

**On Becoming a Teacher:**

**Novice Teachers' Experiences of Early  
Professional Learning**

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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, Marinda Elizabeth Swart, declare that**

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.....  
**Date**

## **A DEDICATION**

**I dedicate this research study report to**

**Marius - my soul mate**

**You made me *strong* by always listening**

**You *walked beside me* as we shared ideas**

**You *inspired me* to go through the rough in order to reach success**

**You add to my *string of pearls*.**

**Cheyenne - my precious girl**

**You always *practised patience* when I could not take the time to do our  
usual little things together.**

**"Imagination is the beginning of creation.**

**You imagine what you desire,**

**you will what you imagine,**

**and**

**at last you create what you will."**

***George Bernard Shaw* (1856-1950)**

## **ABSTRACT**

This study explored the Early Professional Learning (EPL) of Novice Teachers (NTs) in the process of becoming a teacher within a South African context. The main purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of Early Professional Learning acquired by Novice Teachers within the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) phase and the Novice Teacher Induction (NTI) phase in the first employing school. Research literature used in this study has indicated the divides and discontinuities between the world of university and the world of schooling. A systems thinking approach proved useful in helping to understand both the disconnectedness and the connectedness between learning spaces/phases of the university ITE programme and the school's NTI environment.

This research study was located within an interpretative case study design. Six Novice Teacher participants teaching in various schools were purposively selected for this study. All participants had studied for their professional qualification at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. A multiple method approach was used for the generation of data, including semi-structured interviews with each participant, which took place over a period of eighteen months. The process of data gathering and interpretation went through various stages to produce a story portrait of each participant. Using a visual interpretative representation technique in this study was a worthwhile research tool for validation and added another layer of meaning making to understanding EPL.

The findings were that the two systems of university and school offered conflicting spaces that impacted on the NTs' EPL. The university-site offered open protective spaces for learning that were underpinned by conditions of trust, that involved communities of learning, and that encouraged an individual voice. In contradiction, the schools seemed to operate on a deficit approach as they failed to provide useful formalised planned sources (opportunities) for the EPL of NTs. Workplace conditions were categorised by hierarchical power struggles, unhealthy staff conflicts and the lack of socialisation of the NT into the new workplace environment. The absence of and limitations in basic induction practices at a centralised or whole school level nonetheless generated professional agency and autonomy within the NT. Early Professional Learning took the form of personalised-

professional learning as the NT-Self emerged as the connecting element within the learning system. The metaphor of the radar monitoring system is presented as a summative illustration of the NT-Self in navigating the EPL system.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BEd	Bachelor of Education
DoHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
EPL	Early Professional Learning
EPLS	Early Professional Learning System
HEI	Higher Education Institution
FET	Further Education and Training (Grades 10 – 12)
FP	Foundation Phase (Grades 1 – 3)
GET	General Education and Training (Grades 1 – 9)
ITP	Intermediate Phase (Grades 4 – 6)
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
NT	Novice Teacher
NTL	Novice Teacher Learner
NTI	Novice Teacher Induction
PGCE	Post Graduate Certificate in Education
PLA	Professional Learning Agent
PPL	Personalised-Professional Learning
PLS	Professional Learning Space
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team
SP	Senior Phase (Grades 7 – 9)
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa)



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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 SKETCHING THE ORIGIN OF THE STUDY**

Learning to become a teacher and learning as a teacher is a moving force with moving targets. This is because lives and the world are not fixed entities (Morrow, 2007). Similarly, teacher professional learning should not be fixed in time or space but rather viewed as a process that has moving targets with no finish line. Although this may be understood as a truism, Morrow (2007, p.83) argues that teacher education programmes are expected to produce “the ‘complete’ teacher who has the full range of competences of an expert professional schoolteacher”. Yet student teachers are mostly trained for a specific school phase or particular subject areas for a relatively stable schooling system. The ranges of school realities that impact on the work of a teacher are not stable (Morrow, 2007). Consequently the varied conditions and contexts in schools are not and cannot adequately be addressed within teacher education programmes. Once in the field, most teachers are placed in positions where they experience gaps and daunting challenges for which they are not necessarily trained (Morrow, 2007). Schools are expected to support Novice Teachers with their continued professional learning. Loughran, Brown and Doecke (2001, p.7) argue that the nature of professional learning in schools “takes on new significance when the responsibilities of school life become the daily concern of the emerging professional”.

My experiences as a teacher educator working with the development of student teachers within Initial Teacher Education (ITE) as well as in-service training of practicing teachers confirm the above perspectives. I have over the past fifteen years listened attentively to what student teachers valued as important in learning to be a teacher. I have also encountered many anecdotal stories of my former student teachers once they began their teaching careers as novices. To begin this chapter I have selected four vignettes to sketch the experiences of new graduate teachers. As researcher I offer my own reflections on my experiences of being a Novice Teacher twenty-five years ago. This is then followed by the experiences of three of my former students. I knew them as student teachers and met them again briefly after they started their teaching careers. These vignettes were written at the

commencement of my study and generated my interest in pursuing this specific topic of exploring the Early Professional Learning (EPL) of Novice Teachers (NTs) in the process of becoming a teacher.

☞ [1] *I hated my first year of teaching and wanted to resign every day. The distance between the earth and the moon!! That is how I view my experiences!! I was never prepared for the challenges of the classroom. The theory that I learnt at university did not prepare me for the practice of teaching. The only way to survive was to latch on to a colleague who was willing to support me.* ☞ (Researcher)

☞ [2] *When I was a student teacher I saw myself as an alien in the school but my experiences were like the use of paint and brushes on a big canvass. I say to myself: “It is your canvass, your palette. If you don’t want the colour in a specific place, you do something around it and make it work.” All my mentors are here in this palette, and I am the one who is picking from them and I place it somewhere. I do the same now as a practising teacher.* ☞ (Mlungisi)

☞ [3] *I love my teaching and my learners. The staff at the school and the community is really wonderful. But I do not have much support in understanding how to teach my subjects in this specific context. My one week of teaching in a rural setting during the winter school while I was doing my PGCE<sup>1</sup> gave me some sense of the challenges of a rural context. I am coping. I am making a plan. I have had several consultation sessions with my former lecturers at UKZN<sup>2</sup> for advice* ☞ (Mikail)

☞ [4] *I am drowning and very disillusioned. The teacher whose position I filled took all her files and materials with her when she left and there is no other teacher teaching English second language to assist me as this is a small school. To survive, I established a network with other PGCE students from my year group.* ☞ (Annie)

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<sup>1</sup> PGCE refers to the one-year Post Graduate Certificate in Education which follows an initial degree.

<sup>2</sup> UKZN refers to the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

These comments of the Novice Teachers (NTs) on their first year of teaching in a school briefly reflect their lived experiences which were often challenging and often sharply at variance with what they expected. They illustrate their hopes, dreams, expectations, illusions but also in some cases, their despair, frustrations and disillusionment in their personal journeys as early developing teachers in various complex contexts of teaching and learning in South Africa. They are also examples of teachers' reflection on their early career experiences, in an attempt to make meaning of their own learning. Their experiences within different school contexts (as student and as practising novice) shifted them to give new meaning to their existing professional learning. These early career experiences signal how individuals made their own attempts to try and fit into an environment, by selecting sources of support, such as agencies outside the school environment (Mikail), learning from mentors (Mlungisi), consciously selected colleagues (Researcher), and networking with peers in other schools (Annie). Embedded in all these experiences was a process of bringing difficult issues into subliminal self-consciousness and choice to take certain actions to develop as a teacher.

These experiences of the three individuals that I came across in my work as a teacher educator also provide a glimpse of how Novice Teachers (NTs) view some of the roots or sources of their own Early Professional Learning (EPL) in specific situated contexts. These stories left me engaging in serious thinking about some of the initial fundamental questions to be asked:

- Where does the Early Professional Learning of Novice Teachers come from?
- What and how is learning connected between the world of teacher education (as student teacher) and the world of work (as Novice Teacher)?
- How do novices make meaning of their learning as a newly qualified teacher within a specific contextual reality?
- What does 'becoming' a professional teacher for the 21st century entail in a South African context?

The above questions were my initial thoughts for this study and eventually became reflected in the title of this study, "*On becoming a teacher: Novice Teachers' experiences of Early Professional Learning.*" I define here the key constructs of this title which will be

used consistently within this study. “*Novice Teacher*” (NT) for this study refers to an individual who is a newly qualified teacher in the first, second or third year of her/his teaching career. In a South African context a teacher receives qualified status once he or she has completed the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) qualification. Orland & Hayuta (2005) refer to Novice Teachers or beginner teachers as individuals who lack certain knowledge and skills and have limited experience in teaching. White and Moss (2003) as well as Killeavy (2006) indicate that Novice Teachers are positioned as qualified teachers who are required to take full ownership of their classroom. This position is recognised within the school community. Furthermore their position requires that they are able to access support offered by colleagues, continue their learning and practices through strategies such as induction, mentoring and reflection. “*Early Professional Learning*” (EPL) in the process of becoming a teacher refers to the initial professional learning acquired as a student teacher as well as a Novice Teacher (the first three years as a beginning teacher). The process of becoming a teacher requires going through a process of movement, of change. “*Becoming a teacher*” refers to the shift from one state to another state, meaning from the position of student teacher to newly qualified teacher. Du Toit & Kruger (1991, p.6) describe “*becoming*” as “the motive for developing personal potential and becoming everything that the person possibly can become”. In considering the meaning “*on becoming*”, the argument made by Le Cornu and Ewing (2008, p.1806) is of value. These authors indicate that there is a need for universities to refer to pre-service teachers as “early career teachers” in the move to ensure that student teachers “accept increased responsibility for their own and other’s learning.” I have therefore in this study used the term “*early developing teacher*” as referring to the combined position of student teacher and Novice Teacher.

The professional becoming of the early developing teacher in the process of learning to teach is a complex multi-dimensional process of multi-directional movements (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997). These authors emphasise that there are different kinds of things to learn in different spaces and through various processes. They point out that the fundamental question becomes not “how student teachers learn” but “how do particular student teachers learn x in context y” (p.193). This statement carries value not only for student teachers but also for newly qualified teachers entering the teaching profession for the first time. The consideration here, as Calderhead and Shorrock (1997) point out,

should include not only the process of learning, but also the content, the contexts and the specific disposition of the learner. What and where learning occurs became an initial key question related to my study. I was specifically interested in understanding how do particular Novice Teacher's learn  $x$  from sources  $y$  in context  $z$ ? Directing attention to the sources of learning raises the question as to what constitutes those sources (roots or opportunities) of Novice Teachers' (NTs) Early Professional Learning (EPL), learning that in this study crosses two diverse institutional spaces, university and school, within a broader South African context. The post-apartheid South African educational landscape is characterised by a range of transformations that are being undertaken in an attempt to address the legacy of apartheid. Moletsane (2003) indicates that the mass of challenges and demands on South African teachers due to the transformational agenda in education is well documented. Yet neither national educational programmes nor policies "seem genuinely able to change the profession or education system" (p. 323). Gaining a deeper understanding of the influence of various factors on contexts where beginning and experienced teachers are struggling with changes and adaptations, will present greater opportunities for exploring how particular sources influence (or not) Early Professional Learning (EPL) and in what way they do so (or not).

I set out in the sections below the focus and purpose of the study, which is set within a South African context. This is followed by the three research questions that guide this study. The rationale for this study is located in my past experiences as teacher and my present work as teacher educator in the field of teacher professional development. Selected key discourses from research studies on the complex process of becoming a teacher and on being an NT are highlighted. The gaps in these studies are highlighted as a foundation for the need for this study. My position as researcher is offered in an attempt to disclose my positionality in this study. This chapter concludes with an overview of each of the chapters of this thesis that also serve as the structure of this report.

## **1.2 FOCUS AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

This study is concerned with exploring the sources of Early Professional Learning (EPL) of Novice Teachers (NTs) in the process of becoming a teacher within a South African context. The EPL of NTs commences during the Initial Teacher Education phase (ITE)

and continues within the Novice Teacher Induction or orientation phase (NTI) within the employing school(s). My study refers to induction, by definition, not as a formal structured programme but rather the orientation period or process that guides the NT into the process of teaching at a specific school. The purpose of the study is to develop a better understanding of how NT experience and make sense of their EPL within diverse South African teaching and learning contexts. The study is also aiming to discover through a more in-depth analysis, some of the key formal and informal sources of EPL from the ITE programme (four year Bachelor of Education (BEd) or one-year Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)) through to the Novice Teacher Induction (NTI) phase of being an NT in a specific schooling context. Furthermore, this study focuses on understanding the conditions and elements within the ITE and the NTI phases respectively that shape or constraint the EPL of the NT.

The main intention with this study is to offer a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of EPL against the background of the South African context where formalised structured support for NTs is not mandatory. To locate the reader in the context of the study, a brief synopsis of the South African policy landscape that determines the early career years of the Novice Teacher is provided. A more detailed discussion is offered in Chapter Two Section Two. The lack of policy for a structured induction phase for NTs presents a large gap in the existing research on induction as possible professional opportunities. This study will therefore contribute to adding to the theoretical body of knowledge on the EPL of NTs particular to a South African context.

In summary, the purpose of this study is to explore NTs' EPL as they move from the ITE phase to the NTI phase in their first employing school.

### **1.3 KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

What are Novice Teachers' (NT's) experiences of Early Professional Learning (EPL) as they move from the Initial Teacher Education phase to the Novice Teacher Induction phase?

This question will be elaborated on in the following three sub-questions.

1. How do NTs understand their learning from their ITE programme?
2. How do NTs understand their learning from their school environment?
3. What are the implications of this learning for the Early Professional Learning of the Novice Teacher?

### **1.4 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY**

#### **1.4.1 My personal journey towards this study**

Many studies have been conducted internationally on the experiences of NTs during the induction phase into teaching. But each story brings something different and unique (Sabar, 2004; Scherff, 2008; Smith & Sparkes, 2008; Le Maistre & Pare, 2010). To understand their experiences, we need to enter "each teacher's unique world of teaching" (Harfitt & Tavares, 2004, p.356). This can be achieved by listening to their voices about their experiences in a specific context of learning. Such stories contribute to the body of knowledge that, according to Harfitt and Tavares (2004), allows teacher educators to play a more supportive role in NTs' EPL. Furthermore, Korthagen, Loughran and Russell (2006) indicate that although ITE programmes are criticised for their inadequacies "ironically, all over the world, candidates' voices are rarely used to ascertain whether their teacher education programme achieves its goals" (p.1035).

The need to explore the unheard voices of NT participants on their EPL in South African schools emerged from my own personal journey from being a student teacher to being transformed into a newly qualified teacher. In my work as lecturer in the field of teacher professional development and mentoring at the University of KwaZulu-Natal I also came across the many unheard voices of my present and former student teachers on their

journeys to become teachers. It is these voices or stories that prompted my motivation for this study.

The school context where I started teaching was far from the idealised version of the school as presented by my university lecturers (refer to vignette 1 above) and far from my own vision of the work of a teacher. I had expectations of a formalised induction programme, followed by working with experienced teacher(s) as mentor(s) and continuous support from all members of staff. However, my induction commenced with a welcome by the Principal: "...This is the real world of work". He continued with a recitation of rules, regulations and systems to be followed in "his" specific school. Then I was showed to my classroom and awaited by thirty very eager learners with special learning and/or physical needs. I was expected to commence teaching. The Principal believed that I was competent enough to teach the learners assigned to me: "...you have qualified as a teacher the year before and all the knowledge should still be fresh in your mind" and "...you had eight weeks of practice teaching in schools".

In reality, most of my learning during the first years of teaching was based on looking for solutions to problems using trial and error, and trying to survive amongst a myriad of challenges in the Principal's school. I also came to realise that there are so many silent unarticulated practices that developing teachers engage with in the journey of developing a professional self-consciousness along the continuum of initial training and being a novice - practices which were unrecognised and invisible.

Although my past experiences as an NT occurred twenty-five years ago, my story is not particular to me personally or to a South African context. Similar learning experiences that have left comparable marks have been voiced by my former students. Thus this study is closely aligned to my work with teacher educators at both pre-service and in-service levels. My area of study requires that teachers examine how they construct their learning and how such learning contributes towards their personal and professional growth. As a lecturer in the field of Teacher Professional Development in the one-year Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and the four year Bachelor of Education (BEd) programmes, I became consciously aware of the continued gap between theory offered at university and the practice in the real world of schooling. This theory-practice divide was further identified



in the schools during teaching practice sessions. During my frequent visits to schools as university tutor, supervising (mentor) teachers would often comment on the lack of proper preparation of student teachers for the practice of teaching in a school. These frequent statements made me aware that the teachers were of the opinion that their role as mentor was to support the student teacher in fulfilling the requirements of the university and in teaching specific lessons. Yet, I had assumed that teachers acting as mentors to our student teachers were aware of their role in extending the university preparation of the student *within the school as a site of practice*. I also picked up, in my work with practising teachers in in-service courses, what makes mentor teachers unable to fully engage with the continued preparation of both student teachers and NTs – the reason is the overload on teachers in schools. In these discussions, one of the main reasons given for schools to not support or invest in student and novice teacher preparation and development was the notion that schools are “too busy”. The references to the student teachers made by the practising teachers confirmed my view that schools are often unaware of their explicit professional role in EPL

My interest in this study was also stimulated through my experiences of working as a team member on two funded research projects. The first National Research Foundation (NRF) funded project focused on “*Understanding mentoring relationships within school-based teaching practice in South Africa*”. This study specifically focused on the type of mentoring relationship that emerged between the student teacher and mentor teacher over a teaching practice block period of four to six weeks (Pillay, Swart, Ramrathan & Goba, 2006). Findings from this study indicate personal dispositions as a key feature in determining the type of functional or dysfunctional relationship between the mentor teacher and student mentee. An interesting finding that emerged from the study was that generally there was a belief of both parties to *just get the job done* rather than to understand what was learnt by both parties within the mentoring relationship. Moreover, it was evident from the study that there was limited open-ended conversation that could help determine a mentoring agenda that takes cognisance of needs and expectations of both mentor and mentee. These findings clearly indicated the necessity for more in-depth development of both mentor teachers and student teachers in understanding their respective professional roles in mentoring and within teacher professional learning (Pillay, Swart, Ramrathan & Goba, 2010).

However, there are only a few studies that indicate the link between professional learning during teaching practice and professional learning as an NT. This study then serves to determine the beliefs of the NT participants regarding the influence of teaching practice on their EPL.

The second Norwegian funded project was a collaborative venture between institutions in Norway and South Africa. This project focused on the development of a pilot partnership model between ten schools within two geographical clusters and the university in a three-year project entitled “*Enhancing teacher education through university-school partnerships*”. In recent years, teacher education internationally has been steadily moving towards a model that views the initial and on-going training and development of teachers as a joint responsibility between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and the schools where the teachers practise and continue to work (UKZN/NTNU, 2006). The main purpose of the project was then to understand the implications of a pilot partnership model in a range of diverse schooling contexts in South Africa and at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). The partnership model was organised in such a way that the schools and the educational institution planned and worked together on various activities. Such joint activities included, amongst others, partnership planning meetings and school-based teaching practice, as well as developing the role of the liaison mentor as the key agent in the partnership. Teaching practice became the core professional activity around which the pilot partnership evolved. The pilot model exemplified a move away from a linear, hierarchical top down approach where schools were mere placement schools for students to a dialogical approach where schools became partners in the development of student teachers. Such an approach signals a collaborative relational partnership model that provided opportunities for the development of relationships between the university co-ordinators and the liaison mentors of the schools over a period of time. This kind of partnership also provided learning moments that supported the development of the student teachers-self during school based teaching practice (Swart & Pillay, 2011). *Teacher-self* in this study refers to the sense of person and worth as a professional.

Both these projects highlighted the different expectations and operations in the world of university and the world of school. It was also evident that institutions have a tendency to work in isolation from each other, yet both the university and school have an important

role to play in teacher education. Overall, three key issues emerged from these two projects that provided a motivation for my research study.

Firstly, the huge disparities between university and school directly influence the learning of the student teachers, as they are often torn between what is expected from the university and what is expected from the school. Student teachers often do not have the know-how to deal with such disequilibrium. They normally look towards their mentor teacher for support. In the absence of an active mentor teacher their learning becomes superficial as they adopt a “*get the job done*” approach.

Secondly, it was clear that moments of dialogue between the university and school were mostly limited to operational issues related to specific assessment protocols of teaching practice. What emerged was the need for continuous active dialogue between the university and the school in relation to understanding the professional learning outcomes of the student teacher that need to be achieved at various levels of training.

Thirdly, the need for mentor teachers to be developed for their role as mentor and as liaison agent between the university and the schools was underlined. In their capacity as mentor teachers they would be responsible for the professional learning of the student teacher in the school. As liaison agent, the mentor would assist in blurring the boundaries between the university and school through an explicit understanding of the expectations and needs of the university, school and student teacher.

Although these two studies specifically focused on relationships, partnerships and more specifically the role of the mentor within the ITE programme, two major concerns emerged related to my study on exploring NTs’ EPL: How do these early developing teachers overcome learning gaps as well as challenges in their learning both as a student teacher and as a newly qualified teacher? What learning acquired within student teachers’ academic and/or professional programmes, is used, adapted and lost when they become newly qualified teachers? What strategies do they engage in to activate sources that would enable their learning?

It is at this point that I need to provide clarity on my positionality as researcher. My work as lecturer, mentor and assessor of student teachers at UKZN, as indicated in my personal motivation for doing this study, prompted me to now take on the role as researcher within this study. In this role as researcher I was consciously aware of taking on the position of inquirer (Henning, 2005) rather than of former lecturer to my selected NT participants. A careful attempt was made during the data gathering and analysis process to engage in a team approach to the knowledge production process. As indicated by Henning (2005)

“Thus, ultimately the discourse of empowerment is a valuable mind tool and suggests an honourable position of both researcher and respondent ...” (p.4).

The approach adopted within the data production and analysis process is discussed in Chapter Four.

#### **1.4.2 On becoming a teacher: a complex process of learning**

“The profession of teaching is becoming more and more complex. The demands placed upon teachers are increasing. The environments in which they work are more and more challenging” (Commission of the European Communities, 2007, p.2).

This statement alerts one to the complexity of teaching which is clearly linked to the learning process. Several scholars have indicated that professional learning should be viewed as a complex process across phases rather than an event that occurs within stand-alone phases (Britton, Raizen, Paine & Huntley, 2000; Hoban, 2002; Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Therefore, international trends in teacher education have recognised teacher professional learning as stretching over the three phases of initial, induction and in-service teacher education (sometimes referred to as the 3 I's) (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), 2008). Such a notion indicates three distinct phases that are set up as connected on a “seamless continuum” (Commission of the European Communities, 2007, p.12) with the ultimate purpose of continuous life-long learning. South Africa has followed the international example. The Department of Education in South Africa realised the need for closer alignment between the two phases of the formal ITE qualification and site-based induction in school. This need resulted in the formulation

of the National Policy for Teacher Education Framework and Development (NPFTED) in South Africa (Department of Education, 2007). This framework is an attempt to regulate the professional development activities of teachers by narrowing the gap between pre-service and in-service training and development. This overarching policy framework

“attempts to chart the long-term vision of co-ordinated and coherent system of initial and continuing professional education of teachers” (Samuel, 2008, p.4).

The link between the initial and induction phases seem to be most critical for the early career years as it has a significant influence on teacher retention and attrition (Long, 2009; Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). Therefore there is a need for these phases to complement and support each other. For example, in the ITE phase, HEIs offer the necessary intellectual tools and skills for learning and teaching, whereas schools offer a key contribution to site-based training for intellectual and professional learning during the teaching practice experience (Pillay, Swart, Ramrathan & Goba, 2006). Thus, if one sees this as a staged process of learning, both the university and school have a dominant role to play in the formal and informal learning of the developing teacher. These institutional sites are driven by different paradigmatic orientations that determine their logics, beliefs, values and purposes, but also their teaching culture. The main purposes of teacher education programmes should be focused on the quality learning of student teachers to meet the required competency standards and to prepare them for the complexities of teaching (Hoban, 2005a). Schools on the other hand are geared towards ensuring learner achievement which is normally based on teacher performativity (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Central to teacher learning is the student teacher during the ITE phase and as NT in the induction phase. In both positions as student or novice, the early developing teachers enter the university and school respectively with various personal and professional belief systems, expectations and needs that influence what and how they learn. Individual learning is expected to occur within the broader expectations of both the individual and the institutions. This scenario sketches a complex picture of an individuals' journey to become a teacher (as student teacher) and learning as a teacher (as NT) within and across the university-driven Initial Teacher Education phase (ITE) and the school-driven Novice Teacher Induction phase (NTI). As such the learning of an individual is embedded in the context and is influenced by the context (Flores, 2001). Each contextual space is shaped by

various conditions, learning opportunities and social interactions at different levels. It is the interplay between these elements within and across phases and spaces that enable or disable learning.

Although it has been recognised that the two phases of initial and induction should be linked, such a link seem mostly conceptual – an abstract ideal. Most research studies focus on professional learning in either of the phases rather than *across* the two phases. Evidence of this is provided in a recent report on research on EPL over the past ten years in Scotland, the UK and selected countries, which include USA, Portugal, Israel and Australia (Wilson, Hall, Davidson & Lewin, 2006). The report concludes that the EPL of teachers' has been a neglected research area. This report uses professional learning and professional development interchangeably. It does however attempt to identify the kind of professional learning that occurs within various models of and opportunities for professional development. However the distinction between professional development and professional learning remains somewhat fuzzy. This is the exact problem that Hoban (2003) referred to when he argued that teacher learning will remain disconnected as a framework that guides teacher learning is rare, and "educational literature has historically been fragmented when it comes to teacher learning" (p.41). Britton et al. (2000) as well as Loughran et al. (2001) also recognised this gap and indicate a need for an explicit and conscious *link between* the phases of initial (or early) professional learning in order to gain a more holistic view of teacher learning. However, McNally (2006) argues that linking these two phases is not an easy task as there is a multitude of challenges in connecting the two preparation phases that are an "integral part of what it means to become, and probably to continue to be, a teacher" (p.5). Some of the key challenges have been pointed out as the "piecemeal approach" to teacher education (Hoban, 2005a, p.10) and the "washed-out" effect once the NT enters the school (Korthagen, 2010, p. 408). Both these approaches continue to contribute to the theory-practice divide between universities and school (refer to Chapter Two). Wilson et al. (2006) indicate that without effective national co-ordination the discontinuities between the phases may continue. These challenges as well as the scale needed to undertake studies across the two phases may be reasons for the lack of research studies in the field of what is generally known by definition as the transition phase. However, the fore-mentioned statements indicate a gap in research studies that warrants my study. My study will

contribute to gaining a clearer understanding of the nature of EPL through empirical evidence of learning across the ITE and NTI phases.

### **1.4.3 On being a Novice Teacher**

Literature points out that the challenges of beginning teachers in learning to teach have been widely researched but remains a matter of concern (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009, Long, 2009). Sharplin, O'Neill & Chapman (2010) urged that the needs and concerns of NTs have not yet been adequately addressed in research studies. Therefore there is need for this phenomenon to be continually researched. Hence there is a need for my study.

“Findings across 40 years of novice teacher research described ineffectual responses to these concerns” [of NTs] (Sharplin et al. 2010, p.2).

A key challenge for new graduate teachers that has been noted in the literature is the professional socialisation into the world of school as workplace setting. (McCormack & Thomas, 2003; Long, 2009; Sharplin et al. 2010). This process is an important segment of a teacher's career, personally and professionally (Ramsey, 2000; Loughran et al. 2001). Yet it is more than often uncertain and risky for the majority of individuals (Loughran et al. 2001) due to the number of challenges that go along with entrance into the new profession. Such challenges go hand in hand with personal, professional and social adjustment by individuals (Sharplin et al. 2010) in an attempt to survive (Korthagen, 2010) the first years of teaching. According to Sharplin et al. (2010) a major reason for the challenges are the cultural differences between the ITE phase and the new workplace setting. Such disparities cause a culture shock for the NT.

“Initially, cultural differences between teacher education institutions, novices' expectations and school realities create culture shock, causing depression and turmoil” (Sharplin et al. 2010, p.3).

The reality or culture shock is partly due to student teachers' inadequate preparation for the real world of schooling (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Korthagen, 2010) in their role as teacher and as teacher-learner, i.e. teacher as learner (refer to Chapter Two). The notion

that NTs should be able to go through the socialisation process in schools that are “diverse cultural and social places” (Hoban, 2005a, p.10) rather smoothly implies an expectation that the socio-cultural setting of the university should be in line with school cultures. Loughran et al. (2001) and Allen (2009) point out that university programmes cannot fully create an environment that genuinely equates with the reality of the actual workplace or full-time teaching. And neither should it be expected of universities to do so. Loughran et al. (2001) argues that such an expectation reduces learning about teaching to a simplistic process of merely socialising NTs into a school. This then directs attention to a need to explore within this study: What constitutes the level of professional learning as an NT on entering a school context?

The notion that graduates are not adequately prepared by universities for the realities of the world of work is not isolated to teaching. But in comparison to other professions beginner teachers receive very little or inadequate support from their workplace. A study done by Le Maistre and Paré (2010) investigated support given to neophyte practitioners in four professions – occupational therapy, social work, physiotherapy and teaching. They found that beginning teachers received little or no organised support in their first year of teaching whereas the participants interviewed from the other professions, received considerable support through modelling or co-working. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) concur that in comparison with many skilled blue-and-white-collar occupations, traditionally teaching has not had the kind of support, guidance and orientation programmes for new employees collectively known as the induction phase. According to the Commission of the European Communities (2007) only half of the countries in Europe offer new teachers any kind of support amongst others induction and mentoring in their first years of teaching. This clearly indicates that the school as workplace setting do not take care of their responsibilities by ensuring that schools operate as learning organisations for beginner teachers. Schools that do not offer appropriate support and/or workplace conditions contribute to the initial shock experienced by NTs that ultimately influences what and how they learn as teachers.

The treatment of new staff is embedded in workplace conditions. Literature on this area speaks of the mind-sets of some practising teachers on how new graduate teachers should be treated. Some experienced teachers believe that NTs should be thrown into challenging



situations where they learn if they go through an “ordeal by fire” (Loughran et al. 2001. p.16) as part of their baptism or rite of passage into the profession (Moreau, 2004). McCormack and Thomas (2003) indicate that schools operate on a deficit model “where their [NTs’] weaknesses are the centre of concern and little thought is given to their strengths and what they can contribute” (p.136). As such schools often do not recognise the expertise of an NT as a professional asset (Harvitt & Tavares, 2004) and therefore they do not invest time or human energy in such individuals. Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden (2007, p.124) warn of the dangers of such narrow beliefs on learning, “powerful teacher learning does not occur through the sink or swim philosophy”. Such sink-swim working conditions in schools result in NTs’ feelings of “anxiety, stress, inadequacies and isolation” (Sharplin et al. 2010, p.2) that negatively influence their learning about being a teacher in the short and long term. Birkeland and Feiman-Nemser (2012) add that it is often the prevailing conditions in schools that disable learning. They argue that there are only a few schools that offer professional cultures that have supportive learning conditions.

“As a practical matter, they treat novice teachers as expert from their first day on the job, maintain norms of autonomy and isolation that limit new teachers’ access to colleagues’ expertise and organize teachers’ work so that opportunities for ongoing professional learning are rare” (p.111).

Linked to the notion of cultural differences between university and schools, the same literature identifies survival to prevailing conditions in school as a key strategy in professional learning and adapting to the profession. The term “survival”, as it originated in cultural anthropology, describes a cultural phenomenon that originates under one set of conditions and persists in a period when those conditions no longer exist (Survival, n.d. in Britannica Online Encyclopaedia). Survival is thus a skilful technique based on previously acquired learning or learning as the needs arise. Such a description provides further motivation for the need for this study. If EPL as an NT is a case of survival by adapting and fitting into an environment, where and how do NTs learn about these survival strategies? Furthermore, what is actually learned from the enactment of these strategies for survival and/or adaptation? Understanding survival as a learning strategy also requires in-depth exploration of the workplace conditions of schools that enable or constrain NT participants learning. Such in-depth knowledge of NTs challenges in relation to EPL has

implications for teacher educators as it will provide some foundation for better preparation of the prospective NT to deal with such challenges.

#### **1.4.4 On the Novice Teacher Induction (NTI) phase: international and national trends**

The argument has been made in international research studies for the need to address the “wastefulness of leaving new teachers to sink or swim” (Britton et al. 2000, p.2). Such a need has resulted over the past two decades in legislation of a formalised induction phase for teacher learning (Williams, Prestage & Bedward, 2001; Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010). The NT phase can vary between one and three years depending on the mandatory requirements of the respective country and the level of knowledge and skills development of the NT (Long, 2009). Similarly the nature of support within the induction phase varies across countries (Hall & Cajkler, 2008; Long, 2009). The purpose of the mandatory structured NTI phase is an attempt to link the two phases (initial and induction) in the process of becoming a teacher (Ramsey, 2000; Scherff, 2008; Hall & Cajkler, 2008). The induction phase is used to extend what novices have learnt in the ITE phase as they continue to learn as a teacher in a new workplace setting. This implies that “new teachers have two jobs – they have to teach and they have to learn to teach” (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p.1026).

In the induction phase, structured support programmes such as induction and mentoring programmes have become popular professional learning opportunities (also refer to Chapter Two) (McCormack & Thomas, 2003; He, 2009; Long, 2009; Parker. Ndoeye & Imig, 2009). According to Killeavy (2006)

“An induction phase offers opportunities for new teachers to become habituated into learning from the beginning, and be afforded opportunities to consult and collaborate with their colleagues to engage collectively in the learning profession.”  
(p.169)

In countries such as Scotland, England and the USA, to name a few, the NTI phase has become mandatory to ensure that beginner teachers continue to meet fundamental

standards before they can obtain qualified teacher status (QTS) (Malm, 2009; Hobson, Ashby, Malderez & Tomlinson, 2009). Thus the quality of ITE programmes together with the quality of structured support during the NTI phase is rather significant for obtaining QTS and continued professional learning (Hall & Cajkler, 2008; Malm, 2009). In some countries the NTI phase is highly structured and accompanied by specific forms of support.

“During this period, the beginner teacher typically receives a reduced workload, mentoring by master teachers, and continued formal instruction” (Organisation for Economic Enterprise, 2011, p.19).

Although there are a number of other purposes of the NTI phase (refer to Chapter Two), the main purposes of the NTI phase, as indicated above, can then be summarised as linking the ITE and NTI phases, attempting to address NTs challenges, and achieving teacher performativity. What these studies specifically highlight is the influence of the quality of both the ITE and NTI phase on short term teacher performativity (achieving QTS) but also on longer term teacher retention. However there is strong evidence that the nature of support provided by schools within a formalised induction phase do not address the needs and expectations of beginner teachers (Borko, 2004; Long, 2009).) This lack of identifying and addressing the needs of the novices has been cited as the main reason for the high rate of attrition. (Carter & Francis, 2001; Loughran et al. 2001; McCormack & Thomas, 2003; Arends & Phurutse, 2009; Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). For example, in the USA and Australia, teacher attrition statistics indicate that between 40-50% of teachers leave the profession within the first five years of teaching (McCormack & Thomas, 2003; White & Moss, 2003; Parker et al. 2009). The oversight in research studies on addressing the actual needs of NTs that form a basis for EPL when they enter their first employing school will be responded to in this study.

The focus now moves to specifically consider the current South African policy context (also refer to Chapter Two for a more in-depth discussion). Compared to international trends on qualified teacher status and the induction phase, the South Africa context offers a somewhat different scenario. Qualified teacher status (QTS) is awarded to a student teacher on completion of their ITE qualification. There is no legislation that requires schools to formally induct NTs as developing teachers for a specific schooling

environment (refer to Chapter Two). This means that induction practices are left up to the respective schools. Such induction practices are expected to be planned and implemented simultaneously whilst dealing with post-apartheid educational transformation. The role of schools during the NTI phase is largely two-fold. Schools have to provide opportunities for professional learning of the new graduate teacher which commences during the NTI phase. Schools also have to ensure that the NT is able to meet the challenges of the post-apartheid society including the school (Samuel & Pillay, 2003). Samuel (2000) point out that the rapid restructuring of the formal education system in post-apartheid South Africa has resulted in uncertainties in schools. The “difficult and volatile forces” (Samuel, 2000, p.477) at play in schools shape the professional learning of the student teacher during teaching practice and later as an NT. Ten years ago, Samuel & Pillay (2003) urged that schools should manage the quality of induction programmes in their schools as “part of their responsibility to the graduating teachers” (p.156). However, legislation that would formalise an induction phase to support EPL has remained at the level of rhetoric in South Africa.

The absence of clear policies around the structure and nature of formal induction presents a large gap in the South African policy landscape and existing research. Within this policy context, my study will provide insights into possible alternative informal forms of induction and support that will assist to inform schools, teacher educators and policymakers. According to McNally (2006) informal learning is an under-theorised and under-valued element in the context of teacher education. Thus my study will add to literature by offering insights into the nature of both formal and informal EPL.

#### **1.4.5 The need for the study**

The authors Moletsane (2003) and Lewin (2003) concluded the findings on the Multi-Site Teacher Education Research Project (MUSTER), which included South Africa, by highlighting the need for HEIs to become more conscious of the need to assist new graduates in the critical interface period from the ITE phase to the NT phase. Based on this claim, I believe that EPL that stretches across the ITE into the NTI phase is a fertile domain which calls for further in-depth exploration.

In summary, the gaps that have been identified in this chapter provide a case for the need for this study.

There is a need to gain conceptual clarity on (early) professional learning as this concept is used interchangeable in literature with professional development. This study will contribute to providing empirical evidence to support a clearer conceptualisation of (early) professional learning.

There are a limited number of studies that have attempted to gain in-depth understanding of (early) professional learning across these phases (ITE and NTI) and across contextual spaces such as university and schools. This study will add to understanding the connectedness between “learning *to be* a teacher” (as student teacher) and “learning *as* a teacher” (as NT).

Numerous studies have been done on the challenges that NTs experience but there is a gap in research studies, specifically on how these challenges influence EPL. Probing specifically what the NT participants learnt from such experiences will contribute to a deeper understanding of the nature of EPL.

Given the absence of a national scheme for policies and/or frameworks in South Africa that regulate schools’ involvement in the formal structured induction of NTs, there is a need then to gain insights into the kinds of support and workplace conditions that schools offer that enable or constrain EPL.

The gap in the literature on NT professional learning is of further significance for this study. There are a number of studies that have recently been done in South Africa on specifically understanding the development of student teacher learning within the ITE and more specifically school-based teaching practice. These studies particularly examined: factors that matter most in practice teaching (Quick & Siebörger, 2005); the complexity of the practice of teaching in diverse contexts (Samuel, 2009a); reflection as a strategy to develop student teacher identity within a mentoring system (Frick, Carl & Beets, 2010); university-school partnerships in South Africa centred around teaching practice (Mutemeri

& Chetty, 2011); and the expectations of mentor teachers working with student teachers in rural schools (Combrinck & Van Wyk, 2011). All these studies identified the powerful role of teaching practice and a mentoring system as learning opportunities.

In South Africa research in the area of professional learning as an NT is developing but still limited. A few illustrative examples are provided: studies focused on structured induction as a strategy to support the needs of NTs (Steyn, 2004); the life world of newly qualified Foundation Phase teachers in a pseudocommunity of practitioners (Whitelaw, de Beer & Henning, 2008); the role of leadership in meeting the needs of NTs specifically through mentoring (Moodley, 2009); the role of induction and mentoring programmes in achieving school effectiveness (Makanya, 2004); the experiences of the master teacher in a mentoring role for NTs (Pather, 2010); new Foundation Phase teachers perceptions on their university preparation in relation to their work as a novice (Gravett, Henning & Eiselen, 2011).

Most of the studies mentioned above as well as a recent survey (2012) on the Nexus database for current and completed Masters and Doctoral studies provide evidence that most studies conducted on NTs in South Africa have focussed mainly on challenges, needs, coping mechanisms, structured support in the form of induction and mentoring in relation to school effectiveness and professional development. They lack deeper probing into how these challenges and opportunities influence the EPL of NTs.

This chapter has provided an argument thus far that learning to become a teacher is a moving force with no finish line. This implies that the necessary learning is an on-going complex process that requires active movement from *learner teacher* (learning to be a teacher) to being *a teacher of learners* (qualified teacher of learners) as well as a *teacher learner* (learning as a (novice) teacher). Such a learning process encompasses how NTs engage in meaning making of their own learning across phases (ITE and NTI) and learning spaces (university and school) within a South African educational context. It is the intention of this study then to open up possibilities for kinds of EPL systems.

## **1.5 MAPPING THE CHAPTERS FOR THIS STUDY**

Chapter One has served as an introduction to this study. In searching for the focus of the study, I record how my personal journey of being an NT and working with both student teachers as well as practising teachers served as motivation. In my personal experiences with such individuals the need to listen to the unheard voices of the NTs became apparent. My personal motivation for the study was supported by providing background to the study on the process of becoming a teacher. In this section, I highlighted the need to view the complex process of becoming across the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and the Novice Teacher Induction (NTI) phases and within university and school as two central learning spaces. As the NTs' learning is under the lens, an overview of the international and national policy issues related to the NTI phase was presented. The lack of South African literature on my topic as well as the absence of explicit policies for structured support was highlighted as a need for my study.

Chapter Two Section One provides the literature review, drawing on the body of scholarship around two main themes. The first theme presents the ongoing global debates around the quality of teacher education programmes in relation to the preparation of NTs for schools as workplace settings. The second theme covers the issues of NTs' competence, dealing with the multitude of challenges during their early entry into the profession. Section Two focuses on NT context by providing information about the policies and frameworks that govern early career teacher education in South Africa.

Chapter Three presents the theoretical framework for this study. The cognitive, situated and pragmatic perspectives on teacher (professional) learning are discussed. The focus is then shifted to view professional learning from a systems thinking approach, as advocated by Hoban (2002). Reid's (in Fraser Kennedy, Reid & McKinney, 2007) quadrant of learning opportunities is discussed as a lens to frame sources of EPL. Both these perspectives resulted in the design of conceptual framework for this study.

Chapter Four deal with the methodological design of this study. This chapter includes a discussion of the qualitative paradigmatic case study approach used in this study; the sampling procedures; the multi-staged data production process and procedures; and ways

of ensuring rigour through trustworthiness. Ethical issues and limitations of the study are included. The last section of this chapter presents the steps in the data analysis process.

Chapter Five focus on the data presentation and takes the form of the narrative accounts of six participants. This chapter is organised in the form of four story portraits and two vignettes. Both the story portraits and vignettes were designed around key themes that emerged from the data from the two semi-structured individual interviews with each of the participants. The decision to use four story portraits and shortened vignettes in two of the cases was a conscious decision that is further explained in Chapter Four in section 4.5 on data analysis.

Chapter Six offers the case study analysis around the first component of the Initial Teacher Programme (ITE) in EPL. All six NT participants in this study are analysed in order to gain an understanding of what learning is acquired within the ITE programme such as the one-year PGCE or 4-year B.Ed programme at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Chapter Seven deals with the case study analysis around the second component of EPL namely the School Environment. The analysis of the four main participants is organised using a thematical approach.

Having stated the key components in Chapters Six and Seven, it is important for the reader to take note of the following organisational principle for this report that should be kept in mind when reading these chapters. Both Chapters Six and Seven should be read as an integrated and inter-related whole, but they are separated for the purpose of detailed analysis. Chapter Five presents the synthetic complex EPL system which intersects multiple levels of influence on NTs' EPL. However for the purpose of more detailed analysis Chapters Six and Seven will look at two specific "*components*" of the EPL system independently. Whilst these latter (Six and Seven) are independent components for analysis, my report will show that they are part of the interconnected web (as described in the conceptual/ theoretical framework Chapter Three) and further discussed in Chapter Eight.



Chapter Eight then summarises key selected principal (main) elements that emerged from the ITE programme and the School Environment with reference to the framework of EPL as a system.

Chapter Nine shifts to focus on the key findings that provide the building blocks for the thesis of this study. Some key inferences are also offered in this concluding chapter.

This is followed by the list of reference and appendixes.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 ORIENTATION**

The previous chapter provided the focus, purpose and key research questions that guide this study on EPL of NTs. The motivation for this study was presented against the background of my own personal journey on becoming a teacher and of my presently working as teacher educator. The rationale for the study was further grounded in international perspectives on the process of becoming a teacher and on being an NT. Key selected issues related to the NT Induction (NTI) phase (whether formal or informal) as a crucial phase in EPL were discussed from an international and national perspective. A snapshot of the national policy framework on teacher induction was provided in Chapter One with the purpose of introducing the contextual motivation for the study. The South African national policy landscape is further explored in this chapter in Section Two.

This chapter is presented in two sections.

Section One concentrates on literature on international and national research studies which has framed perspectives particular to the nature of professional learning within institutional spaces (university and school) in the two phases of ITE and NTI. It provides insights into key selected issues from a body of scholarship in teacher education to illustrate the continued theory-practice nexus that dominates the nature of professional learning within ITE programme designs. This is followed by reviewed literature on professional learning as (novice) teacher within schools as workplace settings.

Section Two of this chapter provides contextual information about the policies and frameworks that govern early career teacher education in South Africa.

## 2.2 SECTION ONE: SPACES FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

### 2.2.1 A process of movement across phases and spaces

As indicated in Chapter One, the process of becoming a teacher is viewed as a journey within and across the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) phase and NT Induction (NTI) phase and across sites such as the university and schools. Such a journey implies a continuous process in different learning spaces. Yet there is still a trend in teacher education and specifically in South Africa to view the ITE phase as a “terminal stage in a career ladder” (Lewin, 2003, p.344). On completion of the ITE phase, new graduates commence with a new stage as they enter the NTI phase. The distinct division between the stages/phases is evident from the expectations of employers that the NT should perform as competent professionals from the first day they enter the school premises (Eraut, 1997; Kardos, Johnson, Peske, Kauffman & Liu, 2001; White & Moss, 2003). Training institutions may have played a dominant role in the training of the student teacher yet they do not invest any further in supporting the NT once they start teaching. To illustrate, Lewin (2003) comments that evidence from the MUSTER project indicates that in South Africa neither universities, schools nor educational districts support NTs adequately in the process of movement from student teacher to NT. This then

“shows how little thought, time and energy is directed towards managing the transition from training to full-time work as a teacher” (p.349).

As competent teachers, novices are expected to have achieved outcomes for teaching such as cognitive (knowledge and skills) and emotional (attitudes and values) outcomes (Malm, 2009) and to be work-ready with the necessary employability skills (Lawson, Fallshaw, Papadopoulos, Taylor & Zanko, 2011). Competence as stipulated in the DeSeCO<sup>3</sup> research programme (Rychen, 2003) defines this concept as the ability to successfully meet complex demands and challenges in a particular context. In other words being a competent NT means having the cognitive, emotional and occupational ability to meet the complex demands of a new school as workplace setting. This statement surely signals professional learning as a continuous process and, as indicated by Morrow (2007), with no finish line.

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<sup>3</sup> DeSeCo refers to “*Definition and Selection of Competencies: Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations*” (DeSeCo)

It also signals the need for the school to support the continued development of professional learning for NTs to become competent teachers that are able to meet the complex demands of contextual realities in school. Yet on commencement of teaching in a school as an NT the quality and level of learning acquired at university are often questioned by experienced practitioners and the typical, the “*ITE doesn’t matter*” phrase, emerges. Certain school conditions place severe demands on NTs to make a shift in their learning to be able to adjust to the “existing practices in the schools, and not to recent scientific insights into learning and teaching [acquired at university]” (Korthagen, 2010, p.409). This view is supported by Mutemeri and Chetty (2011) as they confirm that schools offer sites for learning in and from practice but “there is much disagreement about the conditions for teacher learning that must exist” (p.515) to support deep professional learning. It is evident from these research studies that learning across the two phases and institutional spaces is rather linear, fragmented and disconnected. Therefore I now focus on some key selected issues from literature to understand key global discourses on teacher professional learning within the university learning space.

## **2.2.2 The University as Professional Learning Space**

### **2.2.2.1 The theory-practice gap**

There is an increase in thinking that teacher education globally is in a crisis (Long, 2009) as powerful teacher education programmes that deliver effective teachers are rather rare (Hoban 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2006). Several scholars have questioned the continued fragmented nature of ITE programmes and therefore have urged for continual research on the adequate preparation of teacher candidates for the complex nature of the teaching profession (Borko, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Scherff, 2008; Korthagen, 2010; Gravett et al. 2011). One of the key concerns in teacher education rests with the lack of alignment between university and schools as institutional spaces of learning in teacher education. Regardless of recent trends in university-school partnerships in the process of teacher education (Quick & Siebörger, 2005; Frick et al. 2010; Mutemeri & Chetty, 2011; Ziechner, Payne & Brayko, 2012), the establishment of a closer alignment between ITE programmes and the realities of the actual classroom remains a challenge. Thus the theory-practice nexus that contributes to pre-service teachers’ difficulties to deal with

uncertainties and realities once they enter their new profession (Frick et al. 2010) remains a “perennial problem” of teacher education (Korthagen, 2010, p.408). Hence this study is of significance in understanding the theory-practice divide and its influence on the complex nature of teacher professional learning.

A number of reasons have been cited in the literature for the theory-practice divide that directly impacts on the nature of professional learning in the process of becoming a teacher.

The first, according to Hoban (2002), is the fragmented nature of ITE programmes that make them out of touch with the world of schooling. Hoban (2005a) strongly argues that there is a lack of connectedness between the various elements that constitute an ITE programme. In other words there is disconnectedness within the university programme as well as between partners involved in teacher education. Hoban (2005a) stresses that ITE programmes first put certain elements in place such as courses to be taught, then looks for a place for teaching practice in a space and time that causes minimal disruption. Both university tutors and school teachers are selected based mostly on availability and willingness. Minimum consideration is given to links that create coherence between the various elements or components such as the taught courses (internal coherence) and teaching practice and between the university and schools (external coherence). Zeichner et al. (2012) concur that little success has been achieved in bringing together the campus-based coursework and school-based field work components. There is also an inability to draw sufficiently on the local community-based knowledge in schools to inform prospective teachers. A possible reason given for such limited success lies within Hoban’s (2005) argument that limited support is provided for teacher education agents such as student teachers, university tutors and school teachers to work in effective collaboration or partnership arrangements.

A second reason often referred to in the literature is related to the learning process within teacher education (Korthagen, 2010). Student teachers’ prior experiences, beliefs and knowledge have firm roots in their experiences as school learners through an “apprenticeship of observation” (Lortie, 1975, p.61). Such acquired preconceptions that student teachers bring to their teacher training become powerful deterrents of their

practice of teaching (Korthagen, 2010) but also of their own willingness to learn and change (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Once a student enters university the apprenticeship of observation may be furthered within the lecture theatre and teaching practice schools. The student teachers' observations are done from the front of the stage where they merely observe others enacting aspects such as modelling and lecturing. The student teacher may be in an observer position where opportunities for engagement in the backstage actions, such as the reflections and intentions of the teacher, are lacking (Borg, 2004). Such actions often remain hidden within the ITE programme if not consciously addressed by teacher educators.

Further, Opfer and Pedder (2011) note that pre-existing orientations brought to the process of learning to teach are not easily altered. Prior beliefs about teaching should not be ignored but tapped into by understanding, extending and supporting such beliefs (Samuel, 2003; Hoban, 2005a; Malm, 2009). The process of de-construction (unpacking prior beliefs) and re-construction (supporting and extending beliefs with theories) requires teacher educators to create cognitive conflict or dissonance in student teachers' thinking (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Such a process also requires teacher educators to consciously engage in assisting student teachers to unpack their individual biographical experiences of teaching and learning (Samuel, 2003). Although the apprenticeship of observation has been recognised as a reason for the theory-practice divide, ITE programmes are still not adequately engaging in the de-construction and re-construction of prior beliefs about teaching and learning (Samuel, 2003; Malm, 2009). This can result in early developing teachers (as student and novice) teaching the way they were taught as learners (Allen, 2009; Malm, 2009) or mimicking other teachers methods as they have not developed a "pedagogical orientated framework" (Lortie, 1975, p.62) during their pre-service training (also see Borg, 2004).

A third reason for the theory-practice gap is related to the complexity of teaching. Hoban (2002) argues that the interactions within sites of teaching such as universities, schools and classrooms have always been complex but linear mechanistic ways of thinking "have promoted a simplistic and reductionist way of looking at complex events" (p.28) such as teaching. One reason discussed in literature for the simplistic view of teaching is the Applied Science model of teacher education that continues to dominate most ITE

curriculum (Mutemeri & Chetty, 2011; Gravett et al. 2011) even though its failures have been documented in many studies (Korthagen, 2010). This model that operates through a mode of deliver and apply the packaged ITE curriculum in schools have been influencing both students and NTs as former graduates of teacher education programmes for many years (Korthagen, 2001; Hoban & Erickson, 2004). Student teachers are taught theoretical knowledge by university experts and then they are expected to apply such “theoretical conceptions into the world of practice” (Samuel, 2003, p.270). A major problem with this type of approach is that the theory is too abstract and therefore not in line with what is expected of a teacher in terms of practical competences in authentic schooling contexts (Hagger, Burn, Mutton & Brindley, 2008). A second problem highlighted is the a-contextual manner (Samuel, 2003) in which these theories are offered to student teachers. This implies that learning to teach is marginalised as ITE curriculum designs “ignores the experience and knowledge of individuals as well as the socio-cultural context of school settings” (Hoban, 2005a, p.8).

In response to the on-going theory-practice divide, several research studies have been conducted to offer possible solutions for bridging this gap. I have selected to focus on three such studies as illustrative examples.

Ramsey (2000, p.57) argues for a better alignment between subjects offered at university and the culture of school cultures, as well as for student teachers to spend more time in schools as professional experience.

“it is possible to reorganise the knowledge base of undergraduate teacher education subjects so that they are more integrated with school and classroom culture. Such alignment between ITE and the school would make the ITE curriculum more relevant, more meaningful, better appreciated by student teachers, with less duplication across subject areas” (p.57).

Ramsey (2000) indicates that the purpose of such an alignment is not a common curriculum for teacher education but “what matters most is the quality of the end product” (p.18). The danger in this statement is that it signals that student teachers have reached a destination as end product on completion of the ITE programme. It ignores the explicit

role of schools in the continued learning towards becoming a quality teacher. I am of the opinion that curriculum alignment or more time spent in schools during pre-service training would not necessarily produce a quality, competent and able NT. Neither would such measures automatically address the theory-practice gap. I agree with Korthagen (2010) on the point that more should be done to ensure that student teachers understand and are able to deal with the theory-practice divide.

School-university partnerships initiatives have emerged in the last decade with the purpose of narrowing the theory-practice gap. Within these partnership initiatives coherence between programmes and on-going active negotiation between partners has been found to be key to effective implementation (Hoban, 2005a; Korthagen, 2010; Ziechner et al. 2012). Findings from a recent study conducted by Mutemeri and Chetty (2011) in South Africa show that partnerships do not necessarily guarantee closer alignment between ITE programmes and schools. These authors conducted a study in four provinces in the country with the purpose of examining the influence of university-school partnerships on student teacher learning. This study found that the partnerships were still dominated by the Applied Science model, resulting in poor collaboration between universities and schools. The continued hierarchical operations between institutions resulted in a lack of clear communication between universities and schools, and thus failure to identify the respective roles of each within student teacher learning. This left student teachers in a position where they were caught in the middle of conflicting expectations between university and school.

The study carried out by Allen (2009) in Australia on a pre-service programme specifically designed in response to narrowing the theory-practice gap found that both pre-service and beginning teachers participants tended to privilege practice over theory taught at university. Although the roles of the university and school partners were carefully negotiated within this initiative, the study found that the participants

“...struggle to provide change agency within the school environment unless the community within which they work supports their attempts; if not, they succumb to traditional socialisation processes” (p.653).



In summary, the above studies indicate that the elements that should form a holistic picture of teacher education within the ITE programme across university and school contexts lack internal and external coherence. It is acknowledged that the disconnectedness is a result of the theory-practice divide, but that the gap between the ideal and actual will remain. Evident from these studies is the resilience of the continued notion that theory belongs at university and practice belongs in the school (Zeichner et al. 2012), irrespective of conscious attempts to address such issues. The theory-practice divide implicitly separates the roles of both the university and the school in the professional learning of the early developing teacher. According to Korthagen (2001) the mismatch between the ideal and real world is not so much the theory-practice gap but the notion of accountability for such a gap. The university is blamed by the schools for the inadequate preparation of the student teacher. The university blames the schools for their unwillingness to change or take responsibility for teacher education. While research initiatives and projects continue to look for non-hierarchical solutions (Mutemeri & Chetty, 2011), the student teacher (and later as NT) remain at the centre of this divide. Hoban (2005a) expresses the position of the student teacher very clearly in the following quotation.

“Such a mechanistic approach is fragmented and promotes an incoherent teacher education program notable for the absence of links; it is left to students to make their own links” (p.2).

There are two issues to be considered in this study that derive from the above arguments on the need for connectedness. If the early developing teacher in their role as student teacher and later as NT are required to make the necessary links within and across fragmented programmes and disconnected sites (university and school as spaces of learning), then how prepared are the student teacher and similarly the NT for such a challenging task? A further question to consider is how does such fragmentation and disconnectedness influence EPL?

## **2.2.3 The School as Professional Learning Space**

### **2.2.3.1 Professional Learning Cultures**

Schools as learning organisations have a critical central role to play in teachers' learning. As realistic learning sites they should create the conditions that enable teacher learning. These conditions within a school constitute what is referred to as the professional culture which "is the distinctive blend of norms, values, and accepted modes of professional practice, both formal and informal, that prevail among colleagues" (Kardos et al. 2001, p.254). These authors also explain that the professional culture, whether positive or negative, directly influences the learning of the NT during induction into the profession.

"Although every school does not have collegial staff relations or a strong professional community, each does have a professional culture that influences new teachers' induction into that school" (p 254).

New comers to a school need to interpret the professional culture but without some form of deliberate induction they more than often find this a difficult task. Similarly established practitioners have forgotten the difficulties of exploring, understanding and finding a place with a specific professional culture (Kardos et al. 2001). As indicated in Chapter One, the process of teacher socialisation (formal or informal), which includes forms of induction and mentoring, can be a valuable strategy to support early developing teachers. Literature has cited socialisation as a means to ensure that new comers become familiar with the prevailing professional culture in a specific school (Löfström & Eisenschmidt, 2009). This process should provide opportunities for social interactions with colleagues, gaining access to different forms of support and finding a place as insider within the school (Allen, 2009). Thus socialisation offers opportunities for gaining insights to workplace conditions. However, research studies also indicate the limitations of professional socialisation. According to Fletcher and Barrett (2004) socialisation is mostly limited to understanding operational procedures and gaining information about learners. Other research studies have indicated that the socialisation process acts as a powerful tool to ensure that new comers (student teachers or newly graduates) conform to established routines and practices (Fantilli & McDougall, 20009, Whitelaw et al. 2008; Sharplin et al. 2010). Such a narrow

approach to socialisation is offered as fourth reason for the theory-practice divide (Korthagen, 2010).

Carrim (2003, p.317) points out that often teachers are expected to act as *agents of change* yet they become an *agent to be changed* within the school context. This also applies to the position of NTs. This shift occurs as prior developed educational conceptions are *washed out* on entering the school during teaching practice or as an NT (Korthagen, 2001; Lewin, 2003). Korthagen (2010) highlights the extreme difficulty for a new individual to influence established patterns within a school. Fixed professional cultures often result in the deconstruction of NTs' initial ideas about teaching (acquired as a student teacher) and reconstruction of new ideas on teaching for a specific school. NTs experience this contrived adaptation to established cultures as a key challenge (Scherff, 2008) as they have to re-create their professional roles (Allen, 2009). They either conform to such practices by following the group or they are forced into a position of isolation as the other. Such complex realities within the schools will not easily be altered, therefore Frick et al. (2010) strongly argue that student teachers need to be developed to deal effectively with such realities. But a question to be asked is how prepared NTs are to effectively engage with and learn within workplace settings where they experience personal and professional dissonance. Such dissonance could derive from the different logics between the HEI and the school (Frick et al. 2010). In understanding the connectedness between ITE preparation and being an NT, my study was specifically interested in understanding how prepared NTs were to adapt or buy into the dominant culture (including habits, routines, processes) of a school. I aimed to find out how NTs managed themselves within such dominant cultures in a school. I was also interested in understanding the type of learning opportunities offered by the school in the reconstruction process of acquiring new local knowledge and skills. A final thought was. How does the dominant prevailing professional culture influence the EPL of the NTs? Such empirical evidence will contribute to a specific gap pointed out in the study of Opfer and Pedder (2011). These authors point out that there are substantial research studies that show the characteristics of professional learning organisations but there is little evidence on the influence of such characteristics on NT learning.

### **2.2.3.2 School-based Induction and Mentoring**

As reported in Chapter One, there is international acknowledgement that the NTI phase is a critical link between university preparation and practice as a teacher in a specific school (Ramsey, 2000; Hall & Cajkler, 2008; Scherff, 2008). This mandatory phase in many countries has also been introduced to provide support to new teacher graduates. Although the introduction of this formal NTI phase has benefitted some individuals and schools, it has not solved the many challenges experienced by NTs or the high rate of attrition. As a matter of fact literature indicates that the multitude of research studies conducted over the past twenty years on the experiences of the beginning teacher as emerging professionals paint a rather dismal picture (Loughran et al. 2001; Le Maistre & Paré, 2010) and therefore continued research is needed. In an attempt to address some of the on-going challenges that NT experience, mentoring and induction as structured professional activities for both student teachers and NTs (Hobson et al. 2009) have received increased attention in research studies. The reason for this lies in the prominent role of structured support in schools in the ITE and the NTI phases. A few researchers have indicated that it is often claimed that induction and mentoring programmes would solve the attrition problem and provide the necessary support needed by beginning teachers (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Long, 2009). Having declared this focus, it is therefore necessary to understand the current conceptualisation of induction and mentoring (formal and informal) in research studies that are central to the professional learning of the early developing teacher. The terms “induction” and “mentoring” are often used interchangeably yet they have different meanings and are employed at different times in the professional learning process. An overview of the benefits of both induction and mentoring is provided. This is done against the background of highlighting the limitations of these two key school-based professional learning approaches as well as gaps in research studies.

