DEVELOPING AS SUBJECT SPECIALISTS IN A RURAL SCHOOL: NARRATIVES OF NOVICE TEACHERS

BY

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Finally, I would like to thank God and my ancestors for making it possible. It is your mercy that has guided me.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my late grandfather, Mr Makhoba. Thank you for always encouraging us to value education.

# COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES DECLARATION-PLAGIARISM

I, NOKUPHILA THOBEKA NGCOBO, declare that

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2. This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

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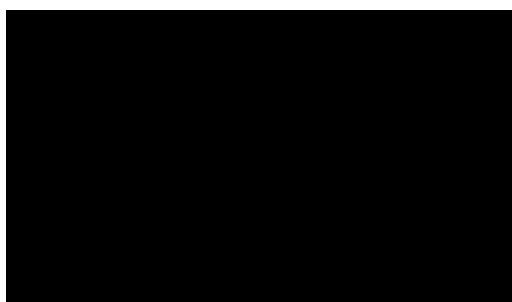
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ABSTRACT

This study explored the lived stories of two novice qualified teachers who taught in a rural school in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The study's primary purpose was to understand what factors influenced their lived experiences as developing subject specialists. Thus, the study did not intend to bring about change regarding the participants' shared stories but rather gain insight into their lived experiences. I was prompted to conduct this study by my own early experiences when I first entered a rural classroom as a novice teacher and my personal motivation to develop as a subject and classroom specialist in the first three years of teaching. The study adopted a qualitative interpretivist approach, allowing the participants to be as expressive as they wished in their storied narratives. The qualitative interpretivist approach enabled me to obtain rich information, which assisted me in gaining a deep understanding of the participants' professional lives through their shared stories as newly employed teachers in a rural school. A qualitative approach, specifically narrative inquiry, elicited thick descriptions that embraced the participants' subjectivity. Three data-generating methods were used: journal writing, drawings of rich pictures, and an open-ended telephonic interview. These three methods enabled the participants to share their memories and to reflect on their unique personal and professional journeys towards becoming subject specialists. My analysis of the lived stories suggests that novice teachers find it relatively easier to adapt to a rural school if they have been previously exposed to such a setting. However, novice teachers can experience a cultural shock when they have to immerse themselves in a rural setting if they have never experienced it before. I found that networking within and outside the school plays a vital role in the development and growth of novice teachers. Other findings include that an ineffective mentoring culture may cause frustration among newly qualified teachers, while a well-established networking system will support and sustain them. The overall implication is that the novice teachers in this study fully understand the demands on them as developing subject specialists; they do all they can to engage in continuous development by acquiring enhanced skills, knowledge, and values from both human and online resources. My analysis of the storied narratives taught me that these novice teachers are willing to learn more about their subjects, especially if they know that they lack some content knowledge even though they are fully qualified. They appreciate networking relationships with more experienced teachers, which also enhances their personal and professional development.

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-Novice teachers have to blaze a trail to success and fulfilment – but never alone-

1.1 Introduction

This study explored newly qualified teachers' progress and their experiences from being novices to becoming subject specialists in the rural school where they taught. The study adopted a narrative inquiry approach to generate meanings and explanations using the participants' narrated stories of their lived experiences. This chapter expands in depth on the background to the topic under study, and I explain why it will have significance as a scholarly investigation for the phenomenon of teacher development in the South African context. The research questions that needed to be answered, the key concepts that were used, and the theoretical perspective are presented and explained to clearly underscore the rationale that gave impetus to the study.

1.2 Focus and Purpose of Study

The focus of this study was to explore the experiences of novice teachers who had been in the profession for a maximum of three years. The overarching aim of the study was to understand how the novice teacher participants adapted to and developed in a school where they needed to ensure that they engaged in quality teaching and involved their learners in effective learning strategies. Contextual teaching and learning conditions such as overcrowding, limited teaching and learning materials (LTSM), and being required to be a subject specialist regardless of a lack of experience in the rural context differ vastly from those in urban areas; hence the study aimed to determine what factors influenced the development of novice teachers on their journey to become subject specialists in a rural school. I also considered the implications of context-inconsiderate policies that the participating teachers had to adhere to. The purpose was neither to change the conditions at the school nor the applicable policies, but rather to discover how they impacted newly appointed teachers' development in their quest to become subject specialists. The conditions that I focused on were: the status being a novice teacher, the

requirement to become/be a subject specialist, and the impact of the rural school context on teaching and learning as experienced by the participating novice teachers.

1.3 Background to the Study

This study explores the lived experiences of novice teachers as subject specialists in rural schools. It is a context-based study because literature suggests that enough research has been conducted to explore challenges faced by novice teachers in general however little consciousness is placed specifically on novice teachers in rural contexts (Fry & Anderson, 2011). Therefore this study was conducted to fill in the identified gap, specifically looking at the development journey of novices as subject specialists.

1.4 Practical Justification

The focus of this research study was on the development of novice teachers in their quest to become subject specialists and good classroom managers. Various factors play a role in the continuous development of a novice teachers, which undoubtedly include the seven roles of a teacher as outlined by the Department of Education (2008). These roles are:

- Learning Mediator
- Interpreter and designer of learning programmes
- Leader, administrator and manager
- Scholar, researcher and lifelong learner
- Assessor
- Community, citizenship and pastoral role
- Subject Specialist

I was prompted to conduct this study by my own early experiences when I first entered a rural classroom as a novice teacher and my personal motivation to develop as a subject and classroom specialist in the first three years of teaching. I currently serve in my third year as a teacher and, even though I gained some insights into what constitute a good teacher when I was doing my Honours Degree in Education (Teacher Development Studies), I believe that I am still 'a work-in-progress'; hence I am continually searching for knowledge and understanding of almost everything that is important in my profession.

I am currently teaching English at in a deep rural area in the north-east of KwaZulu-Natal Province. As the reader can imagine, teaching and learning and related supportive processes in a rural society can never be the same as in an urban context. This assertion is supported by Graham and Provost (2012, p.1), who argue that rural schools "…do not always have access to the same level of federal[1] funding as urban and suburban schools". The differences in infrastructure, the availability or not of LTSM, the differences in standard of living, and the nature of learners' needs mean that different demands are exerted on teachers in these two contexts (Kereluik, 2012).

1.5 Contextual Rationale

After commencing my teaching career in March 2019 in a deep rural school in the study area, I resolved to always ensure that I do thorough lesson preparation before entering the classroom. My lesson planning has always addressed all the expected lesson activities, the roles to be played by myself and my learners, and the envisaged outcomes. Alber (2012) recommends that we should rather over-plan than under-plan our lessons to ensure that all learners are engaged in activities and that disruptions are avoided. However, I have noticed two issues that stand out each time I reflect on my daily classroom activities: (1) the importance of classroom management, and (2) the need to give learners enriched knowledge, which requires of me to be a subject specialist. By enriched knowledge I mean subject knowledge of high quality as well as skills and values that are not compromised by contextual factors. In brief, as a teacher I need to be equipped with more knowledge and better skills than what the textbook requires.

According to Ben-Peretz (2011), teacher subject knowledge includes the teacher's understanding of different ways in which the curriculum (or a specific subject) should be delivered, and of a variety of appropriate pedagogical practices to teach subject content. Teacher subject knowledge is not contextual based as novice teachers enter the profession as already qualified subject specialists; however, delivery of subject content is influenced by the availability of LTSM.

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[1] In the South African context, 'federal' is similar to state or provincial funding.

Considering that the study aimed to explore the lived experiences of novice teachers, positioning the study in a rural setting was relevant as this environment is characterised by various factors that influence teacher subject knowledge. Reagan et al. (2019) allude to the fact that most rural schools are far behind urban schools in terms of resources and infrastructure, arguing that the former are, by their very nature, are social constructs. This means that novice teachers' lived experiences in rural schools are not solely based on their individuality, but they are also influenced by the entire school and community which form part of their social and professional world. Fry and Anderson (2011, p. 2) further support the idea of rural schools as social constructs as they assert that "Rural communities are tightly sociologically linked to their schools" meaning that when novice teachers enter in rural schools they also need to learn and adjust to the community's cultural dynamics. Mathikithela (2019) stresses that a rural setting poses major socio-economic challenges that may demotivate teachers and prevent them from working to their full capacity. For instance, they may feel compelled to dig into their own pockets to procure resources that will enrich teaching and learning to ensure their continuous development as subject specialists. Resources such as libraries and internet connection are lacking in a vast majority of rural schools, and this causes inconvenience when teachers want to enhance some aspects of their subject knowledge. This lack of teaching and learning support exacerbates novice teachers' already fragile position, and this means that the rural classroom is fraught with challenges and tensions that may prevent teacher development, particularly in the early years of teaching.

In my view, the phenomena of teacher subject knowledge and classroom management need to work hand-in-hand because, if they do not, teachers will fail to teach effectively to equip their learners with advanced knowledge and skills. Moreover, this shortcoming will also impact negatively on classroom management. Based on this dilemma, I have often asked myself: "What if trying to enrich learners and keep them on track throughout the lesson consume too much time and then reduce the time for covering the required subject content?" To address this question and explore its implications, I obtained the narratives of my study participants which I unpack as data utilising scholarly-approved methodologies to find out, amongst others, if teacher subject knowledge is compromised by the demands of classroom management in a rural setting.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study is relevant to the South African context as it addresses certain roles that teachers are expected to fulfil and as outlined in the Norms and Standards for Educators (Department of Education, 2000). These roles include, among others, being a learning mediator, an interpreter of learning materials, a scholar/researcher and lifelong learner, embracing community, citizenship, and pastoral roles, and being a learning area/subject as well as phase specialist. These roles are prescribed at national level, which means that, whether in a rural or urban context, and however advantaged or disadvantaged a school might be, teachers are expected to fulfil all these roles for the benefit of their learners. Moreover, no role is ranked more important than any other, which means that playing all these roles is crucial in the teaching and learning context. The seven roles are acknowledged as teachers are expected to comply by them giving equal attention to each, however the interest of this study is solely on the role of subject specialist. The significance of studying this role was to analyse if rural context has an influence on teacher experiences as they continuously develop their knowledge, skills and values on subjects that they are specialising in. In short, it is a study of novice teacher experience as subject specialists however some other roles may come up as they are all related to one another especially during pedagogical processes.

The importance of teacher subject knowledge is acknowledged and emphasised across the world. However, teaching is very complex whether the teacher is a subject specialist or generalist, and there are a variety of needs in the classroom that need to be addressed during teaching and learning processes. According to Hattie (2009), teacher subject knowledge is important but should not be prioritised over other variables that form part of a classroom setting. The relationship between teacher subject knowledge and learner achievement shows much less correlation than other factors that influence student learning, like inadequate teaching, limited learning support material, and classrooms that are not conducive to learning (Metzler & Woessmann, 2012).

1.6 Main Research Questions

Three key research questions needed to be addressed to achieve the aim of the study. These were:

1. What are novice teachers' stories of their lived experiences of developing as subject specialists in a rural school?

   I asked this question because I wanted to understand how novice teachers experienced their journey of development as subject specialists in a less advantaged school.

2. What factors influence the lived experiences of novice teachers and their development as subject specialists in a rural school?

   Various factors impact the experiences of teachers either positively or negatively. Addressing this question thus helped me to understand which factors to embrace and which to avoid if the positive lived experiences of novice teachers are to be enhanced for successful teaching and learning and continued novice teacher development, particularly in the area of subject specialisation.

1.7 Theoretical Perspectives and Key Concepts

In preparation for this study, I scrutinised various research studies and scholarly articles related to the phenomenon under study. All the relevant information that I gathered that related to theoretical perspective and key terms are presented in this section.

1.7.1 Theoretical perspective

The main perspective that underpinned this study was my understanding that individuals create their own meanings. Therefore, the study adopted the constructivist theory of learning which explains that individuals create their own new understandings based on what they already know (i.e., their prior knowledge) and the situations that they encounter on a continuum of daily experiences explained by Brandon and All (2010). The constructivist theory is descriptive in nature, meaning that it seeks to explain how learning events take place and not how they are expected to occur (Richardson, 1997). Constructivism is therefore a way of looking at reality while relating to information acquired in the past (prior learning) to construct meanings that relate to both past and present phenomena. People make meaning of events in different ways; therefore, what may seem like a challenge in managing a large class for one teacher may be

seen as an enriching experience for another. In short, I embraced constructivism for this study as it is a theory that explains 'meaning making' (Richardson, 1997, p. 3).

In explaining how individuals construct meanings of the environment around them and from previous life experiences, Kalina and Powell (2009) distinguish between 'personal constructivism' and 'social constructivism'. Personal constructivism posits that individuals create meanings through the personal processes they engage in that elicit subjective ideas regarding these experiences, while social constructivism means that ideas and meanings are created when people interact with others around them. The experiences of my participants were explored to determine the ways in which they constructed meanings of their lives as novice teachers in both the aforementioned ways. Personal constructivist activities were evaluated by collecting data from the journals and collages that they had developed and in which they shared their personal thoughts and experiences. A group discussion as a form of interviewing was also conducted (as posited by social constructivism) to allow the participants to interact and to share their ideas, opinions, and make meanings that exposed their construction and understanding of their social realities. As Kalina and Powell (2009) argue that the two sub-theories of constructivism should not be isolated from each other as there is a connection between what the individual thinks and experiences and what is suggested by society, both these theories were effectively used to reach conclusions.

The purposively selected participants were thus invited to construct and present their meanings in the form of visual images, writing, and through oral discussions. I found it appropriate for my participants to engage in different tasks as a way to cultivate their own perceptions with regards to their personal and professional development. Richardson (1997, p. 7) explains that "knowledge is constructed by a person in transaction with their environment". The use of constructivism was related to inductive data analysis as meanings and conclusions were constructed from the narrated stories of the participants. This means that the raw data were reconstructed into stories that are presented as first person narratives. This process was accommodated by narrative inquiry methodology that elucidated meaning through addressing 'how?' and the 'why?' questions based on the participants' narratives of their lived experiences.

1.7.2 Key concepts

1.7.2.1 Teacher subject-knowledge

Teacher subject knowledge can broadly be explained as the information, skills, and values that teachers possess and that students are expected to learn and acquire in a given subject. Shulman (cited in Goulding, Rowland, & Barber, 2002, p. 691) explains teacher subject knowledge as "the amount and organisation of the knowledge per se in the mind of the teacher". Drawing from this explanation, one may argue that when we speak of teacher subject knowledge, we are referring to the methodology of teaching the knowledge, skills, and values (KSVs) that teachers impart so that learning will occur.

The differences between novice and expert (or experienced) teachers were explored in the literature. According to Goulding et al. (2002), the terms 'novice' and 'expert' are used to emphasise the importance of teacher development before he or she will possess quality subject knowledge for enhanced teaching and learning. Having said this, and in consideration of the focus of this study, it is clear that one should not shy away from the fact that certain aspects in some subjects will change with time, while others may require more in-depth research or adaptation after a certain period of time. This applies to both specific subject knowledge and to the school curriculum in general. Teachers are thus expected to engage in on-going personal and academic research in their respective specialist subject fields to gain broad and well-developed knowledge. The Norms and Standards for Educators (Department of Education, 2000) document states that being a researcher and a subject specialist are amongst the seven duties of an educator.

It is commonly accepted that subject knowledge is available in textbooks that are issued to teachers and learners as a teaching and learning tool respectively, and therefore some may argue that teacher knowledge is not that important as all the necessary information that learners need is available in these textbooks. However, it is important to highlight that textbooks are one *part* of learning and teaching support material (LTSM) provisioning, and that they may have various limitations. For instance, many become outdated as new information and developments occur globally almost on a daily basis, and these books can then at bests assist teaching and learning and not enhance or enrich these processes. This means that teachers are mandated to supplement the information contained in a single textbook to address the 'Why?' and 'How?' questions posed by students depending on the topic or subject being taught. Even in a classroom with over seventy learners, a teacher is expected to be able to provide meaningful and enriched

explanations to ensure understanding and learning. As large classes and other challenges are a reality in many rural schools (Yusuph, 2013), this study endeavoured to understand the experiences of novice rural teachers who are constantly expected to keep up with the demands of large classes while ensuring their personal and professional development. The study thus interrogated the professional journey of recently appointed teachers as the custodians and presenters of subject knowledge in a rural school to determine what factors impacted their experiences as developing subject specialists.

1.7.2.2 Novice teachers

In every profession, experience comes with time, and in the educational context we therefore distinguish broadly between novice, senior, and master teachers. Senior and master teachers are those who have been in the teaching profession for many years and have acquired a vast range of skills, knowledge, and expertise. Novice teachers are newly qualified teachers who have teaching experience of less than five years.