Definitions of induction mostly refer to a process of formal structured support for the beginning teacher (Birchmore & Birchmore, 2010) that are based on planned agendas and are therefore purposeful (Scherff, 2008). Purposeful support entails providing assistance based on the needs of the beginning teachers. Whereas structured support refers to providing some form of organised assistance at the various institutional levels (Zellermayer & Margolin, 2005). Birchmore and Birchmore (2010) takes the conception of formal

induction a step further by providing a conceptual definition for effective induction as “a systematic process, embedded in a healthy school climate that meets new teachers’ personal and professional needs” (p.1006). Personal needs are related to the psychological well-being of the NT and include aspects such as feelings of belonging, independence, self-worth and self-efficacy. Professional or technical needs encompass procedural, reflective and collegial practices as well as content and pedagogical skills and knowledge. Heyns (2000) points out that the needs of both the NT and the school form the basis of induction programmes and should therefore clearly be identified.

Mentoring, within or outside of induction, has been described in literature as a journey and as a process of collaborative work between two individuals (one-to-one mentoring) or within a group (group mentoring) (Aways, McEwan, Heyler, Linsky, Lum & Wakukawa, 2003; Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005; Shank, 2005). Mentoring can take on the form of *planned* or *natural* opportunities. Planned mentoring occurs through structured programmes in which mentors and participants are selected and matched with the purpose of achieving a planned agenda (Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005, Long, 2009). Natural mentoring occurs in a relational environment established through friendship and collegiality (McNally, 2006). Irrespective of the form of mentoring, two key conditions are highlighted for effective mentoring that is relevant to this study: contextual support and mentor-mentee pairing (Aways et al. 2003; Hobson et al. 2009; Long, 2009; Birkeland & Feiman-Nemser, 2012)). Contextual conditions that support mentoring are amongst others collegiality and setting up available mentoring-time. The success of NT mentoring is partially dependent on the pairing process and meeting the needs of the mentee (Hobson et al. 2009). Thus the process of mentorship is grounded in some degree of choice between the parties (Aways et al. 2003; Long, 2009). Research studies have indicated that in the absence of criteria for the matching process, the range of practices for the selection of mentors in schools range widely. Long (2009) indicates that often teachers volunteer to be mentors although they are inexperienced as teachers and mentors. Kardos et al. (2001) write about mentors being mechanically assigned where limited or no effort is made to consider careful matching of mentor-mentee. In the absence of vital criteria for suitable matching there is a risk that the mentoring process could fail (Hobson et al. 2009; Long, 2009).

It is important to first view the potential benefits of both induction and mentoring before moving on to the limitations in research evidence. The short and long term benefits of structured induction and mentoring have widely been researched (Borko, 2004). Short term implications involve assisting the new teacher to acclimatise to a specific school culture and the profession (Hall & Cajkler, 2008; Parker et al. 2009); ensuring achievement of basic competence to meet the core required standards of the profession (Britton et al. 2000; Malm, 2009); personal support such as handling stress and developing confidence (Awaya et al. 2003; Fantilli & McDougall, 2009); reducing feelings of isolation (Hobson et al. 2009); establishing relationships with learners (Britton et al. 2000); and finally, acquiring competencies to fulfil new tasks and roles associated with cultural knowledge (Kwakman, 2003) such as planning, effective communication skills and report writing (Britton et al. 2000). The long-term benefits have been identified as increased retention rates, teacher effectiveness, job satisfaction and career advancement (McCormack & Thomas, 2003; Schuck, 2003; Fletcher & Barrett, 2004; Howe, 2006; Scherff, 2008).

The conceptualisations of both induction and mentoring in the above discussions entail meeting individual and organisational needs within a *healthy* professional climate as the main criteria for effective induction/mentoring. Three issues of concern related to these conceptualisations are identified below:

Firstly, the structured nature of induction/mentoring programmes has been criticised for being narrow and fixed. This does not allow for flexibility in the structuredness of the mentoring process (White & Moss, 2003; Schuck, 2003; Parker et al. 2009; Long, 2009). Thus the needs and expectations of the individual NTs are often not met in such fixed programmes. Furthermore, structured programmes are often regarded as something imposed on a school whereas according to Fiore and Whitaker (2005) it should be part of the professional learning culture of the school.

The second issue of concern is the notion that effective induction/mentoring practices are linked to a healthy professional climate. The notion of *healthy* climates as well as appropriate conditions in school for teacher learning is questioned in research studies. For example, Iancu-Haddad and Oplatka (2009) identified that formal programmes often fail due to the lack of supportive induction/mentoring conditions within the professional

learning culture of the school. Bantwini and Diko (2011) indicate that there are very few schools in South Africa that have supportive conditions for deep teacher learning (also see Bertram, 2011). Such authors as Steyn (2004) as well as Bickmore and Bickmore (2010) have indicated the need for research to examine the effect of whole school structures on new teachers' learning within the induction process.

A third concern is linked to what we know and don't know about planned agendas of structured programmes. Existing research studies on the effects of induction/mentoring tend to be a-theoretical as empirical research focuses on what works but not on why or why not (Le Maistre & Paré, 2010; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

“Future research could begin to clarify and sort out which elements, supports and kinds of assistance are best and why” (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011, p.41).

The fore-mentioned concerns related to gaps in research on induction/mentoring as school-based approaches to professional learning are significant for my study. These gaps alert us to the need to explore alternative induction/mentoring practices that could meet the needs of the NT outside of formal arrangements. From the available research evidence, I found that informal induction/mentoring and its contribution to mentee learning is a rather under-researched area. In this study I aim to contribute towards understanding how the various induction/mentoring practices or lack thereof in diverse professional cultures influence the developing NT as mentee/learner.

## **2.3 SECTION TWO: THE (NOVICE) TEACHER CONTEXT IN SOUTH AFRICA**

This section moves its focus to contextual information about the policies and frameworks that govern early career teacher education in South Africa.

In Section 2.2.3 above it was highlighted that teacher learning is embedded in certain conditions within professional learning cultures. In this study the EPL of NTs is explored in a complex South African context where schools are still struggling with post-apartheid educational transformation. Soudien (2007) points out that the legacy of apartheid is a

major reason for the ineffectiveness of South African schools. He further alludes that the implementation of various educational policies in addressing the inequalities in the schooling system impacts on the physical, social and management conditions in schools. Ultimately such conditions would influence the work experience and professional learning of NTs. Considering these post-apartheid issues in schooling, one would assume a dire need for statutory requirements for some form of structured support for NTs. In this sense I refer to a formalised induction phase (NTI) or even a shorter structured type of induction (orientation) period accompanied by forms of formal support. As recent as 2008, the Review of National Policies for Education in South Africa (Department of Education, 2008), found that the formal provision of the induction phase of teacher learning on the teaching career continuum is non-existent. This clearly is in contrast to international trends in teacher learning towards the systematic support of NTs through a mandatory structured induction (NTI) phase (refer to Chapter One). Therefore NT EPL in South Africa which is the focus of my study may offer a different picture from the international perspectives on learning as an NT.

In South Africa, the need for alignment between theory and practice by supporting NTs to adjust to a particular school context has been acknowledged in several frameworks and research reports regulating professional development of teachers (these are discussed below). Although the need for a formal structured NTI phase (including induction/mentoring) is identified in such national government documents there are no specific policies in place to regulate when and how the induction phase should occur or the intended outcomes of such a phase. It is left entirely to the individual schools to determine the planning and implementation of induction/mentoring programmes/activities. In Chapter One, I noted the fact that the absence or lack of much needed government regulations within the context of challenging post-apartheid schooling requires in-depth exploration of how NTs that enter the South African schooling context engage in learning as teachers. The next sections provide an outline of some of the key frameworks and research reports that regulate teacher education in South Africa.

In 2005, the report on research programmes in Teacher Education in South Africa (TESA report) (Department of Education, 2005) identified the need for more in-depth research on improving the quality of teacher education programmes. Two of the projects of this bigger



study promoted further research on understanding the quality of pre-service education programmes (Project 17) and the readiness of graduates for teaching (Project 18). Project 17 suggested a study on the perceptions of beginning teachers on their first two years of teaching and how their pre-service education programme prepared them for their teaching roles. The intention with Project 18 was aimed at investigating the perceptions of the School Management Team (SMT) on beginner teacher readiness, knowledge and skills in relation to the quality of pre-service education programmes. The focus of these studies would provide an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of beginning teachers. Within the call for these research studies it was clear that there was an assumption that beginner teachers are equipped and ready for operation in the profession on completion of the ITE programme. Two omissions in the call for research in the TESA report (Department of Education, 2005) are noted. Firstly the need to research the nature of support provided by relevant stakeholders based on the needs of beginner teachers and secondly the need to research how such support or lack thereof influences the learning and growth of the beginning teacher.

A research study on the aforementioned projects was carried out as part of the Teacher Education Programme (TEP) in South Africa and reported by Arends and Phurutse in 2009. A key finding from the study was that NT and SMT participants were satisfied with the quality of ITE programmes. An area of concern though was the lack of pedagogical knowledge of NTs. As a possible solution, the report (Arends & Phurutse, 2009) recommends longer period of immersion in practical teaching in the final year of the ITE programme. A second key finding from this study pointed out the lack of support programmes at national, provincial and school levels to ensure teacher retention.

“The education system in South Africa does not have formal structures, policies and strategies in place for teacher retention” (Arends & Phurutse, 2009, p.xi).

This second key finding was based on evidence where 61% of the NT participants indicated that no support was offered by the SMT. School managers tended to blame the government officials for the lack of infrastructure and funding to support beginning teachers. A few schools in this study did provide some induction programmes where funds were made available by school governing bodies (SGBs). As a way forward this research

study recommends that differentiated intervention programmes and strategies should be put in place to tackle problems experienced by beginner teachers at school and district levels, However, Bantwini and Diko (2011) express their concern about the possibility of districts offering effective services to schools due to a “deficit of human capacity” (p.233). Arends and Phurutse (2009) conclude that their findings are in line with international research that beginning teachers are a “fragile group” (p.45) that needs to be nurtured.

The above study has specifically highlighted the absence of but also the need for formal support structures and policies in South Africa. It has also acknowledged that the research area on beginner teachers in South Africa has not been given sufficient attention as in the case of other countries. My study will add value to the body of scholarship available in South Africa on NT EPL. Specific attention is paid to understanding, from the perspective of the NT, how learning acquired at university is linked to learning experiences as an NT. Insights into forms of available support as possible learning opportunities would contribute to a better understanding of the nature of EPL.

More recently, the Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa (ISPFTED): 2011 to 2025 (Department of Basic Education and Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011) has included an improvement plan for teacher education. One of the key issues raised in the improvement plan is the preparation and induction of new teachers into the world of work as part of the career plans for teachers. These initiatives include having trained mentors for student teachers. The plan also aims to have competent teachers as mentors and subject advisors for the induction of new teachers in the profession. Furthermore, this national plan is aiming to develop Teaching Schools (TSs) and Professional Practice Schools (PPSs) as a means to strengthen the teaching practice component of teacher education programmes. The TSs will provide student teachers with teaching laboratories where they can engage in learning-from-practice through structured observations and micro-teaching activities. The PPSs will work closely with HEIs where student teachers will have extended periods of time in schools to ensure meaningful Work Integrated Learning (WIL). The aim with Work Integrated Learning is to ensure closer working relationships between schools and HEIs.

Three key issues have been pointed out within this ISPFTED improvement plan:

- 1) The prominent role of formally trained mentors for student teachers and NTs. Yet formally trained mentors are a rather scarce phenomenon in South Africa. A possible reason for this may rest in the lack of mandatory requirements that teachers should be trained as mentors.
- 2) The acknowledgement that the induction phase is integral to a teachers' career path and runs across two phases. Yet there are only a few studies that provide empirical evidence on understanding the link between such integrated induction processes. Steyn (2004) argues for a shift in thinking from an 'induction programme' which implies a formalised event to "educator induction" as "an ongoing process, which includes both formal and informal elements of socialisation and professional development, extending from pre-service training into the teaching profession" (p.83).
- 3) The need to ensure closer working relationships between schools and HEI's as partners in teacher education. Contrary to the need for closer collaboration, a study done by Mutemeri and Chetty (2011) on partnerships has indicated poor collaboration between universities and schools due to the continued application of the Applied Science model by universities.

Although the ISPFTED initiative seems a step closer to connecting the world of university with the world of schooling and the world of student teacher to the world of being an NT, no tangible actions plans have been implemented as yet to operationalise the above recommendations. Furthermore the framework does not set up specific guidelines for developing and supporting the capacity of expert agents (mentor teachers and subject advisors) responsible for mentoring and induction. The lack of research at present on exactly how these TSs and PPSs will function as well as the role of mentors during induction/mentoring is of significance for my study. Findings from this study could provide valuable criteria for the type of professional cultures needed within TSs and PPSs that would be conducive to the EPL of the early developing teacher.

A report by the Centre for Development and Enterprise (2011) indicate that South Africa is in dire need of quality skilled teachers as they are at the centre of South Africa's "struggling school system" (p 29). This unit provides statistics obtained from the South

African Council for Educators (SACE) which indicates that “77% of new teachers registered in 2009/10 were either under-qualified or trained abroad” (p.29). Such statistics strengthen the need for more effective structured or unstructured support activities for developing and retaining new teachers.

In summary, the policy landscape that regulates teacher education specifically related to EPL is rather limited. The need for structured and supervised support for early developing teachers have been acknowledged, yet I argue that even with policies regulating formal support, NTs will remain a *fragile group* unless certain regulations and conditions for structured support are put in place by the various stakeholder involved in education. My study will contribute to understanding the forms and level of support (as possible sources of learning) that are available in schools for NTs. Furthermore, considering that no changes in legislation have been forthcoming for such a long time, I believe that a case should be made to boost up informal induction (and mentoring) practices. This study will assist in gaining clarity on such informal practices.

## **2.4 SYNTHESIS OF CHAPTER**

This chapter provided insight into existing research on key selected theoretical perspectives related to this research study. It was pointed out in Section One that the process of becoming a teacher occurs across two phases and different professional spaces. To illuminate this process, attention was paid to several researchers’ views on ITE programmes as these influences the professional learning of the student teacher. It was evident from the literature that the ITE programme continues to be fragmented and disconnected. As a result the theory-practice and ideal-real divides remain dominant in teacher learning. Studies on the NT Induction (NTI) phase have drawn attention to the high rate of attrition amongst NTs due to inadequate preparation at university and lack of effective support from the employing school. The mandatory introduction of structured induction and mentoring internationally has not addressed the divides between the ITE and NTI phases. It is evident from the literature review that the linear and disconnected approach in the process of becoming a teacher has a distinct influence on professional learning.

Section Two shifted to provide the South African policy landscape that aims to regulate early teacher learning. Research studies clearly indicate the need, but also the lack of, a formal induction phase, structured support and trained mentor teachers to support EPL. The lack of studies on informal strategies of induction, mentoring and support was highlighted in this section.

Chapter Three will proceed to provide the conceptual framework for this study. It will offer different views of teacher learning and sources (opportunities) for professional learning. Hoban's (2002) systems thinking approach offers a useful lens for professional learning. Reid's quadrant (Fraser et al. 2007) of learning opportunities will set the frame for the categorisation of sources of learning. Both these frameworks will provide a theoretical positioning for EPL.

## **CHAPTER THREE: CONCEPTUALISING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AS A SYSTEM**

### **3.1 ORIENTATION**

This chapter begins by providing conceptual clarity in the distinction between professional development and professional learning. As indicated in Chapter Two: Section Two, there is a multitude of descriptions in the literature that attempts to conceptualise professional learning. However, professional learning and professional development are used often interchangeably to have the same meaning. In section 3.2 of this Chapter, I provide a clearer conceptualisation of professional learning for this study. I then move to explain different perspectives (cognitive, situated, pragmatic) on teacher learning that become integrated in a systems thinking perspective. This perspective is the systems thinking approach to professional learning of Hoban (2002). The systems thinking approach provides the lens to explore EPL as a system. This author argues for the need to look at professional learning as an interconnected non-linear system. (Teacher) professional learning, viewed as a Professional Learning System (PLS), attends to the various elements and conditions that interrelate as a system. Reid's quadrant of teacher learning opportunities (Fraser et al. 2007) is used to frame sources of professional learning which is a secondary phenomenon in this study. Both these frameworks provide the conceptual lens for theorising the EPL of NTs in this study.

### **3.2 PROFESSIONAL LEARNING: THE NEED FOR CONCEPTUAL CLARITY**

Noticeable in the literature on teacher education is the lack of distinction and overlap between *professional learning* and *professional development*. In my search for finding a clear explanation for understanding professional learning for the purpose of this study it became clear that Gravani and John (2004) were rather accurate when they stated that it has been difficult to conceptually pinpoint the concept of professional learning. Although many scholars in the field of mainstream teacher education development have attempted to provide clarity between these two concepts, conceptual vagueness remains. They are often

used interchangeably to mean the same or a range of meanings are assigned to each respectively (Hoban, 2002; Gravani & John, 2004; Fraser et al. 2007; Bertram, 2011). Opfer and Pedder (2011) assert that there is a misconception in some of the research on professional development that tasks (e.g. activity based), structures (e.g. collaboration) and location (e.g. situated in practice) that contribute to some measure of change are equal to teacher professional learning. Existing literature on professional learning focusses on specific activities, processes or programmes without “considering how learning is embedded in professional lives and working conditions” (p.376). These authors found in a review of close to 72 journal articles on teacher learning that a dynamic complex conceptualisation of *professional learning* is absent in the literature. Borko (2004) also averted to the gap by pointing out that research studies on *professional development programmes* often do not engage in in-depth understanding of what teachers learn, why they learn and how their learning improves their practice. Similarly, Hoban (2002) strongly argues for a clear distinguishing between *professional development programmes* and *professional learning*. Hoban regards learning through specific programmes or activities as a reduction of learning to a linear and mechanistic event. *Programme* suggests a linear event whereas *learning* is a non-linear process. Hoban (2002) advocates that long term learning should be regarded as a system rather than a programme. He explains:

“The term ‘system’ is preferred to ‘program’, because a system implies a combination of conditions that interrelate to support learning, whereas ‘program’ implies a prescriptive plan of events” (p.68).

I believe that *development* is a somewhat ambiguous concept and does not necessarily bring out the complex on-going process and nature of teacher professional *learning*. In other words *development* refers to reaching some end goal (outcome), while *learning* refers to the multiple and complex process of getting there (the process). *Programme* on the other hand is a formal way of organising the learning as a means to contributing to learning. This means that professional *programmes* are normally designed as a set of activities (tasks) presented in an abstract and a-contextual manner. Attending a once-off departmental meeting (learning opportunity) does not necessarily contribute to learning for the individual. It may remain an external-driven opportunity but does not move the individual to deeper learning. This argument, together with the failure of literature to

provide a better understanding of professional learning, gives greater motivation for this study. My study will contribute to gaining a more specific understanding of what and how selected NT' participants learn from active engagement in varied sources (opportunities) for professional learning. The study looks closer at the nature of professional learning through an in-depth exploration of the lived experiences of the NT across two phases (ITE and NTI) and contexts dominated by various conditions. Figure 1 below represents the differences in the three concepts of *learning*, *development* and *programme*.

With this in mind, I address the main theoretical perspectives on learning (cognitive, situated, pragmatic and systems thinking) in order to gain a broader understanding of professional learning, with a view to crafting a conceptual framework for underpinning the data production and analysis process.

Figure 1: CONCEPT CLARIFICATION





### **3.3 VIEWS ON LEARNING**

#### **3.3.1 Perspectives on teacher professional learning**

Educational research on learning has over the years identified different theoretical perspectives on learning. The two dominant perspectives that cause a dichotomy in research communities, according to Hoban (2002), are the cognitive and situated perspectives. Each perspective has value as it each has different underpinning assumptions and its own unit of analysis or focus for learning (see below). However, Hoban (2002) argues that the different perspectives on learning contribute to the cognitive/social split and subsequent fragmentation of teacher learning. The move to find a common ground between the two perspectives in the form of the pragmatic approach (see below) is often used in adult learning and workplace learning (Hoban, 2002). Hoban (2002) however, strongly urges that there is a need to look differently at teacher learning as a system by

“using a new lens that can draw together the tenets of each perspective into a coherent framework” (p.58).

#### **3.3.2 A cognitive perspective**

The cognitive learning theories evolved from the traditional psychological perspective that originated from the work of Jean Piaget (1950). This perspective explains the process of individual knowledge construction, where meaning making is based on personal experience. As such, prior knowledge and experience is seen a major influence on learning. Thus the unit of analysis is situated in the “*individual itself*” or “*in the head*” (Hoban, 2002, p.52; (see also Gravani & John, 2004).

According to the cognitive view, teaching is seen as a craft that includes a range of skills and competences that have to be enhanced over time. This model takes on a somewhat technical behaviouristic approach as it is assumed that learning can be acquired through once-off activities such as workshops and conferences. Furthermore, such acquired learning can be applied to another situation or task (Konkola, Tuomi-Gröhn, Lambert, &

Ludvigsen, 2007). According to Kelly (2006) the various cognitivist models share a common view:

“Individuals acquire skills, knowledge and understandings in one setting, often specifically designed for that purpose, and are subsequently able to use these skills, knowledge and understandings elsewhere” (p.506).

Constructivism through the notion of reflection is also a popular teacher learning strategy that is consistent with the cognitive perspective as “it is the rethinking of experience that provides personal meaning and hence learning” (Hoban, 2002, p.53).

Despite its contribution to the understanding of personal or individual knowledge, there are several critiques of the cognitivist perspective on learning. Kelly (2006) challenges the assumptions made by the various cognitive models of learning by stressing that the cognitivist perspective does not take the complexity of teacher learning into account. Rather cognitivist models simplify the concept of teacher learning by not taking account of learning that is acquired in practice where learning is dispersed across people, resources and settings. It also ignores the argument that learning is the movement from peripheral (novice) to full (expert) participation in the work of schools (Lave & Wegner, 1991).

Hoban (2002) supports this statement by pointing out that the cognitivist perspective does not explain the lack of transference from one context to another. A second anomaly of this perspective is that it does not pay attention to how new knowledge is constructed in the absence of prior knowledge and experience (Gravani & John, 2004). Thirdly, it does not explain how social interactions influences individual learning (Hoban, 2002). I would also argue that prior knowledge acquired through the apprenticeship of observation (referred to in Chapter Two), if not adequately addressed during the pre-service phases, may result in superficial learning due to possible narrow frames of reference. Conversely, prior experience obtained in the world of work can be of great value in teacher learning. There is a need to engage in empirical studies that investigate the link between individuals’ prior work knowledge (outside of teaching) and teacher professional learning.

### 3.3.3 A situated perspective

Most of the literature on professional learning reviewed for this study indicates that learning to teach or learning to be a professional is a socio-cultural construct (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Maynard, 2000; Knight, 2002; Borko, 2004; Imants & Van Veen, 2008). Borko (2004) explains that the learning process should be viewed as a process of enculturation and construction within a community of practice. Thus learning is viewed as a process of active construction of individual and social learning through participation in a community of practice (or learning community). This perspective is supported by a number of other scholars such as Lave and Wenger (1991) and Adler (2000). Thus individual learning is intertwined with collective activities. The individual's learning can only be grasped if we understand how the entire activity system learns (Engeström, 2001). The lens of inquiry is focused on the activity within the specific setting and the moment-by-moment interactions between the individual and the activity (Nardi, 1996; Gravani, 2007.) The principles of interaction and interdependence are central to the function of such learning communities (Gravani, 2007). Lave and Wenger (1991) suggest that learning is not a case of the individual acting *on* the world but rather of the individual acting *in* the world thus indicating that the focus needs to be on the whole person in relation to the context and culture in which they learn. The unit of analysis according to this perspective is "*individual-in-social-action*" (Hoban, 2002, p.55). Thus learning is context-bound through individual participation in social activities.

Borko (2004) used the metaphor of multi-focal contact lenses for considering a situative perspective for research on teacher learning:

"... the 'near-vision prescription' of a psychological conceptual framework to focus on the individual teacher. With this prescription, they collect and analyse data on questions such as how a teacher constructs new knowledge and instructional practices. They use the 'distance-vision prescription' of a socio-cultural conceptual framework to focus on the professional development community to collect and analyse data on norms of communication and patterns of participation in professional development activities" (p.8).

This situated perspective has contributed to understanding the social and contextual conditions for learning. However, as in the case of the cognitive perspective, a number of anomalies associated with the situated perspective have been pointed out in the literature (Hoban, 2002; Gravani & John, 2004). Firstly, learning can happen outside of a specific authentic context. Secondly, different amounts of knowledge can be transferred depending on the amount of practice. Thirdly, learning does not only happen in a specific social context, but can also occur individualistically and through concrete examples. Furthermore, viewing communities of practice as a fixed and stable environment is rather problematic. (Fuller, Hodgkinson, Hodgkinson & Unwin, 2005; Haugaløkken & Ramberg, 2007; Konkola et al. 2007; Maistry, 2008). This view also assumes that all contexts operate as communities of practice or learners, which is not always the case. The view also does not take cognisance of the power of the dominant culture (Korthagen, 2010) at play within a school and its influence on individual learning.

### **3.3.4 A pragmatic theoretical approach**

Hoban (2002) identified the theoretical pragmatic approach to learning as an attempt to bridge the dichotomy between the cognitive and situated perspectives. Hoban (2002) draws on the work of Cobb (1994; see also Gravani & John, 2004) that advocates the use of either a cognitive perspective or a situated perspective based on “what works” (Hoban, 2002, p.37). In other words, use the theory that best suits a specific purpose. Scholars such as Putnum and Borko (2000) advocate a second option within a pragmatic approach to learning. They call for finding a common ground between these two points of view which will allow learning to be viewed through multiple lenses. Similarly, Opfer and Pedder (2011) point out that adopting either a situational or a cognitive perspective provides a narrow focus on learning; at best learning is then viewed through separate lenses. Such an approach overlooks the interactions that occur amongst the different perspectives. Therefore there is a need for a multiple perspective on teacher learning.

Although the above scholars point out the use of multiple and eclectic *what works* approaches to teacher learning, Hoban (2002) moves these discourses on points of view on professional learning mentioned above to a different perspective. He paves the way for thinking about teacher learning as a complex process and system. This author does not

offer a new perspective on learning that could add to the cognitive and situated perspectives. Rather he organises the cognitive and situated perspectives as two main perspectives in learning somewhat differently in the form of an interrelated systems thinking approach.

### **3.3.5 A systems thinking approach (Hoban)**

#### **3.3.5.1 Professional learning through a flexible lens**

Thinking about teacher learning as a system offers a way of thinking rather than a new theory of learning. This perspective is an effort to bring together the core ideas of the cognitive/social learning perspectives (Hoban, 2002; Gravani & John, 2004).

Hoban (2002) argues that teacher learning should be viewed through a flexible lens. Both the cognitive and situated perspectives omit some of the details that are essential considerations in teacher learning. The cognitive perspective on teacher learning uses a “close-up lens” (p.59) and zooms in only on the individual. On the other hand the situated perspective on learning looks through a “wide-angle lens” (p.59) at broader issues of social contexts but with limited consideration for the individual learning.

“Learning is therefore distributed among influences on learning, rather than across a social setting (as in situated perspective) or within an individual (as in a cognitive perspective)” (Hoban, 2002, p.59).

Framing professional learning as a systems thinking approach is viewed as appropriate to this study. Hoban’s (2002; 2005a&b) work on teacher learning and teacher education designs within the broader field of educational change is derived from viewing schools as complex systems and teacher learning as a complex process. Although his systems thinking approach mainly deals with teacher learning within the context of school change, it provides a useful framework for the EPL of NTs across two systems such as the ITE programme and NTI environment. Reviewed literature on systems thinking mainly focuses of this type of approach in relation to school effectiveness and teacher change. In this sense Hoban (2002) argued that a Professional Learning System (PLS) should not only be used for the design of specific projects in schools or for professional development alone,

but can also be deployed as a useful framework to support teacher learning. My study will thus use the systems thinking approach for the purpose of understanding the phenomenon of the EPL of NTs as a non-linear process between and within various systems (ITE and NTI) and learning spaces (university and school). Furthermore, it is the interplay between the various elements and the conditions across the two systems and within each system that influences the nature of professional learning as a system. Thus using the systems thinking approach to learning will provide an integrated multifocal lens focusing on the individual NT participant's learning within a system.

### **3.3.5.2 Professional learning as a complex system of interrelated elements**

Hoban (2002) stresses the need to move away from viewing teacher learning as a simplistic mechanistic endeavour that compartmentalises learning. The rapid changing educational landscape associated with the twenty first century necessitates a perspective on learning as a complex system. Hoban advocates that it is more appropriate to view learning through a systems thinking approach that is embedded in complexity theory. This theory argues that reality is not static and one-dimensional but flexible and fluid. The epistemology of complexity theory is seen as multiple elements that interact collectively as a system to produce movement or a ripple effect (Hoban, 2002). Opfer and Pedder (2011) add that looking at learning from a complex systems thinking approach provides broader and more in-depth understanding of the various dynamics at work and how “these interact and combine in different ways such that even the simplest decisions can have multiple casual pathways” (p.377). As such the combination of conditions and interactions between these are driven by specific actions.

Hoban and Erickson (2004) argue that understanding the interaction between various elements and systems as central to professional learning. Therefore using a more flexible lens allows teacher learning to be viewed as an interrelated system of personal (individual) conditions, social and contextual conditions of learning (influences) - a system formed through the development of a network of relations (Hoban 2002; Moody, 2005; Gravani 2007). In other words the focus is on the relationship between different elements. Such a systems thinking approach places focus on the “*individual- in-related-action*” as a unit of

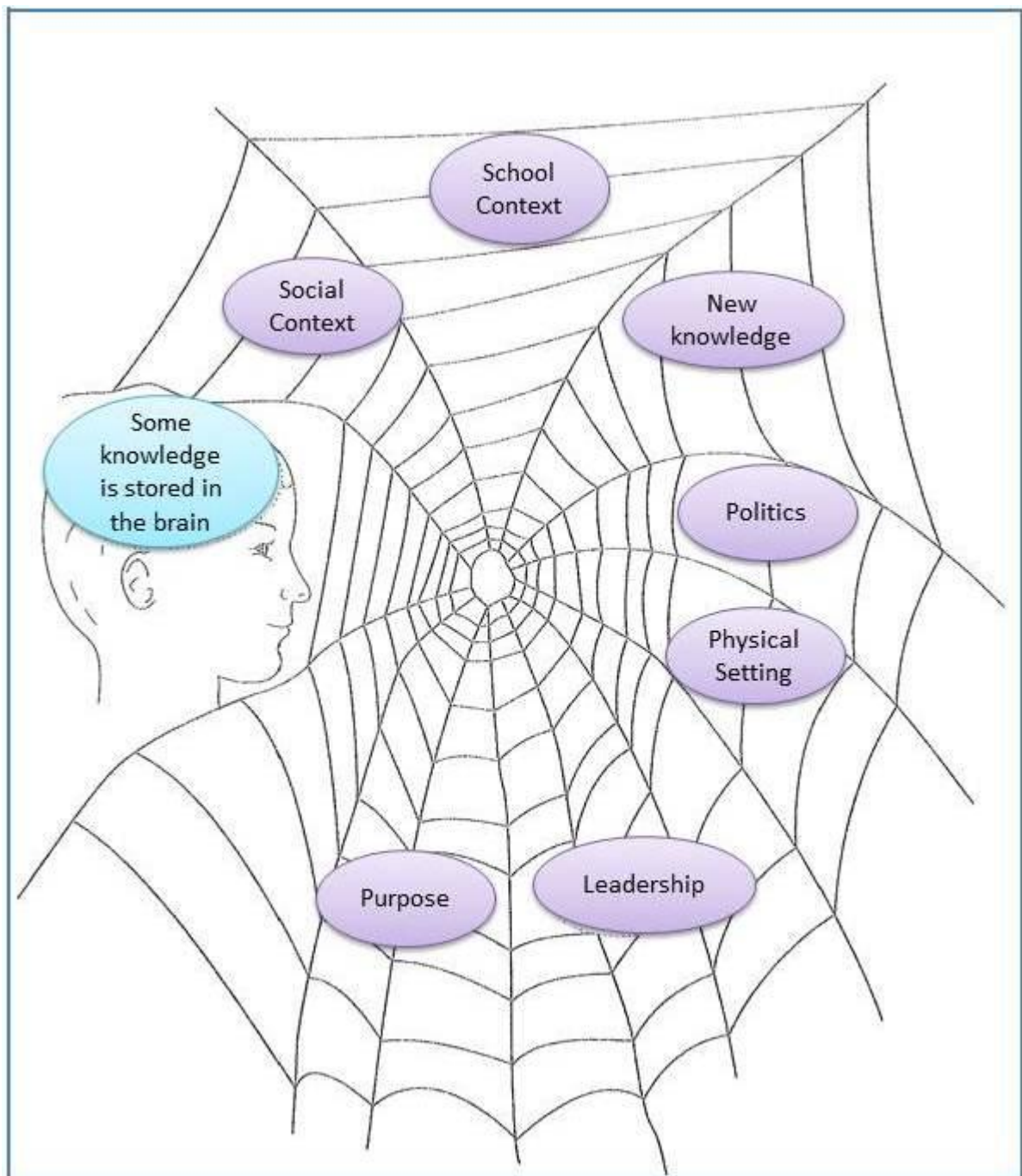
analysis (Hoban, 2002, p.59). As such individual learning is affected by different actions through the interplay of the various elements and conditions within a context.

“Any context, therefore, can be viewed as a learning system with multiple relationships among people, the setting and artefacts, much like a spider web, but not all need to be operational at one time or to the same extent” (Hoban, 2002, p.60).

The use of a simplistic spider-web metaphor illustrates the interconnections of the individual-in-related-action within a system (Moody, 2005; Hase, 2006). The learning system consists of the following elements: purpose; knowledge stored in the learner’s mind; social context; school culture; new knowledge; politics; physical setting; and leadership (Hase, 2006). These elements within the “individual-in-related-action” as unit of analysis are illustrated in Figure 2 below (Hoban, 2002, p.61).

The relationship between the elements is illustrated with unbroken lines that signal the network, or link between elements, which are of vital importance in the system. But the various elements are illustrated with broken lines as they are flexible and fluid. They can change or come in different combinations - “not all need to be operational at one time or to same extent” (Hoban, 2002, p.60). Each system is unique with its own different elements that together act collectively to make up the system. Learning is influenced by various actions within the system (Hoban, 2002). The link is identified in Figure 2 (refer to next page) that offers a representation of a systems unit of analysis as the individual-in-related-action (Hoban, 2002, p.61).

Figure 2 A REPRESENTATION OF A SYSTEMS UNIT OF ANALYSIS AS THE  
'INDIVIDUAL IN RELATED ACTION'



From Hoban (2002, p.61)

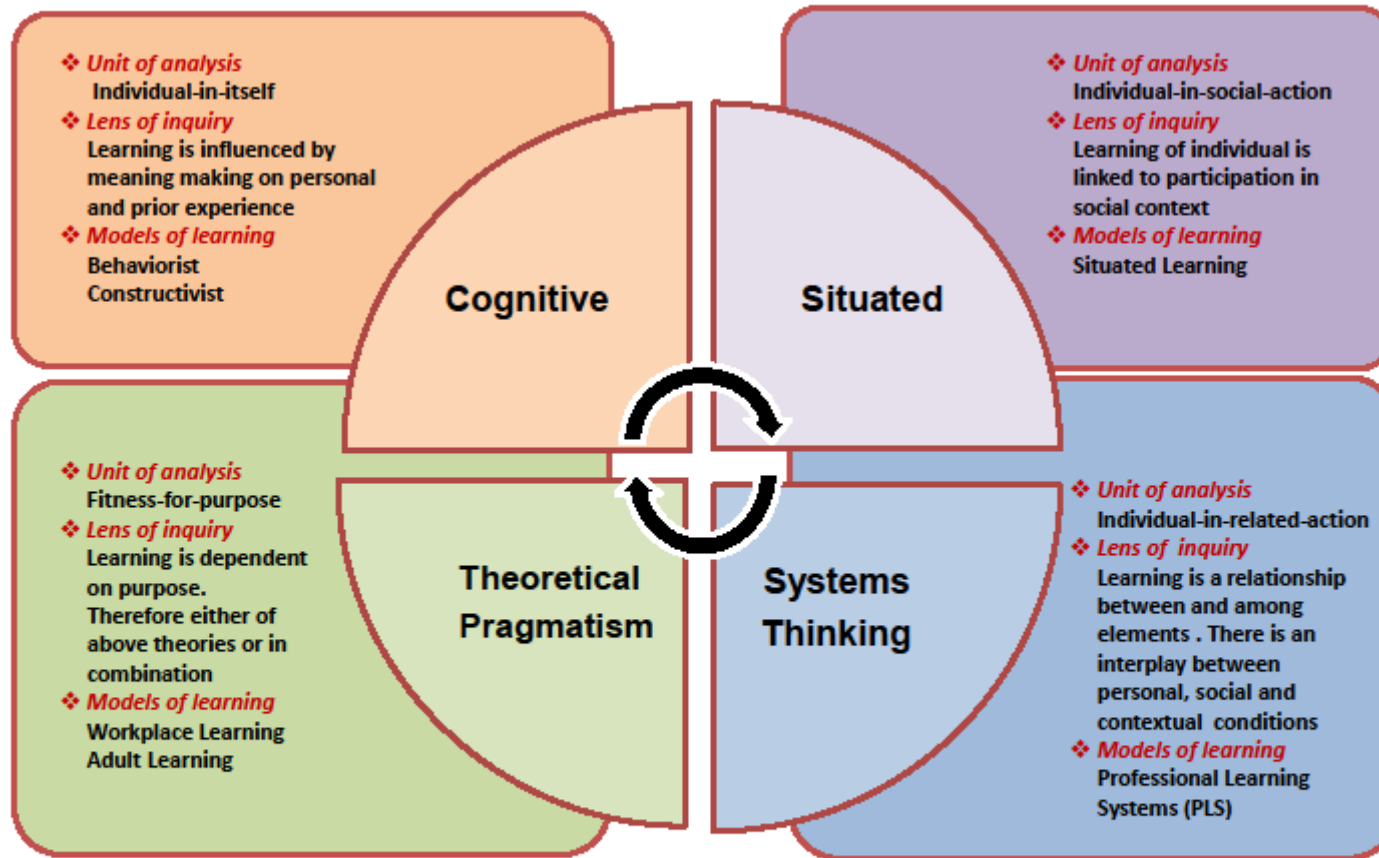


Applied to education, professional learning is then viewed as an evolving complex process consisting of the interaction of a variety of non-linear activities with horizontal and vertical links between various elements (Moody, 2005; Gravani, 2007). Thus there are criss-cross relationships between the various elements in a learning system. Opfer and Pedder (2011) concur that the

“relationships between the elements in the system vary in scale and intensity, come together in different combinations depending on the situation, are often reciprocal and are always nested” (p.377).

Teacher learning should rather be viewed by understanding the influences of various systems on and within other systems. Therefore viewing learning as it evolves as a “nested system” (Opfer & Pedder, 2011, p.377) allows for deeper understanding of the inter-dependent influences of the various systems such as micro-systems (individual(s)), meso-systems (institutional), macro-systems (school/university) on each other.

Figure 3 OVERVIEW OF PERSPECTIVES ON TEACHERS' LEARNING



### 3.3.5.3 Professional learning conditions within a system

Hoban (2002, p.70) stresses that the interplay between certain conditions act as a conductor for learning. He highlights eight conditions as the basis for professional learning as a system but emphasises that these are not fixed, and change within each system. They are identified as (1) *Conception of teaching as an art or profession* (teaching should be seen as an art or profession which requires various dynamic relationships); (2) *Reflections* (to make connections); (3) *Purpose for learning*; (4) *Time frame* for learning; (5) *Community* in which trust can be developed (involves teachers sharing experiences); (6) *Action* (means trying out new ideas); (7) *Conceptual inputs* (refer to knowledge sources that extend experiences) (8) *Student feedback* (on action).

Hoban's book, *Teacher learning for educational change* (2002) discussed the systems thinking approach to teacher learning by providing questions as guiding principles for the design of professional learning systems specifically related to the field of teacher change and school effectiveness. These questions have been framed based on various teacher learning projects as case studies to highlight elements and conditions that are unique to each project as a professional learning system. However, the distinction between *conditions* and *elements* within the systems thinking approach is rather confusing. Throughout the book the concepts of conditions and elements are used interchangeably or to mean something different. In a review of Hoban's (2002) book, Hase (2006) points out the limitations of not providing concrete examples for using these conditions:

“This conceptualisation is useful but it is surprising that Hoban did not link these conditions to some well-established learning models such as action learning, action research, and communities of practice, for example” (p.117).

For my study I have attempted to use the concept of *conditions* to illustrate the personal, social and contextual circumstances that influence or constrain the professional learning of NTs. The above eight conditions can be categorised into personal, social and contextual conditions for learning. It should be noted that often conditions could belong to more than one type of category. I have used the concept *element* to identify specific components within a system that emerged from the data. For example an element that emerged within

the ITE system is that of the formal social spaces of learning (refer to Chapter Eight). My study attempts to separate the elements and conditions but also to show the interplay between these (Chapter Eight) in order to provide a conceptual framework for the EPL of NTs across and within two systems (refer to Chapter Nine).

Hoban (2002) does not provide a clear explanation of what personal, social and contextual conditions entail. Conditions for learning have been cited by other authors. For example, Samuel (1998) designed the Force-Field Model as a way of understanding how teachers' professional identity is shaped by biographical (personal), institutional, programmatic and contextual forces that operate in a push-and-pull approach. Bell and Gillbert (in Fraser et al. 2007) view teachers' professional learning as consisting of interrelated conditions encompassing personal, social and occupational. The notion of the influence of categories of conditions on teacher learning has been noted by a number of scholars in the field. Therefore I have drawn from a wider field of literature to explain some of the key features within each of the conditions in the sections below.

### ***Personal conditions***

Learning as a personal activity rests on the inner power of the individual to take responsibility for their own learning. "Inside-out-learning" (Turbill, 2002, p.95) is based on recognising what it is we need to learn (self-identification) and how we can best go about finding opportunities within the process of learning (Kwakman, 2003; Harfitt & Tavares, 2004; Van Horn, 2006). Kwakman (2003) argues that professional learning is connected to individual teachers' professional goals. Working towards a specific purposive goal is influenced by preferred means that may assist in achieving these goals. Taking action by making decisions and trying our ideas was another dimension related to personal conditions for learning (Hoban & Erickson, 2004). Harfitt and Tavares (2004) reinforce Hoban and Erickson's (2004) observation that learning can be initiated through conscious choice to turn obstacles into learning opportunities. The inner power of the individual to initiate learning is driven by the purpose of learning. Such ownership of learning must be the motivating factor for learning. These authors further explain that self-inquiry, self-reflection and experimenting are learning activities that come from within and therefore the

teacher is the primary initiators of their own learning. Specific emphasis is placed on reflection as a strong personal condition for learning. Hoban and Erickson (2004) note the need for reflection on events, practices, principles and thinking in order to make sense and gain insights from experience. Opfer and Pedder (2011) point out that the dissonance that causes self-blame resulting from expectations not being met can, through reflection, motivate teachers to learn.

In summary, personal conditions that influence learning relate to awareness of what needs to be learnt to achieve specific goals. Achievement of identified goals relies on the motivation to take action. If inside-out-learning (Turbill, 2002) is to occur, the individual needs to understand the implications of needs, goals and actions on learning. This author also explains the external dimension of learning. Outside-in-learning (Turbill, 2002) occurs when an individual is able to interact with the environment and engage in new knowledge. The social and contextual conditions for learning referred to below could provide or neglect opportunities for such outside-in-learning.

This study will add to insights into NTs' awareness of their needs and goals, and the nature of personal action taken in relation to understanding EPL.

### ***Social conditions***

There are certain social conditions within the university and schools that encourage or restrain professional learning. Although most reviewed literature refers to social conditions in schools, the features discussed below also apply to university spaces. Social conditions refer specifically to the relational conditions within a system that influence learning. Hoban (2002) claims that learning is a social and communal responsibility. Therefore a sense of community amongst teachers can support and have a sustainable impact on learning. In recent years the notion of communities of practice or professional learning communities has been at the forefront as a means to curtail isolation and individualism in teaching and learning (Williams et al. 2001; Kelchtermans, 2006; Whitelaw et al. 2008). Communities of practice are believed to work on principles of collaboration and collegiality. Both of these principles are grounded on social interactions. However, Kelchtermans (2006) explains that these two concepts are ill-defined and he therefore

offers clarification. Collaboration refers to cooperative actions, and collegiality refers to the quality of the relationships among members of the community. In other words,

“the actual actions of working together are determined by the quality of relationships among staff members” (Kelchtermans, 2006, p.221).

Social relations in a school have been cited in literature as crucial to both formal and informal learning opportunities. Collaborative interactive (co-operative) activities such as dialogue, feedback, sharing of ideas and new information (Kwakman, 2003), reflective inquiry (examining and questioning) into one’s own practice and talking through experiences (Van Horn, 2006) have been documented as valuable to learning. The benefits of collaborative school cultures have been recorded as: providing moral support, increasing effectiveness in teaching, reducing overload, promoting reflection, understanding experiences (Hoban & Erickson, 2004; Kelchtermans, 2006; Malm, 2009), and experimenting with new strategies and confidence to share (Van Horn, 2006). McNally (2006) points out that relationality in the form of friendship and human bonds are integral to informal learning. This author also point out that this is an under-researched area.

Learning in a collaborative community with others requires a relatively stable system where people work together with a shared vision and purpose in mind (Hargreaves, 1994). In reality, systems are not always stable, neither do they function with a shared vision in mind. Hargreaves (1994) and Samuel (1998) explain that learning and teaching occurs in a globalised world that is characterised by transitional instability, uncertainties and power hierarchies. This statement alerts one to the need for NTs to be equipped to be able to deal with unstable learning spaces (Malm, 2009). This author indicates that interpersonal and communication skills are essential tools that would allow a novice to deal with conflict and uncertainties. Such skills would simultaneously have positive implications for integration into a community of practice.

As pointed out, not all schools function as collaborative cultures with a shared vision. The benefits of collaborative and collegial working conditions that allow an ideal space for a novice to extend their learning or learn something new, have been alluded to in the above sections. Yet, in reality, there are huge numbers of isolated schools where the school

culture is characterised by individualism and conflicting staff relations. As such, teachers' move to self-reliance and professional learning happens at an individual rather than social level. Fletcher and Barrett (2004) illustrate the issue of collaboration versus isolation by referring to a survey carried out in California by Kardos (2003). Findings from the survey provided evidence that beginning teachers believed that collaboration with colleagues offered opportunities for learning, yet 48% of the beginning teachers stated that conditions in schools resulted in working in isolation.

Opfer and Pedder (2011) argue that there is a need to get the balance right in schools. These authors refer to the Goldilocks Principle coined by Nuthall and Alton-Lee (1993)

“too little and learning will not occur, and too much and it is counterproductive or negative” (Opfer & Pedder (2011, p.377).

This implies that too much collaboration can suppress learning as “conformity to group norms at the expense of inventiveness and initiative” (Opfer & Pedder, 2011, p.381) can occur. On the other end of the scale, teacher learning can be constrained through teacher individualism and isolation as a result of too little collaboration. Thus a determining factor in teacher learning is getting the balance right between collaboration and individualism as determined by social interactions. In addition, Hargreaves (1994) argues that the expectation for a collegial culture might produce semblances of collaboration which he refers to as “contrived collegiality” (p.195). The practising teacher feels obliged to comply with collaborative activities whilst not believing deeply in its value for his or her professional learning.

In summary, it is pertinent to understand how social interactions within a learning space influence the professional learning of the NT.

### ***Contextual conditions***

Hoban (2002) and Kwakman (2003) argue that learning is context bound and thus situated. This notion is supported by Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004) as they indicate that the individual cannot be separated from the context and that “each person is a reciprocal and

mutually constitutive part of that context” (p.168). Kwakman (2003) acknowledges that professional learning rests on the “situated nature of knowledge and learning” (p.151), meaning that learning is integral to the everyday world of human activity.

This means that professional learning cannot be explored without looking more closely at the concept of context. The review of literature for a more meaningful explanation of *context* illustrates varied, open and broad descriptions. This open meaning is rather evident in Rule and John’s (2011) description of context. They explain context as referring to the factors, relationships and structures that frame a situation or event. The work of Nardi (1996) on context explains that it is difficult to isolate the properties of context. This author suggests that the activity itself is the context. Context is thus both internally (involving specific objects, goals) and externally (involving artefacts, specific spaces) fused through the activity.

For the purpose of this study the broader meaning of contextual realities as external spaces is offered. Context as external (Bredeson, 2002; Imants & Van Veen, 2008) specifically relates to professional learning as situated in the university and school. These professional contexts or learning spaces are also shaped by specific local conditions particular to the culture.

The contextual realities at university and more specifically the school are shaped by the national policy landscape (refer to Chapter Two). In the case of this study, the lack of clear policies related to induction of NTs will play a role in the visible and hidden factors within the school contexts that influence the nature of EPL. Exploring the contextual conditions is not only appropriate to understanding EPL as a system but also for the case study approach (Rule & John, 2011) (Refer to Chapter Four – Research methodological design ).

For clarity, the purpose of this study is not to categorise conditions of learning but to rather look at how the conditions interrelate with each other in influencing EPL as a system. This study may highlight other conditions other than personal, social and contextual that encourages or restrains EPL. Adding to conditions of learning was clearly highlighted by Hoban (2002) in the following statement:



“.....it is the synergy created through the interplay of these conditions that underpins sustained professional learning. On their own they do not guarantee change or learning but together they generate a critical mass for continuous learning and the PLS takes on a life of its own” (p.97).

### **3.4 SOURCES OF EARLY PROFESSIONAL LEARNING**

#### **3.4.1 Explaining the concept ‘source’**

No literature was found with specific indication to the concept of *sources* of teacher learning. However, reference to activities and opportunities for learning emerged as a possible way of explaining *source*. Studies on teacher professional development, professional learning and workplace learning have identified several terms such as methods/forms/activities/strategies to indicate formal and/or informal opportunities for learning. These opportunities occur in various national, provincial, district and school contexts and in a variety of forms. Such forms of learning have been identified as coaching, supervision, collegial consultation, mentoring, induction, master-mate learning, developmental tasks, fireside chats, action research projects, colloquiums, seminars, assessment instruments, portfolios and many others (Evans, 2002; Kelly 2006; Fraser et al. 2007; Imants & Van Veen, 2008). Reading, experimenting, reflecting and collaboration have also been identified as some key categories in professional learning (Kwakman, 2003).

However, terms such as methods, opportunities, forms, activities do not express the deeper meaning of the concept *source* which is referred to in this study. The etymology of the word “source” is described as a substance, situation, or environment in which something has its origin or takes form (Source, n.d.).

#### **3.4.2 Quadrants of teacher learning sources (Reid)**

My search for literature on sources for learning came up with only one useful framework for this secondary unit of analysis. Reid’s quadrants of teacher learning (Fraser et al. 2007) provide a useful lens through which to understand the classification of professional learning opportunities. Reid identifies two dimensions (formal-planned and informa-

incidental) of professional learning opportunities which could also be translated into possible sources of learning for the purpose of this study. In Figure 4, Reid indicates on an axis four types of opportunities for learning: formal, informal, planned and incidental. The distinctiveness of these professional learning opportunities is expressed as the sphere of action as to where and how professional learning takes place (Fraser et al. 2007).

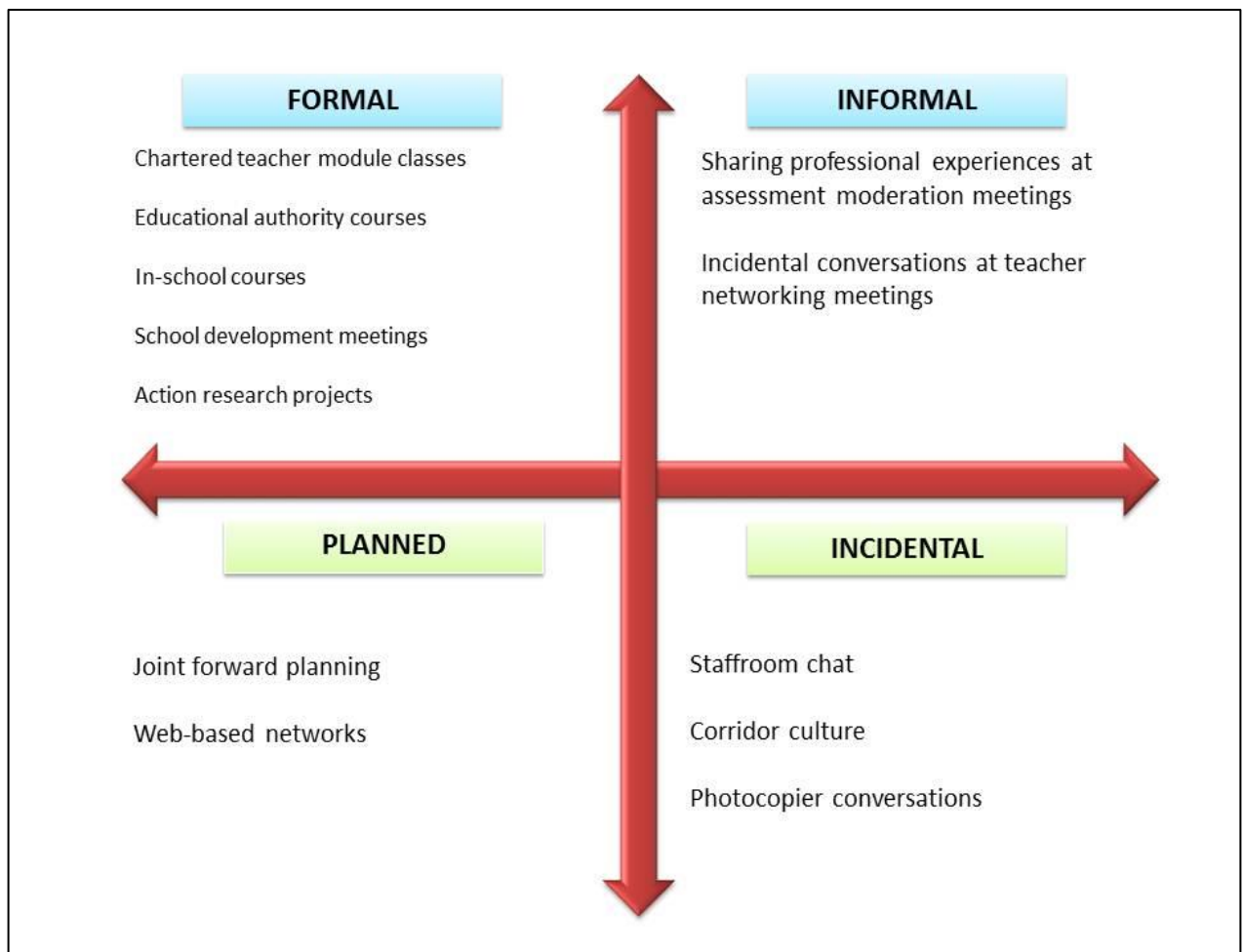
Formal learning opportunities are described as opportunities that are deliberately set up and managed by an outside agent other than the teacher (Fraser et al. 2007). Activities such as university courses, workshops and mandated staff development will normally occur in controlled learning environments and through a defined curriculum (Richter, Kunter, Klusmann, Lüdtke & Baumer, 2011).

Informal opportunities for learning are not limited to particular environments and not driven by a specific curriculum. Knight (2002) and McNally (2006) emphasise that informal learning opportunities in the form of unplanned, unexpected yet fruitful experiences are often down-played or undervalued. Richter et al. (2011) point out that informal learning activities are often embedded but not exclusive to the context of the school. Informal opportunities can be classified as including individual activities and/or collaborative activities. Individual activities would include amongst others reading professional literature and classroom observation. Learning from each other through interactions, discussions and networking would constitute collaborative activities. Participation in informal activities is not mandatory but driven by the motivation determined by their individual goals and strategies (Richter et al. 2011).

On the other side of the axis are planned opportunities which are pre-arranged but can be formal or informal, such as formalised structured induction and mentoring. Incidental opportunities are spontaneous, unpredictable and often occur at the spur of the moment, such as teacher exchange of teaching ideas over coffee (McNally, 2006).

Figure 4 REID'S QUADRANTS OF TEACHER LEARNING

(From: Fraser, Kennedy, Reid, & McKinney, 2007, p. 161)



Although Reid's quadrant provides a useful framework to understand possible sources of professional learning, I am of the opinion that such varieties of opportunities may further be influenced by other factors. For example, sources may be available but the NT may not necessarily engage in drawing from such opportunities or learn from them. Alternatively, sources may be available within the learning space but the NT may not be aware of such sources.

My study will explore the value and limitations of the above framework to see if elaboration could be made from the specific contexts of the participants' worlds.

The following Figure 5 provides a summary of key indicators from the two frameworks as conceptual lenses for this study. This summary is further extended in the conceptual framework as illustrated in figure 6.

Figure 5 SUMMARY OF KEY INDICATORS FOR CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

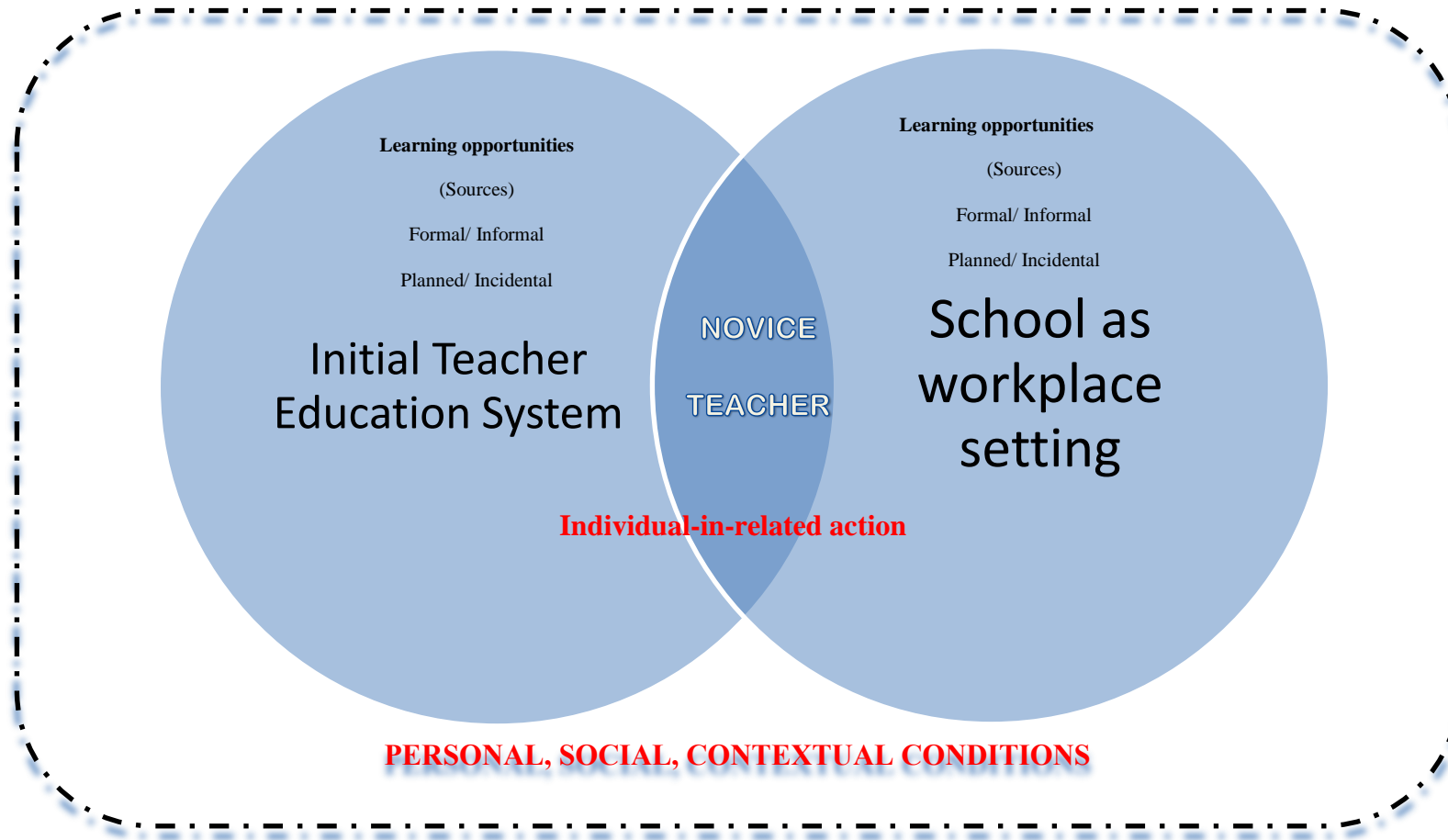
FRAMEWORK	INDICATORS	
Hoban's systems thinking approach (2002)	<b>CONDITIONS</b> Personal Social Contextual	Professional Learning as a flexible non-linear complex process <i>What is PL?</i>
Reid's quadrant of teacher learning (2007)	<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b> Formal/Informal Planned/Incidental	Form (sphere) of action in which the professional learning takes place <i>Where and how of PL?</i>

### 3.5 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR EARLY PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

The literature review has provided a platform for understanding professional learning. In summary, learning to become a teacher is viewed as an active and complex process rather than an event. Within this process, learning is a personal, social and context bound activity. To provide an in-depth understanding of EPL there is a need to gain insight into the interplay between elements and conditions within the real unique world of becoming a teacher. Therefore, viewing professional learning through a flexible lens such as the systems thinking approach will allow for understanding the connectedness between the ITE programme and the NT environment. The connectedness in professional learning is further

grounded in the variety of explicit and implicit learning sources (opportunities). The two frameworks of Hoban and Reid are brought together in Figure 7 below. This framework illustrates the NT as central to the two systems of the ITE programme and the school environment. The conceptual framework illustrated in Figure 7 was designed as a map for the research journey followed in this study. The framework provided a basis for the design of the research instruments for the semi-structured individual interviews (refer to Annexures 2 and 3 at the end of this report). It was also used in the staged data production process discussed in Chapter Four (also refer to Figure 7). This lens framed the data analysis process by providing structure to the selected themes. This initial conceptual framework further allowed for framing of preliminary ideas for a more developed conceptual framework and model of EPL that emerged from this study (refer to Chapter Nine).

Figure 6 EARLY PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AS A SYSTEM



### **3.6 SYNTHESIS OF CHAPTER**

This chapter has discussed key theoretical perspectives of teacher learning. Hoban's (2002) systems thinking approach as a flexible multi-focal lens was selected as a framework to view EPL as a system. Reid's (Fraser et al. 2007) quadrant of opportunities for teacher learning is offered as a lens for exploring sources of learning. The key indicators from these two perspectives provide a conceptual framework for EPL as a system.

The next chapter describes the methodological design of the study. The study is located in an interpretative case study design.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN**

### **4.1 ORIENTATION**

Chapter Three identified the conceptual framework for the initial methodological design of this study. The framework of Hoban's (2002) systems thinking approach was discussed as a lens for exploring EPL. Reid's (Fraser et al. 2007) quadrant of teacher learning was further presented as a useful lens to understand the categorisation of learning opportunities or sources as indicated in this study.

This chapter shifts focus to theorising the methodological design of this study. It consists of four sections.

Section One covers the methodological design. Within this design, a case is made for using the qualitative case study approach located in the interpretative paradigm. The sampling procedures provide an overview of the variables and criteria used to select the participants. Table 1 provides an overview of the sample of NTs which include criteria and variables that were used for purposive selection.

Section Two describes the data production process. Included is my reasoning for the multiple research method approach used in this study for the generation of data. This is followed by a discussion on the construction of a story portrait for each participant over a period of eighteen months. I also highlight the roles of both the researcher and the participants in the data generation process. I offer a description of my role as researcher in the process of designing the story portraits as constructor and re-creator. This is followed by an explanation of the role of the research participants as co-creator of each of their storied portraits.

Section Three explains measures put in place by the researcher to ensure the quality of the study. An overview of the trustworthiness, limitations and ethical considerations for the study is presented.

Section Four provides details on the data analysis process used in this study.



## 4.2 SECTION ONE: DESIGN OF THE STUDY

### 4.2.1 Qualitative case study design

This study uses a qualitative research design that involves a case study approach to explore the sources of NTs' EPL. As my study involves an exploration of certain types of experiences in the social world, this argues for a qualitative design (Vithal & Jansen, 2006). Taking as my focus NTs as a cohort or as specific cases supports the use of a case study approach to focus on "individuals or groups with a common starting point" (Schutt, 2006, p.188). Qualitative research allows the researcher in the process of studying certain selected phenomena to delve deeply into the data. This opens up opportunities to identify the detail that emerges from the categories used to analyse the data (Terre Blanche, Kelly & Durrheim, 2008).

Consistent with the qualitative design, the methodological approach for this study will be a multiple case study approach. One of the four purposes of a case study approach according to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) that is relevant to my study is

"to portray, analyse and interpret the uniqueness of real individuals and situations through accessible accounts" (p.79).

In the case of my research study, the purpose of using this type of approach is to be able to examine the unique lived learning experiences of a cohort of people at different points along two phases on the continuum of professional learning of their early teaching career. Yin (2004) explains that a case study design has two important features that need to be considered. The first feature requires that the researcher should define a phenomenon (in my case EPL) within a specific theoretical location. Secondly, the researchers need to carefully select the specific case as subject(s) (in my case the NT). Yin (2004) states that if the researcher has two or more cases as the subjects, the study is referred to as a "multiple-case study" (p.xv). Yin (2004) provides a distinction between a *case* and the *case study*. He explains that "the 'case' is a real-life set of events from which data will be drawn" (p.xiv). Such real-life events can take the form of a concrete affair (such as social life in a community) or an abstract affair (such as an implementation process). The real-life events in my study, thus the lived experiences of NTs in various phases of the becoming a teacher,

takes the form of a “concrete affair” as specified by Yin (2004, p. xiv). Likewise, Henning (2005) explains that the *case* as a “bounded system refers to a group of people as a social entity that can be bound as a unit by specific connections such as observable behaviour” (p.40). Yin (2004) explains further that

“The ‘case study’ is the substance of your research inquiry, consisting of your research questions, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, interpretation and conclusion” (p.xiv).

From this understanding of case study, it makes sense that my study takes the form of a multiple-case study design, as the subjects are six NT participants. In my study the participants are bound by their status as NT at a particular point of entry into the teaching profession.

Another requirement in case study design is for the “case to be placed in its context in order to make sense of it” as a means to ensure richness of text (Rule & John, 201, p.49). In an attempt to understand the relations between the case and context, the case is located as a microcosm or “world in miniature” (p.49). This implies that in order to understand the case it is important to understand “the various contextual forces and influences that shape the case” (p.40). The EPL of the cases in my study is shaped or constrained by factors, relationships and structures (Rule & John, 2011) of two broader kinds of contextual realities, the university and the school. The spatial concept of context applied to this study is framed within a particular university (UKZN) where the participants studied for their professional qualification and school contexts, either as practising schools during teaching practice (ITE phase) or as the employing school on entering the teaching profession.

#### **4.2.2 Interpretivist paradigm**

Paradigms are used in research to understand the nature of knowledge in the real world in a specific way. Mouton (2002) points out that a paradigm is “not merely collections of research methods and techniques, but also includes certain assumptions and values regarding their use under specific circumstances” (p.37). Scherff (2008) explains that a researcher working in the interpretive (narrative) paradigm takes on a participatory stance.

As such the role of the researcher within an interpreting paradigm is to become a co-creator of meaning through interpretations of the lived experiences of others. Thus researchers need to explain their patterns of thinking that underlie their actions within the research process (Bassey, 1999; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). As this study will focus on understanding the differently constructed social realities of multiple participant cases, the research will be approached from an interpretivist paradigm. The purpose is to examine how individuals and groups of people give meaning to their own reality based on their own preferences, prejudices and interactions with others (Schutt, 2006). According to Cohen et al. (2007), the interpretivist paradigm allows the researcher to “get inside the person and understand from within” (p.22). This allows the researcher to work directly with experience and to understand action and meanings rather than cause. Terre Blanche et al. (2008) add that working in the interpretative paradigm allows the researcher to take the individual experiences of the participants seriously (ontology). Furthermore, careful interaction with the participants allows for meaning making of their experiences (epistemology). This process is further discussed in Section Two below.

#### **4.2.3 Participants**

A purposive sampling strategy was used to select the six NTs as participants for this study (refer to Table 1 below). The motivation for using purposive sampling was firstly based on the research questions which called for an intensive investigation into a small population. Secondly, a multiple-case study design required that careful consideration should be given to the selection of the participants for the study to ensure variation amongst the cases (Yin, 2004; Schutt, 2006) or what Rule and John (2011) refer to as diverse cases. Yin (2004, p.xv) explains that a benefit is that the data from multiple cases can strengthen your findings and interpretations. However, using a small selection of participants has implications for the trustworthiness of a study. By definition, a case study’s intention is not to generalise but to generate in-depth insight into a phenomenon. Schutt (2006) alerts us to the fact that if a small sample is selected it could limit the researcher’s ability to generalise and impact on the confidence of others through the research findings. Thus, to strengthen the selection of diverse cases for the study, specific variables and criteria were considered (Rule & John, 2011). Rubin and Rubin (1995) provide knowledge, willingness and variation as criteria to consider when purposively engaging in the selection of

participants. Participants should be “knowledgeable about the cultural arena or situation or experience being studied; willing to talk; represent the range of points of view” (p.66).

In my study variables that were considered in selecting the participants were primarily age, gender, type of professional qualification (PGCE or BEd), specialisation field, number of years as an NT, type of schooling context of teaching for first teaching position, willingness and availability to participate in the study. Although race and other work experience were secondary variables in the selection process, they were not the deciding or key indicators for selection. The classification of the participants into race groups is necessary as the contexts of schools are mostly still organised according to racial and class division brought about by the apartheid era in South Africa (Pillay, 2003a). The above stated variables were considered important to me as researcher at the outset of the study. Drawing from a diverse range of participants that meet most of these criteria would provide more depth into the key phenomenon under the lens. It should be noted that at the time of the two interviews the participants were at particular stages of their teaching career (in terms of their number of years of practice). The data production focused on their experiences of the first year of practice in their first employing school.

The participants did either a four-year Bachelor of Education (BEd) or one-year Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Both these ITE programmes are designed around two key components, a university-site lecture programme and school-based teaching practice. The BEd students attend a school for a blocked session of teaching practice for four weeks during the second, third and fourth year of study. The PGCE students engage in teaching practice during two blocked sessions within one year. The first session is four weeks and the second session is six weeks. Within each of these teaching practice sessions the schools are expected to supervise and mentor the student teacher. The ITE teaching practice policy at UKZN recommends that students select a diverse range of school context with the purpose of gaining exposure to what it means to be a teacher in a South African context. This model was introduced to align with the Council of Higher Education’s expectation that student teachers should be prepared for the diverse realities of South African schools (Council for Higher Education, 2006 a, b). Amin and Ramathan (2009) indicate that contextual diversity in post-apartheid South Africa refers to a range of unequal and challenging conditions that form part of the

work of teachers. A few of these conditions that are referred to by these authors are high rates of teacher absenteeism, violence amongst learners, lack of resources (physical and/or human) and ineffective leadership. Student teachers entering the profession have limited exposure to such diverse conditions or what Samuel (2009a) refers to as the “wide messy variety and reality of authentic schooling” (p.748). Therefore the recommendation that student teachers need to select an under-resourced school for one of their teaching practice sessions is specifically geared to ensure some exposure to these schooling conditions. However, this does not always occur due to operational challenges of placing a large number of students in schools. In the process of selection of schools, student teachers often do not adhere to the recommendation stipulated by the teaching practice policy.

The type of school context that students attended during teaching practice (TP) is presented in Table 1 below. The table indicates two teaching practice sessions for BEd students which reflect the schools they attended during the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years, as the 2<sup>nd</sup> year placement mostly consisted of observational experiences. Reference to teaching practice schools as well-resourced refers to physical and financially well- resourced schools.

Table 1: An overview of the Novice Teacher participants: criteria and variables for purposive selection

Participant	Age *	Gender	Qualifications	Novice Teacher Status**		Trained specialisation/ learning Area	Context of TP school		Context of first employment	Appointed learning area	Race	Other work experience prior to teaching
				At 1 <sup>st</sup> interview	At 2 <sup>nd</sup> interview		1 <sup>st</sup> TP school	2 <sup>nd</sup> TP school				
1. Mikail	53	M	BSc PGCE	3 <sup>rd</sup> year as practising teacher	4 <sup>th</sup> year as practising teacher	Senior Phase and FET Maths, Physical Science, Natural Science	All-girls secondary urban school Well-resourced	Co-ed secondary urban school Well-resourced	Secondary rural school	Senior Phase and FET Maths, Physical Science, Natural Science	Indian	Research chemist
2. Zoe	30	F	BEd	1 <sup>st</sup> year as practising teacher	3 <sup>rd</sup> year as practising teacher	Foundation Phase	All sessions were done in well-resourced primary urban contexts		Primary rural school	Foundation phase	White	Au pair- (Holland) Assistant teacher (Sweden)

3. Dan	27	M	BCom PGCE	2 <sup>nd</sup> year as practising teacher	4 <sup>th</sup> year as practising teacher	Senior Phase Maths Business Studies	Under resourced secondary urban township school	Well- resourced secondary urban special needs school	All boys secondary urban school	***Senior Phase Maths Business Studies Maths FET	White	Hotel Management (SA) Brand Manager (UK)
4. Nick	25	M	BA; LLB PGCE	1 <sup>st</sup> year as practising teacher	Left school based teaching after 8 months of teaching	Senior Phase Life Orientation Social Science, Technology	All sessions were done in well-resourced secondary urban contexts		Primary urban dual medium school	*** Intermediate Phase All learning areas	Coloured	
5. Bronwyn	24	F	BSocSc	1 <sup>st</sup> year as practising teacher	2 <sup>nd</sup> year as practising teacher	Foundation Phase	All sessions were done in well-resourced primary urban contexts		Junior primary urban school	Foundation Phase	White	Voluntary missionary work

6. Leesha	24	F	BEd	1 <sup>st</sup> year as practising teacher	Left teaching profession after 10 months of teaching	Intermediate and Senior Phases Life Orientation Natural Science English	All sessions were done in well-resourced primary urban contexts	Primary urban school	*** Foundation Phase	Indian	

*Notes:*

The sample was arranged according to age

Pseudonyms were used for all participants

\*Age at time of first interview

\*\*Novice Teacher status refer to number of years of teaching experience at time of first and second interview

\*\*\*Not trained for appointed learning area



### 4.3 SECTION TWO: DATA PRODUCTION PROCESS

In this section, I provide an argument for the data production processes that I used for this study. Henning (2005) argues that it is important to provide reasoning as to why a specific methodological design has been chosen and what value it has in the study. I decided to try out a multi-method approach for the data production as a means of gaining a deep and thorough understanding by getting inside the lived experiences of the participants. This multi-method process of data gathering and interpretation went through various stages to finally produce story portraits of the four main cases and story vignettes for the two auxiliary cases (refer to Chapter Five for the data presentation). This approach is supported by Yin (2004) who claims that case study evidence is strengthened if multiple data generation techniques are used.

#### 4.3.1 First stage: First individual interview

Individual semi-structured interviews were the primary method of data production for this study. The first level in the data gathering process was an in-depth individual interview that ranged between one hour and two hours per case. Cohen et al. (2007) explain that the value of a semi-structured interview lies in the notion that it is an “open situation that allows for greater freedom and flexibility” (p.355). The initial intention with the design of the interview was to use a semi-structured format to pose the relevant questions. Although there were some structured questions as a basic foundation to guide the researcher, with the main purpose of exploring the range of views on sources of EPL as an NT, the interviews took on a more open and conversational mode (Yin, 2004). The use of such an open-ended approach is in line with case study design. The first key question that was posed to the participant: “*Tell me your story of being a beginner teacher in your specific school,*” provided a wealth of in-depth relevant information. Key responses to this initial question were further probed for elaboration or clarification. Within the moments of telling their story, the participant’s selected key *critical moments* that they felt were special in their learning experiences as NTs. This notion of self-selected situations within the context in which it arose is highlighted by Teekman (2000) as well as Kochis and Gillespie (2006). Participants choose to focus on selected accounts of highs and lows that come to mind when triggered by events or questions

(Loughran et al. 2001) (refer to Appendix 2 for first interview schedule). The interview was deepened through an open discussion around the other questions on the interview schedule.

Further building blocks for the first interview centred on retrospective reflection on professional learning during their ITE programme as a PGCE or a BEd graduate at UKZN. The questions were based on identifying which sources of learning they found valuable and how they used such sources and learning as a beginner teacher. I further explored how and why the identified sources were shaping forces in light of their experiences as an emerging teacher. In this first interview participants were also probed for sources of professional learning in their ITE phase that could not be used in the NTI phase and the reasons therefore. The key focus here was to determine whether their experiences in the ITE programme through the formal lecture programme and or the school-based teaching practice could be related to sources of professional learning, and to what extent they can account for their present level of professional learning as a beginning teacher. The notion of the retrospective reflection was based on the view of Cohen et al. (2007, p.212), “Is there anything about the previous experience of these individuals that can account for their present situation?” My positionality as lecturer, mentor and researchers in the lives of these former students was clarified at the interview (refer to Chapter One). In keeping to the ethical requirements for a research study, assurance was given to the participants of confidentiality and that they would be given an opportunity to comment on transcribed data.

Another key question that brought to light the personal experiences and feelings of the participants as beginner teacher was through the use of a metaphor or analogy. The question was posed as, “*If you had to compare your transition from student teacher to beginner teacher as a journey, how would you describe your journey? Start with the words “My journey from student teacher to beginner teacher was like .....*” Some of the participants focused on a selected personal metaphor to express their experiences as NTs rather than the shift from student to novice. The role of a metaphor in the interview provided a certain way of viewing the learning process and as a tool for communication (Botha, 2009). Two participants (Mikail and Leesha) could not give metaphors but they used a key concept to illustrate the focus of key moments in their learning. These metaphors/moments were subjected to a further level of data production and analysis. They were used by the researcher

to design diagrammatic drawings as visual stimulus for the second interview (these drawings are included later in this chapter). The first interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. A key question that came to mind while I was involved in the interviews as well as the transcription process was how I would be able to provide an honest and true reflection of the participant's experiences and feelings. My thinking about ensuring trustworthiness whilst working in an interpretative paradigm resulted in the design of story portraits based on the narrative accounts of the participants.

### **4.3.2 Second stage: Creating story portraits**

#### **4.3.2.1 Story portraits**

It is important to first explain my reasoning for designing the story portraits consisting of narrative accounts and drawings as part of the process of data refinement. An explanation of the process of data refinement will then follow.

I have chosen to use a creative methodological approach in the form of consciously constructed story portraits to provide a nuanced depiction of the lived experiences of selected NTs in their first schools. The use of both a word-based method (story) and a visual method (drawing) provides an integrated methodological approach that affords a “way of exploring both the multiplicity and complexity that is the base of much social research interested in human experience” (Guillemin, 2004, p.273). Furthermore, the value of teachers' stories is that they can be used for improvement but also for reflection on beliefs, practices and contexts (Scherff, 2008; Smith, 2012).

My motivation for using this multi-method approach stems from the epistemological stance that I take, that knowledge about the experiences of NT is not fixed or static, but rather fluid and on-going. I felt that I did not want to close or end the interactions with the research participants at an early stage of the research process (Pillay, 2003a), as their perspective on their initial experiences of being an NT in their first school could change over time. A second consideration was that on-going dialogue could provide more depth and substance to the data. Here, I would like to draw on Guillemin (2004), who states that “knowledge is produced through practices, interactions and experiences” (p.274). Therefore, the multi methodological approach that I employed focused on both the process and the product. This

approach provided an opportunity to use the story and drawing as a research tool for the generation of knowledge. This involved on-going interactions of constructing, co-constructing and re-constructing the story portraits between the researcher and the participant (Pillay, 2003a; Smith & Sparkes, 2008). The final version of each story portrait as product was then used as the representation technique of selected data and as an analytical device to make sense of the data.

In each case, the story portrait included firstly a story or narrative account and secondly one or two illustrative drawings to make up the process that Henning (2005, p.112) refers to as “paint a portrait” of the experiences of the NTs and the sources of EPL. These story portraits presented a method of analysis. Smith and Sparkes (2008) explain that there are various approaches to narrative analysis and therefore there is a need to recognise the possibilities in such variety. In an attempt to ease out “some of the analytical threads and coils that make up the web narrative analysis” (p.20) these authors offer a typology of narrative analyses. According to Smith and Sparkes (2008) there are two standpoints in narrative analysis, “the story analysis and the story teller. For storytellers, analysis is the story. Stories do the work of analysis and theorising” (p.21). As such, story tellers use the story itself as an analytical and theoretical device. Therefore, storytelling as a method of narrative analysis clearly becomes a way of representation and the “writing is considered a method of analysis” (Richardson, 2000, as cited in Smith & Sparkes, 2008, p.21).

The standpoint that I preferred within the methodological approach for my study is that of story teller. The data from the interviews were used to construct a narrative account as they have the qualities of a story (Terre Blanche et al. 2008). Unlike narrative inquiry, the participant did not tell the story, but as researcher, I carefully selected threads of information from the interview data sets to provide a narrative account of the participant’s experiences (Henning, 2005).

#### **4.3.2.2 Why the drawing?**

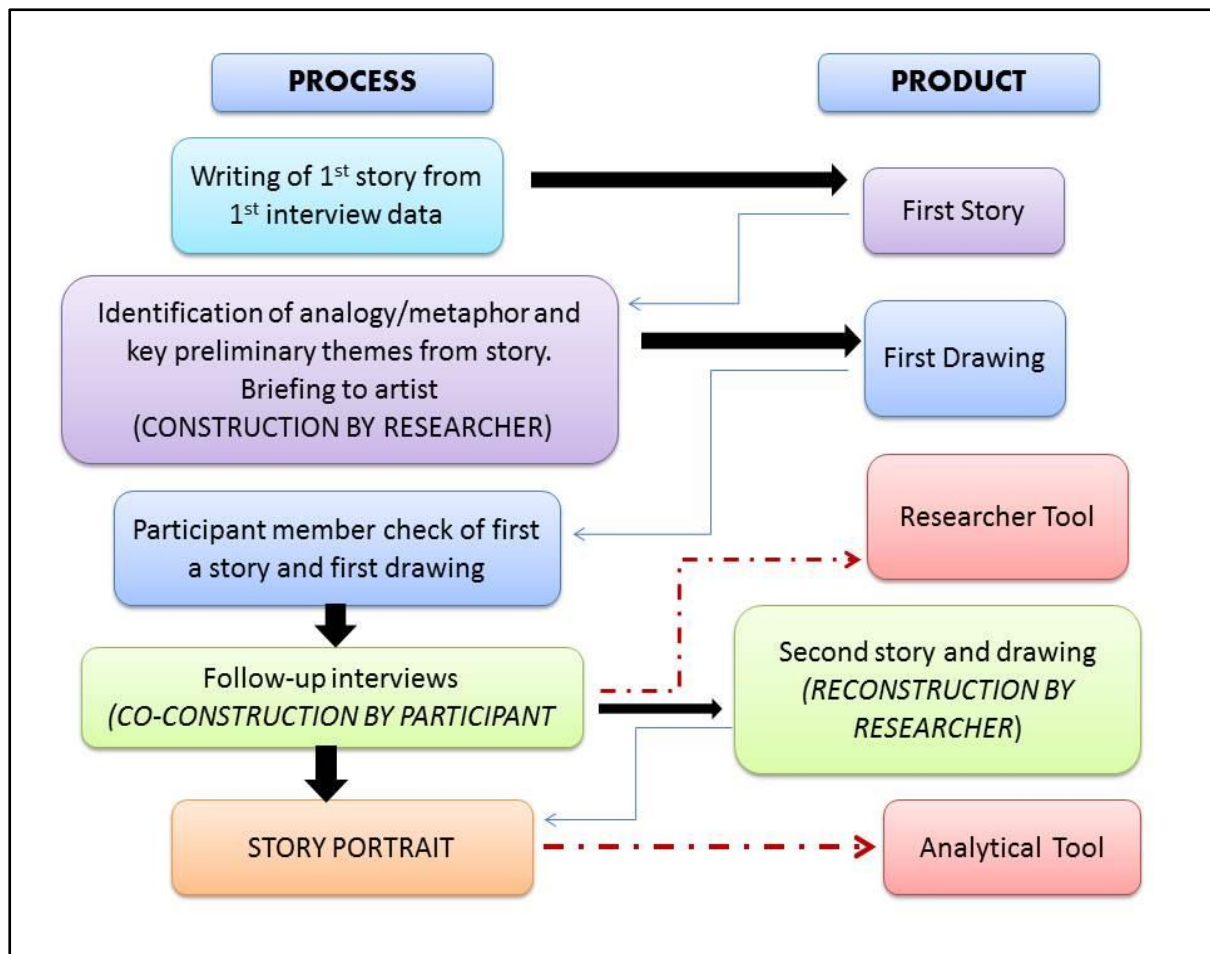
According to Guillemin (2004) the value of visual drawings is located in both the “act of drawing and the drawing itself as a product” (p.274). Drawings are generated in a specific time and space and can as such be used as “ways of understanding how people see their

world” (p.274) in that specific bounded period. Although the participants themselves were not involved in the actual drawing (as proposed by Guillemin), the illustrative drawing extends the key themes/ideas from the narrative in order to provide a more in-depth presentation of the mentioned and unmentioned (salient) aspects coming through in the data. The drawing provides another layer of meaning to the story (Pillay, 2003a) and to the production of knowledge. The drawing per se is not analysed but used as an instrument for more in-depth discussions and reflection. As such the illustrative drawing was not only used to support the design of the first draft of the story portrait but also as an interview instrument for the second interview. This instrument allowed for the interview to take on the format of a stimulus for conversation around the visual drawing (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

#### **4.3.3 Explanation of process of data refinement**

Guillemin (2004) explains that method and methodology are interrelated with epistemology. Taking the epistemological position that the process of meaning making and the product are foundations for generating knowledge, I offer a detailed description of the evolution of the methodological approach for this study. The various steps aim to refine data within the data production process. The details could also assist other researchers who wish to employ or adapt this method. Figure 7 below offers an outline of the methodological process used in this study. This is followed by a description of the process.

Figure 7 OUTLINE OF THE METHODOLOGICAL PROCESS



#### 4.3.3.1 First story – design process and product

The story, a narrative account of the data from the first interview, was constructed by the researcher, using the third person. The transcribed data was carefully screened using an open coding system. Key themes were identified in each transcript and across transcripts. As a representation technique, the first story for each participant was designed by synthesising the key categories that were identified from the data transcript in relation to the topic and the research questions. Smith and Sparkes (2008) draw on the work of Richardson (2000) to explain that storytellers use creative analytical practices in their writing. This method allows for the hows and whats of the story to be developed to construct a certain kind of story. Such practices recognise that form and content matter. The form and content used for developing

the story would provide a certain structure to the story. The structure of the story in this study takes the reader through a chronological beginning, middle and end. Each story is identified by a central theme in the form of a main heading that illustrates the main plot of the story through a metaphor, analogy or critical significant experience. During the interview, participants were asked to describe their learning experiences of being an NT through the use of a metaphor or analogy. Van Laren (2007) explains that metaphors can be used as an imaginative approach of expressing personal viewpoints and experiences. Further, Kochis and Gillespie (2006) state that metaphors offers a way of communicating “complex or abstract ideas in terms of ordinary experiences” (p.567). Within each story the subsequent sub-plots are identified through the use of sub-headings.

The beginning of the story was used to introduce the biographical details of the participant, the school context, how the teaching position was obtained and key characters in the story. The middle or development of the story was based on the key points to support the central theme indicated in the title of the story. An attempt was also made to provide the highlight of the story in the form of a critical moment or experience as experienced by the NT. The conclusion or denouement section provides a resolution to the critical moment and provides the coda that returns the reader to the participants’ present status at the time of the second interview.

The decision to write all the stories in the third person narration was a conscious choice. As researcher, I took on the role of *interpreter* which allowed me to interpret the messages, words, and emotive expressions that came through in the interviews (Pillay, 2003a). The direct words of the participants were included in “*double inverted commas*” and purposefully selected to highlight key messages through the voice of the participant in the story. My taking on the role of *interpreter* in the construction process of the stories is in line with the interpretivist paradigm employed in this study. According to Cohen et al. (2007) the interpretivist paradigm allows the researcher to “get inside the person and understand from within” (p.22). This allows the researcher to work directly with experience and to understand action and meanings rather than cause.

#### **4.3.3.2 First drawing – design process and product**

When I met my first two participants for the first individual interview, I requested them to make a drawing of their experiences of being an NT. This request was met with reluctance as the participants indicated that they could not draw or were not willing to draw. One of the participants asked me, “*Why don’t you draw and I will check!*” This statement led me as researcher to thinking of creative ways of interpreting the data. I decided to design the drawing on behalf of the participant and then return the drawing for the participant to check the validity of the design and the meaning of the drawing, as interpreted through the eyes of the researcher. Thus, the composition of the drawing was generated by the researcher and developed into a drawing by an outside artist<sup>4</sup>. The philosophical underpinning of this decision was that I as the researcher felt that my interpretation of the data from the first story would highlight the key theme and supporting elements in each story that would address the research questions. At a second level, I reasoned that this approach would add to another level of meaning making of the data.

#### **4.3.3.3 Second interview – design process and product**

Following the example of the study of Pillay (2003a), the first story and drawing were constructed with the view of keeping it open for extended dialogue between the researcher and the participants, so as to “expand our ways of knowing” (p.88). The second follow-up interviews with five of the participants took the format of face-to-face and electronic interviews. A telephonic second interview was done with one participant (Zoe) who was unable to meet face-to-face. Specific clarification questions were asked within the first story and participants responded either through a face-to-face interview or electronically. The use of an electronic method of interview is supported in Scherff’s (2008) statement:

“With story creation using mechanisms such as online communication (e-mails, blogs, etc.), the narratives can be solely or jointly be constructed and reconstructed” (p.1320).

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<sup>4</sup> The illustrative drawings were generated by Dennis Joubert (e-mail: Dennis.Joubert@southafricanartists.com).



The procedure for participants to check the first story portrait allowed for further participation in the data production process. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explain that storied narratives are composed as life experiences that are “lived, told, re-told and re-lived” (p.71) again. Asking the participants (as experts of their own experiences) to read the storied narrative designed (re-told) by me as researcher, allowed an opportunity for them to re-live their past learning experiences. It also allowed them to check the story for accuracy and enabled me to ensure the trustworthiness of the interpretation. This is also referred to as respondent verification. This strategy is an attempt to avoid miscommunication and wrong interpretations (Rule & John, 2011). This second interview allowed an opportunity for the participant to “take charge of framing their own realities” (Henning, 2005, p.112). Although the participants did not directly participate in generating the story and drawing, they were involved in producing a co-constructed design of the final storied portrait as product.

The second in-depth interview had specific purposes in mind: (1) to verify the interpretation of the data by the researcher in the story; (2) to get a feeling of the participant’s view on the interpretation of the drawing and the key elements presented in the drawing. Thus the second interviews were used for further probing of key issues and to obtain clarification on others. It also allowed for a more accurate production of the final story portrait. Following a similar approach to a study by Pillay (2003a) I asked questions such as

- (1) Do you think the drawing as a whole represents your experiences as a novice teacher in your first school?
- (2) Do you think each of the elements I have chosen in the drawing accurately represents your experiences?
- (3) What would you like to change in the drawing and why?

Thus the purpose of the drawing was designed as a support mechanism to the story to illustrate the plot (metaphor, analogy, critical experiences) and sub-plots (themes) in the story which would ultimately form the final storied portrait of each participant’s experiences and sources of EPL in a bounded period of time and place. Using the visual drawing technique in this study emerged as a *visual interpretative representation technique*. It proved to be a useful research tool as it became an interview schedule to verify the validity of representation

of the data by the researcher as well as to extend dialogue. This technique also allowed the researcher to move closer to understanding the inner interpretation of the participants of their lived experiences. Thus the extended dialogue around the drawing as stimulus contributed to participants' reflecting on their experiences after a time period had lapsed. This use of the drawing provided another level for knowledge production on the key phenomenon of EPL.

This process of interrogation of the story and the first drawing allowed for clarification of specific issues. In turn, these clarifications led into dialogue and reflection around issues related to the key themes from both the story and the drawing. The final story portrait as data set was revisited by the participants for improvement, refinement and/or alteration. It is at this point that I would like the reader to note that in the filtering process of what should be included in this final report of the study, the story portraits of Mikail and Bronwyn were re-written as vignettes (refer to Chapter Four, Section Two).

Below I present the drawings that emerged as the instrument tool after the design of the first story (referred to as drawing one). Subsequently the drawing was used as the instrument for the second interview. Drawing two is presented to reveal the changes requested by the participants. This is done to make visible the process of reworking that took place in the drawings, taking each participant in turn.

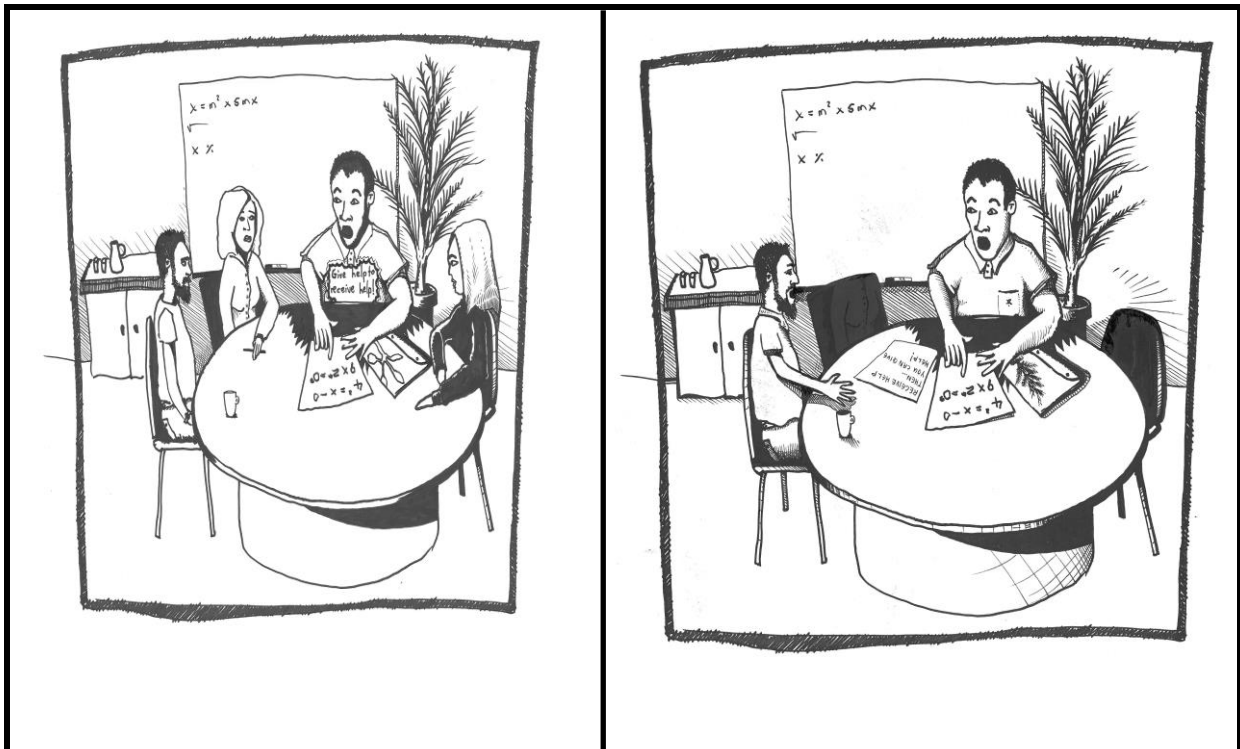
Dan, Nick, Bronwyn and Leesha engaged in conversation with me around reasons for certain changes that they wanted. Such reasoning provided another layer to meaning making of the phenomenon of EPL between the researcher and the participant. Participants Mikail and Zoe agreed to the design of their first drawings without any changes. As a reminder to the reader, the data generated from the second interview was captured in the final case story portrait or vignette.

Dan: As researcher I initially interpreted the key learning moments in Dan's story as the group support within the Maths subject department (picture one). During the second interview, Dan indicated a shift in his thinking from learning from the group to learning more through a one-to-one approach. He indicated that the one-to-one presentation reflects a better bond in the relationship that was a key element in his development of confidence. The palm as background object in the picture illustrates the plant metaphor to describe his learning. (Refer to Chapter Five Section 5.2.1).

**Dan:**

**Drawing 1: *Departmental group support***

**Drawing 2: *Selective one-to-one support***



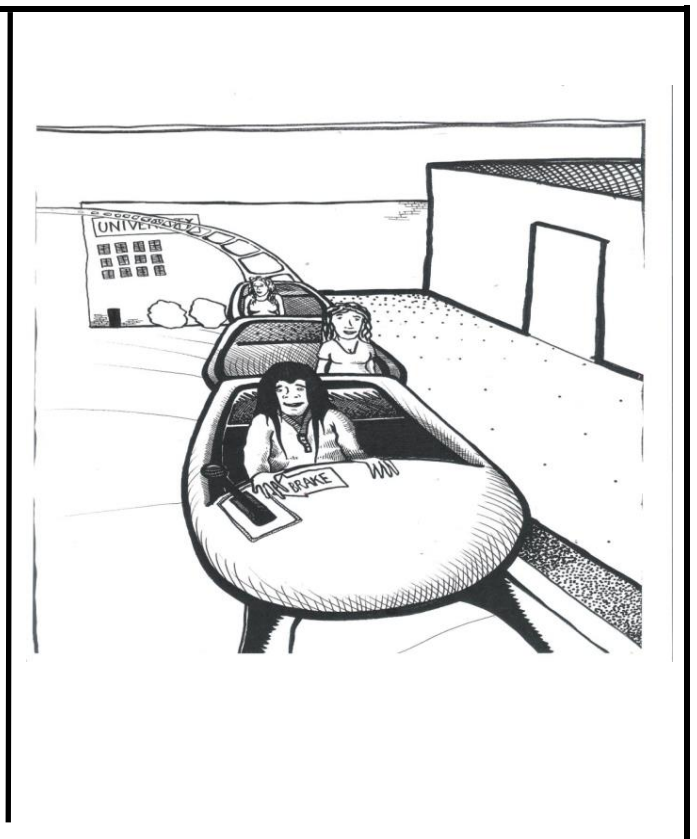
Nick: his metaphor of a rollercoaster ride was used as key theme for the drawings. He was in agreement with the first picture that portrays his learning experiences in his first employing school as a hellish rollercoaster ride. However, he requested a second picture to be added to illustrate the start of a rollercoaster ride that is “going up slowly, nice and pleasant” to represent his supportive learning as a student teacher. (Refer to Chapter Five Section 5.2.2).

**Nick:**

**Drawing 1: A hellish rollercoaster ride**



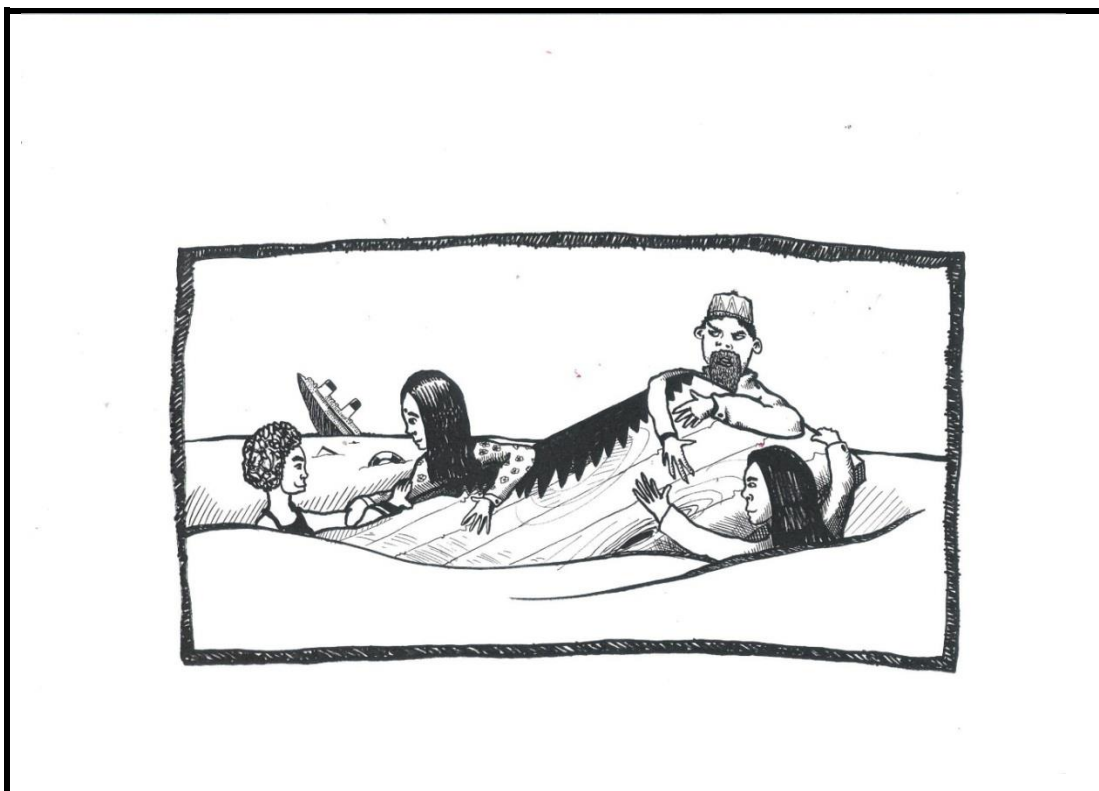
**Drawing 2: The start of a rollercoaster ride**



Bronwyn: At the time of the first interview, she expressed her experiences of being an NT using the metaphor of a sinking Titanic. The design of the drawing illustrated the sinking Titanic as a smaller vessel in the background with her floating on a device trying to survive. At the second follow up interview, she expressed that she liked how the sinking ship was represented in the drawing. “I like the size because it is in the past, far away. The smaller it is the further away it looks.” This alerted me that although she still had the same emotional feelings about her experiences it has become a past distant experience that she preferred to not think about. (Refer to Chapter Five Section 5.3.2).

**Bronwyn:**

**Drawing: A sinking Titanic**

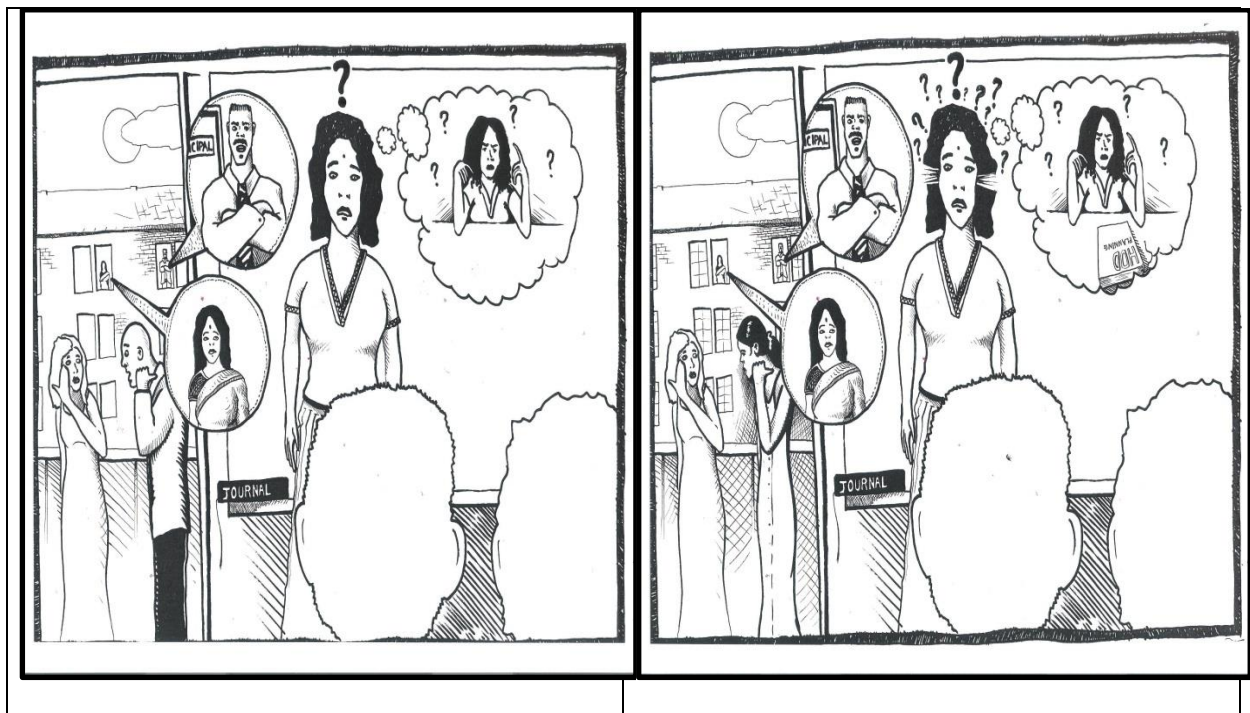


Leesha claimed the drawing was “a very accurate representation of my feelings and experiences of being an NT.” She added, “but draw me with steam coming out of my ears, representing my anger and frustration, because although I was alone, confused, constantly questioning and doubting my ability as an NT, I was and is still angry and frustrated about my ordeal at this school. This is an important aspect which I feel must be included.” (Refer to Chapter Five Section 5.2.3).

**Leesha**

**Drawing 1: *Confusion!***

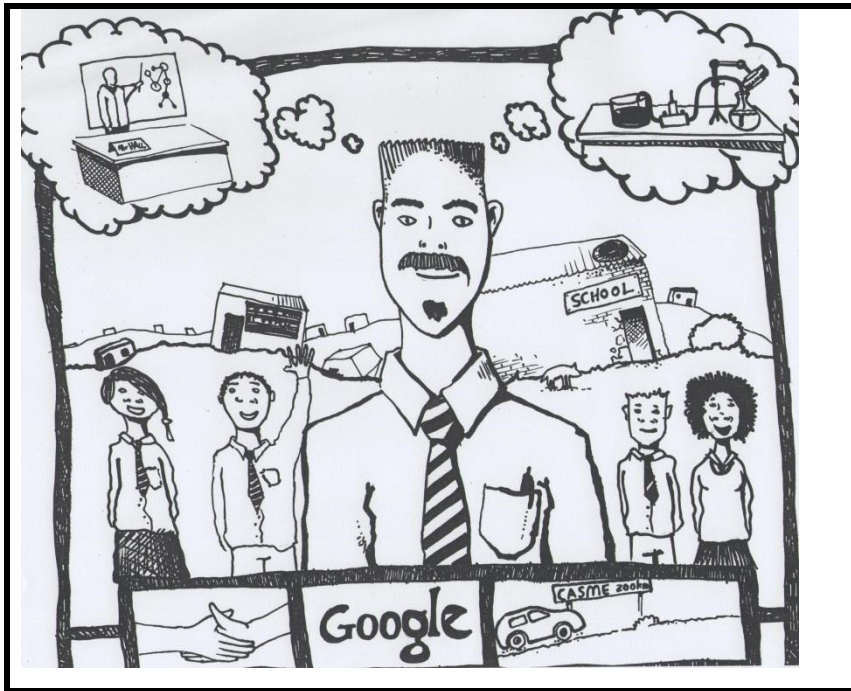
**Drawing 2: *Angry and still confused!***



As indicated at an earlier point in this chapter, Mikail and Zoe was in agreement with their visual presentations – thus not changes were made.

**Mikail**

**Drawing: *Meaningful resources***



**Zoe:**

**Drawing: *Small vessel in a stormy ocean***





The cases of both Leesha and Bronwyn demonstrate that although some time had lapsed between the first and second interview, the emotions of the participants regarding their learning experiences had not changed. These two illustrative examples support the comments of Samuel (2009b) that professional learning is unique to its situated-ness (time, space and context) and thus changes over time.

“The trajectory for professional learning is thus likely to be unique to the specific situated ness of each teacher and is likely to shift over time as teacher learn to become shaped and to shape the world of teaching, learning and assessment” (p.12).

#### **4.4 SECTION THREE: MEASURES TO ENSURE QUALITY**

##### **4.4.1 Trustworthiness**

According to Rule and John (2011) the concept of *trustworthiness*, coined by Guba (1981), in a qualitative research study offers an alternative to validity and reliability. Such trustworthiness was achieved through a process of crystallisation with a case study design. Rule and John (2011) draw on the work of Van Der Mescht (2002) who argues for the use of *crystallisation* in a qualitative case study research rather than triangulation. They argue that triangulation that draws on multiple sources provides breath but not necessary a more “truer (valid) perspective” (Rule & John, 2011, p.109).

“Crystallisation points to the multi-faceted nature of reality, where additional sources and methods show up additional facets rather than confirming some true position, as signalled by triangulation” (p.109)

Crystallisation then requires not only multiple sources but also a combination of multiple researchers/methods/theories (Maree & van der Westhuizen, 2009; Rule & John, 2011) as a means to capture complex realities. My study attempted to use multiple sources and methods as measures to ensure the quality of the study, shifting the perspective from my interpretation to that of the participants, and attempting to ‘read’ the data in different ways.



Guba (1981) offers dependability as an alternative to reliability in testing quality in a qualitative study. The dependability in a study is achieved by providing methodological rigour and coherence towards producing findings (Rule & John, 2011). This can be attained through the use of multiple methods of inquiry, establishing a chain of evidence and through participant examination of data reports (Yin, 2009). Furthermore the use of a detailed and meticulous explanation of the procedures followed in the data generation process contributes to determining whether the research community can accept the study with a sense of confidence (Rule & John, 2011). Such a detailed account of the data generation process was offered in Section Two in this chapter. In this inquiry, I have attempted to adhere to the above mentioned measures in the following ways.

According to Maree (2007) a strategy that contributes towards the trustworthiness of a study is to ensure that the research instruments are dependable and consistent. Peer examination took the form of instrument review by my supervisor. The first interview was piloted and the interview instrument was slightly adjusted before interviewing the rest of the participants. Data from the pilot interview was cross-checked by one of my supervisors. He declared the data rich and reliable for the study. Thus the pilot interviewee became a participant of the study. This supervisory support is also a form of member check and supports crystallisation as validation measure (Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2009). Cohen et al. (2007) point out that is essential to record and represent the data accurately. The trustworthiness of the study was then further ensured through a rigorous process of member checking (Maree, 2007; Rule & John, 2011). Member checks were implemented through a staged process. A few measures were put in place to ensure such accuracy. Firstly, the six participants were asked to read their first interview transcripts to determine the accuracy of these scripts. Furthermore, they were each asked to read and comment on the subsequent interpretation of the data in the form of the story and the visual drawing designed by the researcher. As such the participants were co-constructors of their individual story portraits. This process that I pursued to ensure that the data generated and interpreted was justifiable is illustrated by Henning (2005). This author explains that interpretative research is a collective process whereby the participants inform the study and others verify the interpretations and accuracies. In essence, the knowledge produced in this study occurred through various sets and levels of interpretation. This rigorous approach to ensuring authenticity in the interpretation of data provided well-

founded interpretations of the experiences and learning of the NTs in various schooling context.

Yin (2009) as well as Rule and John (2011) points out that a pre-requisite to ensuring the trustworthiness of a case study is a systematic audit trail. Such a trail requires tracing results that emerged from the data analysis back to the original forms. This process was carried out by keeping an accurate database consisting of electronic and print copies of all voice recordings and transcribed data. Furthermore, the transcription of the first interviews done by an external transcriber was verified by the researcher through a process of comparing the voice recordings with the transcriptions (refer to Section Four on data analysis below).

Trustworthiness was further ensured in this study through the presentation of thick descriptions within the narrative accounts of each case. The narrative accounts were crafted through a multi-staged process (discussed in Section Two above) in an attempt to present the “fullness and essence of the case reality” (Rule & John, 2011, p.108) under review. My study used two varied individual interviews at different points in time to add to the credibility of the study. The design involved a first narrative account supported by a visual interpretative drawing that provided the instruments for a second follow-up interview. The responses of the participants were incorporated into the final narratives presented in Chapter Four. In the final design of each narrative the fullness was developed by providing details about the biographical information of the participants, role of contexts and its influences on learning. Henning (2005) views awareness of the role of context as an important principle that interpretative researchers need to keep in mind. Specific care was also taken to use the same narrative format for each of the narrative accounts (refer to Chapter Five).

Transferability as a strategy to ensure trustworthiness in case study research has emerged as an alternative to generalisability (Rule & John, 2011). According to these authors the issue of transferability is an on-going debate in qualitative research. They offer “reader-determined transferability” (p.105) as a means to support the position of the researcher. They argue that the researcher is in the best position to understand the phenomenon that is under the lens. Through thick descriptions a case study researcher allows the reader to make the choice of transferability of findings and conclusions. The use of an independent critical reader before final submission was used as a strategy to determine the thickness of the text.

This is carried out with the purpose of contributing to the readers' choice regarding transferability of the study to other contexts.

Trustworthiness is further ensured through open confirmation of the position and role of the researcher (Rule & John, 2011). This implies that the researcher needs to be transparent and explicit about her position and role in the research study (Henning, 2005, p 39). The position of the researcher as lecturer, mentor and assessor to student teachers was clarified in Chapter One. Maree (2007) indicates that researcher bias should be clarified by stating upfront the researcher's assumptions, bias and views as well as possible circumstances that may affect the data in any way. In adhering to this principle, my role as researcher, compared to my role as lecturer at the university where the participants studied, was openly discussed with the participants before commencement of the first interview as well as during the staged data generation process. Although my position as former lecturer of the participants was clarified this may be a limitation of the study. A conscious attempt was made to remain objective and faithful to my role as researcher-lecturer and to the accounts of the participants.

#### **4.4.2 Ethical issues**

All ethical requirements for this study were carefully adhered to in an attempt to ensure the quality of the research (Rule & John, 2011). Before carrying out any research, ethical dimensions such as informed consent (verbal and written), guarantees of confidentiality, beneficence and non-maleficence were discussed with all participants (Cohen et al. 2007; Henning, 2005). NTs were provided with detailed information of the purpose, aims, their involvement in the research and what the data would be used for. This information included the recording of data (audio recorders and video recorders) as well as the storage of such data. Letters of consent were given to all participants and signed to verify their involvement in the research study. Participants were assured of respect for their autonomy and anonymity. Pseudonyms were used for all participants to protect their identity. Similarly, pseudonyms have also been used to protect the identities of schools and other people within the narrative accounts. Interestingly, Leesha stated clearly at the second interview, "I don't care what name you use, as long as my story is told". This statement suggests that both the researcher and the researched were keen to explore and report on the phenomenon of EPL.

#### **4.4.3 Limitations of the study**

Vithal and Jansen (2006) acknowledge that the identification of possible limitations empowers the researcher and contributes to ensuring quality in research. Furthermore Rule and John (2011) note that a declaration of the limitations of the study raises the dependability of the study.

The limitations of this study rest in three areas:

Methodological: Firstly, some participants involved in this study were in their second or third year of novice teaching at the time of the first interview. They were asked to look back at their learning during the ITE phase in relation to their learning as an NT. The time lapse (varied between 1-4 years) between their current situation as NT and being a student and first year NT may have resulted in some memory loss. As such valuable information related to the research topic for this study could have been lost. During both interviews the participants will be given ample time and prompts for deep thinking in an attempt to gain in-depth information on relevant issues related to past experiences.

Secondly, a limitation of the design of the study is that it focuses on career paths in the early career years of the NT only. The long term implications of the ITE programme on EPL have thus not been focused on. It is suggested that action could be taken on the basis of the findings, even though they are based only on the early period of the NT's transition.

For future studies on this topic, I would recommend tracer studies running across the ITE phase and NTI phase as a more powerful research design. Samuel (2012) indicates the value of tracer studies over longer periods of time to note "shifts in the patterns of responses over the years to a key set of questions" (p.7).

Thirdly, any interpretations drawn from this study need to consider that the data reflects the beliefs and interpretations of the NT participants only. As such there is a possibility that data is one-sided only and therefore subjective. An attempt was made to address this limitation during the data generation process by asking follow-up questions to participants' responses in relation to the role of stakeholders in the school, for example: "Why do you think the school

or teacher reacted this way?” More accurate data could have been obtained after the first interview with the NT participants through the inclusion of other key participants from the school such as the principal or teachers. However, the unit of analysis is the NTs’ experiences and understanding of EPL, not whether the “significant others” validate their interpretations and claims.

Fourthly, the purposive selection of the sample of NT participants that studied for their professional teachers’ qualification at one particular university in one province (Kwa-Zulu Natal) in South Africa is acknowledged as a limitation in this study. The data generated on the preparation of the NTs participants during the ITE programme thus provides perspectives of a small number of participants on a specific university institutional culture (microcosm) as mentioned earlier in this chapter. I believe that selecting participants from one university only allowed for in-depth examination of the situatedness of the case. I draw on the argument of Rule and John (2011) to support this decision:

“Examining a situation or event in depth is much more manageable than trying to examine all such situations or events in depth” (p.40).

I do acknowledge that selecting participants from other universities may have yielded other interesting aspects related to the link between learning in the ITE phase with learning as an NT.

Personal attributes: My continued personal relationships with some participant cases once they commenced their teaching as qualified teachers may have intruded on the participants not disclosing all information during the interview process. However, contrary to this, I believe that it was this open and trusting friendship between myself as former lecturer and now as researcher that allowed for the participants to provide honest and true accounts of their stories of becoming a teacher. Although there is always the danger of subjectivity I made a serious attempt to continuously monitor such subjectivity by providing thick descriptions based on sufficient empirical evidence (Henning, 2005). The verification process of the story portrait used in this study was an attempt to ensure that I stay as close as possible to the true facts as presented by the participants.

## **4.5 SECTION FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS**

As this study is framed in the interpretivist (naturalistic) paradigm, inductive data analysis was used (Maree, 2007). Several steps were followed in the data analysis process.

The first step involved a process of data preparation and logging of the data (Vithal & Jansen, 2006). The data preparation involved (1) reading through the transcripts done by an outside agent against the voice recordings in order to check the data for accuracy, consistency and relevance. (2) Each interview script was then again carefully scrutinised and line numbers inserted for future data organisation and analysis. A database was created for logging the data that occurred at different points in time. The third step in the analysis process was the open coding where preliminary trends were identified and organised into themes (Vithal & Jansen, 2006).

The second step followed the open coding process for each case. Cross case coding within a constant comparative framework (Lohman & Woolf, 2001) resulted in identifying recurring categories across the cases but also themes that were unique to each participant. This early data analysis process resulting in building four initial sets of proto-categories emerged from the cross case thematic analysis namely: (1) human resources issues in schools (management, staff interactions, status of NT); (2) reflections on ITE (lecture programme and teaching practice); (3) orientation practices in school cultures; (4) sources of learning.

The construction of the narratives followed as the third step in the data analysis process. The first story narrative for each participant was produced around the above four initial themes as meaningful story markers (Rule & John, 2011) and interlinked to the structure of the story. This process is referred to as narrative analysis (Connelly, Clandinin & He, 1997). This process resulted in the design of six story portraits. However as the study progressed I decided to change the story portraits of the two cases of Mikail and Bronwyn to shortened vignettes (refer to Chapter Five Section Two). Thus Mikail and Bronwyn became the auxiliary cases. According to Henning (2005) vignettes take the form of a short character sketch or story and serve to enable data analysis. The storied vignettes were constructed to organise the data around the themes that resulted from interpretation of data related to the ITE programmes. Henning (2005) explains that the vignette is embedded in data and thus not

a fictional story. The researcher designs the story as a representational mechanism for data analysis. Pillay (2003a) points out that the design of vignettes is an alternative strategy for qualitative analysis as the researcher draws on and interprets the extorted voices of participants.

The focus then shifted to analysis of the constructed narratives as the second level of abstraction to generate thematic categories in respect of the key research questions. The four proto-categories identified above were reduced to two components. Chapter Six Section Two offers case analysis of the six NT participants' learning experiences from selected sources from the ITE programme as the first component of EPL. This chapter answers the first research sub-question: How do the NTs understand their learning from the ITE programme for their role as NT? This chapter is organised around key themes that explicate the types of learning from key sources within the ITE programme.

Chapter Seven presents the case analysis of the four main participants' learning experiences related to the second component, that of the school environment. This chapter responds to the second research sub-question: How do the NTs understand their learning from the school environment for their role as NT? Section One of this chapter provides analysis of data from the three main participants, Dan, Nick and Leesha (refer to Chapter Four Section One for their respective story portraits) on how they experienced various sources that contributed to their EPL within their respective school environments. I have carefully selected these three cases as they provided the most articulate and comprehensive data in response to the research question for this chapter. Section Two of this chapter concentrates on case four only (refer to Chapter Four Section One for the story portrait), the case of Zoe. This is done so as to explicate the theme of what is generally known as the induction or orientation period. In the case of Zoe, the focus of analysis is centred on the theme of orientation of a newcomer to the school. The inclusion of the analysis of this specific theme is based on two considerations. Firstly, Zoe's induction to her new workplace setting presents an exemplary case for analysing the influence of induction practices or the lack thereof on the professional learning of an NT. Secondly; the inclusion of this particular case is an attempt to unravel the traditional understanding of induction as formalised, structured processes and activities. I offer a reconceptualised notion of induction that will move to a closer advanced

understanding of induction as self-inception with the purpose of assimilation into a specific culture (refer to Chapter Eight Section Two).

In Chapters Six and Seven, the words that portray the participants voices are indicated in double inverted commas and are extracted from the story portrait or vignettes presented in Chapter Five.

Chapter Eight presents key principle elements within the ITE programme and the school environment using the framework of professional learning systems of Hoban (2002) and Reid's (2007) quadrant of teacher learning opportunities as sources.

Chapter Nine presents the theory building chapter. This provides a conceptual framework in response to the overarching critical question as well as the third sub-question on the implications of this learning from the ITE programme and the school environment for the Early Professional Learning of the Novice Teacher?

#### **4.6 SYNTHESIS OF CHAPTER**

The methodological design discussed in this chapter allows for the extension and enrichment of analysis methods for qualitative data that are currently being used in social sciences research.

Chapter Five offers the data presentation that forms the first level of analysis of the six participants. Story portraits of the four main participants (Section One) and two story vignettes of the two auxiliary cases (Section Two) are presented.



## **CHAPTER FIVE: DATA PRESENTATION - STORY PORTRAITS AND VIGNETTES**

### **5.1 ORIENTATION**

This chapter offers a representation of the six story portraits at the first level of abstraction. The chapter is divided into two sections. Section One deals with four main or key story portraits of Dan, Nick, Leesha and Zoe. These four cases were subjected to more in-depth data analysis in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight to provide the second level of abstraction of the analysis. Section Two presents vignettes of the two auxiliary cases (Mikail and Bronwyn). Further analysis of the two cases, related to their learning from the ITE programme, is offered in Chapter Six. The four story portraits and two vignettes were designed from key themes that emerged from the transcribed data obtained from the two semi-structured individual interviews.

To comply with ethical principles pseudonyms were used for the participants in order to protect their identity. The names of schools and other teachers in all the cases in this section are protected through the use of pseudonyms.

### **5.2 SECTION A: FOUR MAIN STORY PORTRAITS**

#### **5.2.1 Case 1: Dan<sup>5</sup> : A strategic action approach**

##### ***Make opportunities for yourself***

As a 27 year-old White male, Dan had travelled widely in Africa as well as internationally. A number of his vacations were spent travelling with his parents or his friends. He qualified at the end of 2004 with a Bachelor of Commerce Degree (B.Com) majoring in Management and Marketing. He then worked in the business sector for three years. His first job was in the Hotel Industry in South Africa in Cape Town from 2005 to 2006 as a Human Resources

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<sup>5</sup> Dan is a pseudonym adopted for the purposes of this study.

officer. He mostly managed the contract staff at the hotel. This position gave him experience in dealing with the various challenges related to managing staff. He often had to deal with difficult staff including their emotional and social problems. His job also entailed dealing with employment, disciplinary issues and discharging staff. He quickly learnt that this specific position required him to be assertive in order to get the job done. He clearly stated, “I will sink if I am too soft.” At the end of 2006 he resigned from his position as he wanted to travel and work overseas. In 2007 he worked in London as a Brand Manager for a year. His work experiences in the business sector made him soon realise that his initial degree limited his job opportunities to mainly the Human Resources field. He wanted to broaden his work employment possibilities therefore he decided to venture into the teaching profession. He enrolled for the Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)<sup>6</sup> in 2008. He qualified to teach Business Studies and Economics in the Further Education and Training Phase (FET)<sup>7</sup> for Grades 10–12 and Maths for the Senior Phase<sup>8</sup> for Grades 7-9. Whilst studying PGCE he served as a boarding house master and sport coach in a school. He highlighted that these experiences assisted him with understanding how to deal with learners of all age groups.