Being a novice teacher involves a necessary transition from being a student/pre-service teacher to being a qualified and fully functioning and accountable educator. Their role entails the need to take responsibility for their duties and to abide by all policies related to administration and pedagogy. Johnson, Down, Cornu, Peters, Sullivan, Pearce and Hunter (2014, p. 531), who investigated the challenges faced by newly appointed teachers, point out that novice teachers experience what they refer to as "transition trauma", which means that they become overwhelmed by work-related demands in their early years of teaching. This implies that these educators feel much pressure as they try to settle in their new working environment. Getting used to the school culture, trying to get to know and understand their learners, being isolated from colleagues and families, and trying to be resilient despite these demands are some of the most common challenges that novice teachers experience (Johnson, et al., 2014).

In outlining underlying transition traumas, there is a clear discrepancy between ideal and real-life classroom conditions as stipulated by Omar and Sinnasamy (2017). When novice teachers enter the classroom for the first time as qualified teachers, they already have preconceptions of what and how the classroom should be like. Currently, when novice teachers are trained they are introduced to the 'so called intelligent classroom' (Hervaz Gòmez & Toledo Moralez, 2018, p. 92), which refers to a classroom with highly advanced technological, economic, and social

development. Novice teachers then enter the profession understanding that they will be required to integrate the use of these advanced tools, such as the Internet, with their face-to-face teaching. However, in most cases this does not happen due to the unavailability or insufficient provisioning of these tools and facilities in financially strapped and under-provisioned schools (Hervaz Gòmez & Toledo Moralez, 2018). This situation impedes flexible teaching and learning strategies and, when their expectations are not met, novice teachers become frustrated. They encounter the total opposite of what they envisaged classroom conditions to be. Facing this issue, novice teachers find it hard to adapt to their new and, what they perceive, unwelcoming environment for which they are not prepared.

Research stresses that the transition period from pre-service teacher to in-service teacher is an emotionally demanding phase during which teachers may experience overwhelming feelings as they try to settle in their new environment with totally different job demands. Schatz-Oppenheimer and Dvir (2014) emphasise the importance of emotions in the development of teachers who face both positive and negative encounters as they try to shape and adapt to their professional environment. According to Schatz-Oppenheimer and Dvir (2014), novice teachers often hide their negative feelings such as anxiety and helplessness while trying to keep up with school and environmental demands, and this is referred to as "emotional labor" (p. 141). Surviving emotional labour is thus dependent on the individual's personal strategies of dealing with classroom challenges, and this validates the notion that there may be a strong relationship between personal and professional development.

When an individual is flexible and able to adapt to change, they are most likely not going to feel overwhelmed by their job demands as they possess the strength to cope with challenges. However, if individuals are not well equipped to deal with the pressure of the transitioning period, professional development becomes an unpleasant challenge and this may cause the novice teacher to withdraw from the teaching profession.

1.7.2.3 Internal school structure and culture

Johnson (2014) argues that the internal school structure and 'culture' of a school may cause transitional trauma in novice teachers as they impose major limits on teachers who wish to explore their creativity and engage in new practices in their working environment. The established structures within a school generally exist to maintain order, ensure the smooth

everyday functioning of the school, strengthen productivity, and motivate teachers to work for promotion. All these structures and the school's culture impact teachers' everyday interactions with colleagues and learners, direct their teaching practices, and impact curriculum delivery (Liddicoat, Scarino & Kohler, 2018). School structures and culture mainly normalise fixed and unquestionable ways of "…*the* way things are done" (Liddicoat et al., 2018, p. 11), and suppress the potential for freedom and creativity in teaching and learning.

1.7.2.4 Pre-service training at higher education institutions

Amongst the many factors that play a role in the experiences of novice teachers is the issue of higher institutions that do not fully prepare pre-service teachers for specific real-school contexts, particularly when they are deployed to schools in deprived or deep rural communities. There is a definite discrepancy between the ideal school and the actual school context. Policies regarding the training of pre-service teachers are developed and enforced according to how schools and classes should be arranged and run, only for the teacher discover that conditions are far more demanding in the real-school context. Even though novice teachers are briefly exposed to the classroom during their teaching practice, it is a far cry from what they actually encounter when they have to take full responsibility for a class as a qualified teacher.

1.7.2.5 Induction

Induction programs are intended to guide and support novice teachers so that they will easily adapt to the school environment, but in many cases these programmes are vague and ineffective (Johnson et al., 2014). The latter authors mention that school leaders are often too busy to develop and supervise proper induction programs that support and properly equip new teachers to deal with the professional environment and develop during the transition period from student to teacher. Induction programs are important as they assist teachers to settle down and understand the practices, processes, and culture of the school. However, research has found that most school leaders lack the skills to develop and conduct induction programs that are effective for novices, and this results in very few new teachers actually receiving appropriate orientation support (Johnson et. al., 2014).

With reference to the theory of teacher development, Ingersoll and Strong (2011) emphasise that induction programmes should be the very first resource made available to teachers who enter the in-service stage after pre-service training. This theory proposes that successful teacher

development does not solely rely on pre-service training, hence it outlines a series of stages that include induction for improved classroom management and teaching practices, reduce teacher retention, and improve learning and growth. Induction programmes should include orientation workshops, assigning experienced mentors to novices, and assisting newly appointed teachers to manage their workload. It is therefore a necessity that districts and schools offer induction programs in support of newly appointed teachers to minimise attrition (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Preservice Preparation → Induction → Improved Classroom Teaching Practices and Teacher Retention → Improved Student Learning and Growth
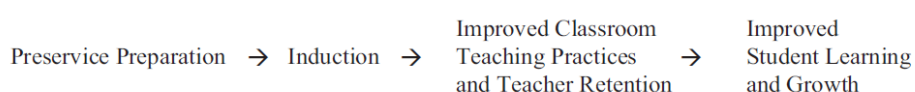
FIGURE 1. *Theory of teacher development.*

Figure 1.1: Theory of teacher development
Source: Ingersoll & Strong, 2011, p. 3

In a study on novice teachers' characteristics and experiences, Fry (2009) maintains that pre-service training can, in some cases, equip teachers with the necessary skills and resources to face almost insurmountable challenges when they enter the profession. Johnson et al. (2014) stress that there is a gap in the literature regarding the issues that novice teachers face and how they can be assisted to overcome and cope with these overwhelming experiences. Johnson argues that the problematic behaviour of teachers should be addressed to prevent them from pulling out of their career during the early years of teaching. Appropriate induction programmes should thus focus on improving guiding novice teachers' pedagogical skills as this will determine their willingness to stay and continue to grow in their profession of choice.

1.7.3 Rurality and Rural Education

The South African education landscape can be divided into three main areas: rural, pre-urban or township, and urban. This classification relates to the diverse lifestyles, household finances, and the availability of facilities and services in communities. Rural areas are situated some distance from cities and on the outskirts of large towns and they are generally characterised by limited facilities and services. People in rural areas are generally self-sufficient as they mainly

depend on themselves for the production of basic food. Even their healthcare relies on traditional methods due to limited western-type healthcare facilities such as clinics and hospitals.

It is important at this point to note that I do not define rurality based on physical features of an area alone, but that I also consider the generally invisible nature of daily cultural practices, values, and social processes. This notion is underscored by Reagan, Hambacher, Schram, McCurdy, Lord, Higginbotham and Fornauf (2018), who state that rural areas are complex as each has its unique social, economic, natural, physical, and man-made attributes that all impact the daily functioning of rural societies. Schools in these communities are also unique as they reflect the community they serve. Reagan et al. (2018) highlight the nature of rural societies as a social construct. For instance, in urban societies individuality is a major characteristic, whereas in rural areas members of the community are dependent on one another. This means that the socialisation process in rural areas is strongly developed as people generally function as a collective in these areas and are connected to one another.

Teachers who are deployed in schools in rural areas thus need to blur the boundaries between their own identities that were developed outside rural spaces and become community researchers to understand the place where, the conditions in which, and the people who they teach. This suggests that personal and professional development as a rural teacher will be enhanced if the teacher becomes part of the community by forging relationships with individuals and groups and, in so doing, bridges the gap between being completely clueless about the people and their way of life and being a teacher who understands how the environment impacts the learners who he/she is required to teach.

Reagan et al. (2018) further argue that we tend to define rural places by their visible structures and resources and then compare them to urban and suburban areas. They state:

> "Aligning place-conscious pedagogies with rural teacher education highlights not just the uniqueness of rural contexts, but aims to move research away from the harmful cultural deficit models that view rural areas as lacking the resources and amenities of suburban or urban schools and communities" (p. 91).

It is said that one cannot fully understand rural places if one can only describe the 'what' and not explain the 'how' that is definitive of that place. This argument suggests that we need to

amend our understanding of rural settings and learn to be flexible in our judgement of the people and communities who live there. After all, it is the children of these communities that novice teachers who are posted there need to teach and understand. According to Reagan et al. (2018), preparing pre-service teachers to work in rural schools as qualified teachers should not only be based on geographical aspects but should also encompass the importance of self-construction as a rural teacher. This highlights the importance of identity development in novice teachers which will enable them not to perceive rural schools as less privileged and demanding institutions, but to learn to appreciate both the constructive and demanding (or less desirable) aspects of teaching in a rural space (Reagan et al., 2018).

South African schools are classified according to a quintile system that rates schools on a scale of 1 to 5. This ranking is based on the financial status, the environmental positioning, and the community that is served by the school. Schools that fall under Quintile 1, 2 and 3 are generally located in socio-economically challenged areas. They are no fee-paying schools because parents are not expected to pay schools' fees as all funding (salaries, infrastructure, and resources) comes from the government. Quintile 4 and 5 schools are fee-paying schools that receive limited funding from the government and the parents are mandated to pay school fees that are utilised for the running of these schools. The schools in the first 3 quintiles are poorly resourced because all facilities, including learning and teaching support materials (LTSM), come from the government with no back-up alternatives from other stakeholders, particularly the parents. This makes it very difficult to sustain these schools as the limited availability of LTSM deprives learners in rural schools of the privilege to better understand and/or interpret what they are being taught. Ramnarain and Hlatshwayo (2018) address some factors that influence the untold stories of novice teachers pertaining to their teaching experiences in rural, overcrowded schools. These factors include difficulty with accessing adequate learning material such as laboratory equipment, a challenge in classroom management as there are quite large classes which in turn causes difficulty for teachers to mediate the teaching and learning process (Ramnarain & Hlatshwayo, 2018).

Considering the South African educational reforms under the revised National Curriculum Statement (DoE, 2002) initiative, learners are expected to play an active role in their learning with the purpose of increasing their ability to take responsibility for their learning and diverting from traditional rote learning with the teacher standing in front of the class and feeding learners

knowledge. For learners to play an active role in their learning, they need to be fully equipped with the necessary resources to do research that will extend the information they find in textbooks. After conducting a study in rural schools in China, Wang (2011) pointed out that there was poor implementation of the teaching method where learners guided their learning; instead, teachers still resorted to the traditional chalk-and-talk lecturing method due to a shortage of learning and teaching support materials. In South Africa, there is a prescribed National Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAPS) document that specifies what content should be taught per Learning Area/subject and in what time-frame this should be accomplished. However, the issue with CAPS (as it is commonly referred to) is that it is mandated to be implemented in schools countrywide but it does not consider vastly diverse school contexts and the unequal distribution of resources; yet, teachers are expected to comply with this policy document. This is often a challenge for rural teachers as it can minimise the scope of learning objectives while the teacher tries to cover the requirements within the allocated time (Wang, 2011).

The South African education system suffers from the legacy of the apartheid system which divided schools according to race for Black, White, Coloured and Indian learners. Previously disadvantaged schools, that were mainly located in townships and rural settings, were predominantly attended by Black African learners (Ramnarian, 2014). Even today, teachers in rural schools are overwhelmed by insufficient resources, overcrowded classrooms, and learners who are not given the freedom to voice their ideas and opinions due to cultural restrictions. This results in teachers defying the use of inquiry-based teaching methods as cultivating learners to become involved in lessons consumes a lot of time and sometimes leads to not achieving the lesson objectives (Ramnarain & Hlatshwayo, 2018).

According to Mathikithela (2019), teachers in rural areas are highly demotivated to give their all because teaching in socio-economically challenged environments is quite strenuous and very demanding. The question can thus be posed: *What impact does the demotivation of teachers have on the teaching and learning processes in rural schools?* In my experience, rural schools are challenging and depressing spaces as they do not provide a warm and welcoming environment for learners. This is due to a number of challenges such as poor infrastructure, lack of proper security, unstable emotional and spiritual support, and little or no mentoring of learners who are interested in participating in sport or cultural activities (Mathikithela, 2019).

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The latter is often a result of poor infrastructure and unavailable spaces for extra-curricular activities. Even though the government assists no-fee schools in rural areas, there are, in the researcher's experience and according to anecdotal information, still numerous challenges that have a profound impact on the teaching and learning in these schools.

1.7.4 Overcrowded classrooms

The phenomenon of overcrowded classrooms is a common problem in South African schools. According to Ellis, Limjoco and Johnson (cited in Marais, 2016, p. 3), "when you have a class size that's even 40, it's too large. You can never really get to teach students and find out their needs and weaknesses". This statement stimulated my interest because, where I am currently teaching, 40 learners per class is only a dream. Even during my teaching practice classes had a minimum of 55 learners. Could this mean that overcrowding in South African classrooms is an accepted norm for those who establish policies but have never been in such a classroom in their lives? In 2012, the Minister of Education, Ms Angie Motshekga, recommended a learner-teacher ratio for South African primary schools of 40:1 and 35:1 for secondary schools (Motshekga, 2012). However, it seems that very few schools are able to apply these ratios because many schools have far more learners than the norm in one classroom.

The relevance of this debate for the current study is that an overcrowded classroom has a debilitating effect on any novice teacher. In fact, the literature endorses the notion that an overcrowded classroom has a negative effect on learners as well as the teacher (Cuseo, 2007). After examining the effect of class size on teaching and learning, Blatchford, Blasett and Brown (2011) advise that smaller classes encourage learners to focus during lessons and play an active role in their learning. Furthermore, Blatchford et al. (2011) argue that learners in large classes get less individual support from their teachers, which makes it difficult, and at times impossible, for the teacher to know the unique individual needs of the learners. In this context, the multiple intelligence theory as proposed by Gardner (1992) is either rarely or not at all brought into practice in large classes. I thus support the argument that "smaller classes can benefit all pupils in terms of individual, active attention from teachers, but that the lower attaining pupils, in particular, can benefit from small classes at secondary level" (Blatchford et al., 2011, p. 728).

The literature clearly argues that education in rural contexts is not the same as education in urban contexts. A common argument about rurality is that schools are located far from cities and have limited teaching and learning resources. This is an important notion as Ben-Peretz (2011) raises the point that teacher subject knowledge does not only comprise the skills, knowledge, and values that a teacher possesses, but that it also includes the ability to understand how this knowledge should be presented in a way that learners can retain knowledge and acquire skills. Teaching in rural schools may thus pose a challenge as the delivery of teacher knowledge requires a range of LTSM, which is reportedly not available in the majority of these schools (Mathikithela, 2019). Educators who teach in rural schools are as qualified as those who teach in urban and semi-urban areas as they were all trained at the same tertiary institutions, and the knowledge they possess and the teaching skills that they have acquired are certainly not inferior to those of teachers in rural schools. However, what teachers are exposed to when they enter a school as a qualified teacher becomes part of and influences their professional development. This suggests that the lived experiences of novice teachers in rural schools may differ vastly form those of similarly trained teachers in urban schools. Their development as subject specialists is therefore also likely to differ. One suggestion is that exposure of all teachers to the rural school environment before entering the profession may be beneficial to their development as the setting may then not be too overwhelming.

1.8 Methodological Approach

The study sought to explore the lived experiences of novice teachers as subject specialists and classroom managers in a rural context. To facilitate this investigation, I drew meanings and patterns from the narratives of novice teachers and therefore adopted a narrative inquiry methodology which enabled the narration of my participants' lived experiences. Clandinin and Huber (in press) explain that narrative inquiry is the study of one's lived experiences to create meaning and draw narrative explanations. Through narrative inquiry, a researcher is able to systematically gather and analyse participants' told stories and interpret the obtained data in ways that challenge traditional and modernist views on reality and knowledge (Etherington, 2006).

1.9 Conclusion and Overview of the Dissertation

Chapter one provided an overview of the study and I explained in depth what the study aimed to achieve, which was to understand the narratives of novice teachers as they transitioned from the pre-service to the rural in-service environment. In essence, the study set out to determine if and how these teachers developed into subject specialists in the short period of three years. Chapter one thus presents an introduction to the research by describing the focus and purpose of study. It also presents pertinent information regarding the background to the study, discusses the rationale, and highlights the key research questions that drove the investigation. The chapter also briefly elucidates key concepts, the theoretical perspective, and the methodological approach that was employed.