Dan is a very assertive person yet he has an open and honest approach to life. Dan stated that his educational, traveling and work experiences have taught him a number of valuable life lessons. He firmly believes that a person should make and take opportunities to enrich one’s own life. A person should take initiative to sort out their own problems. Furthermore, people must take consequences for their actions. Dan regards himself as focused and ambitious.

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<sup>6</sup> Post Graduate Certificate in Education refers to the one year professional qualification following a recognised initial degree suitable for teaching purposes.

<sup>7</sup> The Further Education and Training Phase (FET) refers to Grades 10–12 which caters for schooling for learner age levels between 16 and 18/19 years.

<sup>8</sup> The Senior Phase refers to Grades four to seven which caters for schooling for learner age levels 9-12/13 years.

### ***If you want the job, take it!***

At the beginning of 2009, Dan started his teaching career at Seacross High, a multi-cultural all-boys urban high school. Seacross High is regarded as one of the top performing schools in the province, both in sport and academics. Dan explained proudly that he was approached by three schools for an interview after submitting his resume to them. With confidence he indicated that getting the job was very easy, “Well, when I walked into the school I was basically already accepted for the job. I didn’t even actually have to say much at the interview. Half way through the principal said: look the job is yours if you want it.” He decided to select Seacross High to start his teaching career rather than considering his other two options for employment. Seacross High was a top performing school. He believed that the school would provide him with positive teaching experiences. He held a governing body position which means that his salary was paid by the parent body through the generation of school fees and other funds. He was appointed to teach Maths Core in the FET phase (Grades 10 – 12). He explained that his PGCE studies only qualified him to teach Maths in the lower grades which are Grades 7 to 9. But he indicated that he was confident that teaching the higher Grades (Grades 10 – 12) would not be a problem. He would draw on his knowledge of Maths and Statistics that he had as subjects in his initial B.Com degree. His appointment was based on his potential to become a Maths teacher in the school in the lower and higher grades and his sporting ability. Dan was an ardent sportsman and his skills to coach rugby and golf added to his value as a teacher.

### ***Make it work for yourself!***

Dan approached his first two years of his teaching career with a take-what-you-need and make-it-work approach. He firmly believed that his previous work experiences and his being a boarding house master had definitely influenced the way he approached people in an unfamiliar working environment. His experiences had taught him that he needed to take initiative to find out what is going on in his work environment and how to best approach the atmosphere in the school. He had also developed skills in judging people’s character. Self-assured he stated, “I’ve had all those experiences. So when walking in I already knew who is the go-to-guy, who I’m gonna make friends with, how I’m gonna fall into this department. How do I approach it? Do you go in strongly? Do you go in softly? So I already knew how to approach the environment and that is why it was very easy for me, so I could move to another

school and link in very easy.” Working in tough environments in the business sector had made him in touch with the reality of the working world. He mentioned that his focus is to teach and to get the job done. This is achieved by being firm with the learners. He continuously explained to the learners that they needed to take responsibility for their own learning.

As a go-getter, Dan approached his position as a beginner teacher in a big school as taking responsibility for himself to fit in as best possible. He explained, “It is what you make of it.” He realised that his attitude was important. Therefore he approached teaching as a first year teacher with, “I’d rather learn than be ignorant or arrogant.” He knew that there were gaps in his subject knowledge as he was about to start teaching Grade 10 Maths. He was not qualified for this level of Maths and could hardly remember what he did as a learner in Grade 10 Maths at school. Now he was approaching the day that he had to teach the subject in a top performing school. There was no formal induction into the organisation of the school but a mere rundown of the Maths curriculum by Mr Kotze, the Head of Department<sup>9</sup> in a planning meeting. During this subject meeting the teachers discussed the approach they were going to use to get through all of the work in the coming school year. Dan honestly stated that he made no input at this early stage because as he explained, “I hadn’t looked at the syllabus since I was at school. I was given the syllabus and I had to start teaching.” Without delay, he approached his Head of Department, Mr Kotze and the two most experienced Maths teachers in the school for support. His frankness about the gaps in his subject knowledge and need for help made these teachers realise that Dan would fit into their department. According to Dan, he was viewed as, “someone who is gonna work with them, not against them, not play the intelligence card, not play the competitive card because that’s not the way it works in a school.”

Dan emphasised that there was generally a pleasant atmosphere in the school and amongst the staff although Seacross High is a big school. The school consisted of 60 teachers and 1100 boys across two geographical campuses. Dan believed that the size of the school impacted on

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<sup>9</sup> Head of Department refers to a member on the school management team that takes control of a specific subject specialisation grouping. In this case the Maths Department consists of all the teachers teaching Maths in the school.

the teacher's workloads. Although the workloads were distributed amongst all teachers, teaching in such big school added to additional workload pressures. As such there was no luxury of having a mentor allocated to a beginner teacher. Dan realised that the management team did not have the time to check up whether new teachers were coping. He expressed, "If you keep quiet, they assume you know what you are doing. You can't keep quiet. You have to speak up and say look this is the situation," Dan explained that he approached Mr Kotze on the second day after he started his teaching, "I sat down with my HOD and I said this is the story. So please if I need help I am gonna come to you. And he said excellent and from there we started off on the right foot." Dan knew his upfront approach was welcomed by Mr Kotze and he was on his way of being inducted into the Maths department and Maths teaching.

### ***Have a reciprocal attitude and fit in***

"You are looking at a staff complement of about 50 to 60. You don't have time to have a mentor look over you because we've got too much work to do. The principal don't have time to look over you."

The various subject departments had to work together. That was the culture in the school. The staff in the Maths department, where Dan was located, had a good working relationship and they often had social functions outside of school premises. "We have as a Maths department drinks on some Fridays," he explained. Support, collaboration and openness were the key conditions that made the relationship amongst the staff within the Maths department work. The Maths teachers formed a clique and sat in one of the corners of the staff room where all their social breaks and subject briefings took place. Dan used these informal moments to ask for advice on teaching. Maths teachers who did not want to work with the rest of the team were merely isolated from the rest of the group. Dan explained that there were two Maths teachers that were left outside this working friendship circle as they were always antagonistic. In a business-like manner, Dan approached this state of affairs in the Maths department with, "We excluded the ones that are playing the competitive role because we don't have time for them," and "We couldn't care less what they are doing, and that's sad in a way, but that's life." He is of the opinion that he fitted into the Maths department with ease as he is a team player and an easy person to work with. His outlook was that his colleagues "will be helping me out, and in the end I try and help out where I can."

In his self-directed approach to finding things out for himself, he developed a friendship with a fellow Maths teacher, Ms Barnes, who coincidentally became his mentor. He described her as very supportive in all aspects of developing his subject knowledge and demonstrating how to design his resources. She also gave him valuable tips on how to deal with learner disciplinary issues. As a peer and friend, he could go to her for assistance at any time. Then there was another Maths teacher, Mr Knight, who was well known in the school and surrounding community as a renowned teacher. Dan got to know Mr Knight through their many chats in the corner of the staff room where the Maths teachers gathered during break time. Mr Knight did not qualify as a Maths teacher but as an English teacher. Soon after he had started teaching, he was asked to teach Maths as there was a shortage of Maths teacher and “he worked his way up”. Now he had been teaching Maths for thirty five years. Dan explained that Mr Knight “... is a brilliant Maths teacher and that’s the first thing learners remember. They remember the quality of the teaching. Not a teacher who has made friends with them.” Mr Knight made a great impression on Dan as he was strict and the best Maths teacher in the school. He also gave Dan good advice on how to teach certain Maths concepts and how to deal with the various learner problems. Mr Knight became a role model to Dan. Dan explained how he approached selecting experienced teachers for support, “I’m talking about people that have been teaching Maths for 20, 30 years. And I said to them, ‘I take your criticism as an advantage to myself. There is no reason for me to question you.’ So they already understood that I am easy to work with and I strongly believe I am. And that’s why they will be helping me out.”

### ***Learn-as-you-go moments***

Dan had experience of learning how to teach as and when needed. He gained this during his teaching practice days as a student teacher. Now, as an NT, Dan found such experiences valuable. The relaxed atmosphere in the Maths department was conducive to his learn-as-you-go moments. Although Dan prepared in advance for his Maths lessons, he stated that due to his inexperience in teaching Maths to higher grade learners, he now and then encountered a difficult mathematical calculation from a learner whilst he was teaching. If he was unable to come up with the answer and the learner needed a response, he would then merely go to the Maths teacher next to him for immediate support. It would take a minute or so whilst the learners were working on their own. Or he would ask his fellow Maths teachers over a cup of

tea in their corner in the staffroom to assist him with finding an answer. He explained that this did not happen often but he used this as an example to illustrate the collegial approach within the Maths department.

He also remembered as a student teacher how he gained valuable experience of having to teach on request. Reflecting on his initial teacher training at university, he firmly believed that his first teaching practice experience in an under-resourced school was a stepping stone in understanding the realities of the teaching profession. He explained that four days into the teaching practice session, his teacher that was allocated to mentor him had to suddenly take leave. Thus Dan had to take full responsibility for the teaching of Business Studies to the Grades 10, 11 and 12 classes. In his words, “So I took the classes over that he had [his mentor] and I had to set up a test as well. But I had nice support from the other teachers.” He admitted that he really struggled in the beginning but that he soon found his feet with the support from other teachers who often gave him advice on how to approach the learners and the subject content. In his words, “I had no mentor, I just had to start teaching,” and “I was lost but I eventually found my feet.” The school was well managed and thus it made his role of teacher, although in the position of student teacher, much easier. Dan expressed that the active management team in the school ensured that staff worked together. He claimed: “I enjoyed the management as well. How they run the school and how they approach their staff.” His experiences at this physically under-resourced teaching practice school made him realise that you can swim when you are thrown in at the deep end, if you are somehow supported.

### *Learning through experience*

Although Dan enjoyed his challenging experiences at his first teaching practice school, he explained that his experiences at the second teaching practice school was rather unpleasant. He was placed in a special needs school for learners with physical disabilities. The small classes allowed for creative teaching and individualised attention which Dan found very valuable and fulfilling. He thoughtfully stated that it was amazing to teach the learners. However, he angrily expressed that the management style made the school an unhealthy environment to teach in. The management approach was dictatorial. Dan explained that he was often reminded, “This is my school and this is the way I do it.” This was the instruction

to Dan to copy the teaching and learning approach of the school. He was not allowed any freedom to try out ideas that would benefit the learners or him as a teacher in training. He was angry at how he had been treated at the school and how the management impacted on the atmosphere in the school. He was so often told by his supposed mentor teacher what he was doing wrong but no suggestions were given on how he should improve. He decided on the last day of his teaching practice to tell the Principal how he felt about his experiences at the school. He honestly stated, "Thank you, I've learnt so much from you. I said: I have learnt everything you do I will do the opposite. And I will be a success." He indicated that the internal politics amongst the staff and power games that were at play influenced the management of the school and had a direct impact on the learners and student teachers' learning.

Dan mentioned that he learnt some valuable lessons from his teaching practice schools. His first school taught him how to survive in the teaching profession as he was asked to stand in as a teacher in a physically under-resourced environment. His negative experiences at his second school taught him how the mismanagement of a school can impact on the staff and the learners. He pointed out that it was the teaching practice at the two different schools and not the lectures at university that prepared him for teaching. He strongly declared that the lecture programme did not prepare him for the reality of the teaching profession. He mentioned that the methodology lectures focused on how to teach and not what to teach, "it is assumed that you know the content", which was not the case, he claimed. He understood that the methodology courses should focus on the pedagogical approaches in the subject. However, he exclaimed that the content done within the initial degree was far from the content covered in the school curriculum. Therefore, he felt that he had to teach himself content knowledge in his various subjects during teaching practice. This was often problematic as he was expected to frequently teach a full teaching load. The one theory, he felt was worthwhile learning about in lectures was Vygotsky's constructivist theory. Maths teaching was built around the concepts of the Zone of Proximal Development and scaffolding and this he carried over into his first year as a beginner teacher. He also commented on the lack of more in-depth work on classroom management and learner discipline within the PGCE curriculum. Classroom management was an area that all teachers struggled with.



### *A tripod of problems: staffroom, classroom and you*

“They don’t focus enough on how adapt to your environment and the staffroom,” Dan gave his opinion about another dimension that was lacking in his initial teacher training. He claimed that student teachers needed to be developed in understanding personal relationships in school contexts and how to deal with them. He felt that the staffroom was a place with lots of interactions and conflicts amongst people. New teachers need to know how to deal with all of these personal and social types of interactions, if they want to survive. He commented on how the happenings in the staffroom influenced the teacher and how such issues are then carried over into the classroom, “The most important is if you don’t get along with your staff, you not gonna get along in the classroom. Because the children know when you walk into that class and you’ve just come from and you not happy in the staffroom, you not gonna be happy in the classroom, and that filters through. It’s a tripod of problems if you don’t address the issue correctly.” Dan explained that part of understanding complex personal relationships in a school, specifically as a beginner teacher, is to know who to approach for support and how to approach the person. He explained his strategy: “Talk to and go to the most experienced teacher that looks like a nice person, and say look if I have a problem I’m gonna ask you for help.”

The principal should also, he said, take the initiative to direct the new teacher to the most experienced staff for support. The principal is the person who should know the expertise and personalities of his staff. He explained his thinking, “I feel that they just put you in a classroom, and the most important thing is to link into the staffroom. They need to help you to link into the staffroom.” The Principal should direct the beginner teacher to the appropriate teachers who are understanding, approachable and supportive. Dan had learnt that one of the most important strategies that you needed to have mastered before you walk into a new work environment is how to link and interact with the staff. “Your approach should be to receive help then you can give help.” But he questioned where one learnt such strategies.

Dan compared his experiences of being a beginner teacher with being a plant. “Because if you don’t give the plant what it needs it will never grow. Arrogance and competitiveness are the certain things that are not needed. Understanding and willingness are essential.” A plant needs certain elements to grow within the immediate environment in which it is located. A

beginner teacher needs certain elements that will support their growth. He explained that willingness to learn, understanding your position as a first year teacher and dealing with people are the elements that are needed in approaching your career as a new teacher. “I think those are the qualities to make a plant grow into whatever you want it to be and that’s the way I have approached my teaching.” Dan’s focused approach has served him well as a teacher. He remained in the school and the profession.

### **5.2.2 Case 2: Nick<sup>10</sup> : I am certainly worth more than this!! A rollercoaster ride**

#### ***A Rollercoaster ride***

Nick was a 25 year old first year NT. He described himself as a friendly person who was always laughing and joking. People felt comfortable in his presence. He portrayed a happy go lucky and youthful image. Yet he confidently expressed, “I would stand up for what I believe in.” Although Nick was a self-assured and positive person, he explained in a rather solemn manner his experiences of being an NT and his impressions of the profession. “It was a living hell; it was like getting on a rollercoaster. You feel like it’s going to have some harmful effect on you if you don’t get off right now. A rollercoaster ride, it looks so wonderful before you start, because the school looked so good. But once you on it and the ride starts going, you cannot stop. There is no way you can put the brakes on. You are just going. And you want to get off. You want to stop, but you can’t.”

Nick completed a BA degree majoring in Geography, and a Law degree. However, he decided not to enter the law fraternity after completing his studies. He felt that his heart was not in the law profession as it was according to him too rigid. He then enrolled for the PGCE<sup>11</sup> qualification which he completed at the end of 2009. He qualified as a Senior Phase General Education and Training (GET) teacher<sup>12</sup>. He could teach in Grades 7 to 9. He

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<sup>10</sup> Nick is a pseudonym adopted for the purposes of this study.

<sup>11</sup> Post Graduate Certificate in Education refers to the one-year professional qualification that follow a recognised initial degree suitable for teaching purposes.

<sup>12</sup> The General Education and Training Phase (GET) refers to the senior phase as Grades 7 to 9 which cater for schooling for learner age levels between 13 and 16 years.

specialised in Life Orientation, Technology, and Social Sciences learning areas<sup>13</sup>. He was offered a Department of Education position at the beginning of 2010 at a primary school located in an urban area. This specific school is a parallel medium school where both Afrikaans<sup>14</sup> and English are the two languages of instruction. The principal, Mr Gresham, explained to him at his interview how a parallel medium school operated. The same subject content was offered in each grade at the same time but in two different languages by two different teachers. Such an arrangement required on-going collaborative team support and planning throughout the year. This type of teaching and operational procedures was not familiar to Nick. He was also not trained to teach in all learning areas. Nick took on the position two weeks after the school term had already commenced. He would teach in all the learning areas in the Grade 5 English medium class.

### ***Competent to teach and to fit in***

Nick realised that the operation of the school and the culture was somewhat different to what he was used to or at least what he was trained for. He also wondered whether he would be able to handle the younger learners. As a student teacher he taught mostly in high schools and had found it comfortable to work with teenagers. He claimed his teaching practice days were “pleasant and happy times” as he connected with the teachers and teenage learners. He entered the profession with the perceived idea that he would be competent as a teacher. He believed in his ability to teach, no matter how unfamiliar the circumstances may have been. After all he noted, “I did the qualification, the PGCE. I completed it. I passed with relatively good marks so I mean surely I must be competent.” He thought that his job interview and subsequent appointment into the position as teacher was based on trust that he would be a professional and competent NT. He approached his first teaching position thinking that if he did not know something, he would ask. He was not afraid to speak up. “I don’t have a problem having to go and approach someone and ask for help.”

He had developed self-confidence in public speaking during the various lectures in the PGCE qualification. Nick expressed how he developed his confidence, “I was not the most

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<sup>13</sup> Learning area refers to a subject.

<sup>14</sup> Afrikaans is one of the eleven official languages in South Africa.

confident person when I first started out, especially with regard to public speaking. I hated having to stand up in front of a crowd and talk. Then because of the PGCE, because there was so much interaction in class, you've gotta talk and present your arguments and your perspective on things. Then you go on to your teaching practice, and are you just thrown into the deep end, and you stand up in front of this class." He regarded the small group interactions, whole-class presentations as well as the teaching practice sessions as great opportunities where he developed his skills of self-expression. Thus, he felt very confident in his own oratory abilities, a skill that he believed would serve him well when he started teaching. Nick explained that his training at university to become a teacher he now saw as the start of his rollercoaster ride. The start of the ride was pleasant. He was happy and with great anticipation he looked forward to what was to follow. This is what Nick claimed, "You know when you go on a rollercoaster ride. First it starts off going up slowly, nice and pleasant, going up smoothly. Once you get to the top, the climax, then the school should come in. Suddenly, then you go down. But then it became a weird ride."

The staff at the school was predominantly Afrikaans speaking. He soon found pleasure in working with them as they were very welcoming and friendly. Nick, from an English first language background, made a conscious attempt to overcome the language barrier by speaking Afrikaans to his colleagues, although he stated, "I was not really good at it but I'm going to speak Afrikaans anyway." He viewed the interactions with the staff as a learning opportunity to brush up on his Afrikaans communication skills. This would enable him to fit in and be part of the conversations held in the staffroom. He noted, "You must be able to communicate in Afrikaans to participate in discussions."

### ***Decide for myself what to teach***

On Nick's first day at the school he was assigned to a master teacher. Mrs De Beer had thirty nine years of experience as a teacher. She was formally appointed by Mr Gresham as the mentor who would provide the necessary support to Nick. Nick thought this appointment to be a "good idea". However, it was Nick's responsibility to approach her for support if and when needed. Mrs De Beer introduced Nick to his class of learners who were sharing classroom space with another class until such time as Mr Gresham found an appropriate teacher. The maintenance staff assisted in moving desks to Nick's classroom, and the learners

followed soon. Nick, as their newly appointed teacher, was left to commence his teaching. Mrs De Beer returned a while later and brought the prescribed textbooks for the grade six learners. Nick asked what topics he was supposed to teach. Mrs De Beer looked at him surprised and told him to go through the contents pages of the textbooks and decide for himself what to teach. Nick explained in a note of unbelief, “I had to decide for myself what to teach.” He felt nervous about this thrown-into-the-deep-end-situation that he was placed in. Nick had expected that the school would understand that as a newly qualified teacher he had only a basic understanding of what teaching entailed. He had expected that the school would further develop his teaching skills and even improve on it. His teaching practice schools that he had experienced as a student teacher were very different from this school culture. And he was trained for the ideal classroom situation. He had at least expected “that the school would have provided an opportunity to sit down with me and give me possible ways of teaching effectively in this specific context.”

### ***De-throned from his kingdom***

“Your little kingdom and you are sitting on your little throne” is how Nick described his initial feelings of his classroom space. In his teaching, he focused on putting into practice Outcomes-Based approaches he had learnt at university in order to make his kingdom fully functional. However, he was soon dethroned as king of his empire. He could not transfer what he had learnt at university to this school context. The teaching at this school focused mostly on what the teacher wanted to achieve rather than facilitating what the learners needed to learn. The teacher taught content and the learners listened. Learner discussion and group activities were avoided. For the first three weeks he moved the learner’s desks to allow for group work. But he soon realised that his attempts to teach and manage his class the way he was trained were causing disciplinary problems amongst the learners. The learners were not used to his type of teaching. He started changing things on a small scale in order to fit into this school culture. Although the teachers were friendly they were not willing to share their knowledge and experiences with him. Teacher kept to themselves to avoid being criticised. He noted, “They would not show their test papers as they were afraid of being criticised.” He often walked around the school to get a sneak preview of what other teachers were doing and

then tried to implement what he saw into his teaching. He found a huge mismatch between what he had learnt as a student teacher and what was expected of him as an NT.

### *Third-party reprimand*

As his teaching days progressed, Nick realised that his teaching was affected by the lack of information given to him when he started teaching at the school. There were times where he did ask for information from Mr Gresham as Principal and from Mrs De Beer, as his support master teacher. But he received vague and evasive answers. Nick reflected, “It was very good that they did assign me to a master teacher.” But in reality the arrangement did not work. He firmly stated that he did not receive much help from Mrs De Beer and she was “definitely not his mentor.” It was difficult to find opportunities to meet. He suggested that, “they [management] should have tried to co-ordinate our timetables a little better, so that when I’m free, she would be free. With this arrangement we were never free at the same time and also the location of our classes was far from each other as well.” Not having the necessary information on how to teach, he often found himself in situations where he was attacked for not knowing things that he was not told. The school expected everything to be done by the book. But Nick reported, “The problem is there is no book.” Although Nick felt a need to get basic information from other staff he did not want to approach them during the only available time. He explained his reasoning, “I want to go and speak to them but they resting now and they are talking to their friends. Like it’s a social conversation. I can’t come to them and suddenly start talking about work, because clearly that’s not what they want to do in the like five minutes that they’ve got to rest.”

The turning point for Nick came when one of his colleagues asked him if he had done his home-work time-table for his class. Surprised he asked, “What time-table?” But he decided that it could not be too difficult to design a homework time-table and get it out in time. However, what he did not realise in his hurry to get the work done was that there was a specific format for the time-table and a step-by-step procedure to follow for the photocopying of the time-tables which took up to four working days. Nobody informed him of the procedures. At the following parents’ evening, his first encounter with the parents, they attacked him in a rude and disrespectful manner for using the wrong format for the time-table and for not giving it to the learners on time.

The parental interference continued as they “questioned everything” he did. There were times where he was called into Mr Gresham’s office at the demand of a parent and without any notification. He was then expected to defend himself against a third party reprimand. Nick remembered one of a few specific incidents where he had given detention to a disruptive learner in his class. Nick had followed the correct procedures prescribed by the school for detention cases. The following day Nick was suddenly summoned during his free period to Mr Gresham’s office. He was aggressively and crudely attacked by the learner’s grandmother about the detention. Mr Gresham did not formally introduce the guardian or the complaint but merely let it all happen, without following the correct protocol. Nick, having a legal background, pointed out to Mr Gresham that such behaviour is procedurally incorrect. He explained, “I should have been given notice if a parent wants to come there and question me, so that I can at least have time to prepare and have adequate defence. But no you just get called into the Principal’s office.” Mr Gresham did not support Nick during these encounters. Nick decided to discuss the issue with Mr Gresham. “I told him that if these conditions continue I will be forced to resign”.

### ***De-professionalised***

“I went for the interview to get the job. They were happy with me. They gave it to me. If they didn’t trust me or if they were not happy with my qualifications, why did they give this position to me?” This is how Nick questioned the lack of professional trust in his abilities to teach. The Master’s degree lectures assisted Nick in handling his troubling experiences in the school. Reading literature on various topics on issues of professionalism and development, teacher’s knowledge and teacher’s work, made him suddenly realise, “This is me, this is what is happening to me, where I am at,” and that he need not be placed into such perfidious situations. The discussions with his fellow students and lecturers on issues related to professionalism gave him confidence to speak up against the manner in which he was treated at the school. He was concerned about the managerial style of the principal. Nick firmly believed, “He sucked up to the parents.” Mr Gresham used the parents as a means to manage the school. He allowed the parents to walk in at any time complaining against the teachers. But he did nothing to support his teachers. The parents carried a lot of weight in the school because the principal allowed it. Nick explained, “The principal entertained that sort of

nonsense, and in fact by doing this he also gave power to parents, power that otherwise would not have been there.”

Nick felt that the parents became overbearing and intimidating. Nick felt, “I’d been de-professionalised. I couldn’t exercise my professional discretion in the manner in which one would have expected me to be able to do it. Based on what I’ve studied. Based on my experience prior to that.” He could not be creative or use his discretion in his own classroom. As such he felt that the authority given to him by virtue of being a professional was taken away from him. He declared, “Somehow what I do is going to get out there. I am going to be in the principal’s office having to explain myself, once again for something really silly.” He attempted to discuss the manner in which he was treated with the other teachers. But the general response that Nick received was that Mr Gresham was like that with everyone. Nick retaliated, “Just because he is like that with everyone, does not make it right.” Using a metaphor, he explained, “If you put a frog in a bowl of water and you gradually heat that water, the frog will stay there. It will not jump out. But if you take a frog and put it directly into boiling water it would immediately jump out.”

The manner in which he was treated together with his feelings of not being acknowledged as teacher made him disillusioned with teaching at the school. He claimed, “I’m trying so hard and I’m getting no appreciation from this place. Everything I do is wrong. They don’t even just tell you it’s wrong. The Principal tells you in a rude and disrespectful manner. He has no people skills.” His interactions with Mr Gresham and the parents made Nick engage in deep reflection on what teaching as a profession, for an NT, in reality entails. He felt despondent with teaching and the way that he was treated as a professional. Through self-reflection on his situation and his position at the school, he decided not to let people turn his perceptions of the teaching into something destructive. He came to the conclusion that he need not engage in battles to fight for the value and dignity of the profession. He made a conscious decision that if he wanted to survive in teaching and continue in this profession, he’d rather get out of this unhealthy school environment. No one in the school asked him about his aspirations of teaching in this school. The teachers, like the frog, had got used to the management style of Mr Gresham and decided to remain in the bowl, without any reaction to the gradual heating of the water in the bowl. But Nick saw himself as the frog that was placed in boiling hot



water and jumped out immediately before he became part of the hot environment and accustomed to unprofessional treatment.

He taught for one term before resigning and taking up a position as a contract lecturer. He believed that, “there were too many negatives. They outweighed the positives.” Lecturing after all was his first career choice. He ended his nightmare rollercoaster ride as he firmly declared, “I really thought to myself, I’m certainly worth more than this.”

### **5.2.3 Case 3: Leesha<sup>15</sup> : Confused! I am in the wrong profession!**

#### ***Available, qualified but untrained?***

Leesha is an Indian female in her early twenties and living with her parents. Leesha’s mother, Vijay, is a teacher and has been teaching for twenty years at Johannesen Primary. This school is located in a semi-industrial urban area. The school is well resourced but the learners in general come from poor environments. Teaching was not Leesha’s first career choice. She did apply to the local university to study Industrial Psychology as a first choice but her application was too late for consideration. On her tertiary application form she placed the Bachelor of Education degree as a third choice of study. When she was not considered for any of the other two options that she applied for, she decided to study to become a teacher although not entirely sure whether this was what she wanted to do. She nonetheless considered the option as she came from a family of teachers.

She completed a four year Bachelor of Education (BEd) degree specialising in the intermediate and senior phases of the General Education and Training Phase<sup>16</sup>, thus she was qualified to teach learners from Grades 4 to 9. After completing her initial degree she did not want to start teaching immediately as she wanted to further her studies. She enrolled for a Bachelor of Education Honours qualification in Gender Education on a part-time basis. She expressed her decision that she did not want to take on the heavy burden of teaching and

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<sup>15</sup> Leesha is a pseudonym adopted for the purposes of this study.

<sup>16</sup> The General Education and Training Phase (GET) refers to Grades 4 – 6 as the intermediate phase (age levels 10 to 13) and Grades 7 to 9 (age levels 14 to 16) as the senior phases of this Band.

studying at the same time. Thus, her intention was to stay home to focus on her studies so that she could complete the Honours degree by the end of 2010. One morning in January before the commencement of the new academic school year, her mother asked Leesha if she wanted to come and help out as a locum teacher at Johannesen Primary as one of the teachers had gone on maternity leave. She received a phone call from the Principal, Mr. John, in which he asked her if she would be interested in a state paid teaching position, in the place of a teacher going on maternity leave at Johannesen Primary. Her mom, Vijay, also encouraged her to take on the position. Her mom told her to consider the teaching position as she, Leesha, would have free time during the day as she only attended lectures late afternoon. Taking on this position would give her some teaching experience and she would also earn an income. Leesha wondered if she would be able to cope with studying and teaching at the same time, as they could both be rather demanding. However, the idea of starting to teach was exciting so she decided to give some thought to her mom's request and Mrs John's offer.

***If you are a teacher you can teach any grade!***

During the interview, Mr John explained to Leesha that he urgently needed a replacement teacher in the foundation phase for a Grade 2 class. The present teacher was going on maternity leave. He had heard from one of his teachers, Vijay, during a staff meeting that her daughter Leesha may be able to assist as she was available for a teaching position. Leesha decided to be honest with Mr John. She raised her concern of teaching in a phase that she had not been trained for. She explained that she may not have the necessary knowledge and skills to teach the younger learners and this may disadvantage them and contradict her own idea of a teacher's work. Mr John encouraged her to take on the teaching position by reassuring her that training to teach a specific phase at university doesn't really matter in the real world of teaching. He confidently explained to Leesha, "You know, I have to tell you being a teacher, it doesn't matter what phase you specialise in. If you are a teacher you will be able to teach a matric class [Grade 12] or Grade 1 class. It doesn't matter." Leesha's decision to take on the position as a locum teacher was based on a few considerations. Mr John's expression, that if you are a teacher you can teach any grade, continued echoing in her mind. "I honestly thought that it would be a piece of cake, because I thought, you know, what Grade 2, which person couldn't teach Grade 2. I mean those kids are like six and seven,

right?” Leesha expressed her own internal thoughts about teaching a grade that she was not trained for.

Leesha also considered that the members of staff at the school were familiar with her as she often visited the school with her mother. She had literally “grown up with the teachers.” She did not want them to think that she was “scared” and not able to teach grade two learners. She also thought that these teachers, who had known her for many years, would be supportive and “show her the ropes.” After all, they knew that she was a beginner teacher and not qualified to teach at the level of the Grade 2 learners. She believed that the teachers that she already knew, would “talk you through it” just like the mentor teachers did when she was a student teacher. She explained during the four years on teaching practice in a school as a student teacher, she “abundantly” received support and she was “never short of help or assistance.”

### ***Who am I?***

On the morning of her first day of work she travelled with her mom to Johannesen Primary school. Leesha’s mind was filled with many thoughts as she had mixed emotions as she approached her new school. The school was not big and the grounds were very neat. She was excited about her first teaching position, yet at the same time she was concerned about the type of teacher she would be, considering that she was not qualified to teach at the specific level of her learners. Leesha explained that she wanted to give of her best to the learners. She had heard from her mom that most of the learners came from disadvantaged backgrounds and were exposed to various socio-economic problems such as abuse and domestic violence. The school was well-resourced and equipped with sufficient furniture and computers for staff and learners.

On entering the school, Mr John gave her a warm welcome. He invited her to approach him if ever she needed any advice on how things should be done at the school. Leesha felt satisfied and comfortable with the possibility of support from the principal, when needed. However, she knew she would not approach him for every little problem as she is rather a proud and independent person. She is the type of person who will first try and sort things out for herself, before she will approach another person for support. Leesha was taken to her

class to start her teaching. She was not formally introduced to the staff as a qualified locum teacher.

### *Am I in the right profession?*

“I had no idea what I was doing” Leesha stated as she thought back to her initial experiences of being a beginner teacher. She started questioning what she was doing in the school and the profession. Leesha commented sadly that she was having very “bad” days. She did not know how to teach at the level of Grade 2 learners. To make things worse for her, her colleagues teaching in the Foundation Phase were gossiping about her. At first she could not understand this type of behaviour towards her, as these teachers never treated her in this manner when she used to visit the school with her mom. Leesha believed that she was a “critical thinker,” a skill that she developed through reflective activities at university. Therefore she tried to analyse the uncomfortable space she was finding herself in. She had to think of a possible solution to her problems.

Leesha could not understand the lack of support that she was getting from the school. “I suppose maybe they feel its preferential treatment, because you know my mom’s a teacher and there I got this post now and, I’m supposed to be filling in.” – this is what Leesha gave as possible reasons for the lack of support. The school expected her to find her feet immediately. Leesha was of the opinion that the school thought that she would be able to do everything and handle the challenges that came her way, seeing that she was an independent type of person and her mom was teaching at the school. She was familiar with the staff and the school setting, since she almost grew up in her mom’s school environment. It was thought there was an expectation from the teachers that if Leesha needed help, she would ask her Mom. But Leesha explained that her mom couldn’t give advice as she taught in the senior phase and there was a “big difference” in how things were done in the Foundation Phase. Leesha had initially thought that fitting in would be easy because she knew the people and the environment, but in retrospect she realised that making such an assumption was her “biggest mistake.”

She often found herself thinking back to her experiences at university. Leesha explained with a smile that the “close knit” atmosphere of the university campus where she studied her initial degree offered a community atmosphere where staff and students worked together. Fellow students assisted each other with learning. Lecturers supported students and had an open-door policy. “You help one another. You know you work together,” she claimed. But she wondered why the school environment was not offering the same supportive space. She came to the realisation that her initial teacher education experiences developed her to teach in an ideal classroom situation. Her ideas of teaching and the school that emerged during her practice teaching sessions were different from what she was experiencing now in her first teaching position. The teaching staff was supportive and approachable. Survival in Johannesburg Primary became important for Leesha. She realised that she did not have the practical hands-on skills needed to survive in the type of school situation she found herself in.

As her problems in the school continued, she started taking personal blame for not knowing how to teach. She could have had more experience in teaching in the various kinds of schools, but she did not take the opportunity. Looking back at her selection of teaching practice schools over a three year period of the BEd programme, she realised that she had jeopardised her learning through her selection of certain types of schools. She was exposed to functional, well-resourced schools where the management teams were strong and learner discipline was not a serious problem. Leesha noted, “I didn’t pick a school where you know I would be exposed to some of the problems that teachers face nowadays.” She also experienced “abundant” support. Her mentors were always also available to assist. She explained “anything I needed, any advice that I needed about the school or if I had a problem” as such she was “never short of help or assistance.” She realised that exposure to other types of teaching and learning environments during teaching practice would have made her aware of the challenging side to teaching. Thus she would have been better prepared for her first teaching position. As she said in the interview, “I do take full responsibility. I never really thought about teaching in an under-resourced school and maybe in my mind I had this misconception that you know teaching in the classroom is always going to be like this and suddenly now when I’ve qualified and I go and I get thrown into this situation, I’m like you know what this profession is not for me. If this is what teaching is all about in some schools, I’m telling you I am in the wrong profession.”

### ***What is a best teacher?***

Leesha said her initial journey into teaching was a “rough road”. She had received some advice through grade meetings and the Head of Department, Mrs Pillay, on issues related to administration systems, procedures and documentation. Leesha was introduced to another Grade 2 teacher, Mala, who was “just the teacher next door.” Mala was not formally assigned to support Leesha, but Leesha expected some assistance seeing that she was her “partner teacher”. However, Leesha explained that this teacher was never available and unapproachable. She mentioned that “everybody was ready to go home after school” and not willing to stay to support her. Leesha also supposed that the partner teacher “did not want to take on that responsibility” as it was not her job to show Leesha how to teach. She confirmed, “The Level One teachers in the school, have not supported or helped me in any way, I can one hundred and ten per cent tell you, in no way.”

“I have no experience teaching in the Foundation Phase and I am teaching myself”, is how Leesha expressed her initial teaching experiences. Leesha often found herself in situations where the learners were not grasping what she was teaching. She even used to confuse herself at times. Desperate to survive and teach to the best of her ability, she decided to teach herself how to teach these young learners. She found herself teaching through trial-and-error. She explained her confusion, “There are times when I also stand in front of the class and I think, okay, you know my kids are a little bit confused. So when you realise you have taught something and you look at their work and then half of them don’t understand. Then you think, oh well, am I really doing a good job? Is this what teaching is all about? You know I always ask myself is this how it is supposed to be because I’ll never be sure. I mean I am a first time teacher. I gotta learn.”

She started searching for answers on how to learn to be a teacher, how to be the best teacher. But how could she answer these questions if she was not sure about the meaning of “best” teacher? However, she did not really gain any answers. Leesha claimed, “I don’t know what the best is, to be honest. But you know what; I just try to do a good job. Not to put my kids down too much and you know I just try to be a good teacher.” Leesha realised that if she wanted to change her experiences of teaching in a grade that she was not qualified for, she needed to take the initiative to ask for help. During the second interview, Leesha

remembered that although she relied mostly on her own ability to learn how to teach, there was one person that was an inspiration to her. Out of desperation for support, she had approached Mrs Pillay, the Head of Department, with whom she felt comfortable. Mrs Pillay was a friend of her mom and very approachable. Leesha explained that she “didn’t even know how to teach halving to the Grade 2 class until I asked the HOD.” Mrs Pillay took the time to coach Leesha how to teach specific topics such as doubling and halving. Leesha explained that Mrs Pillay would draw diagrams and use specific examples to show her step by step how to teach the concepts. Leesha reflected that “Everything I know now, if you put me in that class again, I can do it, and it was all thanks to her and the way that she taught me.”

### ***Faulty peers***

Leesha continued questioning her self-worth as a teacher. She came to the realisation that the lack of formal training and experience as well as the unsupportive school environment made her feel cynical about herself as a teacher and the teaching profession. She realised that there were moments where she felt that teaching her learners were rewarding, that she had achieved something. She explained that she was “not trained for the Foundation Phase” and that there was a “nasty” and overtly “gossiping” atmosphere among the Foundation Phase teachers. She pointed to the internal politics amongst the Foundation Phase teachers, “They have cliques. The Foundation Phase teachers - there is about four of them that all stick together. Then you would have the HOD. But because they are one big clique they will undermine the HOD’s authority because I suppose maybe they say ‘stand together’ or maybe they feel they have the bigger number, they don’t need to listen.”

But what really made her angry and unhappy was the unprofessional behaviour, fighting and gossiping amongst the female members of staff in her teaching phase. Leesha tried to avoid getting involved in such altercations but the trouble seemed to follow her. She felt that because she was a beginner teacher, “I’m the easy target. I feel like I am been targeted at the moment” by her peers. She said, the female teachers “are always in your business, they are always trying to dig and find out why you are doing it this way” and not their way. Leesha regarded them as “faulty teachers who have no social skills.” She remembered a specific crisis experience that left her with a number of unresolved questions.

### ***Caught in the middle***

After reading the first narrative account of Leesha's experiences, she requested during our second interview that a specific critical experience be recorded, in order for her story to be told. Leesha was moved to a Grade 1 class in September. She took on the position of a teacher that went on maternity leave. At the end of November, Leesha was asked to write the assessment reports for the learners in the class. An arrangement was made with Mr John that the permanent class teacher would do the report cards as she knew the learners' academic performance. Leesha only had to teach for the four months. This arrangement suited Leesha. When the time came for the reports to be written, one of the Foundation Phase teachers came to Leesha and told her that she must fill in the learners' biographical information, whilst the class teacher would do the academic performance assessments. However, Mrs Pillay refused to give Leesha the report cards as the arrangement was that the class teacher would complete the writing, although she was on maternity leave. Leesha got caught up in the cross-fire in the animosity between Mrs Pillay and the Foundation Phase teachers. She found herself "stuck in a position" and not sure what to do. Eventually Mr John called Leesha in and instructed her to write the report cards. Leesha felt that Mr John had overridden the decision of Mrs Pillay and took the sides of the Foundation Phase teachers with whom he often socialised after school hours.

### ***Isolation***

Leesha stated, "I had real bruises to my ego." She started keeping to herself and stopped going to the staffroom. She felt she could no longer enjoy the company and conversation of her phase peers. Furthermore, she felt there was an age gap between her and the peer teacher. "We just do not connect. Even every day conversations. I am just like "hi and 'bye". I don't really interact with the staff." She emphasised that "I don't really have time to socialise with people who quite frankly do not respect each other and they don't respect me."

Although Leesha's journey into teaching was a "disaster" with "sleepless nights", she felt that she had developed her teaching abilities. However, she had serious reservations whether teaching was the right career for her. During the second interview Leesha reflected, that she was still angry and frustrated about her experiences at the school. She strongly expressed her feelings about her experiences as a novice, "I was alone, confused and constantly questioning



my ability as an NT. I was and still am angry or frustrated about my ordeal at this school. This is an important aspect which I feel must be included.”

But perhaps her experiences were related to how she was perceived by other teachers in the school. The teachers saw her as the “little girl playing” that she used to be when she visited the school with her mom. She felt that she was picked on because of how she portrayed herself to others as “unapproachable” and she her “own voice.” With self-blame she noted that she should not have assumed that because she knew the teachers, that she should have been support. She should not have isolated herself from her fellow teachers. She should not have spent so much time with the Head of Department. She should have established more “positive relationships” with the teachers. The Principal told her a lie, about how a teacher is a teacher and can teach in any grade. She felt that “I don’t know what he’s talking about, he’s got it wrong.” But does she feel this way because she was only an outside “filler” in her mom’s school? No matter how hard she tried to prove herself, it just did not have the desired effect that she wanted, as “I had no control over the situation in my mother’s school.” She left the teaching profession to continue with post-graduate studies.

#### **5.2.4 Case 4: Zoe<sup>17</sup> : Support in stormy seas**

##### ***Sorry but we have a teacher here!***

Zoe had returned home to South Africa after working as an assistant teacher in Sweden for a few years. On her return, she decided to enrol for the Bachelor of Education (BEd) programme in the Early Childhood phase (ages 0 – 9). She obtained the Funza Lushaka bursary<sup>18</sup> which required that she would most likely have to teach in a rural context or context where she was needed on completion of her studies. At the beginning of 2010 after completing her degree, as bursary holder she became desperate to hear from the Department of Education, who should have informed her of her placement school. The school term had

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<sup>17</sup> Zoe<sup>17</sup> is a pseudonym adopted for the purposes of this study.

<sup>18</sup> The Funza Lushaka bursary is awarded to eligible student teachers to complete a full teaching qualification in an area of national priority. Recipients of these bursaries will be required to teach at a public school for the same number of years that they receive the bursary. <http://www.funzalushaka.doe.gov.za/>

already commenced and she had not yet been placed in a school. Tired of waiting, and anxious to take up her teaching position, Zoe took action to sort out her placement problem. She contacted the Education Department regarding her placement in a rural school. The departmental official gave Zoe the name of the school, Belvedere Primary<sup>19</sup>, and told her to contact the school herself about her teaching position. Zoe managed to locate a telephone number for the school. She phoned the school with great anticipation, as this was her first teaching job as a qualified teacher. She was answered with, “We don’t know what you are talking about, because there is a teacher here.” Rather concerned about such state of affairs, she phoned the relevant official at the Education Department again. Zoe explained that the school was not expecting her and that there was a teacher in her supposed position. The response Zoe got from the department official was that if she did not take up the position at the school, she would have to pay back the full amount for her studies immediately. Zoe again contacted the school and explained her position as bursary holder. The school eventually accepted Zoe as they argued that they would then not have to pay for a locum teacher out of their own school funds. Zoe was excited about her first teaching position. She had a clear teaching mission. She wanted to make a difference to learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. She thought that this school would be the ideal place to provide such experiences for her. The school was located in a former White area during the apartheid years but had gradually changed to a predominantly Indian urban community. The demographics of the staff and learners have changed over the past few years. The majority of learners were Black with a few Indian and White learners. The staff complement consisted mostly of Indian and White teachers.

### ***Qualified but a student teacher again***

Four weeks into the school term Zoe took up her position on the Monday morning. The principal, Miss Maharajh, called her into the office and her first question to Zoe was whether she had a driver’s licence so that she could take learners to sporting events. Zoe stated that she did not have a driver’s licence. She was then welcomed with the words, “Well, we don’t accept teachers here without a driver’s licence, but I guess you will just have to stay because you’re holding a government post.” Miss Maharajh as head of the school then sent Zoe off

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<sup>19</sup> All names in this storied portrait are pseudonyms to protect the identity of the school and the teachers.

into the school building with the instruction, “Just follow that teacher around and just remember how it is to be a student. You are doing teaching practice again.” Zoe felt very uncomfortable during her first week in her new position. Zoe felt she was appointed as a qualified teacher to start her teaching career, yet she was placed in this declared position of student teacher. To aggravate the circumstance, she felt embarrassed by being placed in the position as student teacher to an unqualified locum teacher, Jaya. Zoe knew Jaya from university. Jaya was leaving her locum teaching position at the school the following week. Jaya was a former fellow-student with Zoe at university, ten years younger than Zoe and not yet a qualified teacher. Jaya did her teaching practice at Belvedere Primary and was offered a position as stand-in teacher whilst she took a break from her studies. She declared, “So my first week of teaching was that.” These words signalled disappointment in how she was received by the school as a new employee.

The school was about seventy kilometres from Zoe’s home. Zoe could not find appropriate accommodation in the immediate vicinity of the school. She also did not have transport. She was offered a two bedroom flat which was part of the staff residence and only a stone throw away from her classroom. She saw some benefits in living on the school premises such as saving money and time as she need not have to commute long distances. She hoped that she would make friends soon as she was rather social and enjoyed being with people. However, Zoe had realised by the manner in which she was accepted and treated during the first week at the school that the teachers were a closed unit and did not easily allow newcomers such as herself into their space. She was not from the immediate community surrounding the school.

### ***Isolated as an outsider***

Zoe soon felt isolated in her new community. She was far from home. She did not know anybody in the local community. The teachers at the school had already made their own circle of friends in and outside of the school environment. To worsen the situation, Zoe was regarded by most of the teachers as having taken the position of a loved teacher such as Jaya. Jaya lived in the community surrounding the school. Thus she was known in the community. Jaya would have continued in her position as locum teacher and been paid from the school’s funds. But Zoe was sent to the school by the Department of Education. Zoe clarified the animosity she experienced from the staff, “I was coming in as a government post and that

was my post. She had to leave. She was friends with all the other teachers.” Zoe’s position as Funza Lushaka bursary holder was not explained to the staff of the school. Neither did she clarify her position to the colleagues.

As a mature student with some life experience, Zoe expected that she would easily fit into the school. She imagined the school as a type of a family unit. But she soon realised that the school as a whole did not function as a family unit and she was not part of it. “You are supposed to be a bit of a school family with the teachers but it’s a very dysfunctional family.” She pointed out that there was a lot of hostility amongst the staff that resulted in exuberant gossiping, open fighting and hatred. The main reason was the personal intimate relationships that the Principal, Miss Maharajh had with members of staff which resulted in favouritism but also animosities. The favouritism that played out in the school resulted in a separation between the Foundation Phase staff and the Senior Phase staff. On-going animosity amongst the staff stemmed from the hierarchical power issues that were at play in the school environment. Zoe expressed, “There is a lot of like boiling anger. People are quite mean and you just have to be careful who you talk to.”

During the first five months as a beginning teacher Zoe found herself working alone and sitting alone every day. She stayed out of the staffroom. She explained sadly that she was regarded and treated as an outsider, “So I have been seen as very much an outsider. Why are you here, what are you doing? Why are you taking our jobs?” She was also treated differently from other beginning teachers who were introduced to the learners during assembly, while she was not. “It was just kind of forgotten,” Zoe explained in a somewhat pensive tone. “They are also very wary of newcomers and they are very proud, especially if I say things about their town. I know in one incident I said, “Well, wow the wind is blowing and it is very dusty today” and their reaction was, well this is the kind of reaction I often got, “O, well don’t say anything bad about our town, it can also be very dusty or windy where you are”, and they very much they feel like they are being attacked by me.” Zoe mentioned that anything she said in general conversation was often turned around as if she was talking against the community.

### ***Teaching myself how to be a teacher***

Zoe started her teaching with very limited resources or support. The former locum teacher took all the teaching resources as well as files containing the learner profiles when she left the school. Zoe expressed her anger, “I had to start from scratch. Surely, I mean that is illegal. It is the school’s property.” Zoe had expected that she would at least find the necessary documentation that she needed. She also expected that there would be a fellow teacher at the school that would assist her in getting settled into her new school environment. “It’s been quite negative, I’m sorry,” is how Zoe explained her experiences as a mature NT.

Three weeks into her teaching career, Zoe managed to approach the Head of Department<sup>20</sup>, Mrs Moodley, and asked her if they could meet to discuss some of the concerns she had as a new teacher. However, each time Zoe tried to speak to her she was either busy or said she would meet Zoe later, but it never happened. The several grade meetings assisted Zoe in planning for her teaching. But she realised there was a lack of written information and policies regarding the organisational functioning of the school. Thus she had to reach out to other colleagues to obtain basic information related to record keeping and how things work in the school. Yet getting any form of support meant pretending that the other person was your best friend even though this may not be the case. Zoe confirmed how she played a contrived role in an attempt to find her way in the school. She declared, “I’ve actually learnt certain things about being a teacher. I would tell new teachers, there are certain people you need to become friends with. Even if you have to pretend, just pretend you like them. Have a good laugh. Pretend they are your best friend in the world.”

Zoe reflected on which aspects from her initial teacher training assisted her as an NT. She explained that her initial degree supported her with both theory and practice for teaching in her phase. Most meaningful to her were the various practical guidelines on how to teach certain topics and the organisation of files. She explained, “...how to teach certain things and how you do certain files as well as assessment.” She used the practical knowledge on the various motivational measures such as star charts to keep the learners motivated. She

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<sup>20</sup> Head of Department refers to a member of staff on the school management team that takes control of the organisation of a specific phase such as the Foundation Phase (grades one to three).

reported that she experienced a discrepancy between the information given at university and that at the school. She pointed to a specific issue related to learner abuse or learning problems where the information given by the university was not in line with happenings in the school. The university was out of touch with the protocol of dealing with such issues in the school. She supported this assertion by stressing that when she dealt with a learners' special needs, she "spoke to a parent about something and then I got reprimanded" as she did not follow the correct protocol prescribed by the school. Zoe was rather confused as she following guidelines given by the university.

Her varied teaching practice experience in different types of schools assisted her in understanding the actualities of teaching in a South African context. During her third year studies, she had gained experience of teaching in an under-resourced school in overcrowded classrooms. The school environment was rife with "in-fighting and bickering and all the rumours and the corporal punishment that was not supposed to happen." The corporal punishment in the classroom that she was teaching in "kind of got me very upset." As a student teacher she had distanced herself from these undesirable practices taking place in the school. She kept herself outside of altercations as she was only there for a short period of time. In contrast she experienced teaching in a positive school environment where there was a friendly atmosphere among the staff. Staff and learners worked together with the purpose of making the atmosphere happy for everyone. On entering her first teaching job at Belvedere Primary, she thought that her experiences in her initial training laid good foundations for her work as a teacher. However, she soon realised that there were a lot of gaps and challenges which she herself had to address. Zoe justified her thinking as, "I'm learning as I go." In learning how to operate in the new school she had to "kind of piece things together", almost like building a puzzle. In the "scramble" to find the correct pieces she looked at what other teachers were doing. Starting a filing system from scratch was a rather daunting experience. Files needed to be kept for planning and teaching. Writing reports on learners had to be done according to a certain format. Sneak previews of how other classes were arranged and managed gave her some ideas for improving her own classroom atmosphere. She took on an almost eagle-eyed approach by looking attentively at what other staff were doing and tried to follow their example.

Zoe soon realised that she was emotionally unprepared for the environment that she found herself in. She was isolated at school and within the community. She reached out to Reshma, a colleague who lived in the flat next to her on the school premises. Soon a friendship developed between Zoe and Reshma. After school, they often visited each other for a social chat. As a friend Reshma provided some emotional support to Zoe. Their chats made the feelings of isolation more bearable for Zoe. They would often share their thoughts about what was going on in their school. Their friendship remained outside of the school building. At school they didn't talk to each other much out of fear that they would be accused of siding with each other.

### ***Small vessel in a stormy ocean***

A small vessel in a stormy ocean is how Zoe's signalled her experiences of her early teaching. The hull of the vessel was her protected classroom space. She spoke passionately about, "My class. My space. I have a really good rapport with my own children in my classroom. I really enjoy teaching time." The oars of the vessel were the support staff in the school. She realised that in order to help her stay afloat in the stormy environment the secretary had assisted with all the necessary information as she knew the ins-and-outs of the staff and the school. She treated the cleaning staff and security guards with respect. Therefore they were willing to provide her with information on the learners.

Zoe knew teaching in this context where she was unknown would be hard. The teaching in her classroom was not so challenging but the practices and actions outside of her classroom she found unprincipled at times. She was able to establish herself within her classroom where she provided a supportive atmosphere to her learners. The rest of the school space she encountered as rather antagonistic and negative. She had expected it would be the other way around. She explained in a voice filled with emotion, that she had not seen, heard and learnt very nice things. She stated that besides having a storm going on around her, "you have a kind of own storm inside yourself." She often found herself in situations where she had to accept things or brush it aside. There were several times that she overheard racist remarks and derogatory language used by some teachers towards the learners. Some teachers also made nasty statements in front of the learners about how they did not want to teach the learners. These incidents that happened in the school were against her values and principles.

She had entered her teaching career with the idea that a teacher should treat learners with respect and make a difference to their lives. However, now she found herself in a space where she just had to adapt and accept what was happening so that she can fit in with the community. Zoe clarified, “I don’t accept that you kind of just brush it off. You kind of need too. Well, I have to be here. I have to become part of this community. So for the first little bit of problems, you can’t go running to the principal and say, “guess what they said.” As if preoccupied, she briefly mentioned that her initial teacher training did not prepare her emotionally for the reality of teaching. But she thoughtfully reminded herself “I don’t think they [the university] can, that’s something you have to just learn yourself.”

Her teaching during the first two months was chaotic as she tried to juggle between managing herself and her learning of teaching. But she developed self-discipline by ensuring that she was well organised. She realised that she needed to find a balance between all the teacher responsibilities that she was expected to carry out. She had also gained knowledge about people. As a social person, she would normally speak to everyone and try to make friends. To stay safe in this stormy school environment, “I’ve learnt you have to choose wisely who you say things to.” She remained teaching at the school.

### **5.3 SECTION B: VIGNETTES OF TWO AUXILIARY CASES**

As indicated in Chapter Four I made a conscious decision to design a shorter vignette from the story portrait for the cases of Mikail and Zoe. I selected a particular theme in each of these vignettes that portray a distinctive focus that are not covered by the above four narratives.

#### **5.3.1 Vignette 1: Mikail<sup>21</sup> : Meaningful moments**

##### ***A dream: wanted and needed***

As a BSc graduate, Mikail had worked as a research chemist in various industries for many years. In his early fifties, he felt a need to change his career. His initial degree allowed him

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<sup>21</sup> Mikail is a pseudonym adopted for this study.



admission into the one-year Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) programme. He qualified to teach Physical Science and Maths in Grades 10 - 12 in the Further Education and Training (FET)<sup>22</sup> field. Mikail received the Funza Lushaka bursary<sup>23</sup> to fund his studies as there was a need for trained teachers in these scarce subjects. As a bursary holder he would most likely be placed in a school in a rural area. “I wanted to go to a rural school,” he explained. He envisioned that such teaching experiences would extend his life experiences.

Mikail took up his position as a government appointed teacher at Reverie High. Reverie High was a uniracial school consisting only of Black teachers and learners. Mikail was the only Indian person at the school. This rural high school was forty kilometres away from the nearest town. Eagerly he explained that, as traditional in the isiZulu<sup>24</sup> culture, the name of the school where he started his teaching career had a specific meaning. It meant ‘*Dream of the Nation*’. Mikail laughingly exclaimed that he was so fortunate to have landed a position at this school. His experiences at Reverie High fulfilled his dream of what it meant to be a teacher. His first year of teaching was characterised by feelings of wanting to teach and being wanted by the school. The atmosphere in the school was filled with a sense of care, warmth and commitment. There was a strong work ethos amongst staff and learners. Furthermore, all the neighbouring schools in the community worked together in a close-knit cluster system. The cluster system allowed for joint work between the schools through engagement in academic and extra-mural activities.

The school was poorly resourced but was performing academically well. He elaborated, “It just had one photocopier. We didn’t have a telephone in our school”. A shortage of textbooks was a common phenomenon in the school. Learners had to share textbooks. Most of his teaching load was in Science. As a student teacher Mikail had learnt the importance of using a variety of resources to add value to teaching. Therefore he had collected a variety of

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<sup>22</sup> Further Education and Training Phase (FET) includes the higher grades (10 – 12) of the secondary school level

<sup>23</sup> FET refers to Further Education and Training Phase which includes the higher grades (10 – 12) of the secondary school level

<sup>24</sup> IsiZulu is the language dominant in KwaZulu-Natal province and one of the eleven official languages in South Africa

materials which he thought he could use in his future teaching. However, his collection was not adequate enough to assist in his teaching at Riverie High. The school had very limited materials and no laboratory for the teaching of Science. He believed that these challenges were not going to set him back in his teaching. He had been adequately prepared for such challenges in his preparation as a student teacher.

### *Learning through meaningful activities*

Mikail firmly believed that his pre-service Physical Science methodology curriculum and one specific lecturer, Professor Hall<sup>25</sup>, had prepared him to teach Science in any type of school context. He regarded Prof. Hall as his mentor. His experiences of learning from Professor Hall developed his understanding of what it meant to be a flexible teacher whom was able to deal with the many contextual challenges in teaching. Mikail recalled how his mentor lecturer developed his ability to use problem-solving strategies in his teaching. He remembered how the Physical Science students were instructed to research a topic covered in the school curriculum. Each student then had to discuss how the topic could be taught in meaningful ways to a diverse range of learners and contexts. This was followed by a group discussion on the reasoning for the selected strategies, resources and learning activities. Specific focus was placed on adapting the teaching of the topic to the specific context – whether in a school with a fully equipped laboratory or in a school with very limited resources. Mikail explained what he was instructed to think and write about, “What happens if I am in an environment where there is no laboratory, what will I do? ...I had to think up strategies to actually overcome all of these challenges.”

Another strategy that Mikail pointed out that he had learnt as a student teacher and found useful as a beginner teacher was that of “sense-making activities”. Mikail explained that it was important to give the learners activities that were meaningful to them. Meaningful meant using examples and resources to capture their attention, to allow them to think and to make connections between the concept being taught and “real life things”. Mikail cited one specific learning to teach experience that he encountered as a student teacher. “He [the lecturer] brings a boat to the class. It would go on its side when placed in water. He’d spin it

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<sup>25</sup> Professor Hall is a pseudonym adopted for this study.

and he'd say write a paragraph on why you think this happened. And you ask him, what do you think? And he said, 'I don't know myself'. He creates gaps. You don't know if you are doing the right thing or the wrong thing. He makes your mind enquire all the time."

He also learnt a lot of teaching techniques from Professor Hall during post-lesson discussions during teaching practice. Extensive feedback on his taught lessons made him understand the value of finding alternative ways of teaching the same concept or theory, especially if the learners did not grasp the concept the first time. He explained, "Prof told me, 'You got to now use another technique to get the same message across'. So I always take that into cognisance when I'm teaching."

### ***Making things happen for myself***

Riverie High provided a supportive environment as teachers were willing to assist him in understanding the functioning of his specific school culture. However, there was hardly any subject specific support in the school for Mikail as a beginning teacher. Being in a rather small school he was the only Physical Science teacher at the school. He applied his pedagogical knowledge obtained as a student teacher. He made a conscious attempt to integrate strategies and activities that would be meaningful to his learners in this teaching approach. However, the need for further in-depth support and resources moved him to reach outside the school environment. Mikail confidently mentioned that he does not wait for things to happen, rather he makes them happen. He found a great source of informal support through networking with subject colleagues such as former mentor teachers and within the cluster. Being passionate about the learners and wanting to give them the best, he often took the 200km return trip to CASME<sup>26</sup> to borrow materials for teaching in his under-resourced school.

Mikail had a wonderful experience teaching for five school terms from 2008 to April 2009 in rural Riverie High. Then his bursary contract was over, and he took up another teaching position closer to his home. He stated, "I sometimes still questioning my career move, but my passion still lie in teaching."

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<sup>26</sup> CASME refers to the Centre for Advancement of Science and Maths Education. This unit functions as a community teaching and learning resource centre for schools specifically in Science and Maths.

### 5.3.2 Vignette 2: Bronwyn<sup>27</sup> : Sour sweets

#### *Expected to be a “brilliant” novice*

Bronwyn, a 24 year-old White Christian female, did not start teaching immediately after completing her Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) qualification specialising in Early Childhood Development<sup>28</sup>. She could not find a teaching job immediately. She described herself as a rather shy introvert. Three months into the new school year, Far West Junior Primary school, one of the schools where she had left her resume, contacted her for an interview. The school was reasonably small and catered only for learners from Grades 1 to 3. Bronwyn started her teaching career in a temporary government-paid position during the second school term of 2009 teaching a Grade 3 class.

Bronwyn was excited about her first teaching position. The school used to be an all-white school during the apartheid years but the learner demographics changed dramatically in the post-apartheid years. The learner compliment consisted largely of Indian and a few Coloured learners. The School Governing Body (SGB) <sup>29</sup>was dominated by Muslim parents who played an important role in the management of the school. Thus the ethos of the school was Muslim in order to cater for the predominantly Indian Muslim learners. The teachers were mostly White teachers with only two Indian teachers. Bronwyn felt confident that she would be able to fit into this type of school culture. After all she was exposed to understanding different religions whilst doing missionary work for a year after she had completed her schooling career.

The Principal, Mrs Wickham, asked Bronwyn to come to the school for one day towards the end of the first school term to brief her in advance about her teaching responsibilities. Bronwyn was replacing Mrs Shaw who had resigned. In the staffroom Bronwyn overheard a conversation where the Principal told Mrs Shaw that she was very upset with her for leaving the school as she was a brilliant teacher. Bronwyn wondered whether she was expected to be as brilliant and whether she would be able to fill Mrs Shaw’s position. Bronwyn was well

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<sup>27</sup> Bronwyn is a pseudonym adopted for the purpose of this study.

<sup>28</sup> Schools catering for Grades 1 to 3 only are Junior Primary schools addresses learners of ages 6-8 years.

<sup>29</sup> The School Governing Body is the parent-teacher body that plays a governing function in the school

aware of her position as a novice, “I am a first year teacher coming in and, yes, I don’t know everything”. She expressed her concerns about being as brilliant as her predecessor. Bronwyn stated rather sadly, “Just hearing her say that made me feel inferior. What is being expected of me?” The school culture was dominated by teachers operating in small cliques. In an attempt to find a place in a clique she was “hop skipping to everybody.” Bronwyn found the cliques to be rather closed spaces. No clique invited her to join.

### ***From being reliant to being independent***

In her classroom she experienced major problems dealing with the numerous challenges of managing her learners on her own. She noted that she was not adequately prepared to effectively handle twenty-five energetic nine year-olds of which twenty were Muslim learners. Bronwyn expressed that she was not prepared for dealing with “real teaching” where on a daily basis she had to manage “kids crying, having a sore stomach, this one needing to go to the toilet, that one kicking.” Bronwyn had learnt in her PGCE year how to use sweets as an incentive to manage learner behaviour in her class. However, she could not just hand out any type of sweets. Her Muslim learners wanted to see the packet to confirm it was Halaal before they would eat the sweets. For Bronwyn having to continuously check the labels of the packaging and being questioned by the learners became a sour experience.

In contrast to the lack of support as a novice, Bronwyn had ample support as a student teacher. She was also exposed to different types of learner behaviour during her teaching practice sessions. Despite that, she had “phenomenal” mentor teachers that moved “beside” her by providing guidance in how to interact with and discipline the younger learners. She mostly observed the actions of the mentors in dealing with the learners. She had few opportunities to deal with problematic learners on her own. Her mentors were standing by to support her in dealing with learner behaviour whilst she was teaching. They also pointed out how to anticipate and deal with possible challenges in the classroom.

Some of the other hurdles she experienced as a first year teacher she felt she was not supported in included dealing with dominant Muslim fathers, the writing of assessment reports and being frequently checked on by the Principal. Bronwyn experienced a growing uneasiness as the Principal would come into her class unexpectedly at least once a week,

observe her teaching and then leave without giving any feedback on her observations. “I do not question authority figures,” Bronwyn answered in response to a question as to why she did not query such practices, which continued for six months. This led to feelings of self-doubt about her performance as a teacher.

Amidst the numerous challenges, Bronwyn did find valuable sources of support. In the weekly grade meetings, the Head of the Grade informed teachers of the content of the topics to be taught. She also gave examples to support the teachers understanding of how to teach the specific topics. The Head of the Grade was also nominated to support Bronwyn in her teaching. It was clearly spelt out by the Principal that it was Bronwyn’s responsibility to approach the Head for assistance. Bronwyn indicated that she thought she was managing with her teaching. She noted, “So you think you are doing all right. So you don’t go ask for help.” At the same time Bronwyn felt that she was “made to do everything on my own” and expecting a colleague to approach her. “No one came to me and asked me how am I doing. I was just told there is somebody there,” she voiced. Bronwyn expected that “she could have come beside me more, because I was just thrown in there.” Although she felt unsupported by the appointed Head of Department she found support in another colleague.

Bronwyn enjoyed teaching her learners and found satisfaction in their development. She had found a life saver within a rough sea. As a colleague, Miss Bassa not only became a real inspiration to Bronwyn but also a friend, mentor and supporter. Bronwyn made an attempt to learn more about Muslim culture from Miss Bassa so that she could better understand her learners. Miss Bassa took the time to explain to Bronwyn about Muslim culture. She gave Bronwyn practical tips on how to adapt her teaching to fit in with the cultural practices of the learners and the school.

### ***Sinking Titanic but a survivor***

Overall, Bronwyn viewed her experiences as a beginner teacher as though she was on a sinking ship, like the Titanic. But in the end she managed to survive, just like the main character in the movie *Titanic*, Rose<sup>30</sup>. The school environment and the unprofessional

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<sup>30</sup> In the film *Titanic*, Rose plays the main character that survived the freezing cold water and was able to re-tell her story.

treatment by the Principal made her lose confidence in herself as a person and a teacher. Although Bronwyn blamed herself for almost drowning, her own survival was measured in what she had learnt. In future, she stated, she would approach a more experienced teacher for advice, even when she was thinking that everything was in order. Bronwyn took a year off from teaching to re-gain her confidence before re-entering teaching again.

#### **5.4 SYNTHESIS OF CHAPTER**

This chapter provided the narrative accounts in the form of four story portraits and two vignettes as the first level of analysis. These narratives were organised around themes that emerged from the semi-structured interviews data transcriptions.

Chapter Six describes the second level of abstraction in the form of case analysis of the four main participants. This chapter is organised around the first component of EPL, namely the ITE programme. Chapter Seven will follow a similar pattern of case analysis around the second component of the School Environment.

## **CHAPTER SIX: DATA ANALYSIS – INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION (ITE) PROGRAMME**

### **6.1 ORIENTATION**

In this chapter I offer analysis of the six participant cases around their EPL acquired within the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes as the first component of the EPL system. The chapter is organised around themes as indicators of selected types of learning that the participants viewed as influential to their EPL, in response to the first critical sub-question of this study. Considering this view, the purpose of my study requires an in-depth engagement in the reflections of the NT participants around their learning within their respective ITE programmes (PGCE or BEd) as a component of EPL of the NT. Thus learning within the ITE programme emerged as the first central theme for data analysis.

Chapter Two reported the global discourses around selected key issues on the quality of ITE programmes and some of the influential factors (such as the theory-practice divide) related to these programmes, on the experiences of NTs. Although Chapter Four provided the context of this study in relation to the methodological design, I prefer to provide a clear account of the overall concept of the ITE programme, before offering a scrutiny of the data. According to the Higher Education Qualification Framework for South Africa, an ITE programme is “a purposeful and structured set of learning experiences that leads to a qualification” (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2007, p.6). For the purpose of this study ITE programmes refer to the four-year BEd or the one-year PGCE (details were provided in Chapter Four).

“*Programme*” includes the respective curricula (BEd or PGCE) as well as the learning spaces which form an integral part of the ITE programme. Each programme consists of two interdependent components, a formal curriculum and an informal component. The formal curriculum takes the form of the taught lecture component (or first space) which happens through formal class-based contact sessions (“about teaching”) and the practical experiential component (“doing teaching”) which includes teaching practice. The formal practical component (or second space) covers both the campus-based university experiences, for



example the micro-teaching component, and the school-based experience component during the blocked teaching practice sessions. Within this study, the informal component of the programme emerged as key to learning. I thus decided to refer to this component as a third space.

Foregrounding this first central theme of the ITE programme was based on three considerations. Firstly, I wanted to understand NTs' views on their teacher preparation within the ITE programme (either BEd or PGCE) at UKZN as I assumed that such preparation would influence their learning experiences as a first year NT. Considering some on-going assumptions related to this period, such as the "*ITE curriculum does not matter*" and "*apprenticeship of observation*" (Lortie, 1975) (refer to Chapter Two), I remained interested in how the NT participants viewed their specific learning within the ITE programme. The two assumptions mentioned above signal a view that the ITE curriculum has little enduring effect on the student teachers' choices of pedagogical strategies. As a new teacher they would more than often replicate the same strategies that they were exposed to as a learner. Thus several questions were asked during the interviews with the purpose of obtaining data on how the ITE programme as the provenance or "*birthplace*" prepared the NT for their first teaching position. The use of the term "*birthplace*" in this sense refers to a place (source) where something originated or was nurtured in its early existence. I was thus particularly interested in the value that the NT participants awarded to their learning when looking back on the ITE programme.

Secondly, questions were framed to obtain data specifically related to identifying possible sources of learning within the ITE programme. Thirdly, I wanted to understand how their learning from the ITE programme influenced their teaching as an NT. In cases where learning from the student teacher phase could not be linked to the NT phase, the participants were probed as to how they would explain such challenges and how they were dealt with in the schooling context (refer to the interview questions in Appendix 2). Although the analysis of the school environment as experienced by the NT is presented in Chapter Seven, *the linkage* between the learning at university related to specific experiences as an NT is offered here in Chapter Six. Thus, careful consideration was given to the selection of key dimensions that would not overlap with the analysis in Chapter Seven (even though the relationship will be explored at a later stage). Thus the main goal of investigating the NT participants'

learning from their respective ITE programme within this study was to understand the link between learning at university and their learning experiences as an NT. Therefore, the section attempts to analyse what the sources of influence on their learning were, what they learnt from each identified source, and how their learning experiences informed EPL as an NT. Framing the analysis using a systems thinking approach (Hoban, 2002) requires understanding of the interconnectedness between elements and conditions within a system but also across a system. Viewing EPL as a system that emerges across two systems such as the ITE programme and the school environment calls for exploring the links between the two systems.

Both Chapters Six and Seven should be read as an integrated and interconnected whole, but they are separated for the purpose of detailed analysis. As a reminder, (refer to Chapter One) Chapter Five represents the synthetic complex EPL system which intersects multiple levels of influence on NTs' EPL. However for the purpose of more detailed analysis Chapters Six and Seven explores two specific "*components*" of the EPL system independently. Whilst these latter chapters are independent components for the purpose of analysis, Chapter Eight will show that they are part of the interconnected system of EPL as described in the conceptual framework in Chapter Three.

The resulting analysis that emerged from the in-depth individual interviews with the participants allows for a thematic grouping according to the type of learning of each of the six participants from the ITE programme. Such EPL is then presented under the following main headings namely (1) developing practically; (2) developing personally; (3) developing observationally; (4) developing emotionally; (5) developing communally; (6) developing contextually. Selected elements related to EPL from Chapter Six are further analysed in Chapter Eight and brought into dialogue with existing literature and the theoretical framework in understanding EPL as a system.

## 6.2 DAN: DEVELOPING PRACTICALLY

### 6.2.1 Shifting roles

For Dan, the root of his EPL was through his practice-based learning in schools that took place during the two formal blocked teaching practice sessions<sup>31</sup> during the course of the PGCE programme. Such practical experiences placed him as situated learner in the real world of schooling. Both these schools offered opposing contexts and as such conflicting experiences. The contexts were opposing not only in terms of physical resources but also in terms of the human resources. His experiences placed him in different roles as a student teacher. Being placed in dual roles as student, that is “*student as teacher*” and “*student as learner*”, provided useful opportunities that contributed to his learning.

His first teaching practice school<sup>32</sup> provided him a place in an under-resourced school context. He found the positive collegial relations in the school inspirational to his learning. The school had an active management team that ensured a supportive working environment. As such, teachers reached out to assist student teachers. In his words:

“I enjoyed the management as well. How they run the school and how they approach their staff.”

The incident where his appointed mentor had to suddenly take leave, four days after commencement of his teaching practice at the school, meant a shift in his role as a student teacher to full-time teacher of learners. This unexpected event resulted in Dan having to stand in for his mentor teacher by taking on the dual role of “*student as teacher*” and “*student as learner*”. In his role as “*student as teacher*” he had to work independently in his teaching of Business Studies to the Grades 10, 11 and 12 classes. He explained that no other mentor was appointed to support him. In his words, “I had no mentor, I just had to start teaching,” and “I

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<sup>31</sup> PGCE student do two blocked teaching practice sessions during the one-year programme.

<sup>32</sup> The first teaching practice session refer to the four week period in a selected school during April-May of the PGCE year.

was lost but I eventually found my feet.” In the role of “student as learner” he managed to overcome the gaps in his content knowledge by teaching himself the required subject content knowledge. He had opportunities to experiment with different teaching approaches as he was allowed autonomy in his class. However, he did have the support from other teachers in the school. The co-operative climate amongst the staff allowed him to ask for advice on understanding some of the subject content. Furthermore, he received support from other teachers on developing his knowledge of learner behaviour and assessment. He expressed his role as follows:

“So I took the classes over that he had [his mentor] and I had to set up a test as well. But I had nice support from the other teachers.”

Although challenged, Dan’s exposure to such dual roles in his capacity as teacher-in-training prepared him for a similar dual role as an NT. As NT he had to engage not only in the role of teacher but also in the role of “teacher-learner”. He had to learn the necessary subject knowledge in order to be able to effectively teach the grade to which he was appointed. His teaching practice provided the foundations that allowed for his understanding of the shifting roles that were part of learning to become a teacher.

### **6.2.2 Active comparisons**

Dan experienced a number of restrictions during his second teaching practice<sup>33</sup> that affected him adversely. Yet these challenging experiences contributed to his learning. He found working with a small class in a special needs school very rewarding. His classroom space allowed for individualised attention to the small number of learners. Within this space he found moments that simulated his creative side of teaching as he attempted experimenting with pedagogical strategies. However, the power games that were at play at the school influenced the entire school culture. Power differentials amongst the staff resulted in a dictatorial management style which subsequently impacted on him as a student teacher. His supervising teacher (he preferred not to refer to her as his mentor teacher), was a Head of

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<sup>33</sup> The second teaching practice session refers to the six week period in a selected school during July and August of the PGCE year.

Department and a member of the management team. There was an established prescribed way of teaching and learning in the school that was dictated by the management team and which he had to conform to. The institutional culture was reflected as, “this is my school and this is the way I do it”. This statement signals a sense of ownership by management over the learners and staff. As such Dan felt restricted in trying out his teaching strategies in this school. His on-going discussions with his supervising teacher in an attempt to implement or negotiate around some of his teaching strategies did not pay off. He was told to imitate the supervising teacher’s teaching style and to become a *carbon copy* of the teacher. Dan felt disregarded in his attempts to use his discretion and initiative in the learning process of how to be a teacher. He was deliberately forced into the role of *silent* student teacher. He reverted to adopting a more passive role by not questioning authority and sitting out this teaching practice session. However, he made a conscious decision towards the end of his teaching practice stint to speak up by disclosing how he felt about his treatment. Dan’s closing remarks to the Principal of the school were,

“Thank you, I’ve learnt so much from you. I said: I have learnt everything you do I will do the opposite. And I will be a success,”

This statement points to his learning by taking control of the negative experiences he encountered. Not only did he alert the Principal as to how the management of the school impacted on him as developing teacher but he also impressed his aspirations and determination of being a future successful teacher. His outright assertion that he “will be a success” also indicated that he felt demotivated as person and emerging teacher at this school. His desire to articulate his feelings caused him to take action to protect his personal dignity through re-assurance that he will succeed in the future. This can be seen as a significant moment that contributed to his sense of gaining professional agency. The staff conflicts and the form of management that was inherent in the institutional culture of this school hindered Dan’s professional learning. He had to take ownership through self-agency, by claiming back his dignity as a developing professional.

For Dan, his formal practice teaching<sup>34</sup> in two diverse types of school was far more valuable as a source of learning than the formal lecture component of the ITE curriculum. His EPL in a formal teaching university context was primarily through the practice of teaching in the real contexts of a school setting as a student teacher.

### **6.2.3 Learning-within-practice**

Dan expressed the view that the lectures did not prepare him adequately to teach the specific prescribed content in the subjects that he taught. Within the PGCE lecture programme, “it is assumed that you know the content”, which he felt was not the case. He had an expectation that the ITE curriculum would prepare him to teach the school curriculum. He claimed that the subject specific content covered in his general initial degree (B.Com) was not aligned to the school curriculum. As such he expected that the PGCE as a professional qualification was geared towards preparing for teaching in schools. He was aware and understood that the PGCE lecture programme was specifically designed to mainly cover content pedagogical knowledge in the specialisation lectures. However, he found the lack of subject content knowledge problematic in both phases as a student teacher and as an NT. As the PGCE programme did not provide opportunities to come to grips with the subject knowledge needed for teaching, he had to teach himself first what needs to be taught before he engaged with how to teach the subject. As a student teacher he had to resort to mastering the content knowledge covered in the school curriculum. This was rather challenging as time constraints and workload pressures as a student teacher made it difficult to adequately master the content to be taught in every lesson. Situational constraints in his schools, such as high rates of teacher absenteeism, often resulted in him having an almost full teaching load rather than the expected manageable load as a developing student teacher. Thus trying to manage a full teaching load and master subject content knowledge was rather challenging. During his first teaching practice session<sup>35</sup> he learnt to take initiative to approach other teachers in the school for support. Some teachers assisted him by explaining difficult content to him. Such

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<sup>34</sup> Teaching Practice forms a formal part of the PGCE curriculum. PGCE students are expected to do two blocked teaching practice sessions in two different schooling contexts. It is recommended that the students select an under-resourced school for one of these blocked sessions (refer to Chapter Four - Participants)

<sup>35</sup> The first teaching practice session refers to the four week period in a selected school during April-May of the PGCE year.

incidental learning moments allowed him to gain valuable content knowledge needed for his immediate teaching needs, and such student teacher experiences prepared him for situations where he had to take control of his own learning in his role as an NT. As NT he again became a learner teacher as he had to teach himself subject content knowledge.

It became clear from the data that Dan internalised his learning experiences through a comparison of his experiences in the two teaching practice schools. He not only attempted to understand his interactions within each of the schools but also compared his learning in each of the contexts. His comparison was based on his prior working experience in the private sector. Extending such tacit workplace knowledge made him aware of the influence of management and the institutional culture on the position and subsequent development of the employee. Thus his learning highlighted the value for student teachers to experience the realities of being a teacher in diverse school contexts during their time in the ITE programme. Such lived experiences could contribute to a deeper engagement and understanding of the influences of contextual realities on a teachers' work. The outcome of his experiences of working in an under-resourced school with a supportive management and staff environment offered him new ways of understanding the realities of teaching, in a different context within the teaching profession.

Although Dan was placed in an unplanned role of student as teacher in his first practicum school, he managed not only to survive but also to learn. The supportive culture provided conducive conditions for his learning. Paradoxically, the under-resourced school lacked physical resources but offered rich professional support within a caring environment. Furthermore it was this less-resourced school which provided Dan as student teacher the best learning resource in the form of self-reliance.

In contrast to these experiences, his second school placed him in a somewhat forced role of silent restricted student teacher. He had learnt that certain staff interactions and hierarchical power games influenced the learning experiences of the student teacher. Such learning contributed to his understanding of the complexities of the school as a working living organisation. Dan also realised that agency rests in the ability to be able to have some form of autonomy as student teacher. However, he tried to re-gain his sense of agency during his second teaching practice stint by refusing to be put down by certain teachers in the school and

standing up for himself. He had also learnt that a student teacher and NT can survive even if thrown in at the deep end, provided there was some form of support provided by the staff in the school. However, he also realised that a person should take control by asking for assistance. *Learning-within-practice* moved him to understand how a developing teacher should be self-reliant for their own professional learning.

## **6.3 BRONWYN: DEVELOPING OBSERVATIONALLY**

### **6.3.1 Watching a mentor**

Similarly to Dan, Bronwyn identified learning from teaching practice as the most valuable element in her ITE preparation. In Bronwyn's reflections on her learning, she primarily highlighted the value of having "phenomenal" mentor teachers during blocked teaching practice sessions. She found the mentoring support valuable for developing her teaching skills in her position as a student teacher. The mentors assisted her in gaining solid understanding of learner behaviour and classroom management strategies. Her understanding was acquired mostly through observations of the mentor teachers' strategies and actions. Within her own teaching practices, she was able to deal with learner behaviour through mentor assistance. Mentor assistance was through advice either on anticipating certain learner behaviour or on dealing with such behaviour. The mentor teacher also intervened directly with learner behaviour whilst Bronwyn was teaching. Such supporting activities from the mentor teacher assisted Bronwyn as student teacher to teach her lessons effectively.

It is assumed that having a mentor teacher work *beside* a student teacher is a normal occurrence in a supportive school environment. However, too much of a *walking-beside-by-holding-on* mentoring approach could hinder the professional learning of the student teacher. Similarly, providing too few opportunities where the mentor teacher let go of the student teacher (especially in their final teaching practice session) to *walk on their own* deprive the student of developing certain professional knowledge and skills needed as an NT. The lack of setting up sufficient opportunities for the student teacher to work independently may result in a possible reliance of the student teacher on the mentor teacher. As such the student teacher may become indirectly dependent on the immediate and close-by support from a mentor. *Unbalanced assisted learning* may hold potential dangers for the future teacher as



she needs to have the ability to function independently without having immediate support. The influence of too little and too much refers to the Goldilocks Principles (Opfer & Pedder, 2011) mentioned in Chapter Two.

### **6.3.2 Shifting performances: from watching to doing**

Bronwyn's story revealed that she found herself in a *protective space* during her teaching practice. She could rely on implementing her observations of her mentor teacher's classroom practices. Furthermore her own teaching was supported by a mentor teacher that was in close proximity. As such, her teaching practice experiences influenced her expectations of having support adjacent to her when she started her teaching career. However, she shifted from the protective and dependent space offered during her teaching practice to an *un-protective self-reliant space* as an NT. Analysis of the data reveals that as an NT she expected that support would be close-by, readily available and offered to her. Yet, in contrast she was expected to work independently with no support. Dealing with "real teaching" required her as an inexperienced teacher to have to deal self-sufficiently and effectively with "kids crying, having a sore stomach, this one needing to go to the toilet, that one kicking." She struggled to manage on her "own" as she was "just thrown" into the classroom. The services of a "mentor" teacher (Head of Grade) were offered to her but she had to take the initiative to ask for individualised support. Thus there was an expectation from the school that Bronwyn had to be self-reliant. Support was offered but it was up to her to consciously make an attempt to ask for support based on her needs. Interestingly, Bronwyn indicated that she never asked for support from the Head as Bronwyn herself believed that she was coping adequately in her teaching. In contradiction to that view, Bronwyn expressed that she would have had a better understanding of what the school expected of her if there was a mentor or support teacher that approached her ("walk beside me more") to find out about her well-being as a novice.

"No one came to me and asked me how am I doing. I was just told there is somebody there."

Why did she have an expectation that teachers would offer her support? Why did she not tap into the source of support in the form of the Head of Grade that was offered to her? Having

been exposed to abundant support from an adjacent mentor during teaching practice as well as her introvert nature may be offered as possible explanations for her early career choices.

### **6.3.3 From adjacent learning to self-reliance**

The value of a student teacher developing adjacently to a mentor teacher during teaching practice is acknowledged. Such adjacent learning through observations and support has a place in professional learning. However, there is a need specifically in the final teaching practice session to allow for opportunities to shift from adjacent learning to self-reliant learning. 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. Independent opportunities to practise strategies, such as classroom management in this case, allow for a shift from *observation-of-practice* to *learning-within-practice* (as in the case of Dan). Allowing Bronwyn as a student teacher to progressively handle the class on her own during her teaching lessons would have provided more first-hand experiences for learning-in-practice. The mentor's supportive role raises a question as to whether the mentoring practice merely assisted Bronwyn in teaching effectively in the short-term during teaching practice rather than developing her independent teaching abilities for her role as NT.

## **6.4 NICK: DEVELOPING PERSONALLY**

### **6.4.1 Making choices**

Developing personally is influenced by specific internal or external activities that improve, build or enhance the personal-self (that is a sense of person). Nick's story revealed that making specific choices during the ITE programme in relation to his experiences as an NT influenced his EPL.

Interestingly, Nick merely mentioned in one statement that he had "pleasant and happy times" in his teaching practice schools. He did not expand on his experiences and/or learning

during these sessions. His responses were mostly limited to his choice of schools for teaching practice to highlight the incongruence between his teaching practice school cultures and his employing school culture. His choice to do both his teaching practice sessions<sup>36</sup> in two secondary schools was aligned to his teaching specialisation field. However, his retrospective reflections revealed that his choice of teaching practice schools impacted on his own interpretation of the primary school context that he entered as an NT. He somehow had a mistuned conception that the secondary school cultures that he experienced during his teaching practice sessions would be aligned with the primary school culture where he commenced his teaching career. This signals that as a student teacher he had a general assumption that the cultures of different schools would offer the same working conditions. Similarly he assumed that similar operational conditions drive schools.

#### **6.4.2 Escalating anticipations**

Nick indicated there was a huge disparity between what he had learnt as a student teacher and what was expected of him as an NT in his first teaching position. He felt that his PGCE programme prepared him for *utopia* and not for the *real world of schooling*. The theory covered in the formal lecture programme as well as the practical experiences during his two formal teaching practice sessions prepared him for the ideal classroom situation and not for the reality of the numerous challenges of the school as a workplace.

Despite his critical reflections on the ITE programme, he explained that the university atmosphere (or what I would refer to as the *third space*) where he studied to become a teacher provided a warm and pleasant professional learning environment. During the first individual interview he made use of the metaphor of a rollercoaster ride to portray his experiences as an NT. During the second follow-up interview he extended the metaphor to include his experiences as a student teacher. Nick requested during the follow-up interview to add another drawing (refer to drawings in Chapter Four) to reflect his frame of mind about his experiences at university during the PGCE year. He compared his experiences of learning to be a teacher to the excited start of a rollercoaster ride. For him, preparing to become a teacher was filled with feelings of pleasure and happiness. His professional learning during the PGCE year occurred in an environment that left him with feelings of excitement. He thrived

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<sup>36</sup> PGCE student do two blocked teaching practice sessions during the one-year programme.

in his development on the support of peers and lecturers. Such feelings signal internal affective learning. He compared these emotive features with sitting in the rollercoaster before it commenced the ride. This waiting period was filled with feelings of great anticipation whilst looking forward to reaching the climax, which was the commencement of his career as an NT. He explained,

“You know when you go on a rollercoaster ride. First it starts of going up slowly, nice and pleasant, going up smoothly. Once you get to the top, the climax, then the school should come in. Suddenly, then you go down. But then it became a weird ride.”<sup>37</sup>

However, his preparation initiated an imagined image of being a teacher which did not connect to his lived experiences of a “weird ride” as an NT. He had imagined that his actual experiences as an NT would be different. He had expected a more collegial supportive school environment, similar to that of the university campus (refer to drawings in Chapter Four).

### **6.4.3 Developing self-confidence**

Nick learnt valuable personal attributes and skills in the form of self-confidence, public speaking and assertiveness. Nick found the structured interactive activities within the formal ITE programme to be the most useful source of learning. The small group discussions and whole-class presentations during contact sessions in the lecture programme provided powerful spaces for developing his public speaking. Teaching during practice teaching added to the development of these personal attributes. He explained his personal position when he entered the PGCE programme and what he had learnt,

“I was not the most confident person when I first started out, especially with regard to public speaking. I hated having to stand up in front of a crowd and talk. Then because of the PGCE, because there was so much interaction in class, you’ve gotta talk and present your arguments and your perspective on things. Then you go on to your teaching practice, and are you just thrown into the deep end, and you stand up in front of this class.”

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Refer to Chapter Four Section 4.3.6

He pointed out two specific activities during the lectures that provided opportunities for him to learn to express himself and to develop his oratory skills. The interactions with his peers during small group discussions allowed critical moments where he was able to voice his opinion and engage in academic arguments. The plenary sessions were also opportunities where he was able to give feedback on the group discussions and defend the group's views. Embedded in the teaching practice sessions were demanding situations of having to stand up and speak in a classroom full of strange learners. These experiences expanded his learning of his oratory skills and also contributed to his gradual development of self-confidence.

On entering the PGCE, Nick had not expected the development of his self-confidence within this programme. His specific learning in assertiveness and oratory skills in the ITE programme merely resulted from his engagement in the type of interactive activities that were entrenched in the PGCE programme. Such personal development provided him with a degree of self-confidence that influenced him in positioning himself as an NT in his new workplace. Nick approached his position as an NT as a self-assured person. He entered his first employing school with a confident and assertive approach by standing up for his principles. He stated, "I would stand up for what I believe in" (refer to Chapter Seven on school environment).

Nick's accounts foreground his personal learning, such as attributes and skills. Self-confidence, public speaking, decision making, assertiveness and facilitation within the formal participatory approaches within the ITE programme were key to his learning. His personal learning is evident in the shift from being fearful of articulating his opinion in public (when he started out as a student teacher) to adopting a stance of speaking up and being heard (in his position of NT). Nick created his own personal conditions for learning as he took conscious decisions to participate in the collaborative learning opportunities.

Similarly to Dan, Nick's reflective comparisons of the two contextual environments (university and schools) were a key source of his EPL within the ITE programme. Another aspect that emerged in his learning is the significance of personal choice as an element of decision making. The cognitive action of reflecting on his choices of his teaching practice

schools in relation to the type of school that he selected for his first teaching position signals a fixed perception that working environments would be similar.

He also learnt the value of positive feelings that were evoked in a warm and supportive atmosphere in his development as a student teacher. Within such a supportive university environment he found a trustworthy collaborative environment that contributed to his personal development of being a teacher.

## **6.5 LEESHA: DEVELOPING COMMUNALLY**

### **6.5.1 Connected spaces**

Leesha reflected on the comparisons between the university atmosphere and the atmosphere in her employing school. But she also extended her comparisons to the type of support that she received as a student teacher in her teaching practice schools compared to the limited support in her employing school.

Similarly to Nick, Leesha's learning in the ITE programme was confined to the type of learning atmosphere or third space in the form of the university environment where she studied for the BEd qualification. She regarded the type of contextual atmosphere that prevailed on the university campus as a source of inspiration for learning. Leesha valued the non-formal social space of professional learning that existed through the supportive climate and relations between people on campus. For her, there was a "close knit" atmosphere between students and staff at the university. The collaboration amongst the students such as in peer study groups, together with the open-door policy of the lecturers, made this a *space of connectedness and closeness* where people worked together. This kind of proximity provided her with many opportunities to ask for support and information as and when needed. Co-operation and encouragement were key elements that she found useful in learning to be a teacher. As she explained,

"You help one another. You know you work together [at university]."

Learning to become a teacher within a four-year BEd programme within a supportive environment provided the grounding for her expectations of being a teacher in a school. The mentor teachers that were assigned to her over the three years during her teaching practice sessions<sup>38</sup> allowed for “abundant” support and mentoring as she was “never short of help or assistance.” As a student teacher, Leesha’s mentors were also available to assist in “anything I needed, any advice that I needed about the school or if I had a problem”. These mentors also operated as “adjacent” mentors as in the case of Bronwyn.

Thus, there was an expectancy that the school space where she was expected to be a qualified teacher would provide her with a similarly warm and supportive atmosphere as the university space where she studied to become a teacher. In contradiction to these feelings of support and co-operation within a *close family* that she experienced at university, she found her first teaching school rather a *site of struggle* that offered a cold, hostile and unsupportive environment (this is further discussed in Chapter Seven).

### **6.5.2 Disruptive spaces**

Leesha acknowledged that certain decisions she made as a student teacher impacted on her experiences as an NT. Leesha’s expectations of similar environments and available support were not lived as experiences within her employing school. Her traumatic experiences at the school resulted in self-blame. She blamed herself for not being able to teach and for not coping in a challenging school context as an NT. Her self-blame was linked back to her decisions that she took for her choice of schools for teaching practice sessions. Her *conscious decisions* at the time to select “good” schools for her teaching practice that was well-resourced with strong management teams and limited learner discipline problems influenced her early career experiences as an NT.

“I didn’t pick a school where you know I would be exposed to some of the problems that teachers face nowadays.”

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<sup>38</sup> BEd students are involved in an annual four week blocked teaching practice sessions in the 2,3 and 4<sup>th</sup> years of the programme.

She implied that as a student teacher she did not give much thought to selecting an under-resourced school or a challenging school that would *disrupt* her teaching. At the time of her teaching practice she did not think about the long-term benefits of exposing herself to some of the problems teachers face in such schools. As such her choices rested in selecting schools that offered comfortable spaces for her to work in. Her employing school, according to Leesha, was rife with socio-economic, micro-political and organisational challenges for which she was not prepared. She looked within herself by taking responsibility for the choices of schools for teaching practice rather than blaming her higher education institution. She declared,

“I do take full responsibility. I never really thought about teaching in an under-resourced school.”

Her self-blame gave rise to self-doubt. Her self-blame was not only restricted to her choice of teaching practice schools. At the time of making the selection for the teaching practice schools she had a pre-conceived idea that teaching would be similar in any school irrespective of contextual conditions. Such an assumption signals a lack of experience and of exposure to a wider variety of schooling contexts. The implication of her choices impacted on her attitude towards the profession as she experienced inner turmoil about teaching as a career. The challenges that she experienced in her teaching school left her with feelings of confusion and utter despair to the point that she had serious doubts about continuing with teaching as a career.

“Maybe in my mind I had this misconceptions that you know teaching in the classroom is always going to be like this, ideal. Suddenly now when I’ve qualified, I get thrown into this situation. I’m like you know what this profession is not for me. If this is what teaching is all about in some schools, I’m telling you I am in the wrong profession.”

Her experiences as an NT made her aware that exposure to diverse contexts during her teaching practice sessions would have better prepared her for understanding a wider range of contexts and school cultures. She felt that she would have been more adequately prepared



and empowered for her role as beginner teacher if she had experienced how different types of schools function. She explained,

“I think actually it would have opened my eyes. I would have been exposed to being in a school like this you know, um I may not have had all the skills for the first six months [as a novice], of course not. But at least I would have known, look this is what other schools are like, here is an ex-model C [former White] school or here is a very well-resourced school where the kids are well-disciplined and then of course on the other hand there is the school where things are the exact opposite.”

Overall Leesha’s learning was achieved by making a reflective comparison between the institutional culture of the university and that of her school culture. She had learnt that there was support within a close community, compared to opposition in a school rife with individualism. She understood how *collegial spaces*, such as she experienced within her university, could assist in information and knowledge sharing as well as emotional support, whereas her first employing school was an uncaring environment that evoked feelings of being unwanted and isolated. Learning occurred in Leesha’s self-realisation that she made incorrect choices. The consequences of such choices meant not being adequately prepared when she started teaching in a disruptive space such as the school environment.

Both Nick and Leesha learnt that supportive spaces, where people work closely, as they are connected by having similar purposes (such as shared learning), create conducive conditions for personal and professional learning. Both of these participants gave significance to the influence made by their *personal choices* of their teaching practice schools on their process of learning to become a teacher.

## **6.6 ZOE: DEVELOPING EMOTIONALLY**

### **6.6.1 How to teach?**

Zoe felt that she was adequately prepared for teaching in a Foundation Phase classroom during the four-year BEd programme. She placed emphasis on the practical hands-on approaches that she learnt. Certain general and content pedagogical knowledge related to classroom strategies, handling learner behaviour and record keeping she found useful as an NT. The “how to teach certain things and how you do certain files as well as assessment,” came through in discussions during formal lecture sessions. This knowledge was further extended through her own experiences of teaching during the three blocked teaching practice sessions that she experienced<sup>39</sup>. Observing how her mentor teachers implemented certain classroom strategies also provided her with a good understanding of classroom management strategies.

Zoe pointed out two aspects where she felt the ITE programme was lacking. As did Nick, she indicated the lack of congruence between her learning acquired at university and what was actually happening in the school environment. Where Nick emphasised to being prepared for an ideal world of teaching rather than to reality, Zoe found inconsistencies between the procedural information provided by lectures and the procedures applied in the real school situation. She gave an example of this discrepancy. Using her acquired knowledge from university, she “spoke to a parent about something and then I got reprimanded” as she did not follow the correct protocol stipulated by the school policy. This implies that a teaching practice curriculum offered within the school could contribute to schools playing a more active role in student teachers’ learning specifically related to organisational professional practices.

### **6.6.2 How to feel?**

The second aspect that Zoe pointed out was rather a personal need than a gap in her ITE preparation. She felt that she was not emotionally prepared for the numerous challenging conditions of a new working environment. During her third year of teaching practice, she

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<sup>39</sup> The blocked teaching practice sessions of the BEd programme entailed spending four weeks in a school during the second, third and fourth year of the programme.

indicated that she experienced emotional turmoil at the teaching practice school. Her inner conflict about the work of a teacher came about as a result of “in-fighting and bickering and all the rumours and the corporal punishment that was not supposed to happen.” However, as a student teacher although she found it emotionally disturbing, she decided to stand outside of these practices by not getting involved. She thus became an outsider looking-in with the view that she was temporarily moving through an undesirable space. This critical emotional experience was viewed by Zoe as influential in her understanding of the emotional side of a teacher’s work. It also signalled a need for emotional management of the self.

Her emotional unpreparedness for the school as workplace setting was not so much in her teaching work but was mostly associated with issues that were happening outside of her classroom. Emotional preparedness implied having the ability to deal with emotions as a person-teacher. Her learning evidently included how to handle distressed feelings as a result of clashes between personal values and contextual practices in schools. The infliction of corporal punishment in her teaching practice classroom “kind of got me very upset,” as it was against her principles. Such practices resulted in inner tensions, and tensions between herself and the teacher. However, the polaric tensions between personal values and undesirable practices in the school created emotional instability. She dealt with such emotional turmoil by taking a conscious stance to not get involved with external issues that she felt she had no control over. She shifted to rather trying to deal with her own inner conflicting emotions.

### **6.6.3 Self-managed emotions**

Although Zoe pointed to a need for emotional preparation within the ITE programme, she realised it was a rather unrealistic expectation. Therefore developing emotionally should be *self-driven*.

“I don’t think they [university] can, that’s something you have to just learn yourself.”

A key issue that Zoe viewed that could possibly contribute to more adequate emotional preparation about being a teacher is to learn about people and social interactions.

Overall, Zoe’s learning was mostly related to general and content pedagogical knowledge that she acquired during the formal lecture sessions and practice teaching. Learning about the

emotional side of being a teacher was core to Zoe's EPL. Having the ability to shift into becoming an inside-out learner meant developing the personal ability for self-management of teacher emotions.

## **6.7 MIKAIL: DEVELOPING CONTEXTUALLY**

### **6.7.1 Connections to the real world**

Mikail believed that his pre-service education prepared him adequately for the challenges of teaching in a rural under-resourced environment as his first employing school. He entered the formal ITE preparation phase as a mature student with years of work experience in the industrial sector. These biographical features as personal conditions became the foundations of how he approached his learning within the ITE programme. His individual life experiences influenced his approach to his preparation as a teacher. This personal knowledge allowed for a deeper mature understanding of the need to prepare learners for the *realities of the working world*. Entering the Physical Science ITE curriculum with such prior knowledge enabled him to learn from the pedagogical strategies employed by one of his lecturers as his *professional mentor*.

These strategies became core to his learning of teaching. Mikail found the problem-solving approaches and sense-making activities valuable in learning how to teach Science. The use of problem-based learning as a key strategy developed his disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge. He learnt through a process of inquiry through individual tasks and group discussions set up by his lecturer. As a student teacher his learning was grounded in his own active engagement in a process of researching topics (developing subject content knowledge), designing teaching strategies for a diverse range of learning contexts and providing reasoning for the design of such strategies (content pedagogical knowledge). As such conceptual and pedagogical inputs within the formal lecture programme became a key source of learning about teaching for diversity. Mikail cited how he was encouraged to think of teaching strategies that would best suit a specific type of schooling environment,

“What happens if I am in an environment where there is no laboratory, what will I do?  
....I had to think up strategies to actually overcome all of these challenges.”

The individual attempts of student teachers in the design of learner activities were subjected to analysis within the group discussions. Within this *communal learning* setting Mikail found a vital support system.

Furthermore the focus on designing “sense-making activities” as a specific content pedagogical strategy provided him with the understanding of certain design principles to ensure that learner activities allow for relevance. Conscious thinking within the group discussions allowed him to understand the value of ensuring that learners are connected to reality and that they are able to make such connections between taught concepts and the living world. Teaching that is connected to “real life things” provided foundations for his developing philosophy of teaching. The use of concrete examples by the lecturer (cited in the quote below) allowed Mikail as student teacher to develop conceptual and pedagogical knowledge through first hand practical experience. Such activities used within the formal lectures allowed him to develop his knowing of how to use real life objects as motivational stimulus for reasoning. It also allowed Mikail as student teacher to develop his conceptual disciplinary knowledge.

“He [lecturer] brings a boat to the class. It would go on its side when placed in water. He’d spin it and he’d say, ‘write a paragraph on why you think this happened’. And you ask him, ‘what do you think?’ And he said, ‘I don’t know myself’. He creates gaps. You don’t know if you are doing the right thing or the wrong thing. He makes your mind inquire all the time.”

The above quote signals the role of the lecturer as expert (subject specialist and facilitator) in designing opportunities for the student teachers to engage in participatory teaching and learning approaches. Furthermore the activity provided a clear example of how learning can be structured to move learners to think and reason.

### **6.7.2 Valuing a professional mentor**

Mikail found a mentor in his Science lecturer. He learnt from his mentor the meaning of Science teaching and being a meaningful Science teacher. He also developed an

understanding of what it means to be a situated flexible teacher who is capable of adapting his teaching style to suit the diversity of a school and its learners.

During formal teaching practice, Mikail was able to further extend his learning from his Science lecturer as university tutor. Through in-depth valuable post-lesson feedback, Mikail was provided with learning opportunities to deepen his content pedagogical knowledge. Mikail explained one such an occasion:

“Prof told me, ‘You got to now use another technique to get the same message across’. So I always take that into cognisance when I’m teaching.”

The teaching practice arrangements that enabled the lecturer as learning facilitator to tutor Mikail allowed for deeper engagement between professional mentor and student teacher. The Science community of learning within the formal lecture spaces was extended to the formal teaching practice sessions. Such practices allowed for a shift from the deficit approach (theory-practice gap) to teacher education to ensuring a connected approach. The active and on-going learning engagements between professional mentor and student teacher allowed for theoretical perspectives learnt in the formal lecture spaces to be put into reflective practice in schools. As such the professional mentor set up strategies to build a learning community of Science teachers that extended beyond the walls of the lecture room.

Interestingly, Mikail focused mainly on his learning from the Science department. The reason may be that his passion was more in Science than Maths teaching. Furthermore, in contrast to Nick and Leesha, he did not compare institutional environments. It could be implied that his prior working experiences in the private sector paved the way to understanding the diversities in working conditions. Similar to Dan, he adopted an attitude of “don’t wait for things to happen but make it work for yourself”.

Mikail developed meaningful conceptions of learning at three levels. Firstly, he learnt about the interconnectedness between theory and practice. At a second level his learning extended his beliefs about teaching for relevance. This was achieved by learning how to create opportunities for learners’ that would allow them to connect their classroom learning to the real world of work. The wide range of teaching strategies for diverse schooling contexts that

were discussed in the Science learning community allowed for *learning-within-practice*. The way Mikail pursued professional learning within an active lecturing space provides evidence for how contexts influences the way teachers approach their teaching style.

## 6.8 SYNTHESIS OF CHAPTER

In this chapter I offered a synthesis of the key issues that emerged from the narrative accounts of six NT cases. The three categories of learning sources within the ITE programmes that emerged from the data were the formal lectures (first space); formal teaching practice sessions (second space) and the non-formal social spaces of the university (third space). In summary, learning that surfaced from these sources related to *personal learning*, thus learning about self (attributes and skills, decision-making, assertiveness; emotional management) and *social learning* with others (with peers and within supportive communities).

In general, it seem as though the ITE programme had a somewhat limited impact in shaping their initial experiences in their first employing school. Five of the six participants highlighted the gap between theory and practice but also the disparity between the idealistic world of learning to teach at university and the reality of actual teaching in the world of schooling. They also pointed out their inadequate preparation for the diverse challenges in their first employing school as a work place environment. Only one participant, Mikail, indicated that he was prepared for dealing with the disparities between the imagined world of teaching and reality.

Whilst the university programme is geared to offer formal opportunities for learning, five of the six cases barely focused on theoretical perspectives or pedagogical knowledge as sources of learning from the formal lecture programme. In the case where Vygotsky's theory (Dan) and Outcomes Based Education (Nick) was mentioned, both participants focused more on the skill of implementing the learning principles to support their teaching rather than the value of the theory. The failure to cover school curriculum content knowledge sufficiently was also pointed out as a gap within the design of the ITE programme. Whilst these critiques offered by the NTs may be valid for where they are at their particular point of professional learning, they do not necessarily mean that this is a gap that ITE has to address. The gaps may be in

what NTs want rather than in what they need for a long term journey. I am suggesting that the NTs attention is on what would make their early stages of professional learning more manageable, tolerable and smooth. However, it may be a case that if we interviewed the same individuals many years later in their career (inside or outside of teaching) they are likely to reflect differently on the contribution the ITE programme had on their careers (inside or outside of teaching).

Professional programmes such as the PGCE and BEd may have other implications for long term career development that have not been addressed within this study. Therefore a potential limitation of the study would be if it were to suggest that relevance/ value/ worthwhileness should be immediately apparent in the early transition of the NT. This study is designed to focus only on the implications for career paths in the early years.

In terms of the teaching practice component of the ITE curriculum, both Leesha and Nick felt that their choice of schools impacted directly on their experiences as an NT. Their reflections indicated that exposure to a wider variety of contextual conditions would have better prepared them for the various challenges of schools. It seems as though the learning during the teaching practice sessions were restricted to observations, classroom management disciplinary issues and administrative procedures. Data suggests a lack of opportunities for gaining a deeper understanding of the holistic role of a teacher within specific organisational contexts. Beside Bronwyn's learning-about-practice from a protected mentor, little mention of the influence of mentors during school-based teaching practice on their learning emerged from the data. Reference to protected mentor in this sense is to a mentor that protected the student teacher from the need to deal with certain classroom challenges independently. As such the silence in the data on the role of mentors indicates that their influence on the EPL of the student teacher as an emergent future NT has been limited.

The NTs' reflections on the ITE programme in relation to the experiences as new teachers brought to light the following key issues. First, the data suggested that the NTs had complex and contradictory expectations relation to the ITE programme. In all three cases institutional comparisons were made at two levels. At the first level the university atmosphere was compared to the atmosphere at their first employing school. At a second level, comparisons were made between the teaching practice schools as potential sites for learning about



workplace settings and their first employing school. The data implied that NTs expected an extension of the *supportive, protective and collegial university environment* into the school as workplace. Evidently, there were expectations that the atmosphere and supportive conditions across the sites would be similar. Within these expectations it seems as though they did not clearly distinguish between the nature and associated roles in their position as student teacher at university and the respective teaching practice schools compared to the requirements in the role as NT. It was evident that they failed to shift their understanding of role from that of a student teacher to that of an NT. These expectations of the participants raise two questions: Is it the direct responsibility of HEI's to expose student teachers as future teachers to the diverse range of schooling environments, each with its own unique working cultures? Secondly are HEI's able to meet such a responsibility? The implications of such expectations are further subjected to analysis in Chapter Eight.

Chapter Seven will move to focus on presenting the data from the four main participants on the influence of diverse school environments on the EPL of the NT.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: DATA ANALYSIS - SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

### 7.1 ORIENTATION

Chapter Six provided a closer look at the analysis of data around the first central component of EPL. This component discussed what was learnt from the first phase of EPL, the ITE programme. More specifically, Chapter Six provided a description of the specific types of learning that the participants acquired from various sources through the ITE programmes such as the BEd and PGCE that influenced their learning as an NT. Learning was mostly related to *personal* and *social learning*. An interesting aspect that emerged from the data was the limited reference to teaching theories.

Chapter Seven shifts to focus on the second central component of EPL for data analysis. Thus this chapter offers the analysis of the data in relation to the participants' experiences in their respective first employing school environment. It presents a case analysis of the type of learning that occurred through key selected sources of the four main NT participants.

The organisation of this chapter is offered in two sections. Sections One presents the analysis of data from three of the four main participants in this study, Dan, Nick, and Leesha. I have selected certain key themes from these three NT cases to illustrate their professional learning within their specific school environments. Furthermore, the learning sources within each school environment that came to light through their lived experiences are illuminated. The selection of the three cases was based on two considerations. Recurring themes were first identified across all the data sets of the six participants. Thorough filtering of the data sets allowed for the selection of these three cases as the most exemplary. Their accounts of their lived experiences brought out certain important and interesting data in answering the second sub-question for this research study.

Section Two focuses on the case of Zoe. The case of Zoe is offered to explicate the notion of what is generally known as induction or orientation. In the case of Zoe, the focus on analysis

is centred on the theme of orientation of a newcomer to the school. The inclusion of the analysis of this specific theme is based on two considerations. Firstly, Zoe's induction to her new workplace setting presents an exemplary case for analysing the influence of induction practices or the lack thereof on the professional learning of an NT. Secondly; the inclusion of this particular case is an attempt to unravel the traditional understanding of induction as formalised, structured processes and activities. I attempt to offer a reconceptualised notion of induction that will move to a closer advanced understanding of induction with the purpose of assimilation into a specific culture where the needs of the NT are considered (refer to Chapter Eight). Thus, the purpose of analysing her inception (or induction process) into the school is to indicate how appointment practices into her teaching position influenced her EPL.

Before offering the data analysis of the four main participants, I want to clarify the use of the construct "*school environment*" as used in the title for this second central component rather than "*school context*". In scanning relevant literature in the field of school management as well as teacher education on the concepts of school context and school culture, numerous variations in the conceptualisation of school contexts and school cultures were noticed (Du Plessis et al. 2007). It became evident that the two constructs are more than often used interchangeably and as synonyms to mean the same thing. The use of either context or culture to frame the data analysis around the experiences of NTs within the school became problematic and inadequate to describe what it is about the school that should enable EPL, but does not always. I therefore decided to rather use the construct "*school environment*" to label the second central component for this study. The meaning of "environment" is explained in the online Business Dictionary (Environment, n.d) as the sum total of all surroundings in which a person or any other living organism lives or operates. Such surroundings provide conditions for the development and growth of the living organism but conditions could also threaten and damage the living organism. "Environment" according to the Merriam Webster online dictionary (Environment, n.d) means the aggregate of social and cultural conditions that influence the life of an individual or community.

These above explanations of conditions that can develop or threaten living organisms within the concept of an environment provide similarities to the concept of a system as suggested by Hoban (2002). Within the concept of a system there are also various elements and/or conditions at play within a system that can make it either functional or ineffective. More

specifically, using the construct of school environment to signal the external context as a space for professional learning of the NT seems to be better suited for the purpose of this study. Every school as a place of work is unique and provides unique learning spaces. The school environment viewed as a system is thus defined by different elements that constitute its uniqueness as a whole. However, to make meaning of how the school environment functions as a system, the relationships between the various elements need to be considered. Therefore, I worked from the notion that various elements as factors within the whole school environment play a role on the various micro-systems (such as a subject department) within the school. Within a system there are also various conditions that enable (development and growth) or disable (threatens and damages) the learning of teachers.

The analysis of each case in this chapter is organised around a specific theme that best describes the EPL of the NT.

## **7.2 SECTION ONE: Dan, Nick and Leesha**

### **7.2.1 Dan: The Strategist**

#### **7.2.1.1 Directional scanning**

Dan indicated that there was no structured orientation to his school environment when he commenced his teaching career. However, he approached his position as NT knowing what he wanted from himself in relation to what the working environment could possibly offer. His attitude was based on, “it’s what you make of it”. He managed to survive his first year as a novice by taking the initiative from the time he entered the school to purposively scan his work environment. He deliberately engaged in such a focused strategy by adopting a certain type of attitude, attempting to understand both individual personalities and the social interactions amongst the staff.

This attitude and approach was grounded in his tacit knowledge acquired through previous experiences of working in the private sector where he specifically gained insight into the complexity of human relations. Dan was conscious that these previous work experiences had indirectly prepared him for his position as an NT. His previous experiences of being responsible for staff as a Human Resources Manager and working with school learners as a

boarding house master had developed his awareness and skills in assessing peoples' characters. Such awareness resulted in his realising the need for certain personal attributes that should be put into practice in order to settle into a new working environment. Hence, his life experiences had taught him to take on a self-directed approach in fitting into his new workplace. For him such an approach meant that getting the job done required a person to *take control* and take the necessary *actions* to make it work for himself. Taking control implied taking initiative by sorting out your own problems and taking consequences for your own actions. These strong personal beliefs became his professional beliefs. He believed that he was able to adapt to his new work environment because he had the *ability to manage himself*.

#### **7.2.1.2 Focused life interest**

Dan's life experiences allowed him to understand the social nuances at play in a working environment. His prior work experiences allowed him to understand the intricacies of relationships in his first employing school. The interpretation of the data suggests that NTs need to be aware of the possible influence of interpersonal relationships in a school at two levels. Firstly, novices need to be aware that unresolved staff conflicts could impact on the school culture and learning in the classroom. For Dan the phrase, "a tripod of problems" explained how glitches among teachers became the platform for the micro-political situations that played itself out on a regular basis at his school. Unmanaged contestations as well as unhappiness amongst teachers in the school and specifically in the staffroom flowed over into the classroom. He pointed out that learners more than often picked up on the emotional effects of such contestations as the teacher moves from the staffroom to the classroom.

"The most important is if you don't get along with your staff, you not gonna get along in the classroom. Because the children know when you walk into that class, and you've just come from and you not happy in the staffroom, then you not gonna be happy in the classroom. And that filters through. It's a tripod of problems if you don't address the issue correctly."

At a second level, being aware of specific individuals' personalities, for a possible alignment with such an individual, was also an important element for an NT to consider. Dan's personal knowledge on human interactions in the workplace provided a base for his planned strategy in the survival game that he needed to play in his school context. This survival strategy of being able to function in a new and unfamiliar environment entailed approaching and becoming friends with selected key role players. He carefully chose focal teachers who he would focus on as key to providing him with immediate support in adapting to the organisational setting. This type of self-induction strategy was based on self-interest, an interest in his own immediate needs and for survival as a novice.

“Talk to and go to the most experienced teacher that looks like a nice person and say, look, if I have a problem I'm gonna ask you for help.”

For Dan, it was imperative that an NT should enter the workplace environment with basic information and skills on interpersonal relations in order to be able to work within the whirlpool of different teacher personalities. This also meant having awareness of which staff to align with.

#### **7.2.1.3 Calculated actions**

Dan found himself in a teaching position where he was appointed to teach Maths at a higher level than what he was trained for. At the first departmental planning meeting, he was unable to make any input into the proposed action schedule for teaching Maths in his grade. The discussions at this meeting and the overview it gave of the Maths teaching programme for the year made him aware of the huge gaps in his subject knowledge. However, he approached this constraint by being open about his lack of subject knowledge. In line with his self-directed approach, he took the initiative to approach the Head of Department for support on the second day after he started his teaching career. Having no formally appointed mentor in his school moved him to take initiative for his own learning which required certain *calculated actions*. Being honest and speaking up about his competency to teach, were important actions for Dan in his position as NT. He explained,

“If you keep quiet, they assume you know what you are doing. You can't keep quiet. You have to speak up and say look this is the situation.”

However, he indicated that it was the responsibility of the NT to take action to fit in as best possible. Fitting in, meant adopting an attitude to “rather learn than be ignorant or arrogant.” This signals his belief that an appropriate attitude for an NT in order to *swim* rests in displaying willingness to learn by disclosing gaps and challenges and asking for information and support. He would not wait for somebody to rescue the NT out of a *sink* situation. He believed that entering the profession with the right attitude and a strategic approach as an NT will enable such a teacher to grow and to reach their potential by being able to “grow to what you ever want it to be.”

#### **7.2.1.4 Adjusting the lens to self-regulation**

For Dan, the organisational procedures within his school environment implicitly prescribed the teacher interactions within the school. It was the norm for staff to work together in smaller micro-contexts such as subject departments. The large size of the school both in terms of geographical space and learner complement impacted on the operational procedures and the practices associated with the school. This type of management structure of departmental micro-contexts within the larger school environment entailed a devolved induction strategy by the school management team. As Dan explained,

“You are looking at a staff complement of about 50 to 60. You don’t have time to have a mentor look over you because we’ve got too much work to do. The principal don’t have time to look over you.”

The above quotation signals the expectation of Dan that a novice would have an appointed person for support and/or mentoring. It is assumed that this expectation was carried through from the previous ITE phase where the practice is for a student teacher to be attached to a nominated mentor teacher. The mention of time and workload constraints in the above quote also points to his awareness that the operational processes in the school meant that he had to work closely with peers in the Maths department if he wanted to draw on any type of support in the school.

Working in smaller subject departments in the school provided Dan with a valuable space for learning within the Maths department. The Maths department functioned as a sort of selective

micro-system. It was exclusive in the sense that not all Maths teachers belonged to this group. As in the case of a system, there were certain unspoken rules that governed the department. The rules included membership, certain behaviour and conditions. Thus, membership to this working friendship circle or the Maths department was rather selective. The normative behaviour that governed the Maths department was co-operation and teamwork. Only Maths teachers who were willing to co-operate and were not overly competitive were allowed in the group. As a buffer against negative influences, teachers who did not want to be team players were isolated from the group. As such the Maths department acted as a kind of unofficial professional body that exercised a code of conduct. Dan explained the rules of this specific micro-system,

“We excluded the ones that are playing the competitive role because we don’t have time for them.” and

“We couldn’t care less what they are doing, and that’s sad in a way, but that’s life.”

In order to become a member of the Maths department Dan himself had to accept the rules as well as the codes of conduct and as such became himself a regulator of those codes. This rather forceful approach of belonging implied “play the game or be left out”. Thus Dan moved to self-regulation within the professional governance structures at the school. His meaning of “competition” in the above quote reflects competition as an antagonistic and a negative factor as against the collegial relations and the workings within the Maths department. This view also indicates the limits of the code of practice as it could suppress innovation and result in habituated practice.

The selective Maths department functioned on conditions such as on-going support, co-operation and openness on a social and professional basis. Social activities outside of school premises seemed to be valued as an activity that gelled the teachers, “we have as a Maths department drinks on some Fridays,” but again only for selective members. As such the code of conduct was not restricted to in-school practices alone. The social clique, as with the workings of the Maths department were governed by un-codified rules. Professional activities within the group were mostly informed by dialogue as well as emotional and subject support.



For Dan, these on-going interactions with more experienced Maths teachers contributed to his learning,

“I’m talking about people that have been teaching Maths for 20, 30 years. And I said to them, I take your criticism as an advantage to myself. There is no reason for me to question you. So they already understood that I am easy to work with and I strongly believe I am. And that’s why they will be helping me out.”

However, he functioned within this Maths unit by adapting a reciprocal perspective. He placed value on the discussions that supported sharing of ideas and extended his subject knowledge. His standpoint, of learning from others, was to accept criticism from the experienced teachers. He realised that it was in his best interest to be a team player and to work with the relevant teachers rather than against them.

The specific space that the Maths department owned, as a clique in the corner of the staffroom, provides evidence of how the Maths teachers protected their space and working friendship circle. The collaborative discussions in this department took the form of mostly informal work-related and non-work-related talk and as such provided a space for collegiality. As a source of learning, Dan found the work related discussions worthwhile for planning and for co-ordination of teaching schedules. The staff room space also allowed opportunities for learn-as-you-go moments as he engaged in quick discussions with his colleagues. The limitations in his specific Maths subject knowledge for the grades he was teaching made him reach out to his colleagues. The problem-solving strategies for complex Maths calculations that the staffroom chats provided, gave him worthwhile opportunities to develop his subject content knowledge. Dan’s narrative points to the value of his subject colleagues as mentors. Even though they were not formally appointed in the capacity of mentors they exercised a self-regulating code of practice by including individuals into their ranks based on the perspective of Maths pedagogy.

The co-operative atmosphere amongst staff in the selective Maths department contributed to Dan’s professional learning. As a new comer he trusted his colleagues enough to share the gaps in his knowledge and skills with them without fear of being criticised or feeling inadequate. Subsequent discussions with his immediate subject colleagues provided for on-

the-job learning as he was able to implement what he had discussed with them. Besides finding a safe space within the Maths department that functioned almost as a group of mentors, the school culture pushed him to find other agents in the form of two mentors who could help him in his quest to learn how to teach.

#### **7.2.1.5 Focusing on selecting mentors**

Although Dan found general support from the Maths department, he indicated that two carefully selected mentor teachers became his key sources of learning. Both these teachers were not formally designated to be his mentor teachers. However, Dan as NT-self, made a strategic choice to cherry-pick them as his mentors. He took the initiative to reach out to two of his colleagues who were experienced Maths teachers and whom he viewed as capable and approachable. His choice also depended on his learning needs and the strengths that each mentor could offer. His collegial and mentoring relationship with the young Ms Barnes was characterised as a peer friendship. She shared her resources with him and assisted him in designing materials for his learners. In contrast, the influence of an older, experienced and respected teacher in the school community became very valuable to Dan. His reference to Mr Knight, firstly as his role model and secondly as his mentor, was based on several factors. He reflected his admiration for this teacher as he was qualified as an English teacher but had developed himself from an untrained to a competent Maths teacher. “He worked his way up”, as such Dan wanted to follow his example as he found himself in a similar position as untrained Maths teacher for the senior learners. Mr Knight’s philosophy of teaching, to provide quality teaching through a strict approach, was similar to a philosophy that Dan was aspiring towards in his teaching. As a mentor, Mr Knight engaged in sharing ideas with the novice on how to teach Maths and to deal with learner behaviour within the classroom. Dan explained why Mr Knight appealed to him:

“(He) ....is a brilliant Maths teacher and that’s the first thing learners remember. They remember the quality of the teaching. Not a teacher who has made friends with them.”

Both mentors continuously supported him in developing his subject content knowledge and general pedagogical knowledge such as getting tips for classroom management and

understanding learner behaviour. These were areas that he identified as needs or essentials when he started out as a novice, needs that required further development in order for him to be a competent teacher. These individual needs were met through mentoring. Dan's decisive attitude to target appropriate mentors to support him possibly avoided a lot of frustration and retained him in the school and the profession.

As a strategist, Dan took responsibility for his own self-directed purposive approach to learning as an NT. Key to such an approach was his awareness of the link between how people operate in a work environment and survival. His awareness became a principle in his planned self-sustained survival strategy. The hands-off role of the management of the school in directly setting up learning opportunities for novices moved him to take strategic and purposive actions at three different levels. At the first level, he scanned his immediate school environment for possible key players that would assist him in adapting, and as such he took charge of his own induction strategies. At a second level, he moved to taking specific calculated actions by being a team player to be able to fit into the selective Maths department. At a third level, he made a professional choice to connect and rely on two self-selected fellow teachers for support and as such as his sources of learning. Dan's learning rested on the strategic choices and related action plans that he took to adapt, to survive and to learn. The data indicated that Dan strategically selected two of his subject colleagues to serve his own needs and who both influenced his EPL.

## **7.2.2 Nick: The Survivalist**

### **7.2.2.1 A rollercoaster ride**

“It was a living hell. It was like getting on a rollercoaster. You feel like it's going to have some harmful effect on you if you don't get off right now. A rollercoaster ride, it looks so wonderful before you start, because the school looked so good. But once you on it and the ride starts going, you cannot stop. There is no way you can put the brakes on. You are just going. And you want to get off. You want to stop, but you can't.”