In Chapter two I present my discussion of the methodology that was utilised. This chapter focuses on information and guidance elicited by an intensive literature review of the most appropriate approaches that could be utilised in the execution of the study.

In Chapter three I present the narrated stories of the participants. These stories are narrated with reference to the obtained raw data and are presented as a narration in line with the methodological approach, namely narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry asserts that individuals live by stories which means that they create meanings as they live and share their lived experiences. I utilise narrative inquiry which asserts that individuals create stories of their lives experiences that can be accessed and evaluated to understand their development. Stories can only be unpacked by acquiring thick descriptions, hence qualitative data were obtained. These thick descriptions were explored in depth using the interpretivist paradigm. Three instruments were used to generate data and the guidelines for their application are explained in detail.

This study report presents two analysis chapters, namely Chapter four (Precious) and Chapter five (Diamond) in which each participant's data are presented, analysed and discussed.

Chapter Six is the final chapter in which the key findings and interpretations pertaining to the research questions are presented. The study report is concluded with recommendations and final concluding remarks.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES IN NARRATIVE ENQUIRY

-The stories we tell reveal much of the lives we have lived-

2.1 Introduction

In chapter one, I outlined the main focus and purpose of the study and explained that it aimed to explore the lived experiences of novice teachers in rural schools and how they coped with the demands. I also explained that I endeavoured to evaluate the factors that influenced these lived experiences through their narrative stories with a particular focus on their development as subject specialists. In the previous chapter I unpacked the background of the study and explained my concerns that motivated me to embark on this research. Pertinent literature on issues that are related to this study was explored, and key concepts and the theoretical perspective that was adopted were explained in depth.

Chapter two outlines the research methodology processes that I adopted as illuminated in the literature, and the manner in which these approaches were applied is addressed. The research methodology that was used was narrative inquiry as the aim was to generate stories based on the lived experiences of novice teachers and to evaluate their development as subject specialists in a rural school over a three-year period. I discuss already-existing work that is related to the issue of teacher subject knowledge and rurality education. As the foundation for my investigation, I discuss the interpretivism paradigm and explain why and how this was employed to obtain and analyse the data. An interpretivist approach was used because it enabled the participants to present rich storied data while allowing the researcher to become a participant and explore novice teachers' lived world. The practices and tools that I used to generate and analyse the data are therefore clearly presented. To address the research questions and achieve the aim of the study, the lived stories of two participants (myself and another) were elicited through narrative inquiry methodologies. This was possible as individuals relive and relearn their experiences through the stories they tell. The data collection instruments were drawings, journal entries, and a telephonic interview between the participants. I also recorded field observations to help me reflect on events that occurred during the data generation period.

The data that I obtained were then reconstructed as narrated stories. I did not manipulate the data in any way; rather, the stories are presented as the authentic narratives of the participants. Analysis of the data entailed an examination of the narrated lived stories of the two participants as presented in Chapter three, and each participants' narrative is then unpacked in Chapter four and Five respectively. Trustworthiness of the study was ensured by validating that the data presented in the form of stories were not modified in any way. Excerpts are provided verbatim to give recognition to the voices of the participants and to support the assertions made in relation to the analysed data. Should there be queries, the raw data can be retrieved from safe storage.

2.2 Research Methodology

2.2.1 Interpretivism paradigm

An interpretive paradigm was used because the study involved novice teachers as subjects and aimed to interpret and understand their lived experiences. Bertram and Christiansen (2014) explain that a paradigm is a particular worldview that defines *who* hold this view, *what* is suitable for the research, and *how* this research study should be conducted. The interpretive paradigm is essentially humanistic as it considers human traits and processes. Participants are thus treated as subjects rather than objects (Taylor & Medina, 2013), which means that I had to consider my fellow participant's and my own inner characteristics and modes of existence while not imposing research processes on us as if I was dealing with non-living objects.

The interpretive paradigm assumes that access to reality is constructed through social processes (Meyers, 2008); hence it opposes the objectivist view that argues that meaning resides in the world outside the subjective meanings created by individuals. This study valued the unique stories told by the two participants even though they worked and encountered experiences in the same environment, and therefore the conclusions that I drew were bound to be at variance. The aim was to understand the experiences of each individual pertaining to the study questions and I thus did not consider our existence in the outside world. As I engaged with our stories, I came to understand the individual and subjective meanings we shared and I interrogated our lives under the conditions in question. Patton (2002) argues that interpretivism enables the researcher to become part of the community in which a study is conducted, and by adhering to this advice I could view our world as participants through our perceptions and experiences to understand how we constructed meanings of and about this world.

One is better able to interpret and understand other people's lives if one is in close proximity with them and receives a close-up picture of their situation. Taylor and Medina (2013) assert that researchers become ethnographers who immerse themselves in the shoes of research subjects to obtain rich understandings of their lives and culture. This assertion suggests that one cannot regard oneself as an interpretivist if one has never been involved in the community under investigation. In this regard, my study was not challenged by this requirement as it was conducted in a school where I had been teaching for more than a year. At some point I had to strengthen rapport with my fellow novice teacher participant by assuring her that nothing she revealed would be traced to her involvement, and I assured her that she would remain anonymous as pseudonyms would be used when I referred to our contributions.

The interpretive paradigm enables participants to express themselves freely as it contemplates that "realities are multiple, constructed and holistic" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 219). Though the study was conducted in the school where the other participant and I were teaching, the results could be compared because the experiences we encountered were not the same. Taylor and Medina (2013) argue that participants in qualitative investigations create meanings of their lived experiences that are affected by their unique mental and social faculties. It is of much importance to emphasise that even though I am one of the participants, this is however not a self-study. The aim of this study was not about improving practice but rather to understand lived experiences in relation to rural context. They also highlight the importance of the researcher's subjectivity in the interpretation of results. The interpretivist paradigm is vested in narrative investigations, and therefore it is likely that the results of a study may be influenced by the opinions of the researcher. This means that, as the researcher, I had to be conscious of my ideas and opinions when I generated and analysed the data. I thus tried to minimise the possibility of probing the findings based on my subjective interpretations, and this was accommodated as I could play the roles of both participant and researcher in this study.

Assumptions of interpretivist paradigm lie in the idea that reality is vast and relies on social processes. This alludes that it is not fixed hence findings of study conducted through interpretivist paradigm cannot conform to reliability as it considers the flexibility of human nature. In this study flexibility was enabled to participants as each had to develop a journal and rich picture drawings even interviews in their comfort zone where there were no controlled conditions to manipulate ways in which they express themselves. The guidelines were merely

to give a sense of directions on how to develop expressions on each data collection method but not to limit their social reality. In interpretivist paradigm, it is not ideal to predict findings as it considers that reality of participants are context-based and time-bound hence there is no constant reality (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020).

2.2.2 A Qualitative Approach

Qualitative research provides an in-depth and detailed understanding of the meanings attached to different phenomena and behaviours. This research approach gives participants the opportunity to fully explain their perceived notions pertaining to their actions, and I was thus able to examine their stories through the lens of participant engagement (Cohen et al., 2011). Qualitative research gives participants free reign to express themselves within the limitations of the aim and research questions of a study. This approach elicits what is referred to as "thick descriptions" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 222) that lead to findings and in-depth explanations of the actions, feelings, events, and experiences of participants. People's actions and words present messages in qualitative research that are broad and insightful because the researcher does not only consider and analyse what was said by the participants, but is also able to attach rich meanings to their words, perceptions, and narrated actions.

This type of research uses a naturalistic method as contexts are not manipulated to fit the conditions of the study, which often happens in laboratories where quantitative studies are conducted (Gerring & McDermott, 2007). Thus no party has more privilege than another as *emic* and *etic* approaches are adopted. 'Emic' is concerned with the participants' subjective meanings associated with behaviours, situations, and objects, whereas the 'etic' approach seeks to develop insights into the objective meanings that the researcher attaches to the data (Fram, 2013). The relevance of these foci in my study is that they accommodated my roles as both participant and researcher and minimised the chance of one subjective role interfering with the

other (Fram, 2013). I negotiated this by keeping two journals, one as a participant and one as a researcher where I reflected my subjective reasoning as a researcher.

According to Collen and Copper (2014), a common element in qualitative research is strong emotions because data collection practices often elicit personal and emotional responses to the issue under investigation. Therefore, emotional intelligence is an important characteristic that the researcher needs to possess as you need to be considerate of the wide range of feelings that may arise in the qualitative research process. One should also approach sensitive matters respectfully and compassionately and devise strategies to deal with emotionally-charged situations (Collins & Copper, 2014). Therefore, when I explained the data generation activities to the participants, I urged them not to be afraid of raising concerns that might evoke emotions that were uncomfortable and difficult to share.

I chose the qualitative approach because it would enable me to obtain deeper understanding of my participants' lived experiences while allowing sensitive consideration of their emotions and the subjective meanings they attached to their stories. It was a suitable approach for this study as it did not limit the participants in the data they would be prepared to provide. It also allowed follow-up questions and clarification when misunderstandings occurred (Valenzuela, Shrivastava, 2002). As this study aimed to understand the life experiences of novice teachers, I had to consider the feelings, values, and views of the participants which I could only elicit by means of the qualitative approach.

2.2.3 The narrative inquiry approach

2.2.3.1 Relevance of narrative inquiry

The study sought to explore the lived experiences of novice teachers as developing subject specialists in a school in a rural setting. I utilised the narrative inquiry approach to elicit meanings and patterns from the two participants' stories as this was the most appropriate methodology to enable an investigation into our lived experiences. In narrative inquiry, the investigator initially receives raw, first-hand data from participants that, once analysed and appropriately evaluated, enabled me to derive rich meanings based on the reality as we perceived and experienced it. As the participants, my colleague and I delivered our narratives without any limitation and I was also able to ask for further clarity where I perceived gaps. This

approach, which places experience, perceptions, and feelings at the centre of the reality of participants' lives, is founded on the notion that they are able to revisit the past and re-learn from the stories they tell of it. It does not limit them in terms of how deep or shallow they are willing to delve when narrating their life stories, as it is about unearthing the truth of the personal and professional lives of subjects that, in my view, should occur without violating their privacy or compromising their confidentiality.

2.2.3.2 The focus of narrative inquiry

When we live, we are exposed to a variety of experiences that form the basis of our life stories. Clandinin (2013) defines narrative inquiry as an initiative to study human lives putting forth the lived experiences of individuals in order to develop an insight of their told stories. Clandinin and Huber (in press, p. 44) also explain narrative inquiry as "the study of one's lived experiences to create meaning and draw narrative explanations". Through narrative inquiry, a researcher can systematically gather and analyse participants' stories and interpret the obtained data in ways that challenge traditional and modernist views on reality and knowledge (Etherington, 2006). The focal point in narrative inquiry is the lived experiences of individuals. In this study I looked at the lived experiences of two novice teachers (myself included) in relation to how they experienced the demands imposed upon them as novices who had to develop as subject specialists in a rural school environment. Narrative inquiry was suitable as it allowed opportunities to explore, interpret, and understand the participants' authentic lived experiences.

2.2.3.3 The relational framework of narrative inquiry

The fundamental framework of narrative inquiry is that it is relational. Clandinin (2013) postulates that narrative inquiry is relational in that connection manifests when the researcher and participants form relationships and as the researcher becomes part of the participants' community. This is referred to as the 'relational methodology of narrative inquiry' (Barton, 2004). When a researcher enters the research arena, rapport and relationships must be established with the participants. Because narrative inquiry is concerned with lived experiences, the researcher must do so with compassion as the lived stories include personal past, present, social, and environmental influences that have impacted the individual personally and professionally (Haydon & van de Riet, 2016). In this study the relational methodology of narrative inquiry was considered when I firstly approached my participant I ensured her that

this study is merely for understanding their lived experiences not to bring about any action for information they share. I strengthened this framework by assuring her that I am also part of the study, and that we will both remain unknown as no identity will be revealed to the public. To establish trust, I assured her that findings of the study will be made available to her for preview. Narrative enquiry is therefore characterised by collaboration between the researcher and the participant/s in a place or setting where individual and social experiences occurred over time. I remained on the same level as my fellow participant so that I could not make her feel intimidated by the fact that I am conducting this study hence I had to create an open space where we could both express ourselves as we related to each other as participants. When the researcher enters the space of the participant, both are expected to immerse themselves in a manner that does not mar the atmosphere or compromises the context (Guillemin & Heggen, 2009) and they are required to continue in the same spirit until the end of the field investigation.

2.2.3.4 Strong relationships establish rapport

If a sound relationship is forged between the researcher and participant/s, it strengthens trust and allows the participants to tell their stories openly and frankly so that the desired information is elicited. Dwyer and Emerald (2017) allude that the relationship between researcher and the researched is key to narrative inquiry as the depth of the data shared by participants relies on how open they are when they narrate their stories.

Initially, I aimed to include four participants, myself included, in the study. However, two participants withdrew, possibly because of the additional workload that was imposed on them in the process of catching up for lost time during and after the COVID-19 lockdown period. As a result, only myself and one other fellow novice teacher participated in the data collection process. This was not a challenge as I was able to create trust with my fellow participant as we were teaching at the same school. However, I had to ensure that I broke the ice as a researcher because we knew each other only as colleagues. It required a lot of effort to ensure her that everything that she shared would remain anonymous and that her privacy and confidentiality would be respected, even in the dissertation and future publications.

2.2.3.5 Thinking about stories and thinking through stories

In relational methodology of narrative inquiry, we distinguish between processes of thinking *about* stories and thinking *with* stories (Clandinin, 2013). Thinking about stories generally

refers to telling one's lived experiences as a story. Thinking with stories fundamentally involves relating a story to many other narratives that impact the context in which the story takes place. Thus means that narrative inquiry cannot be a fixed procedure to obtain data, as it requires a fluid methodology that flows to where the participants' stories lead (Caine, Estefan & Clandinin, 2019).

2.2.3.6 The three tenets of narrative inquiry

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) point out that narrative methodology comprises three dimensions: temporality, sociality, and place. These dimensions acknowledge that context and experiences are not fixed; rather, they are shifting and evolving phenomena.

Temporality: Temporality is a concept that embraces the past, present, and future of participants. This means that the narratives (stories) that participants share encompass events and experiences that occurred over time as the lives of participants are on-going and experiences are acquired every day. For instance, when my fellow novice teacher and I reflected on our experience of overcrowded classrooms in our very first months of teaching, we were able to recall the changes that had occurred over time. We were also able to consider how the present had changed in comparison with the past. By reflecting on such changes, it is my contention that teachers will be able to find ways to deal with the subject demands that they face on a daily basis.

Sociality: Sociality is composed of personal, social, and cultural aspects. According to Clandinin (2013), sociality commonly entails cultural, social, institutional, familial, and linguistic aspects that impact the context in which an individual's personal traits are developed. This means that the narratives of individuals are influenced by who they are socially and what they are inclined towards. Teachers interact with their colleagues and the school environment as individuals and collectively, which means that their lived experiences and the stories they narrate of these experiences are affected by the school culture and social connections within the school (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). A researcher is bound to consider both the personal and social conditions that underpinned the lived social life experiences of participants, including their feelings, interests, and hopes, as well as the social aspects that impacted them in cultural, social, institutional, familial, and linguistic settings (Clandinin, 2013). One does not exist

merely as an individual; hence all other aspects that make up one's social sphere, be it immediate or extended, need to be considered as part of one' sociality.

Place: Place plays a major role in how an individual experiences and narrates events and experiences. According to Haydon, Browne and van der Riet (2018), the environment in which an individual functions and exists influences how that person perceives an experience. People react in different ways even when living in the same space; therefore, I accepted that experiences and stories of myself and my colleague would differ even though we taught at the same school. This notion is supported by the idea that rurality is a place and that it is influenced by many aspects that shape individuals' experiences and perspectives (Clandinin, 2013). To demonstrate, the issue of the limited availability of LTSM in the study area may be seen by most as a daunting situation, while some may perceive this as a challenge that promotes development and creativity. Therefore, if all three the dimensions of narrative inquiry are connected, a researcher will be able to find deeper meanings and identify patterns in the stories that participants tell.

In clarifying the elements that are pivotal in narrative inquiry methodology, Clandinin, Pushor and Orr (2007) argue that justification as to why the study is important is crucial. Therefore, as the researcher, I justified the study personally when I placed myself at its centre to satisfy my curiosity regarding my development as a novice teacher and to stimulate my interest in what could have played a part in my lived experiences as I had only recently entered the profession as a qualified teacher. The study was thus directly connected to my personal interests, which is why I adopted the dual role of researcher and participant in it. However, the study also explored the larger social context by exploring other teachers' stories so that the conclusions that I arrived at were not only based on data obtained from one participant, which is a process that enhances the trustworthiness of the study.