This analogy of a rollercoaster from Nick's experiences revealed his image of being an NT at his employing school ("wonderful before you start") but also his lived experiences ("want to get off"). It indicated how he looked forward to commencing his teaching career in a school that seemingly "looked so good". The school's external physical appearance and resources appeared to him as a prospective good school that had potential for him as novice. As such he imagined a pleasant entry and experiences into his first teaching position. However, his use of expressive words such as "a living hell", "harmful effect" and "stop, but you can't" in the above metaphor almost defined his emotions of feeling traumatised to the extent of being damaging to his teacher-self and person-self. The institutional space looked very inviting, yet once he had entered the somewhat unfamiliar environment it became a rather daunting place to practice as an NT. During the second follow-up interview Nick emphasised that he wanted two different drawings to express his experiences of his early becoming of a teacher. The first drawing should represent him in relation to the university as "the rollercoaster going up, pleasant, smiling, happy, looking forward to the journey" (also refer to Chapter Six) and the second drawing should represent "his dull and miserable experiences" in the school. His request for the two separate drawings provided insight into his view of not only the differences but also the tensions between the university and the school environments and how these two spaces resulted in the diverse emotive feelings around his experiences (refer to drawings in Chapter Four).

The school environment was different from what he had experienced as a learner or as student teacher in a school. Two specific differences stood out. Firstly, there was a language barrier as the staff and learner complement was predominantly Afrikaans speaking, a language of which he had a very basic command. The medium of instruction in the majority of the classes were also Afrikaans. Secondly, the school operated as a dual medium school which meant that one class per grade would be taught through the medium of English. Such an arrangement required continuous team planning and similar operational procedures to be used in the same grades. He was rather unfamiliar with the operations of a dual medium school. He approached these possible constraints as opportunities for learning. Although the staff was very welcoming and friendly in the staffroom, he could not participate much in the conversations as the staff spoke Afrikaans. To overcome this language barrier and to try and fit in he made a conscious attempt to refresh and extend his oral Afrikaans so that he was able to better interact with staff. He expressed,

“You must be able to communicate in Afrikaans to participate in discussions” and  
“Not really good at it but I’m going to speak Afrikaans anyway.”

Nick’s awareness of these situational circumstances provided him with a challenge. He made a decision that he would use his confidence that he developed at university by asking for help when needed:

“I don’t have a problem having to go and approach someone and ask for help.”

#### **7.2.2.2 Disconnections**

An experienced master teacher was allocated by the management team as a support to Nick, during the first week of commencing his teaching career. Expecting some support from this formally appointed mentor remained a “good idea” that did not materialise in practice. For Nick, the master teacher was “definitely not” his mentor and any mentoring relationship only imaginary. The master teacher was assigned to him on the notion that he should take initiative to ask for help when and if needed. Although he was expected to connect to the mentor, the mentor remained a disconnected *phantom mentor*. His attempts to get advice or support were hampered by situational constraints, such as lack of time, ineffective time-table management and the geographical distance between their classrooms as conditions that hampered his opportunities for learning.

“They [management] should have tried to co-ordinate our timetables a little better, so that when I’m free, she would be free. With this arrangement we were never free at the same time and also the location of our classes was far from each other as well.”

Nick considered asking other staff for advice and support within the staffroom space during tea breaks. However, this thinking was hampered by his awareness of the value that the teachers put on the short time frame to relax. He felt that he could not impose on the social atmosphere in the staff room with work related queries. He elaborated:

“I want to go and speak to them but they resting now and they are talking to their friends. Like it’s a social conversation. I can’t come to them and suddenly start talking about work, because clearly that’s not what they want to do in the like five minutes that they’ve got to rest.”

Informal staff room conversations could offer opportunities for learning. However, data suggest that staffroom conditions in this case were not conducive for work-related talk. Another factor that may have hampered his asking for support from other teachers within the confinement of the staffroom was the different language competences of Nick and the resident teachers.

From Nick’s perspective the main agenda of the school was geared towards extra-mural teacher-learner activities. Time after school for interaction between teachers and for work-related discussions was constrained by a busy daily sport programme that involved the majority of teachers. Such business of the school was not directed towards structuring learning opportunities for the novice. The only available time for possible engagement in some form of discussion with a peer seemed to be during a free period. However, the structured school time-table did not allow for collaborative planning in such free-time. As such his attempts to get support was futile. These unsupportive conditions in the form of situational and human relational constraints within the school environment impacted on the professional learning of the NT.

Being in a look-good school environment and having a mentor for support suggested that Nick would have had a promising course of action to develop his potential as an NT. But these imagined ideas and lived experiences did not connect. His lived experiences resulted in being *disconnected* to his mentor and the school environment.

### **7.2.2.3 Seeking for basics**

Ideally, professionally organised induction practices for, and subsequent first encounters of the new teachers in the school, allow for positive working relationships. However, Nick’s commencement in his first teaching position two weeks into the school term placed him in an awkward position. The lack of leadership in orienting him to the school environment placed

him in an uncomfortable position with not only his learners but also as a novice. He had an expectation that basic information about the culture of teaching and learning in the school would be provided. The management team expected him to start teaching immediately. He explained his first encounters with his learners, classroom space and teaching:

“Oh, then the master teacher came and dumped all the prescribed textbooks with me, and that was it. There wasn’t even a separate sheet to highlight what was focused on in those books. Now I must go through the contents page of these books and decide for myself what I’m going to teach.”

This above quote indicates the mismatch of the expectations between the school leadership and the NT. As novice, Nick had expected better workplace conditions such as a prearranged classroom space as well as some structured orientation. Organised time for discussions around the teaching schedule for the week and basic operational information of the school would have assisted with orientation to the school environment. However, the emotion he expressed at the time of the interview signalled his disbelief at the position that he felt he was placed in. From the school’s perspective, the absence of a teacher necessitated the moving of furniture for the group of learners to the class that they were sharing. Perhaps the school did not view it as an issue that a newly appointed teacher would have to set up his own classroom space. In the absence of mandatory induction in South African schools, the management team did not regard it as their role to orientate the new teacher but expected Nick as a newly qualified teacher to know what to do or to take the initiative to obtain the necessary information to start his teaching.

No opportunity was provided for discussions around expectations, his needs or explicitly prescribed teaching requirements for the specific contexts. He had expected,

“That the school would have provided an opportunity to sit down with me and give me possible ways of teaching effectively in this specific context.”

Nick became a *seeker* as he continuously and consciously tried to look for basic information on how to operate in the school according to the prescribed procedures:

“They expected me to do everything by the book. The problem is there was no book”

The absence of overtly articulated parameters to work in as a new teacher had further repercussions. He found himself teaching in a vacuum for the entire school term as he more than often did not have the necessary basic information. He was left to his own devices to find things out for himself.

“They never ever said let us sit down and have a meeting and discuss how you are developing, how you are finding things. They all just went about their business.”

The limited attention to orientate the NT to the school environment indicates how the school foregrounded narrowly operational issues rather than the professional needs of the NT. The business of the school is perceived to be elsewhere, with specific focus on the various activities with the learners and administrative tasks rather than paying the necessary attention to the newcomer.

#### **7.2.2.4 Qualified, competent and able**

Nick’s beliefs of his own competence and ability to teach was based on his success in his formal qualification and the subsequent job interview at his first employing school. Thus he entered the teaching career thinking that he was competent and able to teach. Being offered the teaching position meant that the Principal trusted that he would be a professional and a competent NT. His beliefs in his own abilities to teach were also linked to his expectation of the type of treatment that he should receive in the school as a professional. But what he expected was not what he received in the school.

Initially Nick found a safe space within his classroom which he referred to as his kingdom where he was the king, “your little kingdom and you are sitting on your little throne.” Within this role he found comfort in trying out new ideas and developing his teaching skills. Being the person in charge gave him power over his teaching, his classroom and his learners. In contrast to the more social staffroom atmosphere, the teachers in this school worked in a more individualistic manner, teaching in isolation. The staffroom space seemed more collegial, yet teachers claimed personal ownership of their subject knowledge and resources.



They did not want to share their materials out of fear for possible criticism. Nick indicated that the teachers “would not show their test papers as they were afraid of being criticised”. Not having the necessary support or information in a specific school culture, he often found himself in situations where he was attacked for not knowing things that he had not been told or informed about.

#### **7.2.2.5 De-throned**

Nick regarded the unprofessional manner where the parents were allowed to confront a teacher without following the correct communication protocol as a source of great frustration. He illustrated the impact of the management style in the two critical incidents of parental attacks mentioned in the story portraits. He found himself in a space where he was not given a chance to defend himself against such attacks. These two encounters and the manner in which he was treated resulted in self-questioning of his professional autonomy as he became restricted in his role as teacher.

The parental interference caused a loss in Nick’s professional autonomy as they continuously “questioned everything” and “attacked” him. His decisions he took in his classroom came under question. Such attacks on him moved him to become uneasy and restricted in his pedagogical approaches. Opportunities to develop as a teacher became lacking as he experienced limitations in the choices he made in his classroom as well as his teaching approaches. He experienced feelings of being restrained in being the type of teacher he wanted to be. He expressed his feelings in the following statements:

“I was limited”

“Can’t give your best”

“Uneasy in my own classroom”

“You’re not relaxed enough to just go with the flow and let the lesson take effect”

“Keep holding yourself back”

“Can’t use my professional discretion in class out of fear of doing something wrong that will be reported.”

The un-procedural manner in which the confrontations were handled by the Principal created internal turmoil for Nick. As a novice professional, he experienced negative attitudes and feedback rather than support and affirmation. These negative reactions came mostly from the Principal, through lack of recognition for his attempts, fault finding and rudeness. He expressed himself as follows:

“I’m trying so hard and I’m getting no appreciation from this place. Everything I do is wrong. They don’t even just tell you it’s wrong. The Principal tells you in a rude and disrespectful manner. He has no people skills.”

The other teachers in the school had accepted the management style of the Principal as they had become accustomed to his behaviour and their treatment. However, Nick’s disillusionment moved him to a position of refusing to accept the undesirable situation that he found himself in. He felt that he needed to stand up for his dignity as a person and a professional.

#### **7.2.2.6 I am worth more than this!**

“I relied on self-reflection to assist me in getting out of a horrible situation. This is because we get too caught up in life and thus we seldom stop to think about what really matters to us and how we should be going about life.”

This is how Nick expressed the purpose of self-reflection as an internal action that he regarded as a basis of learning. His unhappiness about his daunting experiences in the school helped germinate self-reflection on the situation that he found himself in. He thus assessed his worth in his employing school as a professional and his purpose in life, and found that he placed more emphasis on living a meaningful and valuable life rather than remaining in an unhappy situation.

The unsupportive culture in the school became a driving force for self-reflection that contributed to his professional learning. The foundations for his feelings of being ill-treated as a professional rested in the managerial style and the way he was treated as an NT at the

school. The third party reprimand reported in his story portrait, where he was exposed to unfair attacks from the learner's parents, indicated critical events that brought about professional learning. These events allowed him to seriously engage in introspection about the nature of his position as an NT in this specific school. His *self-analysis* was linked to drawing on external sources such as his formal educational qualification curricula to allow for engagement in deeper self-reflection on his worth as a teacher. Nick drew on the learning about himself as a professional that he obtained within the ITE curriculum as well as the modules within the Masters curriculum to address the situation in his employing school. The self-confidence and ability to express his beliefs allowed him to stand up for himself and what he believed in, as a practising professional. Engagement in discussions with his fellow students in the post-graduate Master programme whilst he was teaching continued building up his professional confidence and opened up a space for self-reflection. He had developed a stronger awareness of what a professional teacher entailed and how such a professional should be treated. These learning activities assisted with his shift from a submissive position to being more assertive. He expressed his awareness of his position as NT as:

“This is me. This is what is happening to me, where I am at. Surely I don't have to put up with this. So it made me well aware of what was happening around me. And in a way also it gave me the confidence to go and speak about it.”

He became conscious of his unprofessional treatment in the school and his feelings of being de-professionalised. Such de-professionalisation was caused firstly, by his loss of professional autonomy as he had to defend his decisions in his classroom and himself as teacher against un-procedural parental attacks. Secondly, he was constantly subjected to restrictions by being told what and how to do things in the school. Thirdly, not having a chance to properly defend himself during these critical events resulted in his loss of voice and discretion as a qualified professional.

“That is where de-professionalising came in, it's like they basically telling me that I wasted my time for all those years at University. They know better than me. I must shut my mouth and do what they tell me. That didn't sit well with me at all.”

Through self-reflection on his situation and his position at the school, he decided that his self-esteem and dignity was far more valuable than that of the school as organisation. He could not find a sense of belonging in this school. On the other hand he was also not going to allow teachers at this school to turn his beliefs of teaching into something destructive. His realisation that he need not engage in continuous and unhealthy battles with the Principal and the parents for the value and dignity of the profession had implications for his future role as teacher. With this, he engaged in sense-making of his experiences and beliefs by looking ahead:

“I really thought to myself, I’m certainly worth more than this.”

Nick felt restricted and oppressed in his role as teacher in a school culture that was unsupportive and did not meet his expectations as a professional work environment. His learning is evident in his meaning-making of what a professional is and how such a professional person should be treated. He interrogated the manner in which he was treated by the Principal against his professional dignity. His understanding of professional autonomy, as the right to use one’s own discretion and judgement to determine the types of activities as well as decision-making in the classroom, and what he experienced, did not connect.

As a survivalist, Nick took a conscious decision to fight for his self-respect as a teacher and his self-worth as a professional. Embedded in Nick’s self-perception of being a qualified, competent and able teacher was an expectation of professional treatment as an adult and professional. The lack of such treatment, lack of recognition of his worth and position as NT resulted in his engaging in deep self-reflection. For him, self-respect and self-dignity were worth more than the constant fighting for his rights as a professional in this school space. His dignity as a professional and as a person outweighed that of being an NT in an unsupportive environment. His decision to resign as teacher signalled a need to jump out of the boiling pot as he wanted to save his positive understanding of teaching as a profession. He decided to temporarily leave the teaching profession to continue as full-time post graduate student and contract lecturer in education.

### **7.2.3 Leesha: The Soloist**

#### **7.2.3.1 Mistrusting spaces**

Leesha's school culture was dominated by numerous conflict situations at different levels. The lack of co-operation amongst staff within the school and within the Foundation Phase had provided limited structured learning opportunities for Leesha. The Foundation Phase that Leesha found herself working in also functioned, as in the case of Dan, more as a micro-system within the whole school environment. In contrast to Dan, Leesha's micro-system was dysfunctional. The Level One teachers often worked together as a clique in undermining the authority of their Head of Department. The data reflected a number of possible reasons for this undermining culture that existed in the phase. From Leesha's perspective, there were personality clashes between the HOD and the other teachers. Furthermore the clique seemed to be a powerful space where the Level One teachers joined forces against the HOD.

“They have cliques. The foundation phase teachers – there is about four of them that all stick together. Then you would have the HOD. But because they are one big clique they will undermine the HOD's authority because I suppose maybe they say ‘stand together’ or maybe they feel they have the bigger number they don't need to listen.”

The problem-solving protocol for conflict situations as part of the organisational structure of the school did not seem to be in place. Furthermore the lack of effective leadership resulted in the Foundation Phase becoming a space of dispute that directly influenced Leesha's learning.

She linked her disillusionment with her lived experiences of the power conflicts in the Foundation Phase as well as the status of her position at the school. She commenced her new teaching position with the idea that she would receive the necessary support that she needed. Yet she felt that her peer teachers were un-cooperative towards her needs. She pointed out:

“I just had this idea in my head. Ok, it's my first year teaching. I don't really have the experience. So you think, ok, members of staff will be supportive, they'd help me, they give me the extra assistance that I needed, they would show me the ropes. I didn't have that in the school.”

The expectation of support was based on two assumptions, her position as an untrained NT<sup>40</sup> and familiarity with the staff. She expected that the staff would understand her position as being an inexperienced beginner teacher. Furthermore, the staff was aware that she was a qualified teacher but not trained for the grade or phase that she was appointed to teach. Her employment status at the school was also a crucial element that played a role in her experiences at the school. The opaque manner in which Leesha's appointment was handled by the Principal placed Leesha in an almost branded position. Leesha viewed the staff's perception of her position as a locum as being a filler, "I'm supposed to be filling in," and an outsider as "this is my mom's school." Nepotism was an issue that Leesha raised several times during the interview. The notion of nepotism was linked to the lack of support. Leesha reasoned that perhaps staff did not want to support her as they felt that she had obtained the position through her mother, she expected preferential treatment.

"I suppose maybe they feel maybe its preferential treatment, because you know my mom's a teacher and there I got this post now and, I'm supposed to be filling in."

It is noted that there was a shift from trying to understand the change in behaviour of her fellow teachers to becoming rather sceptical and distrustful towards them. She questioned why the behaviour and attitude of the teachers whom she was familiar with changed so drastically from being friendly (before Leesha was appointed as a teacher) to backbiting (after Leesha was appointed). Embedded in the above statement is the notion that experienced teachers at the school viewed support as preferential treatment rather than a professional responsibility.

### **7.2.3.2 Depersonalisation**

Although contestations are a normal part of any work environment, the case of Leesha's signals mostly meaningless conflicts of a personal and emotional nature that eventually had a negative effect on her. The lack of support from her immediate peer teachers accompanied by their continuous persecution left her feeling demotivated and desperate to leave the school.

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<sup>40</sup> Leesha was not trained as a Foundation Phase (Grades 1-3) but as an Intermediate and Senior Phase teacher (Grades 4-9).

“I’m the easy target. I feel like I am been targeted at the moment”.

Leesha was caught up in the on-going gossiping and hierarchical power issues. These power issues impacted on staff commitment within the phase and made the school environment unbearable for Leesha. She unwantedly got caught up in bickering and internal politics resulting in “sleepless nights”.

According to Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2009, p.518) depersonalisation refers to “negative, cynical attitudes and feelings about one’s students or colleagues.” Leesha’s depersonalisation resulted in her developing hostile feelings towards her chattering peer teachers as she had lost respect for these “faulty teachers who have no social skills”.

“I don’t really have time to socialise with people who quite frankly do not respect each other and they don’t respect me.”

Being de-personalised also resulted in her deliberately isolating herself from her peer teachers by not going to the staffroom during break times, as she felt that she did not want to associate with them. She kept strictly to work-related talk when needed. Accompanied by her feelings of disrespect towards her peers, she also raised the generational gap as a reason for isolating herself. Her attempt not to engage in social talk is reflected in her view that she could not connect with her peer teachers because of the age gap between herself (24) and her peer teachers (mostly in their 40s). She found that they had no common interests and therefore could not connect at a social level. This differentiation also added to her isolation.

“We just do not connect. Even every day conversation, I am just like “hi and ‘bye”. I don’t really interact with the staff.”

#### **7.2.3.4 Confusion! I am in the wrong profession!**

Leesha's challenging initial experiences during the first few months of entering the profession gave rise to insecurities about her ability to teach. During the second interview, Leesha again voiced her feelings of frustration about her experiences as an NT and clearly affirmed the title of her story portrait. "Confusion! I am in the wrong profession!" She explained,

"I was alone, confused and constantly questioning my ability as an NT. I was and still am angry or frustrated about my ordeal at this school. This is an important aspect which I feel must be included."

Leesha found herself in a position where she started her teaching career in a position where she was teaching a grade that she was not trained for. Her stated confusion was firstly about teaching as a profession, secondly, about her own ability to teach as she had to rely on herself to teach herself how to teach, and lastly about the perception of being a teacher in her school. Leesha found solace in self-reflection in an attempt to make meaning of all the paradoxes in her experiences as an NT. Her self-reflection was a conscious attempt to make sense of the unsupportive environment and to find possible answers for her daunting experiences. She was a "critical thinker." Having analytical reflection skills was a competence that was developed and acknowledged by her lecturers during her initial teacher education. This valuable skill was transferred to her experiences of being an NT.

#### **7.2.3.5 What is good teaching? What is a good teacher?**

Her self-reflection came through self-questioning. What is best teaching? What is a teacher? These were two key questions that came through in her experiences as an NT.

"I have no experience teaching in the Foundation Phase and I am teaching myself."

"I don't know what the best is to be honest. But you know what; I just try to do a good job. Not to put my kids down too much and you know I just try to be a good teacher"



Leesha's lack of formal training and experience in teaching the Grade 2 learners and the accompanying challenges were constraining factors for her. Without support from a more experienced *peer teacher* when she commenced her teaching, her course of action was to teach herself the key knowledge and skills required for the day-to-day teaching in this grade. Teaching herself content and pedagogical content knowledge resulted in trial and error techniques that left the learners confused at times. These experiences also left her wondering about her ability to successfully teach. She explained,

“There are times when I also stand in front of the class and I think, okay, you know my kids are a little bit confused. So when you realise you have taught something and you look at their work and then half of them don't understand. Then you think, oh well, am I really doing a good job? Is this teaching is all about? You know I always ask myself is this how it is supposed to be because I'll never be sure? I mean I am a first time teacher. I gotta learn.”

Her self-questioning alerted two issues: her competency to teach (What is best teaching?), and being a good teacher (What is a good teacher?). Her doubt of being a good teacher rested in the lack of impact on observed learner performance and the absence of feedback or support from other teachers. This gap resulted in her own self-assurance that if she could not be good at teaching then she would be a “good” teacher. Being a “good” teacher in this situation meant being empathetic towards the learners by not being too hard on them. Thus, she chose to focus on the ways learners experienced her as teacher. During the second interview she repeatedly mentioned that her confusion remained about what constitutes good teaching in a school where there was limited support. This together with the lack of experience contributed to her uncertainty and confusion remaining. Not returning to the teaching profession after resigning from her first employing school contributed to her continued confusion about her teaching ability.

“I doubted myself – Am I doing it right? Up until to date, I can still not answer that question.”

### **7.2.3.6 View of a teacher!**

Leesha's self-questioning about the meaning of what is a teacher resulted from the principal's initial declaration and her own belief of her ability to teach young learners. The principal stated at the job interview,

“You know, I have to tell you being a teacher, it doesn't matter what phase you specialize in. If you are a teacher you will be able to teach a matric class [Grade12] or Grade 1 class. It doesn't matter.”

A teacher is a teacher and can teach in any grade regardless of training. This perspective of the principal was one of the driving forces for Leesha to take on a teaching position for a phase that she was not trained for. Her difficult experiences resulted in feelings of insecurity and a decline in her personal confidence. Leesha had an erroneous image of teaching a Grade 2 class,

“I honestly thought that it would be a piece of cake, because I thought you know what, Grade 2, which person couldn't teach Grade 2. I mean those kids are like six and seven, right?”

Indirectly she blamed the Principal for giving her a generic and disjointed picture of a teacher and false hope of being an able beginning teacher.

“I don't know what he's talking about, he's got it wrong.”

### **7.2.3.7 Pushed towards a fountain of knowledge**

She expected that her grade peer teacher or “partner teacher” whom she had to work closely with would provide her with basic induction or some support in acquiring understanding and skills in how to teach a Grade 2 class. Contextual constraints such as lack of time and the inability of the peer teacher to recognise her professional responsibility towards a colleague resulted in the lack of support. It appears that the peer teacher was not formally appointed or designated as mentor. There was no specification as to what the peer teacher was supposed

to do as a support or mentor teacher, but in any case, “she did not want to take on that responsibility.”

Her plea for support, as indicated in the statement “I gotta learn” signals an expectation that the school management team would understand her basic needs both as a novice and an untrained Grade 2 teacher. The unsupportive conditions in the school set her in motion to seek support. Leesha incidentally discovered within the Head of Department of the Foundation Phase a person that became a source of knowledge. Over time this inspirational person also became her non-appointed mentor. She was not formally assigned as mentor to Leesha. Leesha took the initiative to ask for help as she found herself in a rather distressed situation. She only approached the Head after a few weeks of desperate struggling to teach at the level of a Grade 2 class.

Her expectation of being supported by colleagues and at the same time trying to work independently to sort out her own problems signals contradiction but also points to the desperate situations she experienced that moved her to seek support. In her *non-appointed mentor* she found a person that took the time to engage in face-to-face coaching of content pedagogical knowledge through the use of various diagrams and examples. Leesha’s gratitude towards and learning from her mentor is expressed in the statements below.

“I didn’t even know how to teach halving to the grade 2 class until I asked the HOD.”

“Everything I know now, if you put me in that class again, I can do it. And it was all thanks to her and the way that she taught me.”

An important outcome directly related to the professional learning for this NT was the issues raised through the reflection that captured her understanding of her experiences during our second interview. Three areas were highlighted that she felt she could have approached differently as a first year NT. Firstly, she should not have entered her first teaching position with the assumed expectations that she would receive support from her peer teachers. Secondly, she should not have aligned herself with the Head of Department whom she spent a lot of time with during the coaching sessions. She found herself in a space central to the hierarchical power conflicts between the Level One teachers and the Head of Department. Thirdly, she should rather have established positive relationships with the staff rather than

deliberately isolating herself from the staffroom and the staff in the Foundation Phase. She took self-blame for her actions, but she emphasised that although she would have approached her position as novice differently, she would not have remained at the school. She gave her lack of training and the unhealthy atmosphere that prevailed in the Foundation Phase department as the two key reasons. She explained that she was “not trained for the Foundation Phase” and that there was a “nasty” and overtly “gossiping” atmosphere among the Foundation Phase teachers.

Leesha’s story highlights the conflicting staff interactions as a dominant element that contributed to her individualism, depersonalisation and eventual isolation in her first teaching school context. Moving into the position as soloist her learning occurred through initially teaching herself pedagogical strategies and relying on self-reflection to make sense of her contextual learning. The unsupportive social and contextual conditions in the school became overwhelming and forced her into a situation where she preferred to isolate herself from her fellow teachers. Her deliberate isolation from her chattering peer teachers moved her to self-agency to find support from a non-appointed mentor. Her isolation and confusion about being a teacher resulted in her early resignation as NT only ten months after she took up her first position as a teacher.

### **7.3 SECTION TWO: Zoe**

#### **7.3.1 Zoe: The Simulist**

In a new workplace setting, first encounters with staff and the working environment are of utmost importance. Reception practices can either make a new employee feel welcome and accepted or leave the person with uncomfortable feelings and being unwanted. The value of receiving and accepting a new beginning teacher becomes very clear in Zoe’s story. Her first encounters with her employing school were rather unwelcoming. These initial emotional feelings directly impacted on her professional learning in the early stages of her career. The unreceptive attitude that she received from the school was linked to two key issues related to her position as an NT. Firstly, her appointed mentor as a Funza Lushaka bursar was handled

in an unprocedural manner by the Department of Education and the principal. Secondly, her unusual baptism into her new environment impacted on her status as newly qualified teacher.

#### **7.3.1.1 A position-less teacher**

Zoe had contractual obligations to take up a position in a school where she was needed as a Foundation Phase teacher. However, her employment at the beginning of the school year was delayed due to inefficient appointment practices. The lack of proper appointment procedures or communication between the Department of Education and her employing school placed Zoe as beginner teacher in a somewhat precarious position. She was only given the name of the school by the department official and desperate to commence her teaching career, she took the initiative to sort out her own appointment at the school. It was left up to Zoe to find the contact number of the school and personally negotiate her way into her position as a new teacher. She became caught up in a tense space between the Department of Education and her employing school. On the one side she was threatened by the Education Department to take up the teaching position or pay back the bursary money. On the side of the school she was accepted under duress by the principal of the school. Such bureaucratic practices of employment caused tensions between Zoe as new teacher and the staff at the school. Her subsequent negotiation with the school around her placement gave the impression that she was forcing her way into the school. The absence of formal appointment actions or negotiations resulted in the school and Zoe finding themselves in an awkward situation. Her initial communications with the school occurred at two levels and were adversely received. The first contact she made with the school was telephonically with the secretary who responded, “We don’t know what you are talking about because there is a teacher here.” The second line of communication was with the principal, who showed tangible signs of not wanting to accept Zoe as a teacher at the school.

“Well, we don’t accept teachers here without a driver’s licence, but I guess you will just have to stay because you’re holding a government post.”

The above introductory question to Zoe regarding being in possession of a driver’s license to enable her to drive learners to sporting events together with subsequent events indicate a resistance to accepting the new teacher, ostensibly on a technical flaw in her qualifications.

This issue raises the question as to how principals view and measure beginner teachers competence to be a teacher? The lack that the principal identified was not a primary task related to teaching.

Zoe had managed through negotiation to find herself at the entrance to being a teacher. However this entrance was more related to physical features of being allowed on the school premises rather than entrance into the school community.

#### **7.3.1.2 A pretending - (student) teacher**

Although Zoe was not expected as a new teacher she arrived as a new teacher to take up her position. The principal had to accept her as she was a government appointment and a bursary holder. The school had to keep their contract with the locum teacher who was employed for another week. Zoe took up her first position as a qualified NT by being placed in the position of a student teacher by the principal.

“Just follow that teacher around and just remember how it is to be a student. You are doing teaching practice again.”

She had to pretend to be a student teacher and was expected to trail and observe the locum teacher who continued teaching in what was supposed to be Zoe’s class. Following the locum teacher meant that Zoe could not take ownership or responsibility for her classroom. Furthermore, her status as teacher was down-graded from being a newly qualified teacher to a student teacher. Evident in the data was Zoe’s emotional feelings of being “uncomfortable” by being a student teacher again. From Zoe’s perspective she understood that the locum teacher may also have been placed in an awkward position but she felt that the volatile situation could have been handled in a more professional manner. Learning through observing a peer who had more knowledge about teaching in the specific school environment could have provided a valuable learning opportunity for Zoe. However, her position as teacher should have been dealt with differently by the Principal. A move to explicitly declare her as peer teacher working alongside the locum teacher would have provided a more protective space for Zoe to become oriented to the school environment. The accumulated

lived experiences during her first week of entering the profession left Zoe with feelings of disappointment as she reflected, “so my first week of teaching was that.”

### **7.3.1.3 An outsider-teacher**

Zoe’s first five months as a beginning teacher were characterised by feelings of isolation as she found herself working and sitting alone in the staffroom. Finding ways for mutual interaction with her colleagues became daunting. She was viewed as an outsider-teacher. There are several elements in the data to support Zoe’s beliefs about why she found herself in the position of an outsider-teacher. She cited a school culture that was closed to outsiders especially if the new comer was not indigenous to the community.

“So I have been seen as very much an outsider. Why are you here, what are you doing? Why are you taking our jobs?”

“Why are you here and what are you doing?” indicates the lack of transparency about the employment procedures followed for Zoe as employee. The school may have felt that Zoe’s appointment was forced on them as she was a specific type of bursary holder. The Department of Education needed to find her an appropriate position where she could teach in the Foundation Phase. The manner in which she was appointed at the school by the government was not explained to the staff by the principal. It was a matter of “Ok, we’ll put you in this post”, but without any form of clarification of her employment procedures and status to the rest of the staff.

“Why are you taking our jobs?” signals the feelings of the existing teachers at the school about Zoe pushing out a former colleague that was known to the school. Implicit in this question also is the notion that Zoe was not from the surrounding community whereas the unqualified locum teacher was well known in the community.

Thus, the opaqueness in which her employment as new teacher was handled allowed for open and skewed interpretations by the staff.

#### 7.3.1.4 Becoming a simulist-teacher

The professional conditions related to employment procedures together with the contextual conditions that resulted in an unwelcoming reception for the new incoming teacher constrained Zoe's socialisation into her new working environment. Being in a rather isolated position, she learnt to act in certain ways to achieve her own personal-professional interests.

“I had to learn a lot about people, not really about the profession.”

*Learning about people* and not learning with people was core to her EPL. Being in an isolated space she used her professional needs for survival to adapt to her environment by finding ways that suited her personal attributes. As a “friendly” person, she moved to engage in contrived friendships with selected colleagues. Pretending to like a person was fundamental to obtaining valuable information needed to cope within a new environment.

“I’ve actually learnt certain things about being a teacher. I would tell new teachers, there are certain people you need to become friends with. Even if you have to pretend, just pretend you like them. Have a good laugh. Pretend they are your best friend in the world.”

Dependent on external information to adapt to a new environment, Zoe took on the form of becoming a simulist or pretentious agent who had to engage in certain type of behaviour. Such specific enacted behaviour allowed for the extraction of valuable information. This survival strategy signals a kind of personal engineering within a critical micro-space such as the contrived friendships.

In summary, the accrual of professional and contextual conditions in the school influenced Zoe's lived experiences and her professional learning. Her first week at the school was categorised by unprocedural appointment processes, a declared down-grading of her position from qualified teacher to falsely being referred to as a student teacher and the overlooking of her introduction to the learners at the school. Furthermore, the actions of the staff in the school by not readily accepting her as a new teacher moved her to become a simulist. Taking on a simulated role by pretending to be friends with staff at the school (as survival strategy)



allowed her to eventually find a space in the real world of teaching. Although she remained teaching at the school, the lack of consideration of her position as a new comer by the leadership of the school left her feeling like an outsider.

## 7.4 SYNTHESIS OF CHAPTER

It is evident from the above discussion that the imagined ideas or expectations of being a novice in a specific school context did not connect with lived experiences. Employing schools offered *risky, unprotective learning spaces*. The numerous situational constraints at school level such as the lack of opportunities for formal structured induction, mentoring and supervised support, as well as interactions with staff, pushed NTs to look for a safe space in other micro-contexts such as the selective Maths department and teacher mentors (Dan), or the Head of Department as mentor and coach (Leesha). Such micro-contexts that were characterised by certain sub-cultures became sources of learning for the NTs.

Entering the position as an NT came with certain self-beliefs of the role of a qualified novice as teacher and of teaching. Such views directly or indirectly lead to certain actions or behaviours that I refer to as adapt, die or fly.<sup>41</sup>

Dan and Zoe managed to ‘**adapt**’ to their environments as they were both able to read their working environments in different ways. Dan’s strategic approach to take initiative to target appropriate key staff that would support him in his teaching was a deliberate personal action, whereas, Zoe also took strategic action by engaging in contrived friendships in order to gain what she needed.

Leesha’s self-reflection in the form of self-questioning and self-blame put her in a ‘**die**’ position. Metaphorically speaking this signalled that she gave up as she could not find answers to her question about the quality of her teaching. Her trial and error methods together with the lack of feedback on her approaches left her wondering about her ability to teach. The view of the principal and her own initial thoughts on the work of a Grade 2

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<sup>41</sup> The reference to adapt, die or fly is drawn from the title of the South African actor Pieter Dirk Uys’s play Adapt or Die.

teacher as being generic to all teachers' work placed her in a disadvantaged position as untrained NT. Her unresolved doubts of being a good teacher ended up in unwarranted self-blame for her failures.

Nick's decided to 'fly' away from his daunting experiences as a novice into another more supportive higher education work environment. He used self-reflection to analyse his position and experiences in the school. In his quest for answers and in response to his in-depth formal knowledge of the meaning of professionalism he made a conscious decision to protect his self-worth and dignity by standing up for the profession and his principles.

Another key issue that emerged from the data was the nature of working relationships amongst staff that in most cases had an undesirable impact on the experiences of the NT. Data from this study revealed that on-going bickering, meaningless conflict and power games amongst staff had an interrelated effect on all staff interactions within the school. Such behaviour among staff specifically if the motives for the behaviour were not known to the NT caused stress and impacted on the emotional well-being and development of the NT.

The lack of formal induction practices at a whole-school centralised level and not providing sufficient basic information on how the school functions as a specific organisational context suggest that school leadership does not always recognise the value of the novice as new employee and professional. However, it is evident from the data that there were informal induction strategies at departmental levels as well as self-induction by the participants. Also most of the sources found within the various learning contexts were primarily located by the NTs themselves.

Chapter Eight shifts to focus on discussing the third component of EPL through a systems thinking lens. The chapter focuses on answering critical sub-question three. This chapter also captures key selected constructs from the data in dialogue with existing research literature.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT: EPL THROUGH A SYSTEMS THINKING LENS**

### **8.1 ORIENTATION**

The previous two chapters (Chapters Six and Seven) provided interpretive thematic analyses as descriptions of the two central integrated components of EPL as a system in response to the first two critical sub-questions of this study. Chapter Six presented the six NT participants' understanding of their learning within the ITE programme at a particular university in preparation for their first year of teaching. This chapter also explored what learning from the ITE programme influenced their work as NT in the school system. The key areas of learning that emerged were personal, practical, observational, emotional, communal and contextual learning. Chapter Seven shifted the focus to the four participants' learning in their respective first employing school environments, pointing to the different interpretations of their experiences as NTs.

Chapter Eight shifts to focus on answering research sub-question three on what are the implications of this learning for the Early Professional Learning of the Novice Teacher? In this Chapter Eight, key selected themes are organised as principal (main) elements of the EPL System (EPLS) that emerged from the data discussed in Chapters Six and Seven. These related elements from the two systems of ITE and school environment are presented through cross-case analysis. Drawing on the theoretical framework for this study, Hoban's (2002) systems thinking approach and Reid's (Fraser et al. 2007) quadrant of teacher learning sources (opportunities) will support the theorising of the findings. Hoban (2002) claimed that any combination of elements can make up a system but it is the dynamic non-linear interconnectedness between the elements that influences teacher learning. Reid (2007) categorised forms of teacher learning opportunities or sources (as used in this study) into formal, informal, incidental and planned (refer to Chapter Three). The purpose of this chapter is then to highlight the key elements and sources of learning within each of the ITE system and school system to form the EPLS through cross case analysis of the four main participants of this study. Key constructs from the principal elements are supported by carefully chosen insights from the composite theoretical framework and supporting literature.

These elements will provide a starting point for developing a conceptual framework on EPL as a system that reveal the insights drawn from the data (refer to Chapter Nine).

This chapter is divided into two sections:

Section One provides the findings related to the cross-case analysis of the ITE programmes. The following three principal elements within the ITE system are explored: supportive university-site spaces; school-based teaching practice spaces; and professional paradoxical spaces between the imagined and real worlds of teaching.

Section Two of the chapter draws on the cross-case analysis findings of the school environments. Three principal elements within the school system are discussed: professional learning cultures; professional support practices (induction and mentoring); micro learning spaces (co-operative / isolative)

## **8.2 SECTION ONE: ITE Programme**

### **8.2.1 Overview of section one**

As indicated in Chapter Two, Hoban (2005a) argues that the design of conventional ITE programmes is disjointed and compartmentalised with little recognition to the interconnectedness of various elements that make up the programme as a whole. Therefore, he pointed out that there is no one best way of educating teachers but he argued that “quality teacher education programs need to be guided by a coherent conceptual framework with interlinked elements” (p.1). Having a conceptual framework that illustrates the interplay between various elements would assist pre-service teachers to understand the complexity of teaching and will allow them to develop their own knowledge about teaching (Hoban, 2005a). The findings from the data from my study supports this notion of Hoban (2005a) that ITE programmes should have a conceptual framework that is offered to student teachers as part of their preparation to become teachers. However, I argue that there is not only a need to have a conceptual framework in teacher education designs as called for by Hoban (2005a) but a conceptual framework for EPL as a system. Such a framework will allow for a deeper

understanding of the interconnectedness between elements of ITE and elements that constitute workplace settings. The data from my study supports Hoban's (2002) view that it is often left to the devices of the becoming teacher, either in their role as student teacher or as NT to make sense of or to try and link these various elements. The design of an EPL conceptual systemic framework will allow the developing teacher to move away from a fragmented notion of either a student teacher (ITE) OR an NT (school) to a view of becoming a teacher as a *fused process of learning and being*. Thus a conceptual framework for EPL will shift thinking about becoming a teacher not as learning in compartmentalised disconnected spaces but learning within interlinked spaces. Extracting the elements of the ITE system and the school environment that emerged from the data will provide grounding for the development of an EPL System (EPLS) conceptual framework.

Thus the insights from the data analysed in Chapter Six in response to the first research sub-question (How do the NTs understand their learning from the ITE programme?) are represented as three principal elements of the ITE programme as a system in EPL. (1) the supportive university-site spaces provided formal and non-formal *communal social spaces* as sources of learning; (2), school-based teaching practice spaces mostly offered *protective spaces* for the development of certain professional roles (3) *professional paradoxical spaces* emerged as the NT participants engaged in meaning making between the contradictory worlds of university (the imagined) and the world of school as site of employment (the real).

Refer to Figure 8 (end of section one) that provides an overview of these elements and supporting features within the ITE programme as a system.

## **8.2.2 Supportive university-site spaces**

The supportive nature of the university environment emerged as the first principle element of the ITE system as influential to EPL. Within this element two supporting features emerged. Firstly, the formal *university-community learning* spaces and secondly, the *non-formal open third* spaces.

### **8.2.2.1 Formal university-community spaces**

The participants described the university environment which they encountered in the formal pre-service preparation phase as a powerful *community learning space* that contributed to their EPL. The notion of community emerged from the data as the interactions amongst a group of people, in this case the students and lecturers, who are committed to a common purpose such as sharing of ideas and practices. The feeling of belonging to a community was evident in the data.

Three of the novices (Nick, Leesha and Mikail) revealed that the university environment provided a supportive social space for learning. *Social spaces* were offered as part of formal lectures in the form of small group discussions that allowed for conscious group thinking and knowledge exchange. Hoban (2002) concurs that healthy social interactions and commitment to a common purpose are key features that make a group a community and as such it differs from a group that meets merely to exchange opinions. An issue that needs to be pointed out is the influence of the supportive learning ethos on EPL. The quality of experiences of participants may be consistent as the HEI offered a particular kind of institutional culture that ultimately influence the emergence of a particular kind of EPLS. Drawing participants from one HEI has been pointed out as a limitation of this study in Chapter Four. Therefore it also calls for further research on the EPLSs in different HEI institutional cultures to gain a broader understanding of HEI cultures on EPL.

### **8.2.2.2 Non-formal open third spaces**

The supportive university environment opened up another space for learning. This space particularly refers to the non-formal social spaces of learning. This learning space is referred to as the “third space”. This concept is drawn from the work of Soja (2004, as cited in

Hallman, 2012). The concept of third space is then described as “every space and place in the world becomes readable or interpretable as a classroom” (Soja, 2004, p.xi). Third spaces, according to Hallman (2012) allow for a restructuring of spatial possibilities within alternative spaces. In my study, the learning that occurred in the open spaces such as outside of lectures in peer study groups together with the open-door policy of lecturers provided opportunities for immediate and on-going support.

In this study, the university community allowed for development of feelings of emotional well-being (Nick) within safe and trustworthy spaces for learning (Leesha, Mikail). Overall, the findings are that the NT participants’ experiences within a *collegial community* were compared to operating in a close family where bonding was based on *conditions* of support, healthy social interactions, collaboration, encouragement, trust and openness.

### **8.2.3 School-based teaching practice spaces**

The South African Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications require that ITE programmes should allow for the development of “practical learning” in authentic environments (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011, p 8). In this study, practical learning involved both learning *from* practice and *within* practice. Thus the second principal element that emerged from the data as a valuable part of EPL was the formal school-based teaching practice sessions within the ITE programme. The particular school-based teaching practice sites chosen by the NTs provided the guide or structure to their professional roles. These chosen sites produce a particular repertoire of experiences, whether positive or not. Both aspects of choice and roles as features are explored here in relation to learning experiences as an NT.

#### **8.2.3.1 Personal choices of school selection**

Student teachers view teaching practice as the most valuable experience within the formal ITE programme (Awaya et al. 2003). Yet teaching practice does not commence when a student teacher walks into the school. It commences with the selection of the types of schools by an individual student. In retrospect, two of the participants highlighted that their deliberate personal choices of specific teaching practice sites had formed their expectations of the nature and functioning of their first employing school.

The study found that exposure to a wider variety of schooling contexts would have better prepared them for the types of schools and associated challenges of their first teaching job. Learning to teach in particular spaces only, such as only a physically/ financially under-resourced school or only a well-resourced school, limits opportunities for exposure to the wide range of schools in the real world. Student teachers that make such conscious narrow choices limit their range of experiences and confine their EPL.

This then calls for teacher educators to ensure that student teachers have access to and experience the deep complexities and range of teaching realities (Amin & Ramrathan, 2009). Thus it is essential for student teachers to be aware of the multiple considerations that shape their experiences of becoming a teacher and how such considerations and/or choices could impact on their future. Selecting *comfort-zone* schools which are close to their place of residence or selecting a school based on familiarity with a specific type of school context should be discouraged. Such narrow choices could limit their student teaching experiences with the resultant belief that schools offer similar working conditions. It is useful for student teachers in their ITE school placements to be provided with adequate background information about the schooling contexts and then consciously select opportunities to experience diverse school contexts. The ITE programme should also provide formal opportunities for engagement in the theoretical perspectives of understanding the nature of workplace environments as professional learning cultures. Furthermore the possible influence of prevailing conditions in the workplace settings on the student teacher and for future employment, even before they make their selection for school-based teaching practice, needs to be emphasised.

Similarly, I argue that NTs bring their own frames of reference to the teaching profession at the career entry point that they developed as a student teacher. To ensure that NTs have more comprehensive frames of reference, the South African Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications spells out that the requirement that the teaching and learning in practice need to ensure that students gain broader and more in-depth experience at diverse schools as workplace settings (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011). This then signals a need for student teachers to learn to teach in schools that disrupt their comfort zone for immediate gratification in terms of surviving the assessments of both university tutor



and mentor teachers. Focusing on immediate wants of *just getting through the teaching practice* may not in the long term prepare them adequately for the harsh realities of schools. Reconceptualising teaching practice to professional practice will perhaps influence student teachers to undertake teaching in a non-supportive environment. Moving from *practise to teach* (teaching practice) to *practise to become a professional teacher* requires a deeper understanding of the complexities of teaching in diverse school cultures. This would require students to understand the value of non-supportive schooling environments on their EPL. Such non-supportive environments may lack in physical and/or human resources for supporting the early developing teacher. This may perhaps sound antithetical when pronounced to students. However the need to view professional practice as a key element in the EPLS is of vital importance if student teachers want take ownership of their long term learning. Le Cornu and Ewing (2008) indicate that professional practice rather than teaching practice requires a move to ensure a close link between the various learning settings. However, merely changing nomenclature would not necessarily link the two systems. For meaningful professional learning to occur, more attention needs to be paid to making student teachers aware of the outcomes of their choices of types of learning spaces. This would also require conceptual clarity amongst designers, managers and teacher educators of ITE programmes.

Teacher educators should ensure that student teachers understand the short term and long term outcomes of EPL in a diverse range of schooling contexts. The view that emerged from the data analysis supports the notion that EPL is linked to disrupting the thinking of student teachers about teaching. A study conducted by Amin and Ramrathan (2009) on “preparing student teachers to teach in and for diverse contexts” (p.69) in South Africa stipulates a need for teacher educators to ensure that student teachers gain opportunities to look at the diversity in schools through a new lens. One such strategy would be to ensure that student teacher experience disruptions and reframing of their thinking about teaching both through teaching practice and through pedagogical approaches. Samuel (2009a) contends that ITE curriculums should not protect student teachers to experience only the ideal “Garden of Eden” (p.748).

### 8.2.3.2 Professional role performance

Teaching practice provides a glimpse into the reality of teaching which cannot be provided in a university lecture room (Taylor, 2008). Teaching practice also provides opportunities for the development of existing knowledge and skills as well as for developing new insights into the teaching competence needed for the profession (Furlong, Barton, Miles, Whiting, & Whitty, 2000; Hascher, Cocard, & Mosser, 2004). These aforementioned statements reflect the importance of teaching practice as spaces for formal learning of context-specific knowledge and skills. Findings from my study imply that although the teaching practice sessions were organised as part of the formal ITE curriculum, significant *informal and unplanned learning* emerged during the practice teaching sessions. Eraut (2004) explains that informal learning in the workplace is more than often invisible, as such learning is taken for granted. The school as workplace setting offers and should be used as a space for such informal learning.

Data drawn from Dan's account indicates his learning through his own management of dual roles as being a teacher (executing practice) and a teacher-learner (learning from practice) (refer to Chapter Six, section 6.2.1). Dan gained personally and professionally through informal learning in an under-resourced school during his first teaching practice session. Although this school was physically under-resourced, the willing support of the teachers as human resource agents made it a well-resourced school. Such teacher support assisted to boost his confidence in his own teaching ability. Eraut (2004) points out that "tackling challenging tasks requires on-the-job-training and, if well-supported and successful, leads to increased motivation and confidence" (p.267). Dan was placed in the roles of full-on teacher (in the absence of an appointed mentor) as well as a teacher-learner. In this role of *full-on teacher*, it seems as though the school expected him to take on the responsibilities of a qualified competent teacher. At the same time, he was also in the role of *fledgling-teacher* meaning that he was still in the role of learner teacher and developing his competence. Thus the operational realities of the school shifted him to become independent in his learning through active professional experimentation (Fraser & Greenhalgh, 2001). Such experimentation meant becoming pro-active by interacting with other teachers in the school. He took an active role in his own learning that allowed for an extension of his competence as a developing teacher. Although he found himself in a rather challenging situation, his *self-*

*directed actions* to ask for assistance from a group of supportive teachers provided a safety net for his learning. He managed to find what Korthagen & Wubbels (2001, p.46) identified as a “balance between safety and challenge”.

Group support in a safe environment, in the case of teaching, entails that a group of teachers are either directly or indirectly aware of their professional responsibilities towards a beginning (student) teacher. This type of support also reflects a broader more advanced concept of mentoring in the form of group support (Shank, 2005; Long, 2009). However, the evidence from this study is that the novice (mentee) needed to approach the group for support. This implies that student teachers need to be made aware of their individual responsibilities in EPL.

Both Bronwyn and Dan found their practical learning valuable, yet learning occurred at different levels. Dan’s learning was established through deeper learning-within-practice. The indicators of such deeper learning are to be found in his ability for self-directed learning. Taking *ownership* of learning required identifying the challenges of his immediate situation. Such ownership was supported through self-directed actions to obtain the most effective professional support. The absence of a mentor teacher moved the NT to self-reliance to develop his teaching abilities which consequently had a greater influence on his ability to teach independently as an NT. Mutshayikwa & Lubben (2009) indicate that self-directed learning leads to empowerment as the (student) teacher takes the “initiative in identifying and acting on their own individual needs” (p. 375)

Bronwyn’s level of learning was somehow restricted to learning-of-practice. This NT learnt mostly about practice. In the predominant role of observer and follower of her mentor teachers, her learning was focused on routines and practices. Allen (2009, p. 653) points out that in certain school contexts “emulating the practice of the seasoned teacher” is often regarded as “a symbol of good practice” by the student teacher. The almost *overabundant mentor* limited the development of early developing teachers’ independent teaching abilities. Although this type of mentoring may be valuable for learning it also has its limitations – here, a narrow type of learning that eventually influenced her initial teaching ability as an NT. Mikail’s learning during the formal Science lectures within the ITE programme signals an extended notion of community of practice. Having the subject lecturer as facilitator of

learning (professional mentor) during the on-campus sessions and in-school during teaching practice (rather than an outside contract lecturer), has more value for EPL. A closer working relationship across two different sites ensures continuity between the campus and school-site programme and therefore contribute to deeper connected learning.

#### **8.2.4 Professional paradoxical spaces**

The third principal element within the ITE programmes that emerged from this study is referred to as professional paradoxical spaces. Two conceptual paradoxes came through in this element that resulted in specific tensions for the NT participants. Firstly, evidence indicates participants' beliefs that they were prepared for the imagined world of teaching rather than the real world. Secondly, the expectations of the ITE programme were based on immediate needs rather than a long term vision of being a professional teacher.

##### **8.2.4.1 Two worlds: the imagined and the real**

Findings indicate that participants in the study were of the opinion that they were not adequately prepared in the ITE curriculum for the real world of schooling. This is not a new insight but is reflected in various research studies. For example, Darling-Hammond (2006) points out that although there are stories of teachers that valued their teacher preparation programmes, the accounts of teachers on their inadequate preparation for teaching outweigh the positives. Darling-Hammond (2006) states that "... they learned little in their courses that they could apply to the classroom, or that if there was any benefit to their training it was to be found primarily in student teaching" (p.6).

Except for the case of Mikail, the participants reported that in looking back to their preparation as student teachers they learnt about the imagined, ideal world of teaching, both in the respective formal lecture programme but also during teaching practice. They were trained for an ideal utopian world of teaching.

Specific to the data from my study, the actual experience within teaching practice schools mostly offered student teachers *protected spaces* in supportive environments. The schools were not typical, and the support offered to TP students could not be assumed to be the same once they would get employed. Korthagen & Wubbels (2001) confirm that imagined and

idealistic environments and conditions within teaching practice sites could result in stereotyping schools and gaining incorrect preconceptions about teaching. The findings of this study thus supported other research studies on the disconnectedness between ITE programmes and teaching in schools (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Hoban, 2005a&b; Gravett et al. 2011). Kiggins, Cambourne and Ferry (2005) assert that knowledge learnt at university is decontextualised and thus does not link with real life situations. Therefore, such learnt knowledge is often not retrieved when it is required in real life situations such as school situations. Samuel and Pillay (2003) indicate that within the MUSTER project (also refer to Chapter Two) ITE course designers intended teaching practice to provide students with an experience of the real world of schooling. However, the manner in which the school environment is mediated by the course designers is to provide an idealised version of teaching in a safe and protected sphere. Such simulated environments then mask the realities of the complexities of schoolings. The intended real becomes paradoxically the long-term unreal.

The on-going argument that student teachers are not adequately prepared for the real world of schooling was confirmed in the data of my study. Participants did not fully grasp the role of the ITE curriculum in learning to teach. It is clear that they expected to be *fully* prepared rather than *adequately* prepared. The NTs had the expectation that the ITE should equip them to teach at any level at any school irrespective of the variations in contextual conditions. *Adequately prepared* refers to being prepared with as much required knowledge and skills to be able to execute basic teaching practice. However, the participants' expectation was that ITE make them fully prepared which implies being able to enter the teaching profession with a total repertoire of knowledge and skills. They fail to realise that the completion of the ITE qualification is only the beginning of the process of becoming a teacher (Morrow, 2007; Gravett et al. 2011). This unrealistic expectation is also viewed by managers of schools who see the ITE certificate as an endorsement of being able to execute the full competence of being a teacher. NTs are therefore caught in their own expectations that ITE would have offered them everything. NTs are also caught within the expectations of their schooling contexts as being completely ready for all aspects of the professional roles of being a teacher. These unrealistic expectations create a dissonance in the NTs' acclimatisation to the roles and responsibilities of a newly appointed teacher. Both self-and externally-driven expectations produce uncertainty in the NT. This results in under-representing the challenges of the stages

of EPL required as NTs make the journey from student teacher to teacher. Several authors have drawn attention to the conflict between the imagined and the real worlds. For example, McCormack and Thomas (2003); Le Maistre and Paré (2010) and Korthagen (2010) indicate that early developing teachers experience conflict in adjusting their own expectations and ideas obtained through recent pedagogical training, their imagined world, and to what is realistic in the existing culture of teaching in a new context.

#### **8.2.4.2 Expectations; needs; wants**

The findings from this study indicate that the notion of inadequate preparation for the realities of teaching was often linked to the various expectations from the NTs. NTs had an *expectation* that the ITE programme should deliver more tricks of the trade such as the practical know-how and personal confidence to respond to immediate *wants* as a novice rather than the long-term professional *needs* of being a teacher. Such expectations came through in the data in the following two selected features: the offering of the school curriculum within ITE and the development of personal attributes.

A first key issue that emerged from the data was the expectation that the PGCE programme would be more aligned to what is needed and expected of a teacher in terms of subject content knowledge. Dan expected that the subject knowledge of the school curriculum would be offered as part of the one-year PGCE programme. This he felt was what he considered as an immediate need as an NT. This was driven by his short-term interest in survival and his plunging into schooling as a practitioner. Such expected satisfaction of immediate needs brings to the fore a somewhat simplistic view of the professional knowledge base that is needed to be an effective professional teacher. It implies an expectation of more in-depth focus on learning subject content knowledge and content pedagogical knowledge without considering a broader view of understanding the complexities of teaching within an authentic organisational cultural frame of a school ethos. This simplistic mechanistic view according to Hoban (2005b) allows for a mere application of knowledge approach which is inadequate if teaching is viewed as a complex profession that requires life-long learning. Although the need for a deeper kind of learning is referred to in this statement, Samuel (2008) and Gravett et al. (2011) stress that educational authorities, schools and student teachers would prefer to have the ITE curriculum mirror the school curriculum.

An important point to consider, specifically in the case of the PGCE students, is that the kind of content knowledge structures that students teachers are expected to have developed in their undergraduate degree, often bear little resemblance to the kinds of present school (primary/secondary) curriculum organisation and content. The manner in which school education curriculum has *packaged* the knowledge content areas of subjects and learning areas do not always resonate with the higher education curriculum. This of course begs the question whether higher education institutions (outside of the immediate framework of teacher education) in general academic degrees such as the BCom, BSc or BA degrees should be expected to align themselves with the school curriculum. The higher education curriculum structures of these academic degrees are not directed by the schooling curriculum, nor should they be. The evolving nature of the disciplines or fields of study may or may not resonate with the schooling curriculum. It is a moot point whether the curricula of more focused teacher education degrees such as the BEd degree should have an alignment with the evolving nature of the discipline (such as is the case with the general academic degrees) or more aligned with the schooling curriculum.

Moreover student teachers' claim of being under-prepared with respect to the content knowledge of the school curriculum need to be considered by taking note of the evolving nature of the school curriculum in post-apartheid South Africa. This evolving nature also refers to the kind of curriculum that NTs are expected to teach as significantly different from the one that they experienced as learners within their own schooling contexts. It is therefore to be expected that NTs experience the changing contexts of curriculum content as a source of destabilisation in their early professional years (Amin & Ramrathan, (2009). Understanding EPL as a deeper level of learning requires understanding the type of professional that should emerge. Thus both the ITE and the school have a responsibility to develop a "thinking teacher" (Samuel, 2009a, p.753) who is able to "think beyond the level of prescription, to exercise independent, creative and critical thought that is relevant, appropriate to the specific contexts in which they find themselves in" ( p.753).

The expectation of being more ready to teach subject content knowledge suggests that HEIs could consider a two-phase component of the one-year PGCE programme which deals with the evolving school content curriculum as a precursor to the associated content pedagogical knowledge. Having established this baseline or solid foundation to build professional

learning, the HEI curriculum could then elaborate other explicit core theoretical knowledge related to managing school contexts, school environments and the process of managing EPL. This would provide a more *stable connective relationship* between the world of ITE and the schooling environment. The management of this interface or interlink could pay attention to both the world of higher education and the evolving knowledge bases of the disciplines we teach in the schooling context, as well as the world of enacting the schooling curriculum (driven by its own curricular policy, logics and frameworks). This curricular interlinking could also be a feature of the four-year BEd curriculum. In this way the NT is able to be both a *shaper* and a *source* of long-term quality professional learning.

Secondly, Nick's awareness of his own needs to develop his self-confidence as well as his public speaking skills, as a teacher on entering the PGCE programme, implies an awareness of his own implicit personal expectations for his ITE programme. His goals included developing his personal attributes and skills in terms of confidence building. His specific needs encouraged him to deliberately engage in specific activities such as the various group and plenary discussions during formal lectures. Lawson et al. (2011) indicate that professional learning activities such as interactive approaches can result in personal learning that is characterised by confidence and motivation.

Such interactive safe spaces provided Nick with multitude opportunities to voice his opinion in a trusting environment. His awareness of his needs became a driving force for his own personal learning based. His disposition and awareness of his personal needs encouraged him to make deliberate choices to actively participate in discussions rather than taking on the role of a silent passive observant. As an adult learner, *learning as a personal activity* is driven by the desire or need to learn which subsequently provides the motivation to learn (Hoban & Erickson, 2004).

The need for learning from social interactions, such as in the case of Nick, is highlighted by White and Moss (2003). These authors indicate that viewing the work of a teacher as an instructional-technician who needs to implement programmes and policies, evokes a skewed image of the profession. They highlight that such a view neglects the affective aspects of teaching associated with intense social interactions with both colleagues and learners.



A general question that underpins the design of teacher education programmes are amongst others: How best should teachers be prepared for the teaching profession? And who decides about such best preparation? How does one reconcile the personal expectation of NTs to be provided with technical skills as they embark on a journey to becoming a teacher, and the theoretical possibilities that providing technical skills (in isolation) might lead to an under-representation of the complexity of being a teacher. NTs want technical directions but are these what they need? The question remains: Who decides what is best preparation? The NTs themselves, or the course designers of ITE programmes? A further question could elaborate whether schools should also have a say in the nature, form and direction of the ITE curriculum, since their expectations also present ingredients for a reconceptualised ITE curriculum. Some of these questions fall outside the scope of this study and indicate the need for further research.

My study specifically focused on the view of the NTs and their participation in their ITE preparation and which features could be connected to the world of teaching. Erickson, Farr Darling & Clarke (2005) noted that one of the many critiques against teacher education programmes is the “lack of agreement between the expectations of teacher preparation held by pre-service teachers, faculty, and school-based personnel” (p.176). Such discrepancies in various expectations were highlighted in the participants’ data. The findings alert us to some important issues.

Students entering an ITE programme such as the PGCE or BEd have different expectations from the staff teaching these programmes, in such areas as acquiring school subject knowledge and developing personal attributes and skills. But several questions are asked such as: (1) Where do these expectations come from? (2) What are the expectations of the various stakeholders involved in teacher preparation? (3) To what extent does the ITE formal curriculum in its entire facets deliver on these expectations, and (4) To what extent do their expectations match their needs when they have to practice as teachers? And overarching question could direct our discourse: (5) Who should best determine the curriculum construction of ITE and EPL as a professional learning system? The section below attempts to address these raised concerns.

(1) Where do these expectations/beliefs come from?

Existing memories and beliefs, founded on past experiences, result in certain expectations. The variety of expectations that are expressed within the data indicates that not all entering student teachers come to the ITE programme with similar sets of expectations or requirements. Each student teacher comes with different pre-conceived beliefs of teaching and the work of a teacher. One possible reason for such thinking may well rest in their construction of understanding from experiences within the ITE programmes. NTs enter their first teaching position with existing frameworks in relation to knowledge, skills and beliefs developed from experiences as school learners and within their ITE programme. Such pre-conceived views and existing frameworks of teaching is based on the notion of “apprenticeship of observation” coined by Lortie (1975, p.61). Teachers teach the way they were taught in their past experiences. Therefore their hopes or anticipations of what they can learn from the various facets of the ITE programme do not always align with what they need to be able to be competent flexible NT that can work in different schooling environments. Similarly, student teachers enter the ITE programme with different needs in terms of their professional development. The nature of their professional learning is thus dependent on their specific expectations and requirements of the ITE programme (also see Hoban, 2005a).

“The student’s learning about teaching, gained from a limited vantage point and relying heavily on imagination, is not like that of an apprentice and does not represent acquisition of the occupation’s technical knowledge. It is more a matter of imitation, which, being generalised across individuals becomes tradition. It is a potentially powerful influence which transcends generations, but the conditions of transfer do not favour informed criticism, attention to specifics, or explicit rules of assessment” (Lortie, (1975, p.63)

Therefore, in order to work towards shifting the notion of the imagined world, the ITE programmes needs to acknowledge and clarify such pre-conceived beliefs about teaching and schools as workplace settings, develop such beliefs and modify them. However the ITE curriculum does not make explicit the connection between these unique biographical expectations and what an ITE curriculum is expected to deliver (Samuel, 2003). Such

modifications in beliefs requires, as Hoban (2005b) suggests, “to confirm and disconfirm them with educational theory and experiences in schools” (p.285).

Teacher preparation programmes should work towards shifting the attitudes or disposition of students as future teachers to allow them to see differently. Reflective inquiry that offers opportunities for anticipatory reflection (Loughran et al. 2001) is offered as a strategy to unpack the known (the familiar) and move it to un-knowing (allows for examining of principles behind practice) and not-knowing (acknowledge ambiguity and uncertainty). This process will allow the student teacher to engage in viewing teaching in a new way (Vinz, 1997). The significance of anticipatory reflection allows for the development of mental signposts in looking ahead to the imagined journey as a future teacher within changing contexts. The professional learning of beginner teachers is deeply grounded in and supported by student teachers’ understanding of the reason for engagement in activities. Such engagement drives their learning so that future opportunities for learning might be grasped (Loughran et al. 2001).

## (2) What are the expectations of the various stakeholders involved in teacher preparation?

NTs expect to learn in their preparation both skills and theory. Students view learning in higher education as *theory* and schools with *practice* (Furlong et al. 2000). It is my finding that the various stakeholders in teaching such as the NT, the school, the HEIs and the Department of Education all have certain expectations as to what constitutes quality teacher preparation. Should the formative education as a teacher be more on learning how to be technicians of the national school curriculum or the development of certain personal attributes and skills, to satisfy the needs of the NT (as indicated above)? It was found also that schools want NTs to be workplace-ready skilled artisans (Allan, 2009). There is thus a need to understand what logic drives this expectation.

On the other side of the debate is the expectations of and role of HEIs in teacher education. HEIs are expected to ensure the development of sophisticated knowledge and skills required for the complex social and economic demands of a globalized world (Hoban, 2005a; Darling-Hammond, 2006). To support the need for more advanced knowledge, Lawson et al. (2011) argue that HEIs should ensure that graduates are career and work ready. This means that

university programmes should pay attention to the capabilities and employability skills needed for workplace readiness. These employability skills were highlighted by Lawson et al. (2011) as being capable in generic skills needed for the workplace such as problem-solving, self-management, communication and teamwork. Having certain personal attributes that would allow for adaptability to the work place setting, were also identified as part of employability skills.

Moving closer to the teaching profession, Hoban (2005b) argues that the purpose of teacher education preparation programmes “is to promote quality learning by students and to prepare them for coping with the complex nature of the profession” (p.285). Coping in this sense means that teachers should be flexible and able to adapt to workplace settings. Teaching as a complex profession and learning to teach as a complex process requires understanding of the dichotomies between ideals and reality. Therefore, Darling-Hammond (2006) argues that the dual role of teacher educators is to prepare student teachers for both the imagined school but also for the reality of schooling,

“... teacher educators must prepare teachers for schooling as it should be, while enabling them to cope with schooling as it is (p.40).

The South African Department of Higher Education and Training (DoHET) (2011) expects that an ITE qualification should deliver a teacher that has in-depth and focused subject and or phase knowledge, practical skills and workplace experience. This requirement highlights the expectation that the graduate teacher should have in-depth workplace experience that will assist in applying such acquired knowledge and skills to a variety of schooling contexts. Furthermore, the beginner teacher should be able to “take initiative and responsibility in an academic and professional teaching environment.” (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011, p17). The expectations applied to ITE and to the NT spelt out in this policy are unrealistic. Although the expectations for the two phases of becoming a teacher are stated, the policy does not provide details of how these expectations should be enacted. It is argued that the role of DoHET is to set out the requirements, and that of the HEI is to achieve them.

There is a gap that is not clarified between spelt out expectations of what a student teacher should be able to do on completion of the ITE programme (in-depth subject/phase knowledge

and practical skills) and expectations of the NT (personal-professional skills of taking initiative and responsibility). Workplace experience is viewed by the DoHET as an authentic teaching/learning site that would assist in providing depth to subject/phase specific knowledge and practical skills developed within the formal lecture programme. Expecting an NT to engage in self-management through professional autonomy requires specific learning opportunities within the ITE programme. I am of the opinion that workplace experience could provide valuable opportunities for the development of *personal-professional skills*. This then calls for work experience regulations that specifically state the expected outcomes of workplace experience to ensure not only subject knowledge, but also subject and generic workplace skills. In the case of the beginner teacher expectations the policy signals that all schools are *academic and professional teaching environments*. However, in South African schools this is not the case. The levels and types of resources in schools vary tremendously as a result of the apartheid era. As pointed out by Harley, Barasa, Bertram, Mattson and Pillay (2000) “the heritage of disorder is still pronounced in many schools” (p.296). In such prevailing contextual inequalities the NT is expected to take personal responsibility to be an effective professional teacher in any type of schooling environment. Therefore more attention should be paid to ensuring that the student teacher gains in-depth diverse workplace experience.

(3) How are expectations of the ITE programme met in relation to practicing as NTs and

(4) To what extent do their expectations match their needs when they have to practise as teachers?

Question 2 raised some issues regarding the expectations of the various agents of teacher preparation. However, expectations of student teachers of their ITE preparation in relation to their needs as practising NTs need further exploration. Thus questions 3 and 4 are addressed simultaneously.

Shoffner (2011) argues that life as a student teacher and life as a teacher carries different expectations and realities. Moving from student teacher to teaching as a novice, involves “an adjustment, requiring different actions, activities and responsibilities” (p.424). This movement from one world to the other requires interconnectedness. Working towards such interconnectedness requires explicit identification of the expectations and needs of the NT by

a forward-looking and backward-looking perspective. However, such an approach is not easily achieved. Many students do not fully engage in the respective ITE programme. AUSSE (2009 as cited in Lawson et al. 2011) states that in

“2009, 78% of university students in Australia spent in excess of 8 hours per week in paid employment, often unrelated to their coursework, and many view learning and work as distinct and unconnected activities” (p.67)

Engagement of the student teacher by looking forward and understanding the needs of an NT as well as what is expected of more experienced teachers in terms of life-long learning, will perhaps contribute to student teachers' taking on more active responsibility in their role as developing professional teachers. Therefore, the ideal is that student teachers need to be made aware of their future role as teachers on entering the teaching profession. Yet it is unlikely that NTs will embrace easily this prospective forward looking perspective since they are often driven by the immediacy of obtaining their qualification and by their need to stay close to the paradigmatic orientation of their teacher educators, who are their assessors. They are thus more likely to reflect a compliance with the HEI paradigm in this initial stage of EPL.

This shift of loyalty from the ITE orientation to the paradigmatic orientation that drives the school environment is also understandable. The logic of everyday practice for survival in the new school is of more importance than staying *loyal* to the ITE worldview. The loyalty to the ITE worldview during training may be (un) consciously a strategic move on behalf of the student teacher. New loyalties are required in the EPL in-situ school situation.

When NTs are able to see this shifting loyalty as to be expected, expedient or likely to produce currency for their stability in the ELP system, they are likely to capitulate to the demands of the new situation and perhaps discard (at least publicly) the ITE worldview and comply with the worldview of the school. This is often understood as the *wash-out* effect of ITE curriculum intervention (also refer to Chapter Two). When NTs are unable to switch allegiance this might produce a dissonance resulting in their choice to abandon the profession or re-assert the worldview of their ITE training and its values. This may or may not produce repercussions for their acculturation into the ethos of the particular school environments.

NTs that look back at their preparation within the ITE programmes in relation to their needs and expectations as a novice (as in the case of this study), can make a valuable contribution to the development of a more integrated ITE programme. But how involved are NTs in contribution to the ITE curriculum design?

In both roles as student teacher or as NT there is a danger of falling into a tunnel-vision perspective. Having tunnel vision in this sense implies looking at professional learning from a narrow, simplistic and somewhat blurred viewpoint. It signals a loss of peripheral vision in the sense that emphasis is placed on immediate needs and wants rather than having a broader and more in-depth view of the teaching profession. The broader complex system of the ethos of schooling in all its nuances and subtleties is what most NTs are usually under-prepared for. They expect consonance but have to encounter a confluence of factors imposing on their everyday practices and the interpretation of their professional competence as NTs.

There is a need to ensure that both student teachers and NTs do not develop or remain with a tunnel-vision view focusing on their short-term survival needs. Therefore, a second action in linking the two worlds of becoming a teacher is to ensure that NTs develop an understanding of the long-term role as professional teachers. Having a telescopic view where an individual is able to zoom in to ensure clarity of distant objects within a visual presentation, is a way of approaching a holistic and broader view of the teaching profession. The picture (teaching profession) obtained through a telescope can be extended or compressed as the parts of the telescope slide over one another. The movement of extension or compression will be determined by what the viewer wants to focus on. As student teacher and NT, there is a need for a more extensive and expansive view of what it means to be a professional teacher. The focus should be on what they need for sustainability in teaching as a profession. Sustaining working and learning as a teacher thus requires maintaining a balance through personal and professional adjustments between short term wants and long term needs and to align these with various expectations.

Obtaining a balance and linking the short- and long-term needs in the two worlds of student teacher and NT could be developed by understanding the profession in a wider worldview. A holistic understanding of the teaching profession would include the multitude of parts or entities that constitutes this type of work. As such it is assumed that preparing a student

teacher to enter the profession would entail that such an individual has a broader and deeper understanding of the ‘teaching profession’ in its entirety rather than only being equipped for certain parts of the profession such as *teaching for a specific school* or *teaching a specific grade*.. Using a *monitoring scheme* also aims to pick up specific aspects (objects) in the field which need particular attention at a particular point in time. Palmer (1998, p.66) regards this type of thinking as placing oneself in an “either-or-boxes” situation.

Palmer (1998) urges teachers to move from a culture of disconnectedness in which truth is a dominated by “either-or-thinking”. He questions,

“What it would look like to “think the world together,” not to abandon discriminatory logic where it serves us well but to develop a more capacious habit of mind that supports for connectedness on which good teaching depends?” (p.62).

Palmer (1998) argues that thinking in polarities creates imbalances. Therefore there is a need to ensure the healthy tensions between such polarities. This signals the responsibility of both teacher educators and school to open opportunities for student teachers to understand the possible tensions between the two worlds of preparing to be a teacher and being a teacher in different environments. However, linking these two worlds requires changes as expressed by Wideen, Mayer-Smith and Moon (1998, p.159 as cited in Hoban, 2005a, p. 10). They explain that teaching as a complex profession requires a need for change for both university and schools:

“The focus of the knowledge base of teaching during teacher preparation, as something to be applied during the first year, has limited value for beginning teachers.... Teacher education reform will continue to be frustrated until there is a fundamental change in the cultures and contexts of schooling that beginning teachers have to encounter. This change would create situations where greater congruity exists between teacher preparation and the schools where beginning teachers begin their teaching careers.” (Hoban, 2005a, p.10)

One way of obtaining such congruity is by engaging in an integrative approach in teacher preparation. Thus a stronger partnership between the various institutions and agents involved

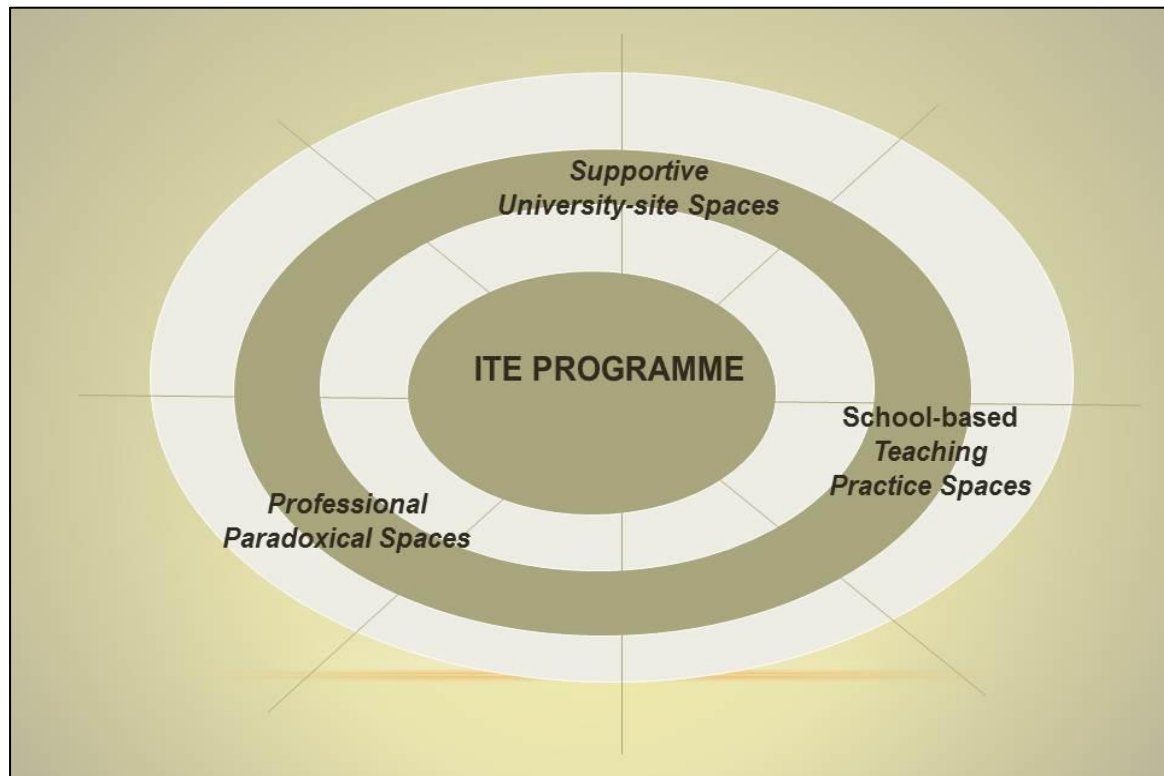


in teacher education is needed (Mutemeri & Chetty, 2011). Smaller steps, such as ensuring better communication and on-going collaboration between NTs, schools, HEIs and the Department of Education could result in contributing to quality teacher professional learning. Open dialogue and networking are possible actions that all agents can be involved in to bring about a better alignment between the various expectations that would better equip student teachers for their early career work as NTs.

Although there is a need for institutions to think differently about teacher preparation in order to work towards closer interconnectedness between the two worlds, such changes may take time or never occur. Thus it is important for teacher educators to focus on preparing the student teacher to make the necessary connections. Dynamic professional learning that is embedded in formal knowledge as indicated by Hoban (2005b) requires explicit linking of experiences of students in various school settings during teaching practice. A formal approach of constructing and deconstructing their experiences and beliefs during post-teaching practice reflection sessions could perhaps contribute to their understanding of how acquired knowledge can be adapted and used in other types of school settings. This approach could also be extended to other on-campus components such as simulated environments (micro-teaching), case studies and readings.

Embedded in this debate of expectations, needs and wants, rest other issues that need further exploration. Who decides what is needed in ITE programmes? How can student teachers and NTs provide an input in the design of ITE programmes? When are NTs expectations and needs identified and addressed in both phases of becoming a teacher and by whom? How do student teacher know what are their specific limitations or what needs to be developed?

Figure 8 OVERVIEW OF ELEMENTS WITHIN THE ITE PROGRAMME AS A SYSTEM IN EPL



### 8.3 SECTION TWO: SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

#### 8.3.1 Overview of section two

This section engages in key findings from the analysis presented in Chapter Seven of the learning experiences of Dan, Nick, Leesha and Zoe as NT participants within their first employing school. The significance of differentiated school environments on EPL is examined in answering the second research sub-question: How do NTs understand their learning from their school environment? Hoban's (2002) system thinking approach as a flexible lens is useful to highlight the particular elements with the different school environments that influenced EPL. Reid's (Fraser et al. 2007) categorization of learning opportunities is suitable for identifying sources of learning with the system. This section then explores the various interactions between the elements that influenced the learning experiences of the NT participants in relation to focusing on the school as a system.

There are significant differences between what NTs expect when they enter the profession as a student teacher (the imagined) and what they experience when they commence their teaching in a specific school environment (the lived) (Flores & Day, 2006; Shoffner, 2011). My study supports the notion that the imagined images of schools as workplace settings are different from the actual lived experiences. NTs had conceptions that institutions offer similar supportive cultures and conditions. However, interestingly, NT participants expressed that in the absence of centralised forms of support they moved to finding strategies to adapt to or to survive in the specific school environment. Very little evidence emerged from the data with regard to specifics related to classroom teaching and management. The findings indicate significant variation in the type of learning cultures, types of support such as induction, types of mentors and opportunities for professional learning.

Selected findings from the data offered in Chapter Seven are represented as three principal elements of the school environment as a system namely (1) Professional Learning Cultures (2); Professional Support Practices (induction and mentoring); (3) Micro Learning Spaces (co-operative and isolative). The distinctive nature of the Professional Learning Cultures provided certain types of support, induction and mentoring. Refer to Figure 9 at the end of this section for a representation of the overview of elements within the school environment as a system in EPL

### **8.3.2 Professional learning cultures in schools**

A recurring theme that came through from the data was the significance of the professional learning cultures in schools that influenced the EPL of the NTs (also refer to Chapter Two). Hargreaves (1994) explains that school culture is unique to its situation. It is the cement that connects people together in an organisation and provides a framework for professional learning. Flores (2001) supports the notion that culture provides a space for learning and emphasise that school culture has a direct influence on NTs professional learning and development. According to Avalos (2011) some school cultures “are more appropriate and conducive to learning than others” (p. 10). Taking the stance that NTs are an *entry point* in a new school environment, how they are accepted, treated and developed as a professional resource of the school is dependent on the type of professional support culture in the school. Hence, a professional learning culture is linked to the broader school culture.

A professional learning culture requires investment in developing teachers as professional support resources in specific working environments (Harvitt & Tavares, 2004). As professional support resources all teachers become supports to other teachers. Thus, understanding the different formal and informal professional support practices within various school cultures can provide a lens to not only view experiences of first year NTs but also contribute towards a framework of EPL. Different elements and conditions related to the professional learning cultures emerged from the NTs' accounts. It was clear from the data that the type of professional support offered to NTs was linked to the kinds of cultures in the school as well as agendas of individual staff members. This finding is linked to Avalos's (2011) explanation that each school operates as a different microcosm with different contextual elements.

### **8.3.3 Professional support practices**

The findings indicate that the respective school cultures did not actively provide *centralised or whole school formal structured support* such as supervised induction, mentoring or support structures for the first year NTs. Evidence suggests that structured induction from a whole school developmental approach was non-existent. Overall, NTs stated that their schools did not attempt to find out or engage in discussions on their needs and expectations, or, conversely, discuss what the school expected from them. Yet, research indicates that dialogue opens up strategies for support and is needed for the socialisation process in a specific learning community (Sharplin et al. 2010). According to Futernick, (2007, p.6 as cited in Scherff, 2008, p.1330) "to understand the problems teachers face ... the teachers themselves must be asked and must be asked often." The importance of learning "*from* talk and *to* talk as a legitimate member of the community" is supported by Maynard (2000, p. 18).

"But talking provides the learner with information not only about how to proceed, but also about meanings, norms and ways of knowing specific to the particular community of practice". (Maynard (2000, p. 18).

The lack of dialogue and talking specifically related to expectations and needs resulted in misalignments that constrained the learning of the NT.

### 8.3.3.1 Induction Practices

Although the benefits of induction have been highlighted in the literature (McCormack & Thomas, 2003; Hall & Cajkler, 2008; He, 2009) the South African contexts offer a different scenario. As mentioned in Chapters One and Two, in the South African context there are no statutory requirements for an induction year or even a shorter induction period into the world of work. And although NTs bring with them external knowledge that they have acquired from the initial teacher training, there is still a need to be prepared for a specific school culture as a place of work. Such preparation requires the development of internal cultural knowledge in the sense of knowing, understanding and adapting to the specific school culture. Such preparation through induction or orientation practices should be geared towards ensuring that the novice is able to fulfil certain job descriptions in the institution. Gavish and Friedman (2011, p.451) highlight the stronger demand on the teacher to function as “an organisational person who knows the organisation and can therefore influence it.” Becoming such an organisational person requires induction practices that guarantee support to meet establishing needs and expectations of NTs (Williams et al. 2001).

Paradoxically this organisational identity and acculturation to the corporate identity of the school system could be interpreted as having precisely the opposite effect of reducing, rather than promoting the professional autonomy of the NT. The NT becomes an organ within the corporate body of the new school, and this *formal induction* might be seen as an early form of *de-professionalisation*, rather than an EPL strategy. This is why some schools may believe that such *formal induction* processes are anti-professional. The flip side of this argument is that many schools do not fully understand or explore the nature of the professional image, yet nonetheless have an expectation that the NT conform to such an image. They simply expect NTs to learn by imitating the habits and routines of the school’s lived culture. No formal or explicit worldview or mission may exist in these latter schools and NTs simply are expected to become part of the *corporatisation*. A more critical perspective is that such schools which do not offer any formal induction process may be simply ignorant or un/under-prepared to deal with the complexity and importance of a formal EPL induction system, since they have other priorities to which to attend. Induction of NTs is a luxury and it is expected that HEIs ought to have done their work adequately to prepare NTs for the world of practice. A transferring of responsibilities onto HEIs characterises such schooling contexts.

Furthermore, the findings are that the NT participants had expectations that the school would provide some form of induction with the aim of providing basic information to the new employee on how things are done in a specific context. Eraut (1988, p.202) points out that such “process knowledge is knowledge about how to get things done” and that such knowledge within a workplace setting is normally acquired “informally but deliberately.” NTs’ expectations of obtaining process knowledge were implicit in their personal knowledge of workplace induction and through their training at university. Birkeland & Feiman-Nemser (2012) highlight that although “induction supports are ideally situated in schools with integrated professional cultures, in which new and experienced teachers regularly collaborate around instructional issues” (p. 111) such integrated cultures are a rare phenomenon.

Whereas participants had expectations of some form of induction, data indicated implicitly that there was an expectation from the respective schools that the NTs should on entering the workplace know what to do and to get on with the job. The lack of dialogue on expectations and needs from both sides became a source of frustration and embarrassment (for Nick, Leesha and Zoe). As newcomers they felt that they were confronted by teachers in their respective school for not knowing about specific procedures. Their challenges were multi-folded as they struggled with understanding operational procedures and fitting into the workplace setting. However, ironically, the evidence is that the novices tried to work things out for themselves in the absence of having necessary information or support. Being independent of external information to adapt to a new environment, or the lack of a centralised induction moved them to become more pro-active by taking responsibility to look for avenues to fit in and get support. As such, *self-induction* emerged as an indicator of EPL.

This self-induction took on many forms. Nick engaged in self-induction through his attempts to become fluent in the dominant conversational language used amongst staff and to fit into the social atmosphere in the staff room. Dan applied a deliberate strategy of carefully selecting focal teachers that he considered as useful to provide immediate support. Leesha moved to finding a source of information and inspiration in the more senior Head of Department. Zoe used a similar approach by engaging in contrived friendships as a means to extract valuable information. Such self-induction strategies were based on *self-interest*, an interest based on immediate needs and for survival as an NT.

Informal induction opportunities emerged in the form of departmental or subject meetings. Avalos (2011) indicate that subject departments can operate as powerful communities that have positive effects on teacher learning and development. Dan experienced informal moments and activities related to induction, mostly through information sharing of curriculum processes at departmental level. As such this decentralised initial department meeting became a developed induction strategy that gave the novice a kick-start in gaining an overview of the curriculum plan for the year. This type of micro-induction space also opened up an opportunity for him to express his needs in terms of lack of subject knowledge to the expert teachers, in an attempt to approach them for their assistance.

In summary, induction practices may have varied outcomes. It may provide leeway to critique the operational worldview of the school or adapt effectively to the school culture but it may also have long-term alienating consequences. Self-induction emerged as a key element of the EPLS. Self-induction by definition has ingredients for allowing the NTs as agents to shape their own professional learning. Therefore self-induction may serve as a kind of enhanced strategy for professional autonomy. Formal induction on the other hand could potentially be used as a form of de-professionalisation or corporatisation into the existing school culture. The total abandonment of any form of induction/orientation in the school could have the negative effect of simply leaving the NT on the periphery and never being included into the school culture. Although the notion of being fully inducted into the school, or being isolated and not inducted presents a tension, there may be another way of looking at the issue of induction. What most schools have as their culture is a failure to address induction, in a deep sense. It is a cultural style of inclusion/exclusion that is counter-productive to the mission of education. In other words, exclusion is a central element of the schools' culture. Those *included* may continue to have a sense of insecurity that makes them *exclude* others more rigidly.

### **8.3.3.2 Mentoring Practices**

As indicated in Chapters One and Two, it has been a trend in many countries and many professions that a more experienced person would be appointed to supervise or guide the novice into the workings of the profession. The participants in this study entered the profession as novices with the belief that they would have such a supporting teacher. These

beliefs were constructed through their ITE experiences where their student teachers progress was monitored and supported by either university-based lecturers or appointed mentors in the school. Having mentoring and support in the school settings during the teaching practice sessions resulted in their assumptions that an experienced teacher would be nominated to support them when they entered the school workplace as NTs. Such beliefs are supported in the literature. For example, Wang and Odell (2007) point out that although the structure of mentoring programmes differs across countries, many share a similar expectation for mentoring of new teachers.

“It is assumed that by working closely with the new teacher in the context of teaching, an expert teacher can facilitate the transition for a student of teacher education to be a qualified teacher in the existing school culture and be retained as a teacher across time” (p.474).

The kinds of mentors that emerged from the study varied from a formally appointed, yet *phantom mentor* to an active *unofficial professional mentor*. Although mentoring was not evident as an organised centralised school activity, there were pockets of support mostly at *decentralised levels*. Long (2009) explains that often mentoring does not materialise as mentors feel that it offers few benefits and having a mentee is an added load. Evidence from my study indicates that the lack of structured mentoring moved the NT participants to look for their own mentors and/or support strategies. Pietsch and Williamson (2009) explain that informal mentoring and opportunities to engage in collegial activities allow for enhancement of NTs positions in the school and subsequently provide wider access to support. However, my study indicates that the lack of wider school-based collegial activities moved the novice to look for *informal mentoring opportunities*. Self-selecting of mentors and mentoring became central to EPL (also refer to sections on Micro Learning Spaces below). This finding provides an important building block for the emerged conceptual framework on EPL as a system.

This is further discussed as a typology of mentors and EPL in Chapter Nine.



### **8.3.4 Micro Learning Spaces**

The notion that social conditions for learning such as collaboration, dialogue and networking within a school or through communities of practice have a positive effect on the professional learning of NTs is well documented in literature (Borko, 2004; Sharplin et al, 2010). Although the ideal is for teachers to work together in such communities, it does not always happen as teachers tend to work in isolation. The findings from my study are that learning occurred mostly through co-operation with colleagues in micro-communities. Participants also preferred to work in isolation resulting in individualistic approaches to learning in their respective school. The various professional learning cultures in the schools created co-operative or isolated spaces. These spaces were shaped by certain conditions within the respective NTs' schools.

#### **8.3.4.1 Co-operative learning spaces**

Du Plessis et al. (2007) are of the opinion that the school culture in a secondary school is influenced by the size of the school, departmental structures and academic tendency of the staff. This statement is significant to the experiences of Dan. The type of school culture determined the de-centralized manner in which the school functioned and which consequently influenced Dan's learning experiences. The management of a large school, such as Dan's, contributed to the academic departments working in smaller units or micro-systems. This provides evidence of a type of Balkanised culture as suggested by Hargreaves (1994). Balkanised teaching cultures refer to the formation of smaller collaborative groups within the school which reflects neither isolation nor collaboration. Nevertheless the units function with loose interconnections from the whole school.

Such a micro-system became a developmental situated space where Dan found various opportunities for learning by participating in collegial activities. The Maths department acted as a kind of unofficial professional body exercising their own type of code of conduct. The code of conduct implicitly prescribed that certain normative behaviour such as co-operation and team work would allow membership to such a selective department. Furthermore, the code was not restricted to in-school practices but also extended to outside-of-school social practices. Maths teachers that did not belong to the selective Maths department by virtue of not conforming to the codes were not invited to join such social functions. Dan's awareness

of the codes of conduct led him to strategically engage by positioning himself by interpreting the rules, accepting the rules and enacting the rules. Thereby he became a regulator of these codes.

The conditions within the selective Maths department allowed Dan as a member certain informal opportunities for learning. On-going dialogue, discussions and talk (work-related and social) were frequent activities that he engaged in with members of the Maths department that opened opportunities for sharing of ideas and pedagogical guidance. Chiles (2007) argues that social and work-related talk are linguistic enactments of learning. Nias, Southworth and Yeomans (1989 as cited in Williams et al. 2001) refer to the value for learning of collaborative talk in the form of social chat about themselves and discussion about teaching. Similarly, Dan's opportunities with teachers as sources of information and knowledge assisted in his professional learning. Also, White and Moss (2003) note that talk provides informal opportunities for professional learning. Through work-related talk novice and experienced teachers engage in thinking and re-thinking their practices, learn pedagogical strategies (Bertram, 2011), and learn about themselves. Van Horn (2006) is of the opinion that learning is more effective if there is an opportunity to meet with others, talk through experiences and reason about such experiences. Such shared opportunities allow for learning about one's own practice as well as the practices of others.

Dan's interactions with teachers within the selective Maths department is very similar to what Duncombe & Armour (2004, p.144) refer to as "collaborative professional learning (CPL)". These authors define CPL as "any occasion where a teacher works with or talks to another teacher to improve their own or others' understanding of any pedagogical issues" (p.144). Also Nias et al. (1989 as cited in De Lima, 2001) argue that a collaborative learning environment allows for openness where teacher insecurities and uncertainties can be shared rather than obscured or denied. Collaboration refers to people working together to achieve a common purpose (Williams et al. 2001). The Maths department may have been working together for some purpose but the exclusion of certain Maths teachers does not make it a collaborative working or learning environment. Therefore, I am of the opinion that the selective Maths department in my study rather functioned as a co-operative working community. In such a co-operative space, synergy was achieved by people in a group who shared similar motives such as willingness and ability to work with other as indicated in the

implicit codes of practice. Thus the findings indicate that interactions with people are a determining factor in the what and how of teacher learning (Putnam & Borko, 2000). Hoban (2002) explains that communities are important for teacher professional learning as they provide various opportunities for novices to interact with and learn from more experienced teachers both in terms of knowledge and for improvement of practice.

Although Dan's learning can be described as co-operative professional learning, certain personal conditions had to be put in place for the learning to occur. Learning was embedded in his enactment of the rules through displaying certain types of behaviour. Such behaviour was driven by his attitude of "make it work for himself". As such being a team player and willingness became central to his survival approach. Adhering to such rules provided some formal and informal opportunities for drawing from the expertise of other members of the group. In adopting a *strategic approach* he managed to survive his transition into the profession by acculturating to the norm of the unwritten codes.

#### **8.3.4.2 Isolative learning spaces**

In contrast to the co-operative learning space experienced by Dan, findings suggest that Leesha, Nick and Zoe experienced learning in isolative spaces. Such spaces caused these three NTs to function in isolation in their respective schools. Power struggles within the school were the main reasons for the different nature of isolation that they experienced.

The main reasons for Leesha's isolation were the unhealthy staff contestations and internal politics especially amongst the Foundation Phase teachers. Similarly to Dan's situation, the Foundation Phase also operated as a micro-system governed by certain behaviour and conditions. The powerful space where the Level One educators gelled as a clique provided unified opportunities to undermine the authority of their senior Head of Department. As such membership to this clique was selective. The Head as well as Leesha were not given membership in the clique. "Conflict is inherent to social interaction and no organisation functions without it" according to De Lima (2001, p.111). De Lima also points out that balanced cognitive conflict amongst peers could lead to innovative ideas and changes. Contrary to this statement, findings from the study are that the unhealthy contestations and hierarchical power conflicts between the level one female staff and the senior level Head of

Department resulted in a stagnation of the professional development within the phase. Hoban (2002) concurs that collegial relationships are difficult to establish or sustain when sub-cultures with different motives exist within a school. Whitelaw et al. (2008) indicate that such institutional bullying often result in the novice to retreat and find a haven in their classrooms. This is exactly what Leesha did. The on-going conflicts moved Leesha into spaces of isolation whilst finding the Head an inspirational source of support and learning.

What emerged from Leesha's experiences was the sub-culture or micro-system within her respective school pushed her to take certain decisions and actions. The isolative spaces were accompanied by specific conditions that can be categorised at three different levels. At a personal level, Leesha's depersonalisation in the form of negative feelings towards her Level One peer teachers resulted in what Hargreaves (1994) refer to as "elective individualism" (p.172). Elective individualism refers to situations where a choice is made to work alone, all or some of the time. The choice is based on preference or based on principle. Williams et al. (2001) point to individualism as being potentially damaging to the NT's development and, at best, damaging to the longer term interest of the school.

Leesha's learning rests in her self-reflection on the situation she found herself in. However, her self-reflection focused mostly *self-blame*. Apart from her self-blame on her choice of teaching practice school, as previously mentioned, she held herself responsible for the situation in the school that she found herself in, as she had initially accepted the principal's view of a teacher and had confidence in her professional adequacy as the learners were young. Yet, her statement of "I had not control over the situation in my mother's school," indicates a polarisation between her self-blame and having no control over the contextual constraints in her school that left her feeling disempowered.

As a social level, Leesha's choice of withdrawing from social interactions with her peers was based both on preference and principle. Her conscious choice was grounded on her negative feelings towards them. Her feelings of disrespect towards her peers resulted in her isolating herself from the staff room during tea breaks. Yet the staff room conversations could have opened up opportunities for informal learning spaces. The generation gap was given as another reason for refraining from engaging in informal social chats. Leesha's interactions with her peers were strictly based on work-related discussions. This deliberate personal

strategy brought on by social conditions impeded on her opportunities to fit in. Thus having commonalities with peers, other than work-related factors, seems to be conditions that could contribute to better working relations amongst staff.

In marked contrast, findings suggest that Nick had healthy interactions with his colleagues. A collegial and friendly atmosphere dominated the staffroom space during break times. The non-work related social interactions in the staffroom space involved specific linguistic engagement as the atmosphere was dominated by social chats rather than work-related talk. Although Nick had a desire to engage in work-related talk in the staffroom he respected the implicit rules of behaviour. Such rules imply a restrictive space as the staffroom was reserved for specific behaviour in a specific time. Nick furthermore made a conscious effort to overcome the language barrier in order to be able to become part of the social interactions in the staffroom. Behaviours such as showing respect and attempts at becoming acquainted with the dominant spoken language indicate that he took personal responsibility to blend into a specific culture. Indirectly, Nick engaged in self-induction through his attempts to be included in the *prescribed* staff room space and into the established social culture of the school. The social conditions that played itself out in the staff room can be identified as “contrived collegiality” as suggested by Hargreaves (1994, pp.195–196). Such contrived collegiality is predictable within a specific time and space.

In their contexts both Leesha and Nick positioned themselves in their role as NT as a beginner who needed and expected support, especially as both were not trained for teaching a specific grade and learning areas. Their expectations of being offered support and basic information to become familiar with the cultural attributes of the school would have eased the move into the school. Thus, what they expected was in line with Pietsch and Williamson (2009) understanding of professional socialisation as allowing NTs to “draw on the support provided by schools and systems to enhance knowledge, understanding and practice of teaching” (p.3).

The two schools handled the two NT participants differently. No support was offered to Leesha as a qualified teacher. The school may have believed that Leesha was familiar with the school environment based on her frequent visits and teaching practice experiences at the school. Furthermore, the employment status of Leesha in terms of being in a casual “filler”

teaching position for a short period of time perhaps did not warrant intensive support for long-term retention and goals, according to the school's point of view. Pietsch and Williamson (2009) point out that the perception in a school that a teacher in casual position is almost similar to a "babysitter of other teachers' children" (p.11). In this study, the position as casual teacher was seen as a mere warm body in the classroom that does not need support, as the position is temporary and the time duration in the school is short. Leesha recognised that support as seen by the school was regarded as (unfair) preferential treatment rather than the professional responsibility of the school.

In Nick's case although the staff room provided for social collegiality, spaces outside of the staff room indicated that teachers worked in *academic isolation*. Such isolation was embedded in the culture of the school, as teachers were hesitant to share their teaching resources. Academic isolation was furthered by lack of information and guidance resulting in the novice working in a vacuum. Academic isolation resulted in Nick functioning in what Hargreaves (1994) referred to as "constrained individualism" (p.172) (also see Williams et al. 2001). Birkeland and Feiman-Nemser (2012) note that school cultures that

"maintain norms of autonomy and isolation that limit new teachers' access to colleagues' expertise and organize teachers' work so that opportunities for ongoing professional learning are rare" (p. 111).

The variations in professional learning agents and spaces and their respective conditions influenced the emergence of a particular kind of NT learner. Spaces, agents and learners are offered as typologies within the EPL system in Chapter Nine.

#### **8.3.4.3 Rethinking induction and mentoring as integral to EPL**

The lack of structured tangible induction, mentoring and support practices for the NTs signals a need to rethink the notion of formal induction in the schooling field. Thus a question to consider is: What are other alternatives if there is a lack of formal or structured induction opportunities in a school?

The findings suggest variations in the broader induction strategies as well as in mentoring as part of the socialisation process into a new school culture. In all four main participant cases there were constraints that impacted on the forms of individualised support either as part of induction, mentoring or other forms of support. Such constraints were identified as excessive workloads, lack of time, lack of time-table coherence, teacher unawareness of professional support responsibilities, geographical distance between novice and supporting teacher and protected spaces. Long (2009) points out that individual teachers' are already overloaded with teaching responsibilities. Therefore, schools need to consider working towards a culture of group support through more creative ways for induction and mentoring. However, it is also the responsibility of teacher educators to ensure that student teachers have a solid theoretical perspective of induction and mentoring strategies at school, departmental (group) and individual levels.

This then calls for both teacher educators and schools to reshape how they think about mentoring and induction practices. There should be a move from thinking about formal induction and mentoring as the key source of support in schools to thinking more widely about informal varied strategies. This study has indicated that in the absence of such formalised support, NTs should have a knowledge base of possible varied induction practices but also understand their role in *self-inception* into a specific school culture as an alternative strategy.

Findings also indicate that schools of different scales or sizes as well as types of schools such as urban or rural schools may call for different induction strategies. For example smaller rural schools may have the need for centralised group support strategies or one-to-one mentoring compared to de-centralised departmental support strategies in the case of larger urban schools. The type of support would be dependent on the conditions and operational culture in the school. Strategies for producing such induction or orientation to workplace conditions may entail amongst others self-induction strategies and knowing how to gain access to collegial activities. Setting of informal support opportunities through collegial activities (Pietsch & Williamson, 2009) is also an option for induction to a new school environment.

Another issue for consideration is related to the time frames when induction and mentoring takes place. Time constraints for discussions around teaching and challenges amongst peer

teachers or within mentoring is a general contextual constraint referred to in literature related to mentoring and induction for NTs (Long, 2009). Fantilli and McDougall (2009) express the need for careful consideration to be given to the employment practices of new teachers. Sufficient time needs be allocated between the date of employment and commencing actual classroom teaching. Allowing necessary time would give opportunities for the novice to become familiar with the school, curriculum, operational procedures, planning for teaching and getting ready for the classroom. However, in general, schools mostly have to deal with operational and learning enrolment issues at the beginning of a school year and thus may not have the time for effective orientation of NTs to the workplace. In some countries teachers are required to report for duty to a school at least three to four weeks before the official start of the academic year for induction/orientation purposes (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Birkeland & Feiman-Nemser, 2012).

Possible constraints need to be pointed out to student teachers as conditions that could impact on the manner in which the school welcomes and supports them. Novice teachers need both to respond to what they find at schools in terms of structured induction and mentoring and to take responsibility for their own *self-inception through self-selected strategies*, by fitting in or finding an appropriate person for information. In other words self-inception presents an alternative way of viewing the definition of induction. Self-inception would enable sustained working and learning as a teacher as learning becomes self-directed by *making it happen for yourself* rather than *waiting for it to happen to you*. The notion of induction and socialisation into a new school setting implies “outside-in” learning (Turbill, 2002). I argue in favour of “inside-out” learning (Turbill, 2002) so that the NTs become active in their own self-inception into the school culture. A process of self-inception into a specific workplace setting entails the NT to take active self-directed actions for:

1. Understanding the intricacies within the established structures, practices and norms that are at play in a school system;
2. Actively engaging in extracting information about support systems at all levels of the school;
3. Understanding their status as newcomer and outsider to a specific school culture;
4. Understanding of what professional acceptance into wider school culture and within micro departments entail;



5. Becoming acquainted with established codes of practices at each of these levels;
6. Strategically positioning themselves in terms of their needs, wants and expectations;
7. Finding out how best to assimilate into the school culture;
8. Finding appropriate focal individuals for support.

Figure 9 OVERVIEW OF ELEMENTS WITHIN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AS A SYSTEM IN EPL



#### 8.4 SYNTHESIS OF CHAPTER

Sections One and Two of this chapter focused on the principal elements within the two components of ITE and the school environment in EPL respectively. The findings indicate that there was an assumption on the side of the NT participants that the institutional environments of the university and the first employing school would be similar. Yet the data did not bear this out. The university space seemed more supportive and collegial. The school environments offered different types of professional support cultures ranging from being restricted to accessible for the NT. Such variations raise another question. How are the two

systems (worlds) of the ITE programme and the school environments linked? Hoban (2002) highlights that teacher learning can only be understood if the *individual in related action* focuses on the relationships amongst the combination of elements and the conditions within the system but also amongst the elements and conditions themselves.

Chapter Nine attempt to bring the two worlds of university and school together into an Early Professional Learning System (EPLS) and build the main thesis or contribution of this study.

## CHAPTER NINE: EPL AS A CONNECTED SYSTEM

### 9.1 INTRODUCTION

The study aimed to gain new insights into how NTs understand their learning from the two components of the university driven ITE programme (as a professional teaching/learning space) and school driven workplace environment (as a workplace teaching /learning space) within EPL. The study further aimed at understanding the connectedness between the world of university and the world of schooling.

The literature review chapter reported that conventional ITE programmes do not adequately prepare NTs for the complexities of teaching and being a teacher. It was also argued that it is unrealistic to expect HEIs to fully prepare competent and workplace-ready NTs for a diversified schooling system such as in South Africa. Thus, the need for schools to provide on-going support during the NTI phase was pointed out. Such support could act as link between the learning that occurs at university and the continued learning to teach and be a teacher in a school. Research studies however indicate the lack of support from schools as the most important reason for teachers' dissatisfaction and attrition.

The data analysis chapters (Chapters Six, Seven and Eight) highlighted the type of learning from the ITE and within the school environment as components of EPL. Taking the stance that both *learning to teach* and *teaching* is a complex process, the systems thinking approach of Hoban (2002) as a conceptual framework was discussed as a lens for the analysis of the data on EPL (Chapter Three). Reid's (Fraser et al. 2007) quadrant of teacher learning opportunities was also offered as a framework for the analysis process in understanding categories of sources of EPL. Both frameworks guided the data production process as well as analysis.

This final chapter provides the researcher's findings in relation to the purpose of the study, which is to explore the EPL of the NT in the process of becoming a teacher.

Section One provides the emerging constructs of the study. Firstly, I discuss the emerging nature of the learning spaces within the university-ITE programme and the school-NTI environment. The conflicting nature between the kinds of learning spaces within these two components of the ITE and NTI resulted in the emergence of a specific kind of NT Learner and Learning. The four emerging typologies are the Professional Learning Spaces (PLS), Professional Learning Agents (PLA), and the Professional NT Learner (NTL) in relation to EPL. I chose to integrate the discussion of the kinds of learning that emerged within each respective NT Learner. These constructs offer the building blocks for crafting a conceptual framework of an EPL System (EPLS) of NTs explored in this study. This conceptual framework is used to highlight selected theoretical insights from this study. These four typologies are presented in Table 2 as an emergent conceptual framework of the EPL of the NT participants.

Section Two presents the main thesis for this study. The Professional NT-Self in the Early Professional Learning System (EPLS) is illustrated through the metaphor of a radar monitoring screen (system).

Section Three concludes with the theoretical and methodological contribution of this study. This is followed by selected key implications (theory, practice, policy and future research) of the study for teacher educators, schools, policy makers and future researchers.

This thesis report is concluded in Section Four with a fictional conversation between a Liaison Teacher Mentor (LTM) from a school (Famida), a Teacher Educator/Researcher (TE) at a university (Lizzy) and two NTs (Abigail and Zander) in their first year of employment that serves as a “*coda*” (tail) of this chapter. These pseudonyms are used to portray imaginary characters: none were participants in this study. Following the example of Pillay (2003b), I refer to this section an “*epi-pro-logue*” (p.241). As epilogue it provides the key indicators of the thesis but at the same time as a prologue it does not close the text. In this sense it provides space for “new issues for further research” (ibid., p.241). The notion of re-opening the case is supported by Rule and John (2011).

## 9.2 SECTION ONE: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR EPL SYSTEM

### 9.2.1 The professional spaces in EPL

#### 9.2.1.1 The ITE programme as protected professional space

The evidence in this study confirmed that the ITE programme (refer to Chapter Six and Chapter Eight Section A), as a component within the system of EPL, offered variations in kinds of learning and sources. The university-site offered protected spaces such as the formal lecture spaces (first space), formal school-based teaching practice sessions (second space) and non-formal social spaces (third space). The formal lectures (first space) and non-formal social spaces (third spaces) provided social and contextual conditions that allowed for openness and therefore the development of different kinds of professional learning. In their role as student teachers participants found these spaces enabling to their learning through conditions of support, collaboration, trust, encouragement and healthy social interactions between students and university staff. The kinds of learning that emerged here were *personal learning*, thus learning about self (attributes and skills, decision-making, assertiveness; emotional management) and *social learning* with others (with peers; with mentors; and within supportive communities).

School-based teaching practice as second space is designed to expose the student teacher to the realities of the complex world of teaching and schools. This study indicated that teaching practice schools mostly offered protected spaces to the student teacher as developing teacher. In general the teaching practice schools were mostly supportive. Mentor teachers were valuable agents for student teachers' professional learning. There were some challenging experiences that student teachers had to deal with such as being expected to be a carbon copy of the mentor teacher plus managing tensions between beliefs and certain practices within the school. Such challenges were dealt with simply by sitting the blocked session out and adhering to the established practices in the school.

The learning that took place during teaching practice ranged from deeper learning-within-practice (*learning through independent teaching*) in the role as a full-on teacher in the absence of a mentor to *observational learning-of-practice* with an over-supportive mentor. Individual learning that emerged related to the student teachers' personal choices of the types

of schools that they select for the various teaching practice sessions. Critical decisions about choosing either a comfort-zone school (one resonant with the NT's existing experience) or a school that disrupts prior frames of reference, directly influenced learning. The choice of teaching practice school either restricts or develops the student teacher's understanding of the functional realities of work place settings. Thus selecting a diverse range of school contexts for teaching practice provides a more comprehensive frame of reference regarding the complexities of schools, which in turn broadens and deepens professional learning. This, specifically within the changing landscape of South African education, may be a key influence on the short term and long term professional learning of both the student teacher and NT.

#### **9.2.1.2 The school environment as un-protective professional space**

The school environment as a professional space for learning as a teacher presented rather challenging conditions for the NT participants in this study. NTs expected an extension of the supportive, collegial university environment into the school as work place setting. In contradiction to their expectations, the schools seemed to operate on a deficit approach as they failed to provide useful formalised planned sources for the EPL of NTs. Workplace conditions were categorised by hierarchical power struggles, unhealthy staff conflicts and lack of socialisation of the NT into the new workplace environment. The absence of and limitations in basic induction practices at a centralised level of the school produced paradoxically a degree of professional agency and autonomy within the NT. This implies that the lack of induction pushed the NTs to sink or swim. Open and transparent employment practices and the need to declare the position, roles and responsibilities of the NT to the staff and learners as part of induction practices were neglected. The lack of adequate induction practices was detrimental to the NTs learning, even though it did encourage independence in those who had the strength to respond.

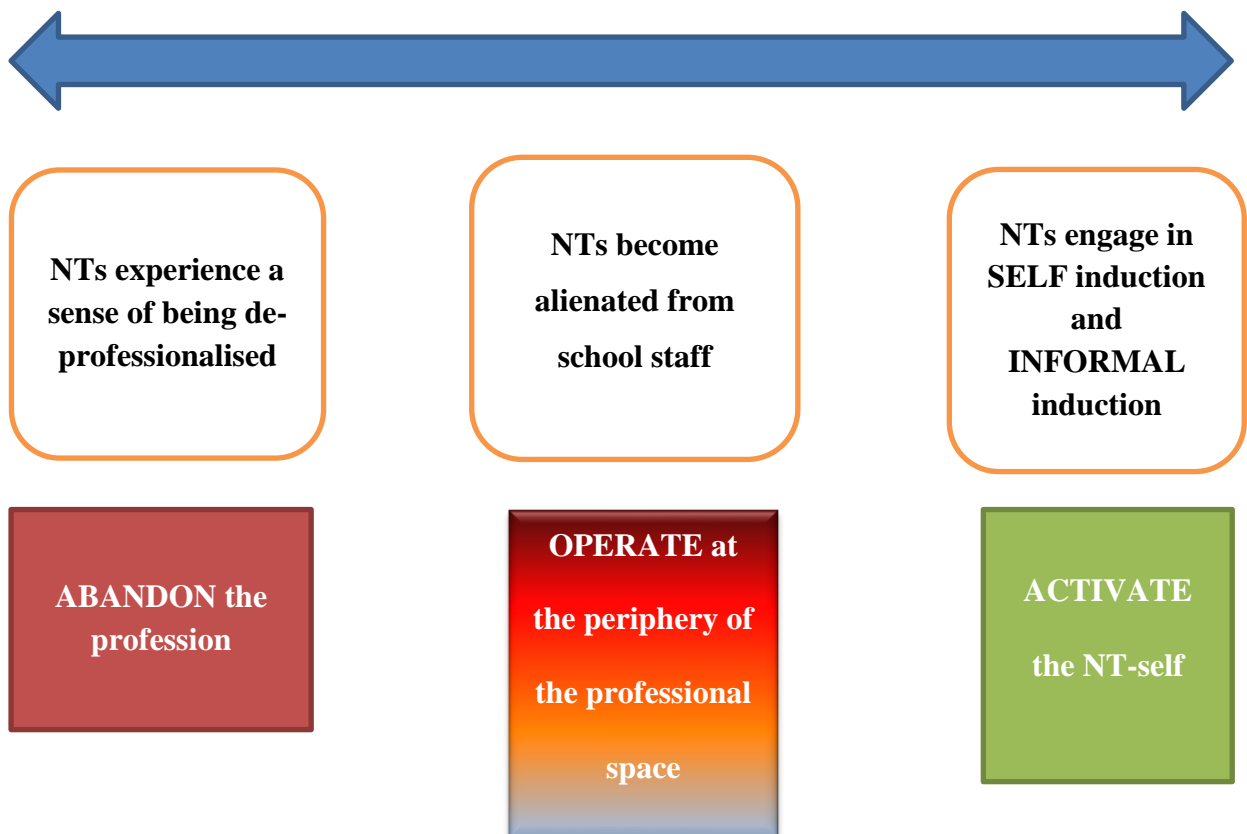
The propositional knowledge acquired at university could not always be used as the schools operated according to different teaching paradigms. On entering the new workplace setting NTs therefore needed to engage in the generation of new kinds of cultural knowledge and skills either through support from the school or through self-directed approaches. NT expected their employing school to have an obligation to provide some form of initial and

ongoing support during the first year of teaching as a means to acquire particular cultural knowledge. The focus of schools on meeting the ever increasing post-apartheid changing and challenging demands of schools limited their capacity to provide opportunities for EPL. The schools gave priority towards primarily paying attention to the operational management of the school, extra-mural activities, satisfying parents and the experienced practising teachers. Peer teachers did not view it as their professional responsibility to offer support to the NT. Such implicit professional responsibilities to bring the newcomer inside of the teacher-learning circle were not evident within the school cultures. The lack of structured support and inattentiveness to the NT also seem to result from misaligned expectations, which were further exacerbated through lack of communication between the NT and respective teachers. Limited opportunities were available or accessible to discuss the formal outlining of duties, expectations and support responsibilities of all agents involved. As such the schools emerged as un-protective spaces. The school seemed to have the notion that the NT is qualified and should work independently. The developing NTs had expected that the school would invest in them as human resources capital. In response their experience of isolative spaces moved NTs to deliberately detach themselves as a defence mechanism against certain practices in the school, or moved them to search for alternative ways of learning about teaching.

EPL occurred through omission of structured induction practices at a whole school centralised level. The absence of any form of induction or orientation to the school environment resulted in NTs' EPL being placed along different points of the continuum. On the one end of the continuum the NT experienced feelings of being de-professionalised and abandoned their teaching position. At the centre of the continuum the NT became alienated from the staff and ultimately moved to operate in isolation on the periphery of the professional space. On the other end of the continuum induction at de-centralised levels did occur through different tacit strategies employed by the NT-self. The NT moved to engage in self-induction (scanning for the right focal support person, learning the dominant spoken staff room language) and informal induction (within departmental planning meetings) as survival strategies. Through these induction strategies they took ownership of their learning by finding their own space for example in a micro-system or learning space such as smaller subject departments or with a peer teacher. This ownership included the choice to withdraw from the career of teaching. Inside-out learning (Turbill, 2002) was based on the NT self-

interest and immediate needs. This continuum of NT professional engagement in learning is represented in figure 10 below.

Figure 10 CONTINUUM OF NOVICE TEACHER PROFESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT





### **9.2.2 Typologies in professional learning**

The sections below present four typologies (Spaces, Agents, NT Learner and EP Learning) that form the foundation of an emerging framework for EPL. Thus the intention with the design of the various typologies presents a way of looking at the phenomenon of EPL within this study. The *types* or *kinds* within each typology are not exclusive as there may be other typologies that may emerge from existing or further research. Furthermore, overlaps between these typologies may be possible. The typologies should be viewed as potentially equal as each has the possibility to be mediated/modified/grown within a particular system. The interplay amongst elements within a system provides the conditions for the shaping and re-shaping of a particular kind of NT.

#### **9.2.2.1 Professional Learning Spaces (PLS)**

Based on the findings of this study, I present a typology of possible professional learning spaces (PLS) in schools. This typology specifically focus on identifying types of learning cultures in schools in terms of particular characteristics related to physical and or financial resources and professional support resources. The interplay between the elements within a school culture determines the level of support to the NT as well as the type of EPLS. Developing such a typology aims to explore how various types of professional learning spaces develop or constrain the EPL of the NT.

There may be a misconception that a physical under-resourced school by definition may not always offer the necessary support to novices as teachers as they are more engaged in struggling with various barriers to teaching and learning. The data from my study indicate that schools that are reasonable to well-resourced (in terms of physical resources) often lacked in ensuring accessibility to adequate professional support. On the other end of the scale, under-resourced schools offered a climate of individual and group support (refer to Chapters Six and Seven).

Thus, three types of professional learning spaces within the schools emerged from the data in respect to understanding EPL.

#### *9.2.2.1.1 A restricted professional learning space*

The first type of professional support culture is referred to as a restricted professional learning space. Such a restricted space signifies a culture that is inactive in supporting the novice irrespective of the nature of physical and financial resources of the school. This restricted space is dominated by a school culture that lacks awareness of the position of the NT. This space is disconnected as the needs of the NT are neglected. The professional support resources are not explicitly available and thus unattainable to the NT. Or the professional support resources may well be in place in the school but out of reach or not offered to the NT for various reasons. To illustrate the working of the restricted professional learning space, I offer two examples. As a grade colleague, the **silent peer mentor** worked closely with the NT but did not offer the needed mentoring support to the NT (refer to section 7.2.3 and section 9.2.2.2.2 below) as the position of *mentor* was not formally acknowledged. Therefore the option of having a peer teacher as mentor was out of reach. The appointed **phantom** mentor (refer to section 7.2.2 and section 9.2.2.2.1 below) as the professional support resource was officially put in place but remained distant and unavailable due to certain contextual workplace conditions.

#### *9.2.2.1.2 An imitative professional learning space*

A second type of professional support culture that emerged from the data is referred to as an imitative professional learning space. Such a PLS transpires in a school culture that is fixed in their cultural attributes as their traditions and practices are well entrenched. Irrespective of the physical and financial resources, the professional support resources are available but such resources are fixed within the set culture of the school. Professional support resources are accessible to the NT in the process of the novice acclimatising to this type of fixed culture. However, such a settled culture follows rules of restriction and only allows the NT to draw from the professional support resources if they follow the rules. The type of mentor in such an imitative PLS would be the **carbon copy mentor** (refer to section 6.2.2 and section 9.2.2.2.3 below) where the novice has to take on the role of imitating the mentor. As such the mentee takes on the role as passive recipient learner either through observation or following the rules of the fixed culture. This almost signals a notion of un-mentoring. Mentoring

allows for a mentee to develop their potential through experimentation whereas the un-mentoring practices of an appointed mentor reduces the mentee either in the role as student teacher or NT to an acolyte or follower.

#### *9.2.2.1.3 An accessible professional learning space*

The third type is described as an accessible professional learning space which is established within a school culture that is nurturing, caring and supportive towards the NT. Such a school is active in providing appropriate professional support resources for the NT. The school culture as a whole provides accessibility. This means that appropriate support is not only available but also reachable as and when needed by the novice. Thus theoretically, a school may well be under-resourced in terms of physical and material resources but professionally well-sourced and thus providing an enabling learning space that can empower the NT to develop. Such learning enabled school cultures also include the professional responsibility of all members of staff to act individually or as smaller groups in mentorship with the NT. All individuals are needed to make the mentorship not only workable but to provide opportunities for the NT to fit in and to move forward in the process of learning to become a teacher. As a professional learning space the school site supports the incorporation of the NT into the school culture. This professional learning space is also open to allow the NT to feel and be part of the mentorship. The forms of mentoring that emerged from my study did not occur in this third type of accessible and active professional learning space. The selective Maths department in this study did offer devolved opportunities for informal group mentoring. Irrespective of whether informal mentoring takes place in the staffroom clique or within the planned curriculum meetings, the group as a whole acted as a mentor to the NT. The value of such informal group mentoring rests on the notion that all members of the group engage in mentoring as a collegial activity at different times and spaces. Sharing of the mentoring workload provides a valuable space for sharing of ideas, experiences and open dialogue.

Different types of professional learning spaces offered different types of mentors as agents of EPL.

### **9.2.2.2 Professional Learning Agents (PLA)**

The absence of formalised structured induction and mentoring processes led to different types of mentors (mentor-person) and enactment of mentoring (process) in the various schools. The contextual conditions such as prioritising certain types of operations that prevailed in schools environments indirectly led to mentors of a particular kind. Such variations in mentor types and mentoring or the absolute lack of induction/mentoring per se moved the NTs to other sources of professional learning. The lack of such outside-in learning opportunities shifted the NTs to become internal drivers of their own EPL. I have selected five forms of mentors / mentoring that emerged from the study to form a typology of mentors in EPL.

#### *9.2.2.2.1 A phantom mentor*

An experienced master teacher is formally appointed by management in the designated role of mentor. The term mentor is awarded by the school. The school had fulfilled their obligations towards the NT by appointing a mentor but expects the novice to take responsibility to tap into such a source agent. No formal time is organised for mentoring discussions. The notion of having a mentor remains just that, as no activities associated with mentoring occur due to a number of constraints. Situational constraints associated with the school culture such as heavy workloads, geographical distance between master teacher and NT as well as lack of time are possible reasons for disabling opportunities for mentoring. Furthermore, personal feelings on the side of the NT of not wanting to impose on teachers in their free time are constraining for mentoring opportunities. Time during tea break and after school is regarded by the NT as restricted to personal teacher time. Thus these opportunities do not provide space for work-related talk needed by the NT mentee. Attempts at trying to organise other structured times by the NTs are unsuccessful. The appointed phantom mentor is evasive, distant and unapproachable and thus mentoring became futile. The service of the mentor is available but not accessible to the mentee. The constraints (situational and personal) that move an appointed mentor to a kind of phantom mentor indicates the need for the school management to set up specific structured time for mentoring opportunities.

#### 9.2.2.2.2 *The silent peer mentor*

No formal mentor is appointed by the school for the NT. Therefore the NT assumes that a peer teacher teaching the same grade would be a collegial supporter. However, the peer teacher is not aware of her assumed role as supporter, either as a colleague or as an unofficial mentor. The absence of a formal appointment as mentor or any acknowledgement in the wider school community results in a peer teacher not taking it as her professional responsibility to offer support to the incoming NT and is thus positioned as a silent peer mentor. This signals a need for the school management team to firstly ensure an open declaration of who the supporting teacher or mentor is and their associated responsibilities. Secondly, management needs to ensure a wider school culture where teachers are aware of their professional responsibilities towards an NT or experienced newcomer and thus establish a collaborative working environment.

#### 9.2.2.2.3 *The carbon-copy mentor*

The study finds that specific types of school cultures are strongly dominated by patterned habits and practices. Such established routines are often grounded in the restrictive management style of the school. Management takes ownership of the school and prescribes a set way of teaching and learning. The teacher mentor complies with the fixed habits in the school and thus imposes on the NT the set and static teaching styles used in the school. The NT is forced into the role of imitating the mentor teacher's teaching style and thus to become a carbon copy of the teacher. As such the mentoring style of the teacher robs the NT of personal learning. Experimenting with self-selected teaching strategies would contribute to EPL. This type of mentor shifts the professional role of the NT from being a potential active agent of learning to teach to become a passive recipient who is forced to accept the status quo of the school.