2.2.3.7 Living, telling, reliving and retelling

Teachers function throughout the day and experience different events, emotions, and situations, some of which can be related to previously encountered experiences. Clandinin (2013) argues that four key elements drive narrative inquiry: living, telling, reliving and retelling. The starting point of narrative inquiry methodology is where participants tell their stories of their lived experiences and occasions or events when this happened. First, we live and tell our life stories,

and in research this helps to better identify where participants come from, who they are, and how they match or differ from other participants. As my fellow novice teacher and I told our lived stories, I was able to unpack the three dimensions of narrative inquiry as discussed earlier to enhance understanding based on Clandanin's (2013) assertion that "in narrative inquiry the stories we hear are always partial, always contextual, and always in the relational space between researcher and participant" (p.116). Therefore, when participants narrate stories about their experiences, they relive and retell these stories while attaching different meanings and lessons to them.

By narrating their experiences, the participants in this study were able to share and learn from their stories. The narrative inquiry methodology thus assisted me to respond to the research questions in my quest to achieve the aim of the study. According to Clandinin et al. (2007), stories are often a good way for teachers to share their on-field experiences and, after using narrative inquiry as a research methodology, I fully agree as it allowed opportunities for us as participants to express ourselves and share very concrete and useful information that would contribute to the study findings. My understanding based on this process is now that only an individual can tell their life story in a legitimate way. Moreover, various conclusions and understandings can be drawn from such narratives without erasing the central message the storyteller wishes to impart. I must iterate here that my study did not aim to bring about immediate change; rather, its purpose was to understand the dilemmas that novice teachers face when they first enter the profession and have so many duties to fulfil.

2.3 The Research Setting

The study was geographically located in one school in northern KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa. The targeted school is situated in a deep rural area in the foothills of the Drakensberg mountains. The roads that lead to the school are well constructed and properly maintained as the school is *en route* to popular hotels and resorts. The main road in the area facilitates private transport to the school while the use of public transport is expensive for teachers as the area is quite far from the nearest town.

The school is a relatively under-resourced secondary school (Grade 8 to Grade 12), which means that it has only a few classrooms, and these are highly inadequate for the number of

enrolled learners. Also, resources to support teaching and learning such as textbooks, laboratory equipment, and other materials are either limited or not available at all. The school is ranked as a quantile 1 public/government school under Section 21 of the South African Schools Act, 1996 (DoE, 2006) and parents are thus not required to pay school fees. At the time of the study, learner enrolment was 561, with 16 educators and a class average of 45. Because the school is situated near an internationally acclaimed World Heritage Site as declared by UNESCO, it receives funding and donations from several sponsors.

The surrounding community is dominated by an IsiZulu speaking community, hence the culture of the school mainly adopts the discourse of Nguni people. Even though the area does have some democratic structures of local government, traditional practices and beliefs dominate the functioning of the community. The primary faith adheres to the interventions of Ancestral Spirits and God (uNkulunkulu), and respect and the spirit of Ubuntu are core values in this community. All therefore believe that no-one lives alone and they embrace the motto that "I am, because you are". Ubuntu is an African philosophy that stipulates that one exits because of others. It highlights the value of caring for and treating other people with the utmost respect, irrespective of who and what they are (Dhlula-Moruri, Kortjass, Ndaleni & Pithouse-Morgan, 2017). The majority of employed community members work in the hotels and resorts near the school, mainly as general workers. This is due to their relatively low level of education as most hold a Grade 12 or lower qualification and very few have had accessed higher institutions of learning.

Below are pictures of the area surrounding the school: A, B, & C

Figure 2.1: Images A, B, C depict the rural context of the school where the study was conducted

Source: Google Image (Pond5.com)

2.4 Research Participants

The aim of the study was to understand novice teachers' experiences in demanding classroom contexts. The research participants were novice teachers with a maximum of three years' experience as categorised by Farrell and Bennis (2013).

After obtaining permission from the Department of Basic Education (Annexure A) and a gatekeeper's letter from the principal of the school (Annexure B), I personally tried to recruit novice teachers who had been teaching for less than three years. I explained to them what my study would be about and requested their participation. Initially, I aimed to recruit four participants including myself, but this was not sustainable as two participants pulled out of the study, which was within their rights according to the research ethic of autonomy. I utilised convenience sampling when I recruited the participant so that it would be convenient for me to reach her due to envisaged transport constraints. I adopted a dual role: that of researcher and participant to investigate the development of novice teachers into subject specialists.

2.5 Data Collection Conditions

Being 'in the field' during the COVID pandemic most definitely impacted the conditions under which data were collected. The field work phase had been intended to occur in March 2020, but schools were under lockdown due to the outbreak and spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. I could therefore not liaise in person with any potential participants for a long time which delayed the process of data collection. Schools closed for a four full months which caused heavy workloads for teachers when they re-opened in July of 2020 and everyone had to push very hard to recover lost time. As a result, only I and one other fellow participant were available for data collection. I acknowledge that this small number of participants resulted in a reduction of data diversity and that a larger sample would have presented richer data. However, the richness of the data was sufficient to contribute to trustworthy findings regardless of the sample size.

Playing the dual role of researcher and participant enabled reflexivity as the other participant and I frankly shared and reviewed our experiences. According to Gouldner (as cited in Dowling, 2006, p. 16), reflexivity is proportional to the "analytic attention to the researcher's role in qualitative research". This means that, in qualitative research that involves the researcher, the researcher's views are likely to influence the data. However, Palagans, Sanchez, Molintas, and Caricavito (2017) explain that reflexivity is valuable in self-study as it allows the researcher to bring into play her perspectives and assumptions to augment the data. In negotiating my dual position as researcher and participant, I endeavoured to balance my views between being a novice teacher and the researcher. However, not allowing my subjective experiences to influence the data was somewhat challenging, so I ensured that I adhered to the scholarly tenets that guide each role. Even though there was a chance where I could separate my roles, I fully acknowledge that there could be times where subjectivity would interfere with data generation and analysis hence it would be difficult to affirm that none of my subjective experiences were suppressed for the sake of accommodating the purpose of the study. However, to try and accommodate experiences that evoked my subjectivity, I kept a separate diary for my research role and jotted down my thoughts and observations as the researcher.

2.6 Data Generation Instruments

As the study sought to explore the lived experiences of novice teachers as developing subject specialists in a rural setting and drew meanings and patterns from participants' narratives of their lived experiences in this context, narrative inquiry methodology was used. Clandinin and Huber (in press) explain that narrative inquiry is the study of one's lived experiences to create meaning and draw narrative explanations. Two participants, whom I refer to as Diamond and Precious, were involved and narrated the stories of their lived experiences as they pertained to the purpose of the study. I constructed a table in which I recorded the differences and similarities between the two participants' shared stories, coded similar patterns, and titled the themes that best illuminated the factors that influenced their journey as novice teachers and developing subject specialists. The constructivist theory of learning, as posited by Bada and Olusegun (2015), assisted me in analysing the data and understanding the findings. Even if Precious and Diamond were teaching at the same school, their stories of their experiences differed as they were autonomous individuals trying to make sense of the same setting in different ways.

I had planned that data would be generated by means of three data generation instruments, namely journal writing, collage making, and interviewing. However, due to circumstances such as the unavailability and cost of magazines at the time, collage making was replaced with the drawing of rich pictures, as proposed by Pillay et al. (2019).

2.5.1 Drawing rich pictures

Picture drawing is a form of collage making that is used in research in a variety of fields, especially in the humanities in disciplines such as psychology, behavioural sciences, and education. It is one method that enables the re-imagination of critical events and experiences of the past to reflect on how they are re-born in the present and future (Pillay, Ramkelewan & Hiralaal, 2019). Pictures, drawings, and words are used to represent and illustrate certain life experiences. In collages, words and pictures that are related to experiences are cut from different sources and pasted onto a surface to create a life story (Butler-Kisber, 2008), but drawing a picture with captions and descriptions represents a similar process and has the same outcomes. Drawings allow people to tell their life stories without having to use only words. I used this data collection method because I knew that it could be used to represent the lives of the participants in a way that would be visible to the reader. This is because an expressive drawing,

which is similar to a collage, summarises, visualises, and clarifies major events and responses in one's life (Charlie, 2016).

Butler-Kisber (2008) argues that narrating one's experiences is often better expressed through the use of visual images that convey emotions in ways that words cannot. As participants, my colleague and I could freely visualise our experiences of the past in both language and non-linguistic images. I provided some guidelines for the drawings that I required for data collection. The purpose was to illustrate our journey from the first months in the profession as qualified teachers up to the present and to demonstrate how certain forces had contributed to who and what we had become personally and professionally. Van Schalkwyk (2010) refers to scaffolding life stories, that our present and future build up or are impacted by the past

I provided guidelines on how we should plan and create our drawings. These guidelines refer to collages, but were applicable to drawings as well.

Dear Participant

I trust that you are still keeping up with the journal. How about we put our thoughts into something we can see? A collage! This might just be a very interesting way of visualising our experiences.

You have been in the teaching profession for some time now, and the experiences that you encounter each day differ. The very same experiences play a huge part on our life stories, especially with regards to our development as teachers. Considering that development is a never-ending process, create [draw a picture] telling the story of the experiences you have had as a novice teacher. Your drawing/illustration can include some of the following aspects:

- Your first day as an inexperienced teacher.
- The challenges you have faced as a developing subject specialist and a classroom manager.
- How have these challenges helped you grow?
- Were there any workshops from the school to assist you develop as a teacher?
- Your collage [illustration] must present a clear picture of your development process thus far.

The other participant and I agreed that we would create hand-drawn pictures to illustrate what we wanted to represent for the purpose of authenticity. This process literally became an art work exercise because we would draw exactly what we felt from our hearts at the time. It was also challenging because neither was gifted illustrators so, at times, it was difficult to put what we felt in a picture. Because this was during the COVID-19 pandemic, the pictures were drawn without physical collaboration. In fact, none of the data collection methods was face-to-face as we had to minimise opportunities for spreading the virus. However, we sent WhatsApp pictures of our initial efforts to ensure that were on the same page, as it were. Below is an example of a rich picture that was drawn by one of the participants. Excerpts from this larger drawing will be used in the discussion section.
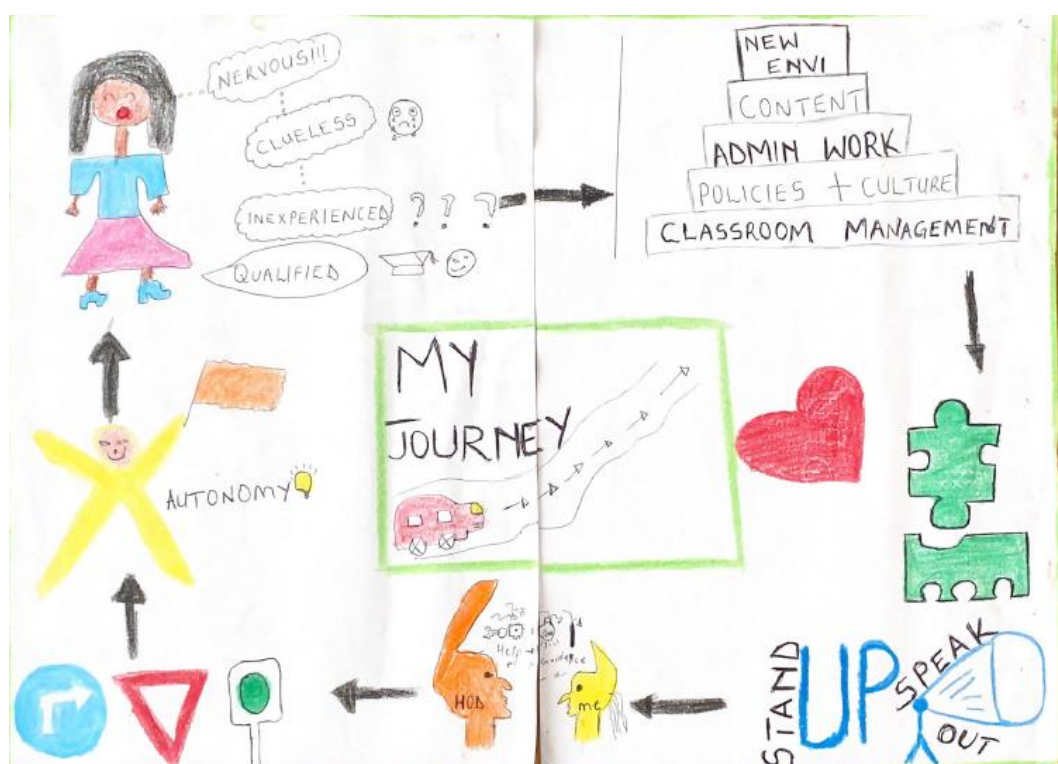
Figure 2.2: A complete rich picture presenting the entire development process from the first day the participant entered the school as a novice teacher

Using the rich pictures as a data collection tool was valuable, as proposed by Samaras and Pithouse-Morgan (2021), and it was felt that they produced data that were very close to what could have been achieved with collages. These rich pictures allowed us to figure out new ways

of facing an issue using different lenses and viewpoints (Pithouse-Morgan et al., 2016). The rich pictures were perfect as they illustrated the growth of the participants from the first day they set foot in the school to the time of the study.

Changing from collage making to drawing was disappointing for me at first, but this proved to be a constructive method for data collection. However, my fellow participant admitted that drawing was not one of her favourite activities, which suggests that collage making could have generated richer data from this participant. Unfortunately, communicating by cellular phone was difficult at times due to Internet connection challenges, and this taught me that any plans in the research proposal are bound to change. A researcher thus needs to be cautious and flexible to ensure that the study moves forward.

2.5.2 Journal writing

Journal writing, also colloquially referred to as journaling, is a writing process that allows one to expresses oneself in pen on paper about one's feelings, life experiences, hopes, and dreams. In the midst of sharing, it also enables reflectivity where one thinks back to the past and this enhances one's learning through memories of past experiences (Masinga, 2012). By engaging in journaling, the participants were able to share experiences which they could not present in rich picture drawings and the interview, as they could record experiences, feelings, and events in the journal every day. Individual journaling as a data collecting method had to be continuous over a period of three months. I urged my fellow participant and myself to share our daily experiences with regards to the issues of being a novice teacher and a developing subject specialist in the rural school where we worked.

However, my fellow participant did not write much in her journal. It could be because she was swamped with work which made it hard to keep up, or that journaling was not the type of method she was comfortable with. Also, it could be that I provided guidelines that were not clear enough to keep up with journaling. The fewer the journal entries were, the harder it was to count on the credibility of the available data. These limited responses detracted from the richness of the data that I had expected which is normal in research because it is not all the time where everything goes according to the proposed plan. I therefore had to rely on interview data

to fill the gaps. Fortunately, follow-up phone calls became an option and I could ask for clarification where I could not understand the other participant's entries.

This experience taught me that a researcher who uses journaling as a data collection method should frequently ask participants for feedback and determine if they are keeping up to date with their journal entries. Such enquiry will serve as a platform to address uncertainties and encourage them to persevere. Although my entries were also not recorded on a daily basis, I had recorded far more events and experiences than the other participant. One challenge I noted about keeping an updated journal is that one records entries only when events occur that one feels obliged to share, and it is therefore difficult to ensure that entries are recorded each day.

Below are the guidelines that we were expected to adhere to in an effort to ensure that the entries were uniformly recorded, if not similar in content:

Dear Participant

Thank you for participating in this study. We know that your input will make a great impact on the lives and experiences of other novice teachers. Please be assured that whatever you write in this journal will remain between yourself, the journal, and the researcher. Your right to privacy will not be violated in any way.

You will have this journal with you for three months. As the researcher has explained, the focus of the study is on three aspects: being a novice teacher, being a developing subject specialist, and overcrowded classrooms.

Journaling is a process of keeping record of all important incidents, experiences, feelings and thoughts through written words and/or pictures. For the following three months, please try to think back on the first day you started working and share the experiences, feelings, and thoughts you have had from then up to the very last day when you will have your journal with you.

NOTE: When you share your feelings and thoughts, please remember our central focus: developing as a novice teacher and as a subject specialist.