#### 9.2.2.2.4 *Self-selecting of mentors*

The absence of a formally appointed mentor as well as the inability of a mentor to practise any form of mentorship becomes a source of learning for the NTs. The absence of a mentor shifts the NT to find *informal learning spaces* by engaging in self-selecting of their mentors. Finding themselves in an almost submerged situation, the NTs use their own discretion to

purposively seek and select more experienced teachers for support. As such the novices are driven by a self-directed contingency plan to survive. Engagement in self-selecting of mentors implies that the NT consciously identifies and approaches a human agent for their learning. Furthermore, such self-selecting is extended to the mentoring process which may have been informal but is based on the novice's specific needs or personal/professional agenda. Such personal choices to take initiative to find appropriate agent(s) as mentor(s) shift the NT to agency. The self-selecting of a mentor(s) is grounded on the NTs awareness of their own needs.

Two self-selecting strategies of mentoring can be identified from the data. On the one end of the scale self-selecting was a simplistic immediate survival strategy compared to a more advanced self-directional strategy on the other end of the scale. Data shows that a specific type of approach and criteria (discussed below) were used in selecting their respective mentors and agenda for mentoring.

#### *9.2.2.2.5 An unofficial professional learning mentor*

Staff contestations and chattering phase peer teachers that dominate a school environment moved the one NT to isolate herself rather than accept the codes of practice of the peer teachers. The absence of a formal mentor and lack of support from peers resulted in the NT questioning her ability to teach. These factors became points of departure that led the NT to search for a support person within the school. The NT selected as a source of influence on her EPL a person who was approachable and willing to take time to coach her. The potential support agent was selected as a coping mechanism in her struggle to learn to teach certain concepts. She found a safe space for learning within a one-to-one form of coaching. Thus her personal needs to quickly learn much needed content pedagogical skills drove her to ask for specialised support. This approach was based on her immediate teaching needs and became part of a strategy for surviving. This mentor subsequently became her life-line as an emotional support person in an unsupportive professional learning space.

#### 9.2.2.2.6 *Self-directed mentoring for professional learning*

Within a large school environment situational constraints such as excessive workloads and time constraints do not allow for the luxury of formalised mentoring. The NT approaches these constraints by engaging in *intentional strategies* to fit into the school culture. Her self-interest in survival and in learning how to teach suggests an approach of self-induction into the school. Such self-induction entails a sifting process by identifying possible appropriate focal support teachers. This action is followed by consciously selecting a mentor(s) based on their personal individual strengths. In other words, what each could offer in terms of their own expertise is of value to the NT. Further criteria for the selection of the mentors are their approachability in terms of personality type and as immediate subject colleagues. Such a self-inductive approach with the purpose of adhering to personal and professional short-term needs as an NT also signals pathways to the development of *self-management skills*.

The NTs *self-directed* approach to select sources of influence over her professional learning in the form of mentoring (process) rather than mentor (individual) implies perhaps a more advanced form of the NTs' professional choice rather than being forced into an overtly prescribed relationship with an assigned mentor. Thus the choice of who should be a mentor to the NT is left to the discretion of the NT based on individual needs and criteria.

Within the self-selective mentoring approach lies the value of the subject group as an informal group mentoring approach. Although the selective subject group was not formally appointed as such they exercised a *self-regulating* code of practice which included an individual into their ranks based on subject pedagogy. However, the NT mentee has to adhere to certain codes of practice by displaying particular kinds of behaviour such as co-operation and being a team player.

Overall, the lack of formalised support, induction and mentoring together with working in specific kinds of professional learning spaces shifted the NTs to take specific actions. In other words the existing established practices in the respective school environments produced a specific kind of NT Learner (NTL). The need for professional support resulted in the NTs consciously engaging in certain actions. These actions contributed to their EPL. Therefore I offer four types of NT Learners in the next typology.

### 9.2.2.3 The Professional Novice Teacher Learner (NTL)

The unit of analysis, the *individual in related action* (suggested by Hoban, 2002) within the EPLS is viewed as a typology of kinds of NTLs. The typology is presented along a continuum to illustrate the absence of formalised support on the EPL and the emergence of a kind of NTL. Similar to the professional learning spaces and typology of kinds of mentors this typology of NTLs is by no means exhaustive but rather indicative of the varieties of kinds of Early Professional (Novice) Learners as potential cases of examples. The features within each of the types of NTLs signal a need for the appropriate context specific EPL opportunities but not as a one size fits all. Integrated within each typology of NTL is the kind of professional learning.

#### 9.2.2.3.1 *The Silent NT Learner*

This kind of NTL did not emerge from the analysis of data within this study but certain features presented here were picked up in the data across the participants and are therefore offered as the conceptual Silent NTL to illustrate one end of the continuum.

The Silent NTL takes on a transmissive position as a newcomer. Learning as a teacher is dependent on an over reliance on outside sources of support. There is a probability that this kind of NTL experienced over-mentored learning as a student teacher. The type of mentor did not allow the student teacher sufficient opportunities for independent teaching or developing teaching confidence. The mentor stepped in to provide immediate support if the student teacher experienced any challenges in the classroom. Such early development of dependency results in the Silent NTL lacking the ability to approach another person within the school environment for support. The Silent NTL expects that colleagues should realise her needs and offer their support. In the case where things go wrong this type of NTL blames other teachers for not reaching and extending support to her. She is also surprised that she is expected to operate independently as a functional new teacher. The lack of reaching out to outside support and not having confidence to ask for support results in the Silent NTLs becoming submissive. In this submissive role she accepts the status quo in the school. She remains silent when confronted about her role as teacher. She does not question authority, speak or stand up for her rights. In essence the disconnectedness of the NTL from the professional learning space is a result of the position taken by the Silent NTL. The PLS



makes available opportunities for learning but the Silent NTL does not draw from such sources.

### *Superficial technical learning*

The kind of basic learning that emerges for the Silent NTL is rather superficial. Such superficial learning is characterised by dependency on professional support from others. Learning can neither be classified as inside-out or outside-in learning. Teaching for this kind of NTL is mostly a technical job with no or little consideration to adhering to personal values and beliefs. Inside-out learning does not occur as the Silent NTL merely becomes a passive follower of the established practices and routines in the school. There is a lack of engagement in critical inquiry about the foundations and operations of such practices. Outside-in learning also does not materialise as the Silent NTL does not find or easily draw on outside agents for support. Professional learning is superficial as learning becomes a matter of momentarily actions. This implies going through the daily motions with very limited engagement in critical inquiry about and with others.

#### 9.2.2.3.2 The Solo NT Learner

This Solo NTL engages mainly in inside-out learning. The professional learning spaces within the school is dominated by conditions that are fixed, static and fossilised. In such a culture the NTL is regarded as an outsider. Existing routinised habits in the school do not freely offer an assimilated space to the NTL. Fitting in and finding a space to belong becomes a difficult venture. As such the established traditions and practices influence the emergence of a specific type of NTL. The fixed practices extend to staff interactions. The unprofessional micro-politics that are at play in the school result in troubling spaces for the NTL as newcomer. The NTL may also choose to move to the periphery and take a more observer role as NT looking on from the outside. Taking a more passive observant role moves the NTL to elective individualism and isolation. This kind of NTL may also choose at times to engage in specific enacted behaviour such as contrived friendship towards a person with the aim of obtaining basic support. Such contrived strategies signal a kind of personal engineering for survival. Workplace conditions that offer mistrusting and unsupportive environments result in the NTL's engaging in depersonalisation and becoming detached from the members of staff.

The lack of professional support moves the Solo NTL to question her worth as a teacher and person. Self-reflection as a condition of inside-out learning is used to make sense of the existent contextual and social conditions that prevail in the school. Such internal dialogue becomes a source of professional learning. Internalisation is used to find solutions to challenges associated with unhealthy micro-politics in a school culture. The Solo NTL however uses self-reflection as a strategy to understand the personal need to survive. Thus the personal-professional needs move the NTL to action. The Solo NTL consciously seeks a support agent such as a mentor teacher or administrative staff. There is a danger that complete disequilibrium within the Solo NTL can result in the Solo NTL to continue working in isolation. This kind of NTL may lose or question the true meaning of being a professional.

### *Individual Learning*

The kind of learning that emerges for this Solo NTL is predominantly geared towards individual learning based predominantly on meeting personal/professional needs. The social and contextual conditions within the professional learning space shift the NTL to adopt a deliberate position within the school. Taking on the position of either contrived conformity and/or deliberate isolation is used as a functional decision making strategy for individual survival. This type of individual learning is mostly geared towards short-term survival.

#### *9.2.2.3.3 The Compliant NT Learner*

This kind of NTL mostly engages in inside-out learning. This NT is compliant to herself as person and professional rather than the external environment of the school. As such the success as a Compliant NTL are characterised by recognition of two key strategies, professional autonomy and beliefs in his worth as teacher. *Professional learning* on her worth as a professional in relation to how such a professional should be treated underpins the NTL's thinking and practices. As such the *professional image* of teaching and being a teacher is underpinned by personal beliefs. Her survival as an NT is grounded in her self-worth as well as acknowledgement of her worth as a professional within the working environment. She regards long-term survival as a professional more important than short-term survival for a specific professional learning culture. The Compliant NTL has a strong sense of self-worth as a person and a teacher. As such self-expression becomes a strategy for survival as she would stand up for her profession and her beliefs.

This type of NTL regards self-reflection on professional beliefs as an important personal condition for learning. As such self-reflection on teaching experiences is used as a survival strategy. External contextual conditions of being restricted and loss of autonomy within a professional learning culture cause personal tensions between the lived and the expected. Feelings of being de-professionalised emerge as this kind of NTL grapples between what she believes a professional teacher should be and the practices of how schools treat the professional teacher. The disconnected feelings that emerge when the expected notions of professional support and treatment from a professional working environment do not match the lived experiences move this type of NTL to engage in deep self-reflection of self and professional worth. Keeping self-respect and self-dignity intact when confronted by challenging professional learning cultures is core to the Compliant NTL. As such the Compliant NTL does not conform to the restrictive school culture but remains true to her personal beliefs of actively defending the value and dignity of self and the profession. The Compliant NTL voices her opinions regarding the meaning and value of professional autonomy. As a professional survivalist the Compliant NTL would then move to leaving a restrictive professional learning space but remain within the profession. This kind of NTL will ask for support but expects that his professional autonomy should be valued. Professional discretion means being allowed to learn through trial and error. In the case of feedback by management on his early performance, the Compliant NTL expects to be treated as a professional adult-person in her role as inexperienced teacher.

### *Insulative Professional learning*

In providing a summary, the kind of inside-out learning that emerges from the Compliant NTL is referred to as insulative professional learning. This refers to learning that is deeply embedded in safeguarding the individual's professional image and professional autonomy. A prime indicator of this kind of learning is the use of deep self-reflection to gain or regain a sense of *worth of self and as professional*. She also places high value on her professional image from within herself and from the community. A second indicator is the value that she places on the professional image and beliefs about the profession. Her learning is also meaningful as this NTL believes it is important to remain true to the profession. The need for *professional autonomy* moves her to take certain calculated actions with the purpose of long-

term sustained learning and continued teaching. This means that this type of insulative professional learning emerges out of immediate needs but is more focused on *long-term professional aims*.

#### 9.2.2.3.4 The Strategic NT Learner

A Strategic NT Learner engages in careful management of outside-in learning and inside-out learning. As an initial outsider, the Strategic NTL has the ability to move into his environment by becoming an outside-in learner. She has the ability to read the environment, identify potential learning sources and draw on such sources to support her in adapting to her environment but also to manage herself within the environment. The combination of outside-in learning and inside-out learning creates synergy for sustained professional learning. As a strategist this type of NTL is able to draw from prior tacit knowledge acquired through work experience or educational experience within the ITE programme and schooling system. Such life experiences provide foundations for understanding the variables that are at play in workplace conditions. Drawing from such knowledge will allow the NTL to know the value of possible variables and therefore either draw on or disregard such variables.

Inside-out learning occurs when the NTL takes control of the working conditions and finds learning sources to *meet her individual needs*. Such self-directed learning occurs through self-inception that is a conscious act of *taking control* of the situation through specific *calculated actions* such as searching and consciously selecting focal agents for support. The Strategic NTL is also able to self-sustain learning. Thus once the NTL has found the learning spaces and agents of learning she should be able to maintain learning with such an individual or within such a group through self-regulation of codes of practice of micro-systems such as subject departments or cliques.

The Strategic NTL has a repertoire of *professional strategies* that would allow her to actively engage in her own professional acceptance into the whole school system and/or a micro-system. The first strategy would include having working knowledge of human interactive relationships in a working environment. Such interactive skills relate to understanding personality types and the interplay in social interactions. Strategic positioning as a second

strategy would entail scanning the environment for possible sources that could support learning. This would entail amongst others purposive selection of mentors (individual peers) and mentoring (within a group). A third strategy is to locate a space within the school and extending the self by protecting such a space by working within the codes of practice. A fourth strategy is for the Strategic NTL to take on a certain *conscious professional disposition* such as willingness to learn from others, being a team player, being open and honest about needs and wants in terms of gaps in knowledge base and challenges as a novice.

### *Personal-Professional Learning*

Overall, the Strategic NTL has the ability to take responsibility for her own learning (Personal) within and of her external environment (Professional). Thus the approach to such deep learning is through *inside-outside learning*. The Strategic NTL is able to make professional choices and enact on selected strategies that allow for self-management of learning in any type of learning context.

Table 2: A framework for integrating the four categories of typologies

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING SPACE (PLS)		PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AGENTS (PLA) (Mentorship)	PROFESSIONAL NOVICE TEACHER LEARNER (NTL)	PROFESSIONAL LEARNING (PL)
<b>Restricted Space (Inactive)</b>	Professional support resources are in place but are not available or unattainable.  This type of cultural space neglects the NTs needs	<i>The Phantom Mentor</i> <i>The Silent Peer Mentor</i>  This type of mentor is appointed or nearby but is unattainable or not available. Thus mentoring does not occur.	<i>The Silent NTL</i> This NTL expects that Professional Support Resources that are in place should come to the NTL. This kind of NTL is primarily the cause of the disconnectedness between NTL-self and the professional learning space through an over dependency on outside sources.	<i>Superficial learning</i> A technical momentarily approach to learning and based on dependency of others.
			<i>The Compliant NTL</i>  This NTL is disconnected from the learning space as a result of feeling de-professionalised. However, this NTL relies on self-reflection to find self-worth and worth as a professional. This NTL chooses to leave the specific learning space to protect her professional autonomy.	<i>Insulative Professional learning</i> Although disconnected from the learning space, learning is meaningful inside-out learning. The NT adopts an approach to protect professional image, values and beliefs for long-term aims.

<b>Imitative Space (Fixed)</b>	<p>Professional support resources are in place and accessible but can only be accessed within a fixed culture and if rules are followed.</p> <p>This type of cultural space follows rules of restriction on the NT.</p>	<p><b><i>The Carbon Copy Mentor</i></b></p> <p>The type of mentor demands the mentee to be a carbon copy through imitation.</p>	<p><b><i>The Solo NTL</i></b></p> <p>This NTL is pushed to become de-personalised by mistrusting the staff in a fixed culture. This moves the NTL to deliberate isolation.</p>	<p><b><i>Individual learning</i></b></p> <p>Individual approach to inside-out learning based on need for short-term survival.</p>
<b>Accessible Space (Active)</b>	<p>Professional support resources are active.</p> <p>This type of cultural space is caring, nurturing and supportive towards the NT.</p> <p>The space is open to learning.</p>	<p><b><i>The Group Mentoring system</i></b> <b><i>The Self-Selected Mentor</i></b></p> <p>The group mentorship system allows all staff in the group to act as Professional Support Resources responsible for the NTL.</p> <p>The self-selected type of mentor is active in mentoring the specific needs (tangible or salient) of the NTL.</p>	<p><b><i>The Strategic NTL</i></b></p> <p>This NTL is connected to the learning culture by taking focussed and strategic actions to adapt to the culture. This allows the NTL to NT takes responsibility of both obstacles and sources of learning irrespective of the conditions</p>	<p><b><i>Personal-Professional learning</i></b></p> <p>Strategic approach of inside-outside learning. Personal strategies are based on ownership of learning. Self-inception through professional strategies is put in place by the NT to adapt into the environment.</p>

### **9.3 SECTION TWO: THE PROFESSIONAL NT-SELF IN EARLY PROFESSIONAL LEARNING**

#### **9.3.1 Personalised-Professional Learning**

Both the university and school as professional learning spaces each act as a system within a broader system of EPL in the process of becoming a teacher. Both these systems have an overarching purpose of developing the early developing teacher for the world of teaching. Yet, evidence from the data in this study clearly indicates that the two systems offered conflicting spaces that impacted on the NTs' EPL. Findings indicate a rather clear demarcation between the paradigmatic orientations of the ITE system and the school system as they operate according to different logics, functions, purposes and values. Such divergent thinking and operations caused tensions between the expectations, wants and needs of the NTs as they moved from the university system to the school systems. Overall, learning to be a teacher within the university-site occurred in a collaborative atmosphere that created a sense of belonging to a specific type of community. In antithesis, learning as a teacher within the individualistic cultures of the schools was mostly driven by the NT-Self.

A closer look at findings from the data has shown that the NT participants experienced the world of university as a supportive community space. Interacting and engaging in social spaces as an element within the system allowed for peer engagement, shared work and enabling relationships. Furthermore, awareness of personal choices in relation to developing an understanding of institutional cultures and what each has to offer the developing teacher, created spaces for learning. The nature of professional learning and growth within the university pointed mostly to the development of outside-in learning and inside-out learning (Turbill, 2002). Such learning of new knowledge, skills and beliefs was based on their personal and professional needs. The university-site offered open protective spaces for learning underpinned by conditions of trust, communities of learning, and openness for finding an individual voice.

In contrast, the world of schooling in this study emerges as individualistic and competitive systems that were restrictive in terms of sharing cultural process knowledge. The elements embedded in the school system indicate paradoxes between the imagined and the lived experiences. It may be argued that the ITE spaces provided a utopia which excludes complex



lived realities of schooling. Within their classrooms the NTs found safe spaces of teaching and learning as the NT took ownership of this space. Outside of their classrooms they were met by troubling spaces that required careful and calculated actions in attempts to become insiders. NTs mostly had to adhere to adapting to the patterned norms of the schooling system without receiving support to understand such established cultures. Yet, they were expected to find their respective place in the school as both teacher and colleague.

The main contribution of this study is that the divergence in conditions of Professional Learning Spaces (PLSs) and Professional Learning Agents (PLAs) (mentors and mentorship) resulted in the NT taking on a *specific shape* such as being Silent, Solo, Survivor or Strategic. In each of these positions they navigated their learning by taking on a specific position. Learning meant looking for divergent sources to suit their respective needs. They mostly found such sources within themselves (internal) rather than relying on external sources. Such *self-action* of the NTL became a driver for more self-reliance and *self-responsibility* over their own learning. In the case where potential external sources were identified, the NTL had to rely on *self-directed learning* in the form of self-induction and self-selected mentoring.

In an attempt to establish a balance in the tensions between the two systems (ITE and NTI) and within a system such as the school space, the NT-Self emerged as the **connecting element** between the two systems of ITE and school. Within the EPL system in this study, the unit of analysis of the *individual in related action* (Hoban, 2002) emerged as the individual NTs shifted to become a specific type of NT learner (action) in relation to the type of Professional Learning Spaces and Learning Agents offered in the respective schools cultures. This means that the manner in which elements within the systems interact with each other becomes synergetic EPL through the NT-self. Thus, the NT-Self became the fundamental controlled source of EPL.

EPL in this study emerged as (Early) *Personalised-Professional Learning (EPPL)*. Each typology described above contributed to forming an understanding of EPPL. Personalised-professional learning takes the form of *inside-outside connected learning*. Personalised learning takes shape when the Professional NT-Self takes responsibility /ownership of learning (self-responsibility) by making calculated actions (self-directed) in relation to needs and wants (self-interest) within specific types of learning spaces. Figure 11 below (p. 267)

illustrates these Professional-Self Strategies. Professional learning takes form as the Professional NT-Self interact with the *context*. Such enactment would include self-inception into a system by strategic scanning of the environment for potential sources; adopting a conscious disposition for self-regulation; selective use of social interactions; purposive selection of professional agents (such as mentors) and professional activities (such as mentoring, peer-coaching); finding a protective space and protecting the located space (as a means for continued learning). Figure 12 below (p. 267) illustrates these Professional-Context Strategies. The NTs-Self emerged as an agent that connects their inside-outside EPL within a system. I have selected the metaphor of a radar monitoring screen (system) to provide a summative illustration of the NT-Self in navigating the EPLS.

Figure 11 PROFESSIONAL-SELF STRATEGIES

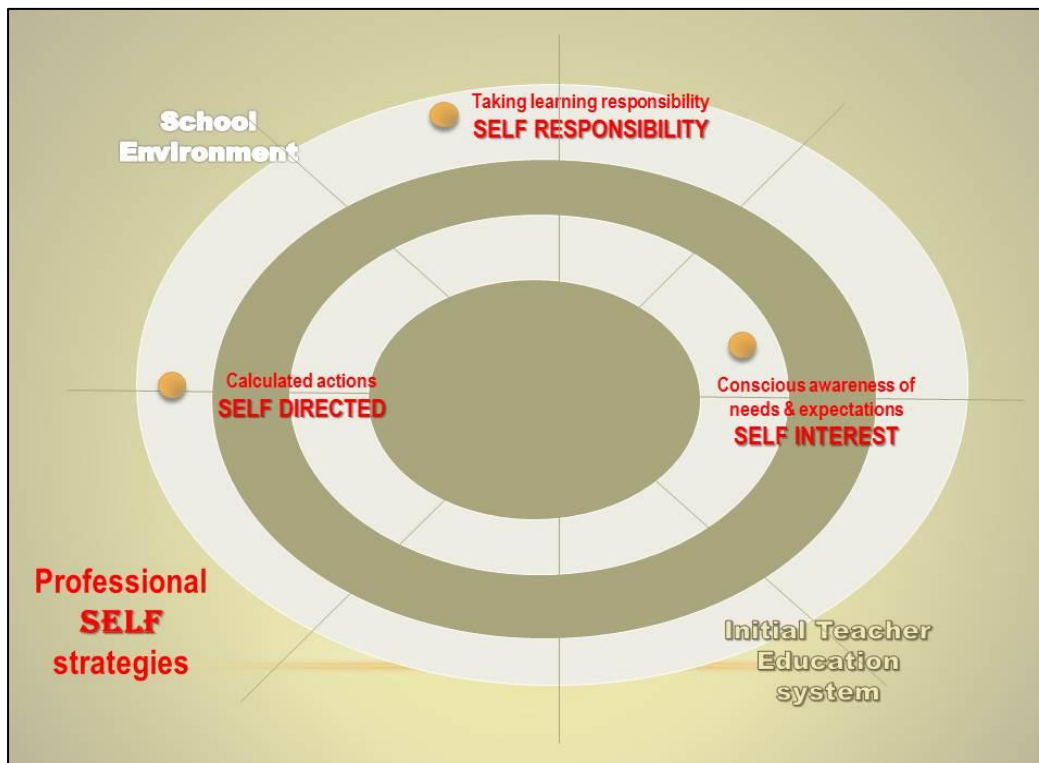
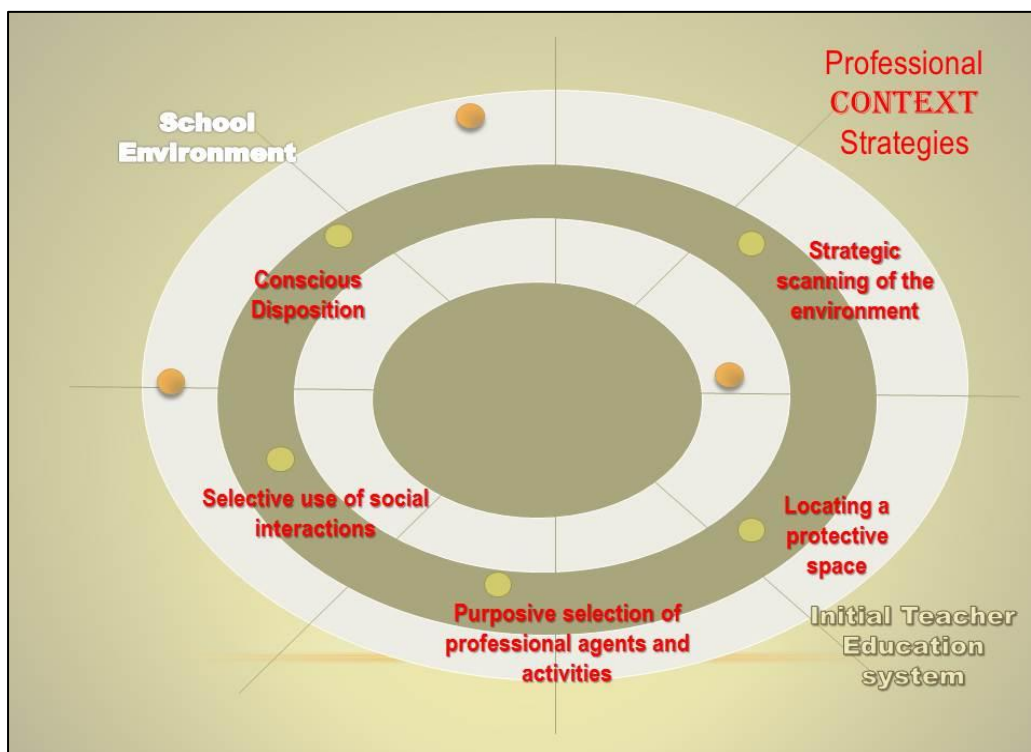


Figure 12 PROFESSIONAL-CONTEXT STRATEGIES



### 9.3.2 EPL as a Radar Monitoring System

In summary and in response to critical sub-question three on the implications of the learning from both ITE and the school environment, the metaphor of a radar monitoring screen is presented as a way of thinking about EPL of NTs as a system.

I have selected the metaphor of a radar monitoring screen to reflect the NTLs controlled strategies in navigating their own EPL reflected as a system in the two worlds of university and school. This metaphor is used to highlight the actions of the NT-Self as a strategist that is able to navigate, control and connect the elements within the EPLS. I first offer an exploration of the concept *radar monitoring screen* before indicating its application to ***EPL as a Radar Monitoring System***.

A pilot of a vessel such as an aeroplane or ship uses a radar monitoring screen when their immediate view is obstructed by thick clouds, for example. The purpose of the radar monitoring screen is then used as a method of finding the presence, position and speed of an object in distant space. The screen displays a rotating beam that continuously scans the immediate and distant space for objects. If objects appear on the radar screen, a blip is detected on the rotating beam. This requires the pilot to take immediate action to reflect on the situation. The pilot as controller has four functions to perform: (1) the pilot has to identify the objects; (2) the pilot needs to make strategic decisions to avoid collision with possible harmful objects. Such reflection requires consideration to conditions in space; (3) the pilot needs to analyse best possible routes for the journey by connecting the systems in space; (4) the pilot needs to take strategic actions based on best possible options.

Within the EPLS, the NT takes on the position of the pilot sitting in the control box of the vessel (university and school). In navigating the vessel, the NT is in control by taking responsibility of the (learning) process/journey. The NT may experience immediate blurred obstructions in their view that take on the form of absent or limited induction/mentoring practices. The NTL then moves to rely on the screen (the Self) as instrument to make sense of the space through which she needs to move. This approach will allow the NTL to pinpoint and analyse the best possible strategies to reach a destination. In the detecting process, unrecognisable objects (obstacles to learning) would reflect a blip on the radar screen.

Similarly recognisable objects (possible sources of learning) are detected by the radar beam. In both cases the signal would be returned to the receiver (NTL) to make sense of the object. The NTL needs to understand and analyse the readings of the radar beam. Immediate and distant objects need to be analysed to determine the value or destructiveness of such sources (objects) in the process of reaching the (learning) destination. The vision adopted by the NT pilot to avoid certain objects, to draw on other objects (available sources) and to search for objects (hidden sources) is determined by the specific approach adopted by the Soloist/Strategist/Complaint NTL (note the Silent NTL is not referred to here as this type of learner is rather a passenger than a pilot). The approach of the kind of NTL is tailor-made to meet their specific needs. Thus the needs will drive the learning targets whether it is immediate day-to-day coping mechanisms, short-term survival and/or long term continued teaching. The Professional NT-Self acts as centre of activation to make the necessary connections between learning spaces through a multi-strategic approach.

Three elements (functions) are offered as advanced organisers in understanding the Professional NT-Self as pilot of the EPLS.

**As navigator** the NT-Self is able to have a holistic view of a system through the use of the radar monitoring screen. With the support of this device, the navigator will be able to find the best route across and within systems to reach a destination. This requires strategic thinking and reflections. As navigator the NT-Self has the ability to search for sources (objects), strategically sift the sources for fitness for purpose; and then approach the most appropriate source that will meet immediate and long-terms learning needs. Thus he has the ability to be a skilled strategist that can take calculated professional actions.

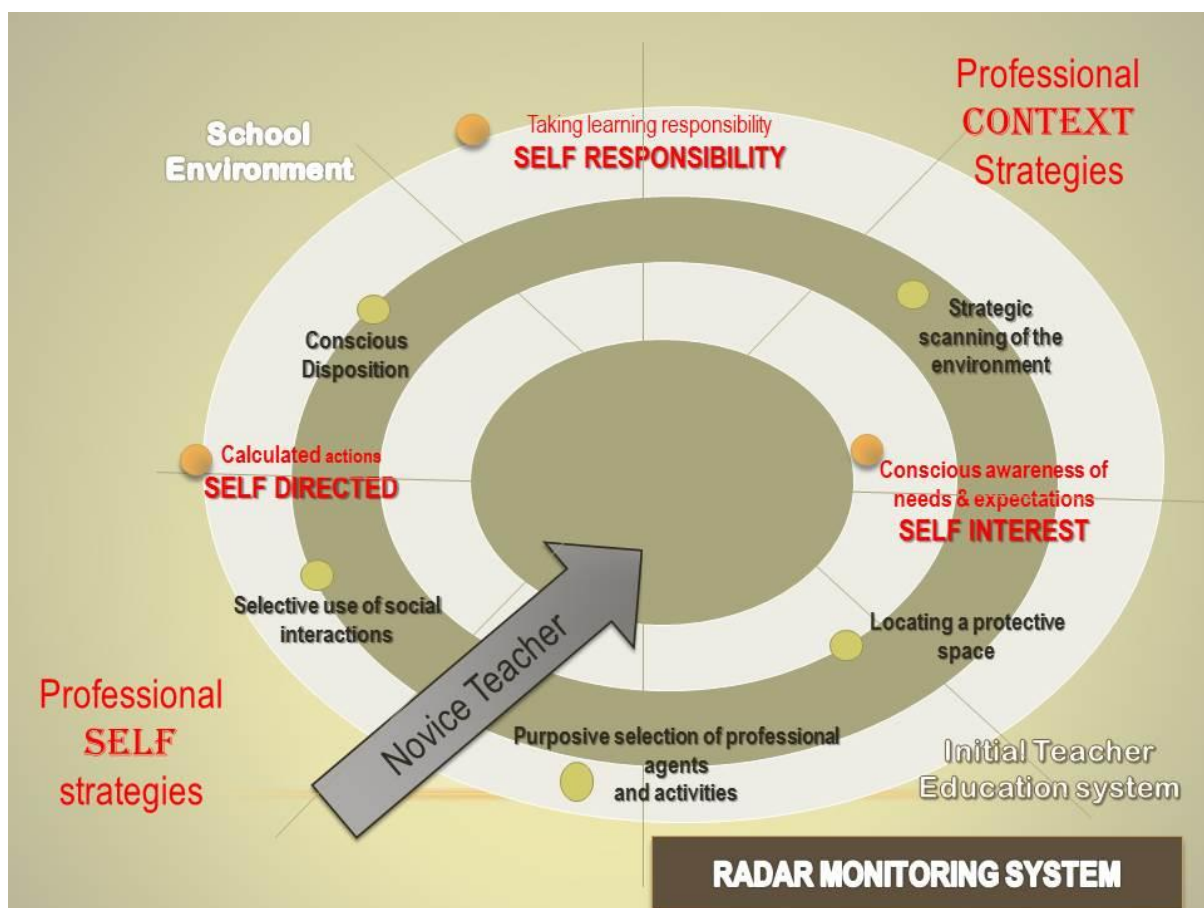
**As controller**, the NT-Self is custodian of his or her own learning destination. Taking responsibility for learning requires adopting personal strategies such as willingness and self-directedness.

**As connector**, the NT-Self is the connecting force in bringing the two opposite systems (worlds) of university and school together. The NT-Self is able to bring the multitude of interrelated elements from and within each of the systems together as a synergistic system.

Enacting this connector function enables the framing, de-framing and reframing of existing understandings and beliefs about the imagined and the real world of teaching.

Figure 13 provides an illustration of the radar monitoring system to capture EPL as a system. The system consists of various *bands* that present the ITE and School Environment, the Professional-Self strategies and Professional-Context strategies. The NT-Self is presented by an arrow that runs through all bands as she takes on the position of navigator, controller and connector.

Figure 13 A SUMMATIVE ILLUSTRATION OF THE NT-SELF IN AN EPLS: A RADAR METAPHOR



## 9.4 SECTION THREE: CONTRIBUTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

### 9.4.1 Contributions

This study has contributed theoretically and methodologically to the body of knowledge on EPL.

**An emergent conceptual framework for EPLS:** Hoban's (2002) systems thinking approach and Reid' (Fraser et al. 2007) quadrant of teacher learning opportunities (refer to Chapter 3) were used with the purpose of exploring the phenomenon of EPL. Hoban's (2002) systems thinking approach to teacher learning focused on providing questions as guiding principles for the design of professional learning systems specifically related to the field of teacher change and school effectiveness. Within each system, of university or school, various categories of learning sources (opportunities) were identified, offered, extracted and developed by the researcher. The integration of these two frameworks allowed me to present an emergent conceptual framework for understanding EPL of NTs as an integrated holistic system. Central to this emerging framework is the role of the Professional NT-Self as the central source of learning in the EPLS. The NT-Self as the fundamental controlled source in the EPLS is a particular key finding in this study that adds to Reid's (2007) quadrant of learning opportunities (sources). This quadrant mostly identified outside tangible sources that involve more than one person. Yet my study indicates that the NT-Self as internal source emerged as navigator of their EPL. Another dimension to be added to Reid's quadrant is non-formal learning in the form of social spaces.

The shaping of specific *kinds of NTs* and *kinds of learning* due to the influences of the types of *professional learning spaces and agents* contribute to a deeper understanding of the various elements at play within the EPLS. The notion of personalised-professional learning highlights the Professional NT-Self as connector of the elements in the move to a synergetic system of EPL. This is further developed in the illustration of the Radar metaphor of the EPLS.

**Methodologically:** The visual illustrative drawings generated and used in the research process can be conceptualised as the development of a *visual interpretative representation*

*technique* (Refer to Chapter Four Section Two). Merely extending the metaphors and/or key critical moments in professional learning from the data would not have opened up the different levels of knowledge production. Analysing the inferential structures that connect the metaphors/moments reveals real insights and implicit meanings that would otherwise lie hidden beneath the surface. At two levels, the use of a visual data production technique, contributed to a deeper and more meaningful interpretation of the phenomenon of EPL.

At the first level, the generation and use of a visual genre allowed me as researcher to get closer to understanding key learning moments of the participants. The process of identifying the metaphor and/or key moments from the first interview data required an in-depth extraction process. Evoking the concrete design of each drawing through identification of the objects to form the compositional design of each drawing allowed me to thinking deeper about the kind of issues that needed to be abstracted from data to give meaning to EPL. The briefing to the out-sourced artist allowed me to move from a word-based method to a visual-method to represent my interpretation of the data. This move in the process of data analysis and interpretation opened up a deeper meaning making as to what constitutes the interpretation of the NT participants of the phenomenon of EPL.

At the second level, using the visual with the purpose of validating the accuracy of the first story portrait allowed the researcher to engage in a more meaningful interpretation of the data through the eyes and voice of the participant. The in-depth discussions that centred around the visual drawing during the second interview, allowed a different way of understanding the lived experiences of the participants. Discussions around the objects, people, and layout within the overall composition design of the drawing added another layer to the production of knowledge on the phenomenon. Within this process the researches' representation of data within the illustration led into a re-living of participants' experiences as participants clarified and extended their lived experiences. This process contributed to adding another layer of meaning making as the participants became co-constructors of their story portraits.



#### 9.4.2 Implications

The findings of this study have implications for theory, practice, policy and future research. Key selected points have been identified and discussed below:

**This study has these theoretical implications for the ITE curriculum:**

- **Better workplace preparation:** Findings from this study provide insight into the diverse workplace cultures that range in schools. These cultures fluctuated from supportive, collaborative cultures to unprotected, restrictive cultures. This study also highlights the importance that the participants placed on their preparation and readiness for the workplace. They expected preparation to deal in particular with job-related requirements and socialisation. This supports the finding of Loughran et al. (2001) that particular structural and organisational issues are integral to the nature of professional learning. There is clearly a need for teacher educators to provide formal opportunities for engagement in the theoretical perspectives of understanding the nature of workplace learning. A few important issues related to workplace preparation would include the nature of professional cultures as well as staff interactions on professional learning. The theoretical aspects of such issues can further be extended and reflected on within a professional practice curriculum (see below).
- **Professional guidelines on survival techniques:** This study clearly highlighted various strategies performed by NT participants for short-term survival. The HEI can take a more active role in equipping student teachers with practical professional guidelines on survival techniques for their initial teaching years. Such guidelines could include a range of coping strategies and a list of set questions that the early developing teacher could ask the SMT and teacher mentor to obtain information regarding habits, routines and support. However ITE programmes cannot be restricted only to provide these short term goals, but should also contribute to the long term professional learning of the emerging professional teacher.

- **Working knowledge of support sources:** Student teachers should have a theoretical understanding of the external types and value of formal structured support strategies such as mentoring, induction, networking and buddy systems. Such knowledge should be extended to alternative strategies for induction and mentoring in unprotected spaces. Developing a broader awareness of the variety of resources and sources in diverse learning cultures would not only assist in more effective self-inception practices of the NT-Self but also allow for more meaningful learning opportunities.
- **Professional-Self Learning module:** My study highlighted that EPL is not so much about learning to teach for the classroom but more specifically about personalised-professional learning. PPL requires self-directed actions that enable learning within a specific and across institutional systems. Enactment of personalised-professional learning necessitates the development of a specific type of professional-self who is consciously aware of his or her needs, expectations and possible strategies to meet such expectations. Such a module could include more specifically a deeper engagement in conceptualising EPL and positioning the NT-self as internal source of the learning system. Key constructs related to deep professional learning such as self-management, self-directed learning and professional autonomy should be key to this kind of theoretical engagement.

**This study has implications for practice. Three specific issues are highlighted:**

- **Professional Practice Curriculum:** The findings clearly indicate how the lack of policy/frameworks to regulate structured support within a mandatory NTI phase influenced the type of learner and learning within the EPLS. Considering that no recent policy initiatives have been introduced to actively address the learning needs of NTs (as pointed out in Chapter Two), a carefully designed formal professional practice (PP) curriculum may have the potential to address some of the theory-practice divide issues referred to in this study. This intended integrative curriculum should provide clear outcomes, topics and assessments to be achieved within both university and schools as learning sites. The design of such a curriculum should a collaborative effort between university and school (including the input of the NT). Such a PP curriculum could assist in closer working relationships between HEIs and schools.

- **Setting up a responsive learning culture:** Findings revealed that schools should play a more active role in preparing the NT for the specific workplace conditions. One approach to achieve this is through administering a type of baseline assessment for the NT on commencement of employment. Such a survey would allow the school to gain insight into needs and specific requirements of the NT in relation to job requirements. The nature and level of support from the school could then be selected with these needs in mind. This approach would allow for a better alignment between acquired learning in ITE and the expected learning in the workplace setting. This survey has the potential to open up opportunities for a responsive culture. In this sense the school moves away from a “tick-box culture” (James & McCormick, 2009, p.982) that promotes learning as superficial technical approach to a responsive culture. Such a responsive school culture would engage in consciously investing in the learning of the NT through an explicit understanding of their personal and professional needs.
- **Expanded strategies of support:** There is a need for schools to develop a broader understanding of the variety of induction/mentoring strategies tailored to meet the different scales (size) and types of schooling contexts (urban, rural, resources etc.). Findings from this study reveal that schools should consider the implementation of devolved induction practices that allow for example micro-systems to provide meaningful opportunities for learning for the NT-learner. Strength-based group mentoring (He, 2009) is another alternative to one-to-one mentoring. Such a group mentoring approach would provide a learning space that would allow the NT to draw on the each individual mentors strengths. Such decentralised strategies have the potential to provide more supportive contextual and social conditions for learning.

Reflections on the findings from this research, point to a number of areas for **further future research:**

- The nature of teacher learning through alternative forms of support within a diverse range of South African schooling contexts could be explored. A gap in research studies has been identified in this area. Further studies would provide valuable insights into existing and innovative supportive practices that contribute to EPL.

- NTs in this study indicated that where they had supportive mentors during school-based teaching practice sessions they felt supported in establishing themselves within the schools. Yet there is little in the data that suggests the role of a mentor or mentoring in enabling deeper professional learning, across the two phases of the EPLS.
- As indicated in the section on limitations of this study, the sample of participants obtained their professional qualifications from a supportive type of institutional culture. Expanding this exact study to NT participants from other institutional cultures (HEI and schools) across and within different countries institutional contexts, would provide valuable insights into social and contextual conditions that influence the EPLS.
- Although there is clearly a need for an explicit link between the initial and induction phases of ITE, a gap exists in research studies in this area. An exploratory study on the input of schools and specifically NTs on the nature of curriculum design for teacher educators would be valuable in understanding their professional learning from the perspective of the school.

## **9.5 SECTION FOUR: CONCLUSION**

### **A CONVERSATION ON EARLY PROFESSIONAL LEARNING:**

#### **AN EPI-PRO-LOGUE**

As indicated in the orientation to this chapter, this epi-pro-logue presents a short fictional conversation between a Liaison Teacher Mentor (LTM) from a school named Famida, a Teacher Educator /Researcher (TE) at a university named Lizzy and two Novice Teachers (Abigail and Zander) in their first year of employment. This conversation indicates the interplay between the types of professional learning spaces (cultures) in schools and kinds of NT Learners. I decided to include this imaginative conversation to highlight EPL as a flexible non-linear system with the NT as the central source of their learning. Whilst I have constructed an imaginative dialogue I am conscious that as researcher I am the story-teller of how the thesis process has produced such imaginations.

**The conversation in the staffroom:****Characters:**

LTM – Liaison Teacher Mentor (Famida)

TE – Teacher Educator (Lizzy)

NT1 – Novice Teacher One (Zander)

NT1 – Novice Teacher Two (Abigail)

**Background:**

*Lizzy, the teacher educator, is visiting a teaching practice partnership school where Famida is the Liaison Teacher Mentor. Famida manages all mentoring at the school. Lizzy is at the school to supervise and assess a few student teachers. A conversation begins.*

**Famida:** Morning Lizzy. Welcome! Your student teachers are expecting you but I would first like to talk to you about something else. I am pleased to have two newly graduate teachers from your university as new employees at my school. I am not sure if Abigail and Zander are familiar to you? Anyhow, what I have found most interesting is that they both have the same professional qualification and are of a similar age. Both have walked into their teaching with a lot of theories learnt at university which is of not much use in the school. Ah .... but that is another point for another discussion. What triggered my interest is how they seem to position themselves rather differently in their learning as qualified teachers. I don't have a problem with that, seeing that all individuals are rather different. Over the past eight months I have observed them and I am grappling with their ability to fit into their role as novice teachers in this school. The one teacher seems to be passive, almost like she is waiting for something to happen. The other takes an active role in adapting to our school.

**Lizzy:** You know, we always inform our student teachers that learning about teaching does not end once they get their qualification. We emphasise that there should be opportunities in schools to support their previous learning but also extend their learning to be a professional. Over the years I have picked up that there seem to be this belief that our newly graduated teachers should be able to know everything about teaching and being a teacher. In fact, this is a general assumption across our country. I am just wondering, did you have any form of

induction in your school to explain to them what opportunities are available and how they can access these?

**Famida:** No, we didn't have a formal induction period, if that is what you mean? I am aware that in most countries overseas such an induction period is compulsory. But in our school we really can't afford the time or resources for induction. We are just too busy with getting the academic year started. This year, we were also short of two teachers. All teachers were overloaded with administrative and teaching duties. I did give the new teachers a prospectus which provided mostly the operational procedures of the school. As the person in charge of mentoring, I told them straight that we are too busy. We cannot afford the luxury of appointing a mentor for each of them. I gave them two specific pointers that I found valuable when I was learning as a new teacher. Firstly, there is value in finding support in a peer colleague or within a subject department. I did caution them that in this school there are some veteran teachers that are glued to their own established practices and which they are not keen to let go. Also there are several cliques in our school and each keeps to itself. I am not saying it is a bad thing. I just cautioned the new comers. Secondly, I pointed out that it was up to them to take action to survive their first year of being a teacher.

**Lizzy:** Well, those seem to be worthwhile pointers. But, please explain the differences in the novice teachers take on their positions within your school that you mentioned earlier?

**Famida:** I tell you what. Let's go and ask the two new teachers what works best for them?

**Lizzy:** Yes, it would be great to hear about their actual experiences.

**Famida:** Good morning, Teachers! I have asked you to join us for tea to talk about your learning at this school over the past eight months. Both of us are interested in hearing your stories.

**Zander:** Ok, I will start. After the briefing about taking responsibility for ourselves, the first thing I did was to unravel how the different departments and cliques functioned in this school. I am aware that there is power in groups. With this I mean, the social interactions amongst people are rather intricate in a workplace setting. I realised that if I wanted to get

the best out of my first year teaching experiences, I need to adopt a certain attitude. I immediately knew that my university training was not adequate enough to prepare me for my role as teacher.

**Lizzy:** What do you mean by “your role as teacher”?

**Zander:** Simply put, I found managing my learners rather easy. I did and still have problems teaching some concepts and I didn’t know who to ask for assistance. I quickly realised that if I wanted to keep my learners’ attention, I quickly needed to learn how to teach these concepts. Having scanned the school environment within the first week of my teaching, I became aware of teachers that I could target for support. Not every teacher was going to assist me. I did realise however, that I needed to find a space in our department but becoming a member of this group was not going to be that easy. They tread carefully in who they allow into the group. What I did was to adopt certain strategies. I assured the group that I needed to learn from them. But I also offered to assist with any tasks that we as teachers need to fulfil on a daily basis. They came to trust me as I was a team player. After about three weeks into the year, I was in, and learning from the group wherever .....

**Abigail:** I need to interrupt. You are so lucky! You have become an insider. I decided to go solo. I do not enjoy the bickering among the teachers in the staffroom. And “my group”, I put this expression, “my group”, in inverted commas as I do not feel part of this group. I am an outsider. There are several reasons why I am stating this categorically. I feel that I always have to defend my type of teaching and who I am as a novice. The teachers in my group criticise me for everything rather than supporting me. I really see their negative actions as obstacles in my way. To keep perspective on my immediate needs I decided three months after I started here to withdraw from the group and the staffroom. I am proud of being a teacher. I am not going to let their negative actions dampen my passion for teaching or restrict my learning as a teacher. Anyhow, I have found a life-saver in a colleague. Finding myself in a rather desperate situation, I approached a colleague who is not part of “the group”. I realised that we had lots in common. We are both creative in our teaching. We are both positive about the teaching profession and she also remained outside of all the bickering. She has really become my mentor in so many ways. But you know what is so nice about this arrangement, I chose her!

**Famida:** Abigail, thank you for being so open and honest. I have been observing both of you over the months and I thought Abigail took on a passive role as a teacher. I always saw you avoiding your phase colleagues and the staffroom. So what you are saying is that you made a choice to work in isolation as a means to protect your personal self-worth and that of the profession?

**Abigail:** Yes, that is exactly my choice. This choice has allowed me other opportunities for learning as a teacher. In fact, it pushed me to look for alternatives.

**Famida:** Zander. You on the other hand made a choice to get into your department. What I picked up from your story is that you adopted certain strategies to ensure your being received into the group and thus into the teaching profession. But I want to ask an important question to all of you. Can all novice teachers be strategists?

**Lizzy:** Let me answer your question. As teacher educators we cannot choose the type of prospective student teacher we want. Everyone is so different: in personality, in their own experiences, in .... so many ways. Therefore we work towards developing the ideal teacher who we think is the strategic novice teacher-learner. Such a teacher has the ability to identify and draw on a variety of sources that support their early professional learning in relation to their needs. As a strategist, the person is consciously aware of the disposition that they need to adopt in relation to their status as a novice. In this way they take ownership of their learning.

**Famida:** But are you really able to develop such a strategic novice teacher-learner that has ALL the strategies that you so clearly pointed out? You aim to develop a new teacher who is self-reliant and self-directed in their learning and teaching. I just want to point out to you that each school context offers different workplace settings. So what I am alerting you to is that learning as a teacher in different schools will require different strategies and practices. Can you really prepare the student teachers for the diverse range of schools?

**Abigail:** I may not seem to be as active in my actions but surely the position I adopted as a solo NT also shows specific tactics. The specific micro-context of my group moved me to



adopt a certain position. This does not mean that I have not learnt! Let me tell you, I have learnt to take care of myself and what I stand for. I have reflected on my self-worth and that of the profession. I have therefore adopted a certain personal position that will enable me to survive in this school. But I have also learnt that I want to be teacher, and I will remain true to the profession, even if it means that I need to leave this school. My solo position may change according to the conditions in the school.

**Famida:** Your standpoint is rather exciting, Abigail. So what you are saying is that conditions in schools have a powerful influence on the type of novice teacher that emerges. And that such a teacher should be capable of reading the workplace setting. The issue of being capable reminds me of a reading that I came across recently. The authors Fraser and Greenhalgh wrote an article in 2001 in which they indicate that professionals such as health workers and teachers should not only be competent but also capable to keep up with contexts that are continuously changing. They explained that “competence” includes knowing about the nature of knowledge, skills and values. Whereas, a professional that is “capable” can manage in unfamiliar contexts. This means that the professional is capable of adapting to change, acquiring new knowledge, working effectively and continuously improve their practices.

**Lizzy:** Mmmm. This makes me think! We as teacher educators and you as a mentor teacher should work together to develop student teachers that are capable of drawing on themselves to find the best possible ways of learning as a student teacher and as a new teacher. I do believe that we need to act more consciously to ensure that novices are able to perform their professional roles as being a teacher of teaching.

**Abigail:** I want to add that more attention should be paid in our preparation to what it means to be a professional teacher. From my experiences thus far, to be a teacher requires personal learning. I need to know what I should put in place as an NT so that I can manage and navigate my own immediate and long term learning.

**Zander:** A further issue that I want to raise is related to the expectation that as a novice I am expected to link my learning at university with my work as a teacher, but I am also still learning as a teacher. It would really have assisted me if I had knowledge in why and how to

connect the two worlds of university and school into my own system of learning. But I suppose university cannot teach us everything. We perhaps need to develop our way of adapting, sensing, selecting, making choices of who and what we want to be, and how we will get there is not a simple recipe. Our choices also might change over time. I suppose I need to research myself: how am I changing over time to see what I see as important, what it is that I think I need. I am sure it will change if I went to another school, I suppose. And perhaps more important why are my views changing. Perhaps, this is a topic for my postgraduate masters degree project?

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## APPENDIX 1: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION SHEET



### FACULTY OF EDUCATION

PhD Study: Proposed Title ‘**On Becoming a Teacher: Novice Teachers’ Experiences of Early Professional Learning**’

#### BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

This schedule is directed to **Novice Teacher** participants in their first, second or third year as a beginner teacher.

##### Dear **Research Participant**

The purpose of this biographical information sheet is to gather in-depth information regarding yourself as a participant in the study and the types of support activities that your school, where you are teaching, offer to beginner teachers. The purpose of gaining in-depth knowledge of your personal and school situations will provide the necessary baseline information against which other data will be analysed. It will take approximately 30 to 45 minutes to complete the information.

The information you give here is strictly confidential and will be used for the purpose mentioned above. All names of schools, teachers and any other persons will be substituted with pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of all participants. However, if you want your name to be used, the special clause on the letter of consent to participate in this study must be completed. All recorded data will be housed in the strong-room of the Faculty for a period of five years.

Thank you

Marinda Swart (PhD Student)

Biographical information to be completed by all participants at commencement of data production phase (in written form or audio format)

Surname and Name	(OPTIONAL)	
Qualification(s)		
Where obtained		
Phase		
Age		
Gender		
Previous work/travel/study experience		
Name(s) of school(s) of employment since completion of ITE qualification		
Are you teaching the phase/subject fields that you were trained for? Explain by give details		

1. Provide the contextual background to your present and past employment schools.  
(History, demographics, role of SMT, space, social interactions among staff)

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2. What support activities for professional learning for beginner teachers are available at your present or previous school(s) that you taught at?

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## APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: FIRST INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW



### FACULTY OF EDUCATION

PhD Study: Proposed Title ‘**On Becoming a Teacher: Novice Teachers’ Experiences of Early Professional Learning**’

Dear **Research Participant**

The purpose of this interview schedule is to gather in-depth information through critical dialogue to shed light on your experiences of sources of Early Professional Learning in various phases of your career as a Novice Teacher. The interview is designed to look back at your professional learning during your initial teacher preparation phase as a student teacher and to link it to your transition into the profession as a beginner teacher. The **focus** will be on identifying the sources for your Early Professional Learning and how these were or could not be transferred into the phase of beginning teacher. The interview will take approximately **1½ hours**.

The information you give here is strictly confidential and will be used for the purpose mentioned above. All names of schools, teachers and any other persons will be substituted with pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of all participants. However, if you want your name to be used, the special clause on the letter of consent to participate in this study must be completed. All recorded data will be housed in the strong-room of the Faculty for a period of five years.

Thank you

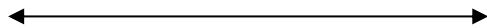
Marinda Swart (PhD Student)

Interview Schedule for individual semi-structured interview. This schedule is directed to the **Novice Teacher** participants in their first, second or third year as a beginner teacher.

## PROPOSED QUESTIONS:

1. “**Tell me your story** of being a beginner teacher in your specific school,” (drawing from experiences). How did you fit in/adapt to the schooling context?
2. What were your **learning needs** when you started practising as a teacher? Were they met/developed? Explain. Give supporting reasons – Why/Why not? Did any person at the school ask you about your needs i.t.o teaching? Explain.
3. **What or who inspired** you the most on entering the profession? Why? What did you learn? How did you use such learning?
4. How did you experience **your ITE training** in relation to being a beginner teacher in your specific schooling context(s).
5. If you had to compare your transition from student teacher to beginner teacher as a journey, how would you describe your journey. ‘My journey from student teacher to beginner teacher was like .....’ (Use a metaphor or analogy) OR using a metaphor/analogy, how would you describe your first teaching experiences?
6. What or who (opportunities/activities/methods/moments during your initial teaching qualification) would you regard played a critical role in your preparation for teaching. State how you obtained/found access to the source/opportunities/methods (school, self, peer, etc.)
7. In each case motivate why you view the specific aspect valuable.
8. How did you use the specific aspect/source for both stages as a trainee and beginner teacher? How did you use the source as a strategy to bridge the gap from the stage as a trainee to the stage as beginner teacher?
9. How did the specific source/aspect contribute to your personal and professional learning as a student teacher and a beginner teacher?
10. Reflect on which aspects of the ITE programme weren’t particularly useful or didn’t work particularly well now that you are working in the school? What gaps were there in your IT training (knowledge, practice, personal, contextual). Give reasons in relation to your experiences and observations as a beginner teacher.

11. Did you **overcome these gaps/challenges** during your first year of teaching? If so explain how?
12. What was **available to you at your specific school** to assist with overcoming these gaps/challenges? How did you use these sources for your professional learning? (prompt: sources of support, learning, induction, mentoring).
13. Did you **initiate finding sources/solutions for yourself**? If so, describe why, how and when you obtained the sources. How did you use these sources for your professional learning?
14. Is there anything about your **ITE experience's in relation to sources/EPL** that can account for their present situation.
15. Any other comments related to your learning at university and school.





### APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: SECOND INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW



## FACULTY OF EDUCATION

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR SECOND INTERVIEW

PhD Study: Proposed Title ‘On Becoming a Teacher: Novice Teachers’ Experiences of Early Professional Learning’

Dear Participant

**My PhD**

**Thank you so much for agreeing for a follow-up interview. Your commitment will allow me to complete my study this year.**

My request for a follow-up (second) interview has several purposes:

- (1) **TRANSCRIPTION OF DATA FROM FIRST INTERVIEW:** To validate the accuracy of the **transcription of the data** of the first interview which took place in Oct/Nov 2010 - PLEASE READ THROUGH THE TRANSCRIPTION and see if there is any aspect that you would like to **change, elaborate on**, or that you would like me to **take out**. For your information we refer to this as member-check.  
*‘Member check* will be implemented by asking the participants to read their interview transcripts as well as comment on the subsequent interpretation of the data by the researcher’
- (2) **WRITING A STORY BASED ON FIRST INTERVIEW:** From the transcription of the first interview, I wrote a story (narrative). this story draws on key issues/themes from the first interview transcripts in order to answer my research questions. PLEASE READ THROUGH THE NARRATIVE CAREFULLY. the issues that need further discussion are highlighted in yellow. These will be addressed during the second interview – you may want to think of these aspects before our next discussion.

- (3) **ILLUSTRATIVE DRAWING:** The illustrative drawing that I have included represents the key issues from your experiences as a novice teacher as indicated in the first interview. The drawing represents my interpretation of your experiences and how you learnt how to teach as a novice teacher in a specific schooling context.

What I did was to ask an artist to make a simple line drawing which focuses on the analogy/metaphor that you gave in the drawing – a rollercoaster and portray the people or dimensions that influenced your experiences and/or your early professional learning.

**WHAT I WOULD LIKE YOU TO DO IS LOOK AT THE DRAWING AND STATE WHETHER YOU WOULD AGREE THAT THE DRAWING REPRESENTS YOUR EXPERIENCES BASED ON THE FIRST INTERVIEW. IF NOT, WHAT OR HOW WOULD YOU CHANGE THE DRAWING. FEEL FREE TO MAKE YOUR OWN DRAWING OR ADD/CHANGE/VERIFY ON THE ARTISTS DRAWING THAT I GAVE YOU.**

I am aware that time has lapsed since the first interview. This is a normal occurrence in social science research.

Regards

Marinda Swart

## APPENDIX 4: CONSENT FORM: NOVICE TEACHER PARTICIPANTS



Faculty of Education  
School of Education and Development

Private Bag x03  
Ashwood  
3605

Facsimile: +27(0)31 260 1598  
Phone: +27(0)31 260 3489

12 November 2010

Dear Novice Teacher

### **Participation in research project**

I hereby request your full and active participation in my PhD research study. The proposed title for the study is **“On becoming a Teacher: Novice Teachers’ Experiences of Early Professional Learning.”** This study is concerned with opportunities for Early Professional Learning of Novice Teachers. The main purpose of the study is to explore and develop an understanding of how Novice Teachers (NT) in their transition from student teacher to newly qualified teacher, experience and make sense of their Early Professional Learning (EPL) within diverse South African teaching and learning contexts.

The data production will depend largely on your participation. If you agree to participate, you will be required to participate in individual semi-structured interviews and a focus group interview. The anticipated time frame for each interview will vary - refer to the table below which also indicates the proposed time frame for the various interviews. You will be notified in advance of the exact date and time for your scheduled interview. The data from the interviews will be recorded using audio and/or digital devices and transcribed.

The methods of data collection will include the following

Activity	Estimated time allocation	Proposed Time frame	Format of data collection
Two or three individual semi-structured interviews	1 to 3 hours	November 2010	Audio/Digital recording and written
Focus group session : drawings and interpretative discussions	3 hours	Jan 2011	Audio/Digital recording and written

The data will be used for the writing of a full PhD thesis. The findings of the research may have implications for Teacher Education and Professional Development. Permission is also requested from you for the publication of the findings in the form of research reports, conference presentations and publication in research journals.

Your anonymity in terms of your responses, evidence and documentation used in the research will be guaranteed. Should the need arise to disclose names and places in the reporting process, pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity. However, if you agree to the use of your name in the presentation of data, the relevant clause in the declaration of the consent form needs to be completed. Records of the data analysis and findings will be given to you for approval before final publication. Your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any stage and for any reason. Withdrawal from this research project will in no way result in any form of discrimination or disadvantage.

Data produced during the research process will be kept in a secure storeroom housed in the Faculty of Education and will be disposed off, after five years of completion of this study .

Please feel free to contact us if you have suggestions or queries regarding this research study.

.....

Ms Marinda Swart (PhD Student)

Details of the researchers:

Name of Researcher	Portfolio	Position	Contact details
Ms Marinda Swart	PhD Student	Lecturer in Professional Studies	031 260 3489 082 356 3234 swartm1@ukzn.ac.za
Prof Michael Samuel	Supervisor	Dean of Faculty of Education	031 2603459
Dr Daisy Pillay	Co-Supervisor	Senior Lecturer in Professional Development	031 2607598

\*\*\*\*\*

**Participation in PhD research study: ‘On becoming a Teacher: Novice Teachers’  
Experiences of Early Professional Learning’**

**Declaration of consent: NOVICE TEACHER**

I hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this letter and the nature of the research and  
I consent to participate in the research study.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the study at any time, should I so desire.

Name and Surname: .....

Name of School: .....

Contact Details: .....  
.....

-----

Signature

-----

Date

**SPECIAL CLAUSE:**

I hereby give consent that my name can be used in the publication(s) of this study. In such a  
case I will have the right to review, comment and verify the data recorded at the various  
interviews.

Signed on this day ..... of ..... of the year ..... at .....

-----

Signature

## APPENDIX 5: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



*University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Research Office  
Govan Mbeki Centre  
Westville Campus  
University Road  
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Tel No: +27 31 260 3587  
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14 May 2010

Ms Marinda Swart  
64 Belfry Towers  
39 Beach Road  
DOONSIDE  
4126

Dear Ms Swart

**PROTOCOL: On becoming a Teacher: Novice Teachers' Experiences of Early Professional Learning**

**ETHICAL APPROVAL NUMBER: HSS/0231/2010 D: Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences**

In response to your application dated 10 May 2010, Student Number: **207529419** the Humanities & Social Sciences Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been given **FULL APPROVAL**.

**PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.**

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

Yours faithfully

  
**Professor Steve Collings (Chair)**  
**HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES ETHICS COMMITTEE**

SC/sn

cc: Prof. M Samuel  
cc: Dr D Pillay  
cc: Ms S van der Westhuizen