The image below is an excerpt from a participant's journal entry as she reflected on her day:
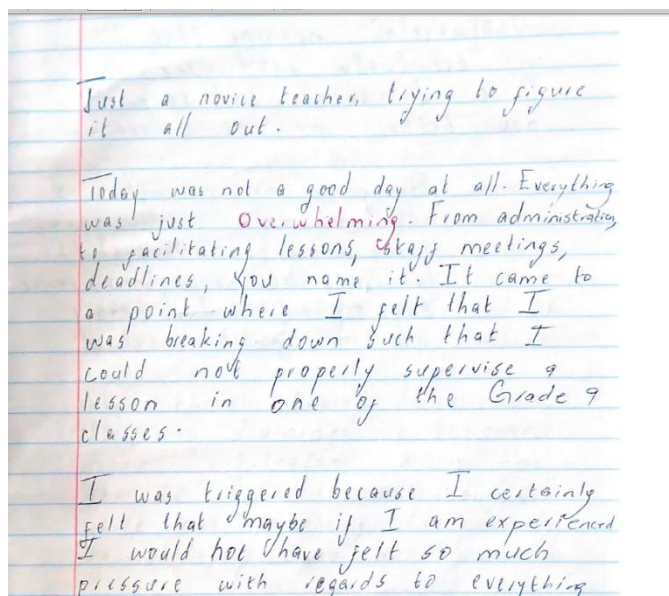
Figure 2.3A: An excerpt from Diamond's journal on a day in her life in a rural school

The participants could recall experiences from the first days and week after reporting for duty the first time. The nature of this journal data collection tool was reflective because it allowed us to look back and reflect on our lived experiences. Journaling provides "moments of reflection and interpretations of all aspects of the experiences" (Masinga, 2012, p. 128). This was also an educational task because reflecting on one's lived experiences poses an opportunity to learn from the past (Wain, 2017). For instance, we learnt that for one's development, working with others is essential. Moreover, expanding one's connections allows enriched development as one receives advice from different individuals. Below are some of the reflections taken from each of our journals:
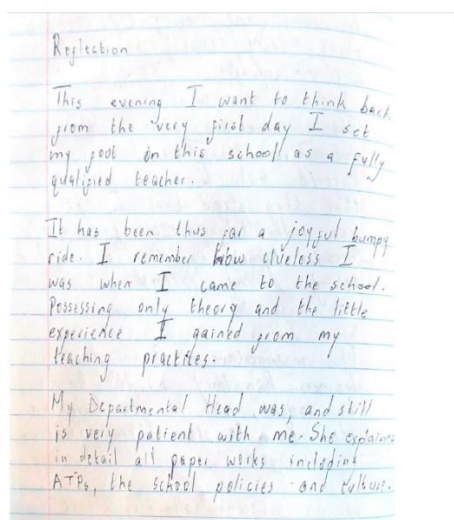
Figure 2.3B: Diamond's reflection on her first day at school as a qualified teacher

In this journal entry, Diamond reflects on her first day when she became part of the school. It explains how she felt and how her journey was supported by her HOD.

Figure 2.4 is an example of how Precious experienced her role as a novice teacher who had to access new subject knowledge:

content.

One of the biggest steps to professional development when you are novice teacher is identifying that you have a problem and accepting and being willing to go an extra mile. Requesting help from others to help you, places an un experience teacher at an advantage to learn more and become the best you can be. For to try to cope with the situation of not knowing the content its, meant that I first had to alert my principal about the problem of not knowing some of the content. Unfortunately, he told me that there is nothing he can do, I must consult with other history teachers from other schools. Its was difficult as I did not know any history teacher. The head of department come to my rescue, she gave me a phone number of a history teacher, who taught history in the neighbouring school. The teacher was a cluster co-ordinator in the school district. She was an expect in history as she has taught many years ago. She was of great help in assisting me with the content and how I should teach the content. We sat down with her, she explained an essay from the paper one session word by word. I have never heard of Mao zedong and his plan to make China a modern state. However, she was able to take me through this essay question. The next I went to class to teach the essay, I knew it by my heard and its become my favourite essay. She played a big role in my professional development as a history educator. She became a mentor and a coach in my development of teaching history. After going to her, I gain lot of confidence in my teaching, of because it's come with lot of preparations before going to class. I learnt that most of history learners did not like the essay question that I had

Figure 2.4: An excerpt from Precious' journal

Precious shared that she was honest enough with herself and the school to admit that she felt unfit to teach Grade 12. In this extract she explains how she sought assistance to equip herself with the necessary skills and knowledge to teach Grade 12 learners.

Writing is a form of expression that allows for deeper thinking and creating imagery through words. According to Furman et al. (2008), writing assists in developing the capability of revisiting and relearning from the past. During this process, the writer is able to cultivate his/her own preconceptions and insights in relation to personal history and the present, and one can draw patterns and develop critical consciousness about one's personal and professional development. Analysing our reflections on the past was an important activity as it resulted in

understanding the root of our opinions, prejudices, and behaviours that formed part of our everyday lives and the diversity we encountered.

2.5.3 Interviewing

I need to reiterate that only two participants participated in the study, and thus a single interview was conducted where both participants had to answer pre-set questions. I asked the questions in the interview schedule as the researcher and then the other participant and I both responded frankly. The questions were open-ended and there could be no wrong or right answer. It was open-ended because in such an interview the interviewee can explain deeply in their own words how they make sense of their lives, emotions, events, experiences, and all other aspects that make up their everyday lives.

Below are the questions that were asked during the telephonic interview session. We conducted a single phone call interview where I asked a question once and we would take turns to answer it. The entire interview was recorded using my phone with the permission of the other participant. The interview was later saved to Google Drive. The questions were divided into sub-sections as outlined below:

The early days of teaching
1. Describe your experiences on the first year of teaching.
2. How did you feel about entering the profession as a newly qualified teacher?
3. How would you compare the feeling you had then (when you started teaching) to now? Has anything changed?

Classroom management
1. How would you define classroom management?
2. Tell me about the classroom management strategies that you have implement in your classroom.
3. Have you ever received any classroom management training when you started teaching except what was offered by your training institution?
   If yes, tell me about it.
   If no, do you think this has an impact on the experiences you have had when it comes to managing your classes?

4. How have the responsibilities of a teacher changed your outlook on the teaching profession?

Teacher subject knowledge

1. What do you understand about the role of a teacher as a subject specialist?
2. What measures are you taking to keep updated with the content of your subject?
3. What aspects do you think may hinder you from mastering the content knowledge required in your specialisation subject?

Overcrowded classrooms

1. How would you define an overcrowded classroom? What teacher-learner ratio would you regard as acceptable and conducive for teaching and learning?
2. Do you think that overcrowding in classrooms impacts the previously discussed issues (classroom management and teacher subject knowledge)?
3. How would you explain the relationship between the three issues (classroom management, teacher subject knowledge, and overcrowded classrooms)?

The interview was not rooted in any existing theory; however, the questions were developed after I had done an extensive literature review on the aspects required by the study topic. The structure and questions were designed following an inductive approach. Brenner (2006) explains that in the inductive approach is aimed at finding theoretical constructs that emerge from the data obtained during the interview. Unlike the deductive approach, the inductive approach generates theory, while the former derives meaning from an already existing theory (Brenner, 2006).

Transcribing the interview took quite some time as I had to listen to the recording word for word and type what had been said. Sometimes I would not hear properly and had to rewind or replay the recorded part so that I could grasp the actual words. It was a learning experience because spoken words had to be accurately transferred in writing on paper, and this process highlighted some comments that I had missed during the conversation.

Below is a table that summarises the key research questions and the data generation tools that were used to address them:

Table 2.1: Summary of data generation

Research Questions	Data Generation Activities	Participants	Data Sources
1. What are novice teachers' stories of their lived experiences of developing as subject specialists in a rural school?	Journal Writing	Two Participants	Journal entries
. 2. What factors influence the lived experiences of novice teachers and their development as subject specialists in a rural school?	Telephonic open-ended interview		Audio-recorded interview and transcripts
	Rich picture drawing		Rich pictures/ drawings

2.6 Data Presentation

I developed narrative stories to narrate the lived experiences of the participants using the data they provided. The stories of both participants are presented in Chapter three and analysed in Chapter four and five (Precious and Diamond respectively). These stories unpack what emerged from the journals, drawings, and interview session. There is no added information or imposed analysis on the stories. In other words, the narrated stories were written as shared accounts from what had been directly stated by us as the participants in the interview, journal entries, and drawings.

The format of the stories is non-structured as they do not narrate the life stories of the participants following a set of guidelines as they reflect what was presented or said by us in the aforementioned data collection instruments. I chose a 'free will' narration process because if I had used directive guidelines, some shared experiences could have been left out. My aim was to narrate the lived experiences of us as novice teachers in a rural school and not to modify them, hence a I present non-modified stories for data analysis and findings that would address the main research questions.

2.7 Making Meaning: Data Analysis and Interpretation

In this study, meanings were formulated inductively from the raw data that had been obtained from the participants. Polkinghorne (1995) explains that the analysis of field texts in narrative inquiry is done by means of two methods: narrative cognition and paradigmatic cognition. These two differ in that the former moves from collection of elements to form stories, whereas the latter moves from stories to elements. This study used narrative cognition to analyse the data obtained by means of journal entries, rich pictures, and an interview.

The study sought to understand the experiences of two novice teachers which required a close connection between them. This was achieved and contributed to the success to the study. Because I was a part of the other participant's community, I did not need much convincing to immerse myself in her world and establish rapport. However, my duty as a researcher was to ensure that I suppressed any preconceptions I had in connection with the topic at hand so that I would be able to view and understand the data through the lens of a researcher and not as a participant.

To understand and make meaning of the lived experiences of participants, it is important to stress that the analysis of their stories considers the relation between temporality, sociality, and place, as was discussed earlier. In brief, this applied to the study as follows:

Temporality: When I analysed the data, I needed to understand that some elements could have changed over time because the experiences and insights of individuals change over time. The study acknowledges that people's life experiences are a combination of their past, present, and future and that we create new meanings as we often revisit and relearn what we have experienced. This was evident when Precious linked her experiences as a learner to her professional development. Her pedagogical practices were influenced by her school teachers' competencies back then. Diamond also stressed the challenges she experienced as she needed to adapt to the rural context because she could not relate it to any of her past encounters. Temporality means that what individuals experience in the presence is linked to the past.

Sociality: Data analysis must consider that an individual is influenced and shaped by the personal and social conditions they live in. I did not downplay the fact that the two are interconnected as one's perceptions of the world are influenced by one's individual traits. Yet, the setting that one lives in has an impact on one's perceptions of one's conditions. This includes the relationships that an individual forge in that setting. Interconnectedness was acknowledged by both participants as they expressed how socialising with colleagues had a positive impact on their professional development.

Place: The physical space in which the development process took place was a rural school. However, a school is not a single entity as it belongs to and is influenced by the community that shapes its processes and the school culture as well. One participant could readily relate to the rural place/setting, while the other was not familiar with it.

As was mentioned earlier, I analysed the data through narrative cognition. This means that I employed inductive analysis of the data in that the data were collected as raw elements from participants stories in order to draw patterns and to arrive at findings and conclusions. The analysis used narrative cognition and thus moved from elements to stories. The elements were collected through raw items that were obtained by means of all three data sources from the participants. Each data source was narrated as a told story and themes were derived when comparisons were drawn between the two participants' stories to discover any similar or different findings. These similarities and differences are presented and discussed in the relevant chapters.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

Research studies are governed by ethics that need to be considered and adhered to. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) assert that narrative inquiry involves sharing both the internal and external world of the participants, and it is therefore important that trust and openness be encouraged between the researcher and participants to ensure that the latter do not limit themselves when sharing their stories due to lack of trust. Etherington (2006) also stresses that when using a narrative inquiry methodology, there should be a high level of ethical and critical engagement. As the stories that the participants in this study shared were very personal and private, I ensured

that the Research Code of Ethics was strictly adhered to before, during, and after the conclusion of the study.

This study directly related to the lived experiences of human beings and therefore I had to ensure that the participants' privacy and confidentiality were protected and that the research process was conducted ethically. Ellis (2007) classifies research ethics into three groups: (i) Procedural ethics govern the procedures or series of steps the researcher follows. These include obtaining informed consent and assuring the confidentiality/right to privacy and deception. (ii) Ethics in practice are those issues that deal with unforeseen circumstances that may require critical engagement by abiding by the code of ethics. (iii) Relational ethics are concerned with a healthy and considerate researcher-participant relationship that requires mutual respect, rapport, and empathy. The following ethical procedures were followed rigorously:

Ethical Clearance: I had to obtain ethical clearance to conduct the study. My application was submitted to the university and was approved by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) (Appendix II). I also obtained permission from the Department of Basic Education to conduct the study in a public school involving educators, as well as a gatekeeper's letter from the principal of the school.

Informed consent: This is a signed agreement by any person who partakes in a study as a participant (Hardicre, 2014). I ensured that I gave as much information about the study as possible to the participants so when they decided to be part of the study, they knew exactly what they would be required to do. Informed consent forms were given to the participants to sign as an agreement to become a part of the study. There was no coercion in the form of deceit or bribes.

My fellow participant and I signed the informed consent form as a way of agreeing to partake in this study and to show that we were not coerced to do this. We therefore participated voluntarily.

Confidentiality: Participants and the school had a right to privacy. According to Goodwin (2014, p. 136) "confidentiality is the major safeguard against the invasion of privacy through research". Confidentiality was and will be ensured by not revealing the actual names of the

other participant and the school; instead, pseudonyms are used. Also, the interview data, recordings, and the participants' journals can only be accessed by the researcher and her supervisor as they are kept in a locked safe.

Autonomy: Autonomy means the right to withdraw participation at any given time when a participant feels that he/she no longer wants to be a part of the study. I made sure that my participants were fully aware of this and two participants in fact decided to withdraw from the study early in the data collection phase. They were free to do so without any repercussions.

Relational ethics are very important when a connection is forged between the researcher and participant/s. I made sure that I valued my fellow participants and that I respect who and what they were. Once the other participants had withdrawn, I still had to be considerate of my fellow participant's feelings and the need for mutual respect, and this enabled progress regardless of challenges.

2.9 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to the research quality that can be assessed. Direct quotes from data sources are presented in this dissertation as evidence to support the assertions that I make. Due to the large body of data, it was impossible to present it all; however, I ensured that I inserted pertinent raw data to support my claims. Polkinghorne (2007) emphasises that understanding human experience requires one to be able to fully support their claims through tangible evidence.

Transferability refers to the extent to which research practices and findings can be applied to other but similar contexts with a different sample (Morse, 2015). A deep description of the research population and the sample is given so that other researchers can apply the same research methodology to a different population with the same characteristics as those under study, and the findings can also be transferred to contexts that possess the same characteristics as those described in this dissertation (Morse, 2015). The findings are only applicable to novice teachers as the sample was composed of teachers who had been in the teaching profession for less than three years. Also, the findings cannot be generalised to all novice teachers in rural

areas because they are based on the personal experiences of each of the two participants as stipulated that interpretivist paradigm does not have a single reality .

2.10 Research Challenges and Limitations that Impacted the Study

Time was not limited but it was difficult to reach the original set of participants as they were very busy. As a result, two participants withdrew from the study, which was their right. The unavailability of participants delayed the research process to some extent, but this was overcome and the study could continue with two participants, myself included.

Finding suitable magazines for collage development was also a challenge. This was overcome by reverting to rich picture drawings.

Journaling was also marred by challenges, particularly as my fellow participant's journal entries were limited and I realised that she had not given herself much time to write in it. This challenge was overcome by augmenting the data with detailed and rich interview data that were obtained when we engaged in a comprehensive telephonic interview based on a set of pre-prepared interview questions.

Conducting this study during COVID-19 restrictions posed further challenges. The data collection process was delayed for months as we were in lockdown and could not meet. This led to frustration and participant withdrawal as well as reduced data collection opportunities.

Conducting a study in which you are also a participant requires that one distinguishes clearly between the roles of researcher and participant. It was not easy to position myself in these dual roles as I felt that they were subjectively inseparable and there was the danger that, as a participant, I would gradually want to present data that would suit the aim of the study. However, as I proceed the roles became clear and I was able to distance myself from subjective data interpretation.

The limitations that impacted the study are evident. First, the sample was very limited, particularly when the large number of rural schools and the cohort of novice teachers are

considered. This means that the findings reflect the views and experiences of only two novice teachers at one school, and they may therefore not be generalised to the population or schools in the same context.

Methodologically the study utilised various data collection instruments, but the journal entry data in particular were virtually limited to the contributions of one participant, which could have skewed the findings. It is acknowledged that the rich data that were obtained by means of the interview responses did not cover the gaps adequately, as the journal entries addressed different aspects of our experiences than could be covered by the interview questions.

2.11 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented aspects of the research methodology that addressed the data generation process that I followed, while supporting my decisions with information from the literature that I had reviewed. I outlined each step and explained its relevance to the study and how it contributed to the entire research process. I also provided an in-depth description of the approach and framework that governed this study. I expounded the qualitative approach that I adopted to allow for deep and detailed descriptions based on the participants' responses that enable me to arrive at various conclusions and findings. I explained why the narrative inquiry methodology was the most suitable for this study as I sought to understand the lived experiences of novice teachers as developing subject specialists. Their lived experiences became narrated stories, and the narrative inquiry approach enabled deep analysis of these stories so that I could develop insights into the development of novice teachers as subject specialists in a rural school. Another trait that made narrative inquiry suitable was that it allowed me to become part of the participant community, although it was very limited. By forging a strong relationship based on trust with my fellow participant, rich and credible data were obtained.

Narrative inquiry worked well with the interpretivist paradigm that I adopted. The aim was to better understand the lived experiences of novice teachers as developing subject specialists in a rural school, and thus understanding of this phenomenon could be established as I worked in close collaboration with the other participant in consideration of our subjective and social realities. I was well able to separate my roles as a subjective participant and an object researcher who had to interpret and make meaning of the data.

The study was conducted in northern KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The study setting was a rural school attended by IsiZulu speaking learners and educators. The school is a no fee-paying institution as it is located in a less privileged community. Initially, the plan was to involve four participants, but this did not happen as two of the participants withdrew from the study. I adopted the dual roles of participant and researcher.

Three data generating methods were used: journal writing (journaling), rich picture drawings, and interviews. The guidelines for each data generating method were presented in this chapter. The identity of the second participant and the name of the school are not revealed for the purpose of confidentiality. The pseudonyms of Diamond and Precious refer to the two participants so that the reader will not be able to trace the data specifically to myself or the other participant. The ethical considerations that I adhered to were also presented, and I explained how this contributed to the trustworthiness of the study.

In the following chapter I present the narrated stories of the two participants as extracted from the raw data.

CHAPTER THREE: PRESENTATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS' STORIES

-Courage and perseverance will assist the novice teacher to overcome adversity-

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter described all the research steps taken to carry out this study in conjunction with information from the review of relevant literature. The discourse establishes the research design as a critical component of answering the research questions.

In this Chapter, the data I obtained are presented in a form of narrative stories that expound the personal experiences of each participant as share in their journals, drawings, and interviews. The purpose of data collection was to construct narratives of the participants' lived experiences. The lived stories of both participants are narrated. Excerpts from the data sources are included to strengthen the participants' voices for the purpose of authenticity. The names Precious and Diamond are pseudonyms to protect their right to privacy. Although the reader is aware that I was one of the participants, my privacy is still protected as the responses cannot be attributed to me personally.

A teacher's professional journey begins when they are still learners. This is because their learning experiences have a relational impact on the kind of teachers they become. The data from the journal entries, interview, and drawings were merged to produce rich narratives.

3.2 Section A: Precious' narrative story[2]

I am Precious…

I am Precious, a novice teacher qualified to teach History and English First Additional Language in the FET[3] Phase. I completed my Bachelor of Education Degree in 2017 and graduated in April 2018. I entered the profession towards the end of 2018 to teach

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[2] ALL names are pseudonyms in consideration of anonymity and confidentiality.
[3] FET is the Further Education and Training phase in the South African education system. It refers specifically to grades 10 to 12.

English First Additional Language and History. Describing my first days as a teacher, I was very excited although anxious at the same time. The anxiety was due to that fact that I felt a bit inexperienced to be assigned to teach Grade 12 as I knew that History content changes with time. I knew I was ready because I had my qualifications conferred on me; however, I felt that I needed someone to assure me that I could do it.

The early days: Mixed emotions

I remember on my first day at work I had different emotions. Nevertheless, above them all, was the feeling of excitement for finally gaining independence. Finding a job at the age of 23 was a dream come true. Things took a sharp turn when my duty was handed over to me. I figured out that I had to teach Grade 12 History. Never had I ever felt so intimidated in my entire life. I felt like I was being tested. I could not help but wonder how I could be trusted with an entire senior grade of the school when I had never taught any. "I cannot do it!" I kept saying to myself. I literally begged the principal to revise his decision. He assured me that I would cope, because I had earned this qualification. He further said that it was better to face greater challenges in the earliest times so that I would not be resistant to development. I even asked if there was someone I could swap with to take my Grade 12s while I got their classes, be it Grade 10 or 11. Honestly, I was not ready to take the senior grade for I felt like my content knowledge was not enough to equip me for national assessment. National assessment means that the 12th Grade assessment tasks are uniform throughout the country. They are administered at the same time across all schools. This means that learners need to be fully equipped with knowledge so that they are fit enough to pull through in the assessments. Putting that aside, I was in fear of the Grade 12 pupils. They looked the same age as me. Thank God for my somewhat gigantic look, maybe it is what scared them not to misbehave.

First classroom experiences

Our first lessons were not as bad as I had expected. If I had not been that nervous, they would have gone absolutely smoothly. I interacted quite well with the Grade 12s. They appeared a better disciplined than the lower grades; inquisitive too. Preparing for lessons took me long, because they engage a lot. Hence everything we did became interesting. At times I would also learn a lot from them.

The school environment

The school is under-resourced and poor in infrastructure. Fortunately, we do have access to electricity which assists us in generating copies for relevant documents and textbooks. Even though at times we face shortages of ink and ream paper to the extent that we ask learners to buy paper themselves. However, we currently do not have a library to visit when we need information about certain things that are not clear in textbooks. We do not have internet access either. This has much effect because when you are a history teacher or learner, you need frequent consultation with the Internet. For me, this was a major downfall because I had little trust in the subject content I was meant to teach. I would say this was because I had never seen textbooks that were used in schools, hence I assumed it was a different content. I thought maybe in schools they are taught things that are way different from what I learnt at university, only to find that it was the same content−only simplified and unfolding from one grade to another. Not that it came as a single unified module, content is divided according to the CAPS document. It was however highlighted to us when we were preparing for teaching practice that for each subject, the CAPS document divides content according to grades. Regarding this matter, I consulted with the principal to let him know that I felt less equipped to teach Grade 12. Only, I was advised to consult with History teachers from other schools for assistance.

Networking as a prerequisite for a novice teacher

I was given two contacts of teachers in neighbouring schools that I could use to seek help. They were particularly experienced in the field. One was male and had been a teacher for eleven years. The other was a female and she had been teaching History for seventeen years. She had been a Subject Head since 2015. They lived a bit far from where I was located. Consulting them after school hours was practically impossible and we could not do this during school contact time either. However, they did play a huge role in assisting me with paperwork. They would gradually send a lot of resources that would help with lesson preparation and assessments. These included maps, encyclopaedia, articles, and other relevant reading materials for different topics, as well

as links to websites that I could visit to find information specifically on History. We mainly communicated by cell phones and we would meet at Cluster meetings.

Cluster meetings as an extension of networking

Cluster meetings are conducted by Subject Advisors within their education districts. They are attended by teachers of that certain subject across all schools within the district. The main aim of these meetings is to enhance collaboration between teachers of different schools with the help of departmental officials. These officials assist in giving professional support for they know best what is relevant to teach and how at a particular time. These meetings have really helped me in that I have made friends with my History peers who have a lot of experience teaching History. Having them by my side on this journey has been a great honour. They still play a huge role when I am in need of help. They always avail themselves when I am in need of assistance in preparing for lessons, filling me up with necessary information where I find misunderstandings with the textbooks, complying with the annual teaching plan, and setting assessment tasks.

Reflections on past primary and secondary schooling

During my primary and secondary school days, I attended rural schools. It would not be fair to generalise the settings of the school and say "typical of rural schools" because contexts are always unique. However, there are some similarities compared to the school where I am teaching now. I remember in primary school we only read one textbook titled *Masihambisane* which means "let us walk together". It was a Zulu reader where we would find folklores and moral lessons to discuss. Come to think of it now, the book must have had a great impact on teachers. They really ensured that "we walk together" for the better in our learning. During mathematics lessons we would use stones and tin bottle caps for counting. As far as I remember, not much learning and teaching support material was available. Yet we were very lucky to have teachers who were able to utilise what they had to make the learning process possible. In high school, we were not as privileged to access advanced learning support material. Primarily, textbooks shared by at least three people were available. Then of course, chalkboard as a tool.

As a learner, I did not perceive having only a textbook as learning support material as a problem. However, now that I look through a teacher's lens, I am observing this as a

challenge. Even though this may not be seen as a huge challenge as textbooks do provide a lot of information that can be converted to knowledge. I somehow feel that access to variety of resources brings about enriched subject knowledge. In my assumption, unavailability of other learning aids did not hinder me from reaching my goals, probably because my teachers were able to utilise what was available at that time effectively. The school currently offers textbooks; only, my job is go the extra mile trying to find other support material that I can use to aid learners in their learning. Although this may seem as a trial, I am left with no choice but to use what I have so as to serve justice in exactly the same way as my school teachers did.

Reflections on contextual conditions: Overcrowded classrooms

Figure 3.1: An overcrowded classroom: Learners tightly packed and attracted to one another like solid particles in matter

Because of limited, if not completely unavailable, learning and teaching support material, I feel much pressure as the learner numbers in classes are quite big ranging between 60-70 per class. In the study area section, you stated 45 per class? Figure 3.1 is my drawing of an overcrowded classroom at the school where I teach. If you have ever

seen a van that delivers cabbages at a supermarket, then you have a clear image of how squashed they are in class. Tightly packed and squeezed tightly against one another. Inflexibility becomes a norm as it gets rather impossible to move around the classroom. Not being able to reach all corners of the class is a proxy for many other challenges. Closer observations to keep track of learner individual progress is always difficult to perform. Hence, one is never too sure whether they can hear and understand what is being taught, so you just assume they do. During scorching weather, you can see the restlessness in their eyes. Yet nothing can be done. Everyone has got to be here, and work needs to be done. So we live through the day anyway. For me an acceptable number of learners in each class is nothing more than 30. Considering the learner-teacher ratio as stipulated by the Department of Education, it is disturbing that we get to experience double the number of the actual figures expected. An increase in the number of learners means an increase in classroom management demands. The paperwork is doubled, and energy and time needed for classroom management are also increased. This does not only have a one-sided effect, as learners are affected too. Each learner is deprived of the privilege to special attention as they become too many to understand.

Classroom management

I currently have 30 textbooks for my subject whereas there are 69 learners expected to share them. It takes a lot of time while learners have to move their furniture to make it fit to accommodate everyone to have access to the textbook. There is sometimes a lot of chaos as some will not engage in the current class activities. At times it becomes quite difficult to figure out who are the misbehaviours as they will all be squashed and squeezed against one another. Others will be writing work for another subject during History period and I am not able to track them because you are unable to walk down the rows. Managing a large class is not child's play, especially for a teacher with limited experience.

In my understanding as a classroom manager, I am mandated to control and manage what is happening in class. It includes taking full responsibility for the administration and paperwork related such as marking registers, assessments, facilitating class rules, and managing organisation and discipline in class. There are strategies I use for

classroom management such as when you come in late you do not disturb the entire lesson; you just walk straight to your seat. Learners are not allowed to leave the classroom unless I have given them permission to do so. Also, to avoid unnecessary noise, my learners know that there can only be one speaker at a time and one has to raise their hand as a way to ask for an opportunity to talk. All these strategies I learnt them at my own capability not because I had received any training from the school when I got there. These strategies have been effective enough to keep the classes in order. Even though it was a bit of a challenge to instil these as they were probably new to learners. This has changed my initial outlook as a teacher because as a teacher you have seven roles to play, hence I carry the work demands wherever I go. The seven roles of a teacher as prescribed by the Department of Education in the Norms and Standards are teacher as a subject specialist, learning mediator, interpreter of the content, leader and manager of the classroom circumstances, a lifelong learner who is always willing to obtain new knowledge and skills, community member in the area she is teaching, and an assessor to track progress and improve learning.

Learner challenges

One might turn a blind eye to contextual factors of the school when it comes to classroom management, yet these play a vital role. Lack of resources, overcrowded classes, and poor classroom management are not the only challenges I face as a novice teacher. Also, learners who come from child-headed families have problems such as late coming and absenteeism. A number of children come from child-headed homes because parents live far from home in response to their jobs. It is mainly quite a large number of fathers who moved to Gauteng province and Lesotho to seek for employment as these are nearby areas that are more developed than this area. When a mother has passed on, these children are left home to look after themselves. They would often absent themselves from school because of duties they have to perform at home. Their absence will sometimes go on for days. It becomes hard to punish them because even the School Management Team has a clear picture of what is going on in their lives. Their absence still does not permit me not to teach in class, hence I teach even when they are not there, which makes them miss a lot. They miss content taught during the time they were not in class, activities that strengthen or assess learning, as well as time to address questions

that they have. As a result, they produce poor results which comes back to me as a teacher that I fail my learners.

Children are still at a fragile stage where everything that is going around them affects their mental and emotional well-being. They suffer socially as they are partially living an adult life through having to take of other children into their households. In that case, they are deprived of many activities that other children from their neighbourhood engage in. This then has an effect on their emotional state as well because they struggle with school work as well as outside the learning environment. They lack motivation to work hard at school because already they are drained by activities at home, hence performance becomes relatively low. Fortunately, we have a Learner Support Agent who deals with learners with special cases that need attention. Many of the things they experience are discussed with her as she is trained to deal with learners who need support.

Subject and content knowledge

I feel that teacher subject knowledge is the very important aspect that a teacher needs to have, and update each and every time. If there was no subject knowledge at first, then we would not have teaching and learning processes. It is subject content that makes learning worthwhile because I remember not a single time when learners were tested or examined on classroom management or other duties of a teacher. For me, I would say teacher subject knowledge is the cornerstone of teaching and learning. Learners are at school to acquire knowledge first, then skills and values.

To keep up and enrich my subject knowledge, I rely mostly on Google to find information of what other provinces teach so that I also administer to my learners in preparation for the National exams. I use my own cellphone and mobile data to do so, as I have mentioned before that we do not have Internet access in my school. Google has basically become my friend in accordance with finding knowledge. I also work with teachers from other schools as well as the Subject Advisor. Subject Advisors are masters of the subject and they always know what is new. I normally consult with the Subject Advisor by phone and WhatsApp. She also does visits to the school to track how teaching and learning are progressing.

The value of Cluster networking and collaborative teaching

I bless the day when my Head of Department in Humanities introduced me to the Cluster co-ordinator. She was of great help in my development as a newly appointed teacher. Her patience in taking me through the content I was not familiar with is unmatched.
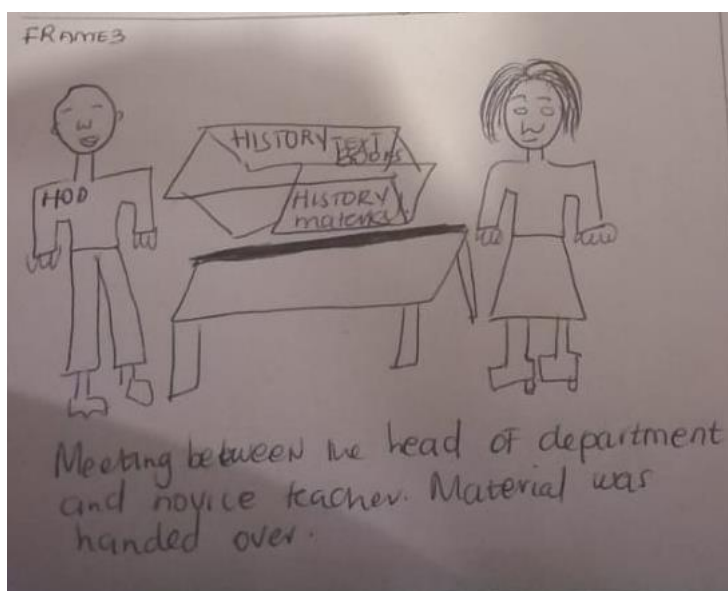
Figure 3.2: A warm welcome from The Head of Department.
Handing over of files and other relevant administrative documents.

Maybe someone else would have said I should figure my way around things as a qualified teacher. Yet she sat me down and explained the essays word for word. It was as if she was teaching a child how to walk. I mastered the essay content before I even walked in to class. She assured me that I could do it, and it happened. Through her assistance I gained a lot of expertise and confidence towards my teaching. In addition to being a cluster co-ordinator, she became a mentor and a coach to me.

From the moment I entered the profession, I was exposed to the importance of collaborative learning. That if you want to learn, you must be willing to work with others. Have the courage to spread your arms to reach for those who have more expertise and experience than you. As a life-long learner, it is always advisable to consult, especially with your seniors for they always know better. I apply this even to my learners. That they must normalise working together as they will always learn a thing or two from each other.

Perspectives on teaching as a profession

My outlook on teaching as a profession has completely diverged from the initial one. I have figured that I am no longer as enthusiastic as I was when I first entered the field. I have been constantly getting demotivated to go all out in terms of teaching and finding new ways to make the teaching and learning processes work. I remember back in my first days I always had good energy for the new day and the next years in teaching. Yet lately I have been getting heavy feelings of demotivation, frustration, and devastation. This is because I feel strain in that being a teacher literally covers every aspect of life. Even when you eat or go to bed, you cannot spend a minute without thinking about work. I do not want to carry work stress to my grave, so I feel like I need to change career paths as time goes on.

Subject workshops and teacher support material

Figure 3.3: History workshops provide me with variety of skills and I can network with History teachers in our circuit.

In this picture I attended a workshop where we were given the Annual Teaching Plan [ATP] that will guide us what to teach, for how long, and the forms of assessments to be used. It granted me an opportunity to meet my peers who we teach in the same grade which helped me expand my networks.
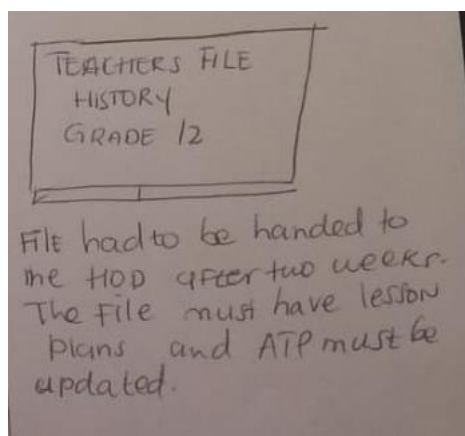
Figure 3.4: File submission to HODs to check content that has been covered
as prescribed in the ATP

The file submission every two weeks is to keep track of content covered and to check if assessments have gone as planned in the programme of assessment. The Annual Teaching Plan (ATP) is set to guide us to content and assessment to be done. It has space for dates where a teacher inserts what was covered on/in which day/week. Normally the ATP is judged against the learners' workbooks as evidence that the scope was really covered in class.

Personal reflection: Concluding remarks

I am Precious, a novice teacher who is willing to continue developing as a subject specialist. Though some days can be worse than others such that I feel like giving up, with the help of my colleagues I have survived my profession thus far. All that my teachers did for me during my school days as a learner, I owe it to the children I am teaching.

Below follows Diamond's narrated story

3.3 Section B: Story Narrated by Diamond

I am Diamond…

I am Diamond, a newly qualified teacher. Similar to Precious, I am serving my second year as a teacher in the same rural school. All incidents shared in this essay take place in a rural school in KwaZulu-Natal, in the same school as Precious. It is an overview of my journey from February 2019 till to date. I have been teaching English First Additional Language and Life Orientation from my first day and there has been no change in the duty load thus far.

The early years

Although my schooling experience differs from that of Precious and in the school I am serving, there are some commonalities. I went to a Comprehensive Technical High School in a well-known township here in KwaZulu-Natal Province. I started Grade 8 in 2009 and matriculated in 2013. My school was well equipped in terms of Learning and Teaching Support Material in that it even offered technical subjects such as Engineering Graphics and Design, Civil Technology, Mechanical Technology, and Information Technology. However, the learner enrolment was very high. There was a minimum of 50 learners in each class, which means that we were overcrowded.

Unlike Precious, I obtained a Postgraduate Certificate in Education, which entails that I only received oneyear training for my teaching career. I did my undergraduate Bachelor's Degree in Social Science. Thereafter, I registered for PGCE specialising in Tourism and Life Orientation in the Further Education and Training phase. This is not to allude that I had insufficient preparation for entering the field, as I continued to obtain a Bachelor of Education Honours and am currently registered for Master's degree in Education. I chose continuing with B.Ed. Hons. for my own development and curiosity in the Education Sector as I was already qualified teacher. This was to strengthen my continuous personal and professional development, to be precise.

First experiences as a qualified novice teacher

The first days of teaching as a qualified teacher are comprised of mixed emotions. On the one hand you are super excited as you have finally secured your career. On the other hand, you are nervous about the duties and expectations to be met. I knew I could do it. That I would deliver what was expected of me in time, otherwise I would not be qualified if I had not met the standards.

On the first day at work, I received a warm welcome by the Principal and got introduced to the staff members. I remember we held a meeting for almost two hours with the principal unpacking the most important aspects of the school and what was expected from me. It was a very informative meeting with a clear agenda. I was assigned to a mentor whom I was told would assist me with getting used to the new environment. All I remember as assistance from my mentor is when she gave me her Grade 12 Teacher's File to copy what needs to be included in my own file. To say the least, she did not give as much support I needed. It also became a mission to seek for assistance, as I could read between the lines that I was a burden to her. A teacher's file contains evidence of assessments administered, resources used to assist during teaching and learning, annual teaching plan for each subject specialisation, as well as lesson preparations. She also helped me here and there when I had questions which did not happen for too long though.

Figure 3.5: Newly qualified teacher enters the profession

As I first entered the field I felt nervous for I thought even though I am qualified I still do not have any experience and a clueless about the operation, policies and culture of the school. Of course, it was not going to be easy as I joined the school mid-year when all orientation workshops, both school-based and departmental-based, had been attended. I joined the school in March, just two weeks away from commencement of the first term control tests. It was much of a challenge, because learners last had a teacher at the beginning of January. I was told that teachers could not assist them in the meantime because they also had their workload to cover. Basically, they had not been learning because when I got there only work in the first weeks of January appeared in

their workbooks. It was as if they had never had a teacher before. Now their tests were drawing near with such a lot of scope to cover, revision exercises as well.

Mentoring

Luckily enough, I had the sweetest and most helpful Head of Department in Languages. She held my hand throughout the year. My HOD was, and still is, very patient with me. She always takes her precious time to assist me when needed. I remember this one time when we took the entire day creating a portfolio for Grade 9 English First Additional Language. She has always displayed good skills of a leader even when she saw that our mentoring process was not going according to plan with my mentor.
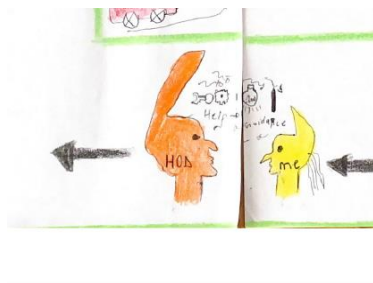
Figure 3.6: The HOD is a leader, not a boss

It is not in every school where you will find School Management Team members who are on the ground. I am forever grateful to my HOD as she always avails herself to offer assistance and guidance when I need it.

Finding direction on the journey of development

I used road signs because I find them relevant as they are of great help to warn, guide, and regulate traffic flow [in education]. Road signs are relevant in that my HOD played exactly the same part in shaping my career development.

Figure 3.7: Guidance

63

Classroom size challenges

My classes are not equal in numbers, especially in Grade 10. In one class they are 32 while in the other one they are 58. All classes in Grade 9 are not smaller than 65, and the same applies to Grade 8. Amongst all the classes I teach, I always find the one with lowest number easiest to manage. Also, lessons always go according to plan as there is less time spent trying to keep the class in order. Through this I always keep in mind that we may have the same amount of time with all my classes, but this does not guarantee the same results. Some parts of the lesson plan may not be covered due to great amount of time wasted while trying to discipline learners.

I remember one lesson. It was the first period after break with the biggest class in Grade 11 when everything went terribly wrong. It must have been the fever after being free for an entire hour in break, now they could not adjust to going back to class. I had to patiently spend close to twenty minutes trying to have the class settled. When the lesson finally went on, it was not smooth sailing as learners kept talking and disrupting the lesson. I ended up referring them to the HOD for further disciplinary measures. As a teacher, I felt unfit for some situations because I could perceive that I had lost control of the learners.

The impact of a heavy workload

Sometimes I feel overwhelmed by the many duties needed to perform such as paperwork, meeting deadlines, continuous assessment tasks, classroom management, and so forth. My colleagues always comfort me by saying that I'll get used to it. Each time I come across such words I just break down and feel like crying. This is because I feel helpless as a novice because experience of dealing with such issues is something that is beyond my control. To me being told "uzojwayela" (meaning you will get used to it) created an image that for as long as I am new in the profession, I am still going to feel burned out. It will take experience, lots of it for me to survive this.
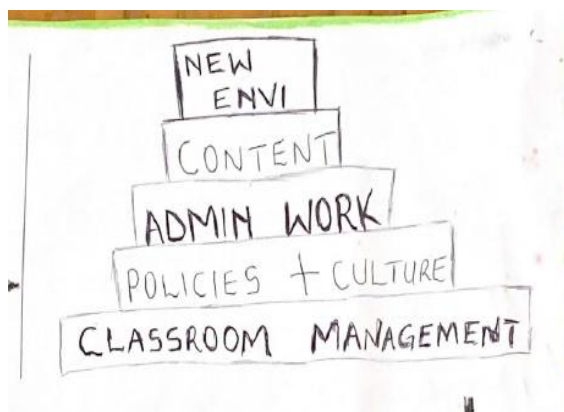
Figure 3.8: Roles and expectations staircase

As I figured the many duties that I had to fulfill, it felt as if I was climbing a staircase. That I had to take one step at a time and I would get to the top. The new encironment is at the top because I feel like getting used to the new environment was the hardest thing to face. All other four are interrelated and I feel that once your understand the environment you are in, it becomes easier to deal with, them hence they are on the lower stairs.

Classroom management

Hard as the days may come, the smiles on my learners' faces make me look forward to the day. Their excitement when you walk in lights up the whole class. From then you know that you have to outdo yourself for their sake. Like any other children, their days differ. Some days they are the most loving creatures, and on other days they will give you a headache because of their restlessness. It is a matter of always remembering that we are at school because of them. Therefore, we work towards making change to them throughout the day.

The impact of COVID-19 restrictions[4]

Life has completely changed since we opened the school under COVID-19 regulations. Classes are separated in half. For the first time the prescribed learner-teacher ratio of 30:1 is followed. I remember when I conducted the first Life Orientation lesson in a class of 30 learners. There was so much order in class that even those known as

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[4] This was written during these restrictions so the present tense perspective is used.

disruptive were reserved. This could be because they were frightened by the whole situation of the Corona Virus pandemic. However, it could still be that it was due to not being used to having fewer classmates. Either way, it was a win for me!

Classroom management is quite easy during this period, even though at first they were a bit shy to participate in class activities. This could be because many of them are used to be passive. It could also be that they are not used to the opportunity of owning the floor and speaking in class.

Under the strictly controlled COVID-19 regulations, the frustrations around classroom management are minimized because overcrowding in classrooms has dissolved. It has become a refreshing experience to walk into the classroom and be able to walk around freely between the rows of desks. Assessment activities are now easier to administer and facilitate as we are in close proximity to the learners. Individual needs of learners are easier to identify and work on. Even those who were passive learners are now getting used to sharing their ideas with their classmates. Of course, children will always be children so there are disruptions here and there.

The 'new normal'

When I comparing pedagogical processes before and during COVID-19, I would say things have really changed maybe for the better in terms of the subject at hand. As a novice teacher I am proud of the autonomy and independence I have acquired thus far. Colleagues are trying to figure out ways to work in the new-normal. We are holding hands by working together to better adapt to the regulations. This has granted me an opportunity to enhance my human relations with my colleagues as we strive to help one another cope during this time.

Adapting to the teaching environment

Figure 3.9: A hearty welcome: part of the puzzle and creating confidence

Colleagues gave me a warm welcome. They showed lots of love and support to assist me not to feel as if I was not part of the family. I use a puzzle as a metaphor to explain how I felt as a piece that fitted with other already existing pieces as I became part of the school. Through this I learnt to believe in myself. I was guaranteed that I am welcomed and I need not to be shy when I want to share some ideas. I must stand up and let them be heard.

Classroom management

Classroom management generally refers to maintaining order and discipline in class. Ensuring that learners know when to talk, participation in class activities. The importance of classroom management is that it involves creating a conducive learning environment for the pupils, not forcefully though. I believe that as much as the learning space must be in order, it should however not feel like torture to the learners. They know they are free to join the class when they are late unless in certain circumstances where explanations are needed. This is to limit shifting of focus from ongoing class activity to only one person as this may cause a great disturbance. Manners are a very important aspect of life and, according to CAPS, we are not only at schools to teach subject content but to produce South African citizens. Citizens that are characterised by knowledge, skills, values, and behaviours of life. This means that in the process of gaining knowledge, they need to also acquire ways to face life in general. These include manners when working with others, attitude towards certain issues around them, and placing

values towards specific objects or situations. It remains my duty to ensure that they acquire good manners such that respecting the speaker on the floor as well as waiting for their turn to speak.

When I came to the school I did not receive any training on classroom management. I figured my ways around the learners and of course with the help of the content I had received at university. Even though it is not as it is put on paper. Classroom management is contextual. What works in one school or class may not be the ideal strategy for the other. Through this experience I figured that, as a teacher, you need to be flexible. Be able to blend into any kind of environment and apply the skills you learnt.

Reflections on teaching as a career

My outlook on the teaching career has completely changed. I thought when you are a teacher you are only at school to make sure that learners learn. Only to find that at one time you will find yourself playing nurse with the first aid kit when they have been injured during break time. You find yourself being a therapist when a learners breaks down and needs emotional support. Learners are faced with many contextual battles that impact their learning and everyday life. At times they carry these to school; they fail to hold them back and you find them crying in class. I remember this one female learner from Grade 11 had suddenly cried when we analysed the poem "Cattle in the rain". It is a poem written by Musaemura Zimunya. It is about a boy who used to herd cattle in heavily raining weather. It states that the boy had a tough time trying to reach home and that he felt that the terrible job would never end. He even wished that he was born a girl so that he would not have to do this work. This poem explains that when we are faced with tough situations, we tend to think they will never pass, but they actually will. When I asked her to talk to me and share what was wrong, she said that it was as if I knew that she had been going through difficulties at home and this poem gave her hope that all this would pass. Basically, when you are a teacher you are what the universe needs you to be at that particular time.

Subject specialisation

According to my understanding, as a teacher you ought to possess advanced knowledge and skills of the subject you teach, hence we refer to this as 'specialisation'. As a

specialist of your subject, the subject knowledge you have should be of advanced value compared to what others know. So for me as a subject specialist, my subject knowledge should go further than just knowing and reciting what is written in the textbook. Being a subject specialist means giving my all in mastering all topics in the subject. A specialist excels at whatever they do in line with their specialisation; hence, I cannot be an English First Additional Language major and have the same knowledge as those who did the subject as an elective.

Networking towards subject specialisation

To keep updated with the content of the subject, I work a lot with my peers from different schools. Luckily my network has expanded since I have attended some workshops and meetings where I met with teachers who share subject knowledge with me. I use Google quite frequently even though it cannot be as reliable at times. But with Travel and Tourism you have to keep updated with everything that is going on around the world. Also, because I am a Masters' candidate, I visit the library quite often and I utilise that opportunity to strengthen the subject content I have and find new knowledge. I also keep up with updates from the MEC of KZN Economic Development, Tourism & Environmental Affairs.

The quest for autonomy

Figure 3.10: Achieving autonomy is enlightening

Regardless of my anxiety on the first day, the assistance offered by my colleagues, HOD, and Cluster peers have helped me grow to be independent most of the time. When classroom management becomes hard, I no longer leave the class to call for another teacher for assistance. I have mastered many paperwork demands and other

administrative duties. I also have gained a lot of confidence in facilitating lessons and am coping much better than before.

3.3 Conclusion

With reference to the excerpts above, it is clear that the personal and professional journeys were unique for each teacher, but that there were also commonalities. This is because of different life experiences and the fact that meaning making of the same life scenarios may not be the same. Also, even when some similarities occurred, the way they responded to them differed because they are two different people.

In Chapter three I presented the data in the form of stories as narrated by the respondents themselves. These stories were broken down into pertinent headings to highlight the content. The purpose was to bring into play what is exposed by narrative inquiry as all people live by stories. The participants told their lived stories from the time they obtaining their qualifications and their early days of teaching to their experiences during COVID-19 lockdown and the current day when they reflected on their respective journeys. Extracts from the different data sources were merged in these stories to present a more holistic view of the voice of each participant. They shared memories of some personal encounters and reflected on stories of growing up and their experiences as school learners. In the following chapter I shall analyse the data presented by Precious according to the story she shared of her lived experiences.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF PRECIOUS' STORY

-An extraordinary teacher is groomed by contextual realities-

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the stories of the two participants from the data that had been obtained. These stories were individually compiled from data in our journals, our drawings of rich pictures, and the open and unstructured interview that was conducted. The stories presented a picture of our lives from the early days of entering the school as fully qualified teachers to the time we participated in the study. They stories are presented in the first person to ensure a deep and authentic view of our personal encounters and the experiences that had an impact on our personal and professional development, but particularly as subject specialists.

Precious and Diamond's stories are analysed in Chapters four and Chapter five respectively. In each chapter I present my discussion inductively to illuminate the lived experiences in response to the two research questions**:** *What are novice teachers' stories of developing as subject specialists in a rural school*? and *What factors influence the lived experiences of novice teachers and their development as subject specialists in a rural school*? This study did not attempt to bring about change in any of the stories shared by the participants; rather, its aim was to understand how novice teachers experience their early days of teaching as developing subject specialist in a rural school.

In Chapter Four, I present the data provided by Precious to analyse her lived experiences as a novice teacher. The data analysis is presented thematically to respond to the research questions that drove the study. This chapter delves into what experiences she recalled as a novice teacher and developing subject specialists and how these experiences shaped her everyday practices to enhance teaching and learning. The investigation explores the daily encounters that she faced since she started her career in the rural school and attempts to comprehend what could have affected these experiences as she embarked on her journey of professional and personal development, with particular emphasis on her development as a subject specialist.

Precious joined the school as a newly qualified teacher in 2019. My analysis unpacks the mixed feelings she had when she first entered the profession as well as the contextual realities that caused anxiety and fear. It also expands on the human and beyond-human supportive structures that assisted Precious to settle into the new school environment and to begin her journey as a subject specialist.

4.2 Precious: Embarking on her Professional Journey

4.2.1 Entering the profession

> *"Everything I wanted is sitting on the other side of fear."*

Precious stated that, when she first joined her school as a qualified teacher in 2019, she was excited and anxious at the same time. Being employed and gaining independence at a young age was a dream come true. She had her Bachelor of Education degree conferred a year before and was fresh from university. The nervousness was because she *"felt a bit inexperienced to be assigned to teach Grade 12"*. Precious felt intimidated by this prospect as she thought that one needed at least a number of years' experience as a qualified teacher to take on the most senior grade in the school. Hence, she did not believe in herself. This fear was exacerbated by her notion that novice teachers are still very young and she felt that was of the same chronological age as some of her learners. This lack of age difference could be due to various reasons. For instance, the teacher may have finished school at the age of 16 years and completed a Bachelor's degree at 20, whereas learners who repeated classes could be 20 or older in Grade 12. This is another reason why Precious felt frightened to teach Grade 12 because "*they looked the same age as me*".

When I asked in the interview why Precious was not confident about the knowledge that she had gained at university, she argued that it was because she was fully aware that History content changes with time, and she had little trust in her knowledge of the content she was meant to teach. Novice teachers' lack of confidence in their content knowledge and skills is one challenge that is also mentioned in the literature (Tynjälä and Heikkinen, 2011). Precious said:

> *I would not say that the content was not enough, I think it is the type of essays that I did not know at that time because in History they change essays each year. I remember*

telling my principal that teaching Grade 12 was not going to work for me and asking him if he could swap me with someone else to take Grade 12 and I would go for Grade 10 or 11.

Her confidence was low to the extent that she even asked the principal to review her duty load and remove her from Grade 12. School managers play a significant role in enhancing the confidence of novice teachers when they assure them of their capabilities, or refrain from doing so. If a leader 'holds a subordinate by the hand', so to speak, the novice is likely to yield desirable results. However, subordinates should be given ample opportunities to unleash their skills and learn to stand on their own two feet. According to Høigaard, Giske and Kari Sundsli (2012), school managers should enable the "teaching efficacy of newly qualified teachers" (p. 354). A school principal and HOD's role is critical in supporting and nurturing young teachers in their early years in the profession, and the role the Principal played in building Precious' confidence is testament to that.

When pre-service teachers attend teaching practice for obtain their qualification, the requirements differ among the different training institutions. Precious and Diamond went to the same university and they trained for only one year. This means that they were trained to teach a few topics in their subjects, unlike if they had been fully qualified and could teach all topics as outlined in the textbook and the ATP per subject. It is because of a lack of academic input that some novice teachers feel that they cannot teach particular topics because they have never been exposed to extensive subject content due to minimal training. Widiati, Suryati and Hayati (2018), who investigated the challenges faced by novice teachers teaching English in Indonesia, found that the majority of their participants highlighted that pedagogical information they were taught throughout their pre-service training was insufficient in content and time. A challenge also exists in the way that content is distributed across grades, which demands that newly appointed teachers should adjust and dedicate themselves to learning and understanding the prescribed topics and content they are responsible for (Widiati, Suryati & Hayati, 2018).

4.2.2 Senior colleagues as part of novice teachers' support structure

This section expands on how Precious worked with her colleagues to seek assistance as she tried cope with the demands of her job. Assistance from colleagues who have taught at a school for a long period of time is important because they are familiar with its structures, culture, policies, and useful support structures. They are also well versed in the best available learning and teaching support material.

The Principal assured Precious that she had not been appointed as a favour but because she was qualified to be a teacher. She accepted her responsibility, plucked up courage, went to class, and did well. This incident taught her the importance of support by senior teachers. Had the principal not persuaded her to face her fears and had he changed her duty load to accommodate her, she might still have been in her comfort zone and missed this opportunity for professional development and growth. Continuous personal and professional development is the route to follow to overcome fear and anxiety. According to Warsame and Valles (2018), strong support from the school can compensate for inadequate teacher preparation during pre-service training. When schools provide well established induction programmes to provide useful resources and support, teachers are likely to stay in the profession and to pursue continuous professional development. Pogodzinski (2014, p. 475) agrees, arguing that "the quality of mentoring support that novice teachers receive may directly impact their perceptions of their working conditions and their own work efforts".

4.2.3 The importance of mentorship for novice teachers in a rural setting

The importance of mentorship is immersed in educational philosophy, which Precious realised instinctively. As she entered the school on her first day and realised that she had to teach Grade 12 History, she knew that a mentor was required. She found one in the person of the Principal, who told her that she was capable and would deliver the best that she could regardless of her age. However, the mentor teacher she was appointed to did not meet her expectations and needs, and this could probably be one of the reasons why Precious stated that she was currently feeling demotivated and frustrated in her teaching career. In fact, she envisaged that she would choose different career path at some stage.

Mentoring would have been beneficial in this case as there would have been proper guidance and supervision from a person who had been in the field for a long period. This is an important

process because it provides career guidance that assists the mentee to acquire advanced skills and competencies (Awaya et. al., 2003). It is also important to highlight that mentoring would not only have been beneficial to Precious, but that even the mentor would have been able to advance and accomplish her professional goals while supervising Precious. Irrespective of how long a teacher has been in the profession, they should embrace the culture of mentorship and support novice teachers for and their and their own continued development.

Having researched mentor-mentee relationships, Phillips-Jones (2003) argues that there are fundamental mentoring abilities that mentors and mentees should share in order to form a productive mentoring relationship. These abilities include active listening, developing trust, motivating others, and setting goals for the mentoring relationship. The most fundamental mentoring talent is active listening on which other abilities should be based. Both sides should display active listening because each has interests and concerns that should be taken into account. Listening facilitates the exchange of ideas and issues are then quickly resolved (Phillips-Jones, 2003). According to Gray and Smith (2000), in order to ensure flexibility and adaptability in the mentoring process, a mentor should establish a welcoming and trusting relationship with the mentee. When a healthy relationship between a mentor and mentee has been established, the entire mentoring process becomes easier and constructive as the individuals understand each other.

Fortunately, particular individuals took on the role of mentoring Precious in the initial stages of her career. Her confidence was boosted after consulting with her Cluster Coordinator and her doubts faded away as this teacher became both a mentor and coach who assisted her in enriching her pedagogical process. This emphasises the value of collaboration among schools in any area. It also elucidates how people close to one's professional space can influence how one adjusts to one's prescribed job demands, which can either be negative or positive depending on the quality of the mentoring relationship.

4.2.4 Networking

When the SMT is fully aware of their role to boost the confidence of newly appointed teachers, they need to encourage them to access networks that will link novices with their peers from other schools. It seems that the school principal understood this as he urged Precious to contact an experienced teacher from another school if she needed assistance in History. Networking within the school and beyond is related to the enhancement of subject knowledge, hence it is an important aspect not to overlook as it influences the lived stories of novice teachers who need to develop as subject specialists (Lieberman, 2001).

Precious was introduced to another History teacher from a nearby school in the area who was also a Cluster Coordinator and Subject Advisor for this subject. She assisted Precious a lot in understanding and accessing the subject content she felt she did not know. This senior person was very patient with her and never made her feel inferior for wanting her assistance:

> *Fortunately, there was a teacher in the area who was also teaching History, and that teacher happened to be the Cluster Coordinator... she sat me down and taught me those essays as if she was teaching someone who did not know History.*

The teacher had connections with a number of experienced educators who taught History at schools in the cluster, and she had expanded her network to include other History teachers throughout the district. This assisted Precious to forge a professional relationship with her peers in the same cluster. McCormick and Ayres (2009, p. 9) highlight how important it is for teachers to continuously engage in learning new information and acquiring new skills in their field of specialisation. They refer to this process as "organisational learning", arguing that this development process should be supported by the SMT and all relevant leadership structures. Networking with colleagues from the same and other schools becomes a system for professional development where "teachers are supported in sharing practice with other schools through networking" (James & McCormick, 2009, p. 10). Networking links to other schools and this, in turn, leads to the establishment of new sources of knowledge and ideas from broader perspectives. "Networking through face-to-face meetings of various kinds builds the social capital (mutual support and trust) that supports the exchange of intellectual capital (ideas and practice)" (James & McCormick, 2009, p.17). It is through such capital that novice teachers enhance their subject knowledge and start their journey as lifelong learners and subject

specialists. Networking is thus a driver that influences and enhances novice teachers' lived experiences as developing subject specialists.

4.2.5 Cluster meetings enhance collaboration

A theme that links with networking is that cluster meetings helped Precious to better access content knowledge when there were gaps she needed to fill. Cluster meetings occur when officials at different levels in the Department of Basic Education meet with teachers from different schools within their district. These meetings are held with the aim of sharing ideas, presenting current information, promoting continual professional growth, and highlighting best practices in teaching. Cluster meetings are useful in that they offer opportunities for teachers and department officials to connect with one another and work on problems as a team. Cluster coordinators call cluster meetings usually at the beginning and end of each school term. Cluster meetings are also facilitated to enhance collaboration among teachers from different schools in the presence of departmental officials. At these meetings, relationships are also forged between teachers and officials. Attending these meetings assisted Precious to develop strategies on how to conduct lessons on specific topics. This was a significant breakthrough as Precious alluded that, by connecting with her Cluster Coordinator, she was now doing very well as a subject teacher, even to the extent that some of her learners obtained a distinction. She said: "*Workshops play a huge role in advancing the skills and knowledge in pedagogy*". According to Lin, Jadallah and Anderson (2015), collaboration is a social process in which ideas and ways of thinking arise, change, and spread among individuals. It involves a web of social connections that affect how professionals use their developing competencies. By collaborating with other teachers, novice teachers develop interpersonal skills, improve their confidence to communicate their ideas, and learn to value social support.

4.2.6 Sharing resources with colleagues from other rural schools

It has been widely reported that rural schools are poorly resourced, particularly in terms of LTSM (Mathikithela, 2019), and this fact was corroborated by Precious. Therefore, to overcome this challenge, some teachers share learning and teaching support material to assist one another in delivering quality content. Precious asserted that her established relationships consistently assisted her as she could contact other teachers to share resources, and these

teachers would come to her rescue when she needed learning and teaching material. These resources included maps, articles, relevant reading materials, links to websites where History slides are available, assessment tasks, and many more valuable resources that enrich subject knowledge. History colleagues often availed themselves when Precious needed assistance with lesson preparation, complying with the ATP, clarifying necessary information where textbooks were not giving much, and setting assessment tasks. She said: *"Keeping contact with teachers from other schools is also useful because we share resources and information they get from different sources"*. This comment affirms that communication with colleagues from other schools plays an important role in providing the necessary support for novice teachers.

4.2.7 Learning occurs in social settings

The social settings that participants are exposed to also affect their personal and professional growth. No person can be completely isolated from their social environment as the two interplay during socialisation. Personal development is more concerned with one's feelings, hopes and desires, whereas professional development is supported by cultural, institutional, familial, and linguistic factors (Clandinin, 2013). Precious alluded that she initially felt uneasy about the fact that she had to teach Grade 12 as she thought that her experience was too limited to carry her through the senior grade. This could mean she had little confidence in herself or she needed someone to assure her that she was well equipped to teach Grade 12. Her confidence was undoubtedly built when she encountered positive and supportive people who also encouraged her to persevere.

4.3 Schooling Background versus Teaching Conditions

4.3.1 Inadequate LTSM provisioning

It was evident that Precious' past experiences of both primary and high school were related to her present attitude and demeanour. For instance, when she arrived at the rural school, she did not feel pressured in this context as she had attended a rural school when she grew up. Even though her experience was now tinged by a different lens due to her position and capacity as a qualified teacher, she accepted overcrowding and inadequate teaching and learning materials

as a given. This is in line with Carr (1986), who argues that, as individuals go on living, they constantly revise their long-lived experiences in relation to their present encounters.

Precious supported the above assertion by raising the point that, as a learner, they only had a *Masihambisane* textbook, yet her teachers never made her feel as if they were at a disadvantage in terms of learning and teaching resources. This undoubtedly impacted the kind of a teacher she had become because she also wanted what was best for her learners but she refrained from sitting in a corner and bemoaning her fate. Instead, she went the extra mile to ensure that her learners were well equipped and not pressured by being less privileged.

4.3.2 Enhancing teacher subject knowledge

Masihambisane in English means "let us walk together". Precious embraced this motto and used it as motivation to ensure that she walked together with her learners and other teachers to enrich her learning and teaching practices. She certainly intended not to let anyone behind. When she reflected on the moral lessons in this book, she resolved to work in unity with others. Affirming the creativity of her own teachers who supported her learning, Precious stated that her primary school did not have access to calculators, but the teacher used stones and bottle caps to teach them to count during mathematics lessons. Her teachers did not have many resources to aid their teaching, but they were wise enough to identify objects around them that could be useful. They utilised these objects to great effect, and thus Precious did not use the under-resourced condition of the school to make excuses for the challenges she encountered. She asserted that limited resources did not necessarily affect her own subject knowledge. She was willing to go the extra mile to support her learners and to help them pass her subject. As she recalled, even in high school the learners did not have advanced learning support material as they had to shared textbooks and their teachers only had the chalkboard as a teaching tool.

4.3.3 Learning experiences influence the teachers we become

According to Precious, the use of various resources enriches subject knowledge as they assist teaching and learning. However, inadequate school resources should not hinder the teacher from finding valuable resources to enhance their subject knowledge and support learners to grasp subject content. The fact that Precious grew up in a rural school environment prevented her

from feeling overwhelmed by the rural school where she was teaching. Instead, it encouraged her to become an educator who wanted to go beyond what was prescribed by the school. For instance, she wanted to renew some LTSMs as they were precisely the same as those that her teachers had used during her schooling days.

A greater challenge was overcrowding. She mentioned that her teachers had never made them feel that they were less privileged during her schooling days as they were creative and utilised all they had to assist their learning. She felt that she owed her learners that much by returning the favours that her teachers had bestowed upon her: the favours of creativity, perseverance, and resilience.

4.3.4 Subject knowledge is the cornerstone of learning

The Department of Education (2000) posits that a teacher is assigned to play seven roles: classroom manager, subject specialist, community member, assessor, administrator, facilitator and lifelong learner. These roles are interrelated as in most cases they happen automatically. However, when it comes to assessments, learners are assessed according to the content knowledge they have been taught. This highlights that the subject specialist's role is more important than any other role.

In the National Senior Certificate Examination Grade 12 learners are assessed on how enriched their subject knowledge is. This implies that teachers need to be able to bring all these expected roles into play while ensuring that their subject specialist role is not given minimal attention. Precious stated:

> *A teacher with deeper subject knowledge should be able to equip learners with information that will make them pass in a nationally set exam paper. I learnt that teachers have an influence on their learners because, when a learner gets 120/150 in an exam, I know that it's me, so I always tell myself that this is why the Department looks at a teacher when learners fail and teachers get proud when the learners pass. So I think that is why the Department says it is the teacher who stays in the way of progress.*

This means that as much as different aspects are pivotal in the teaching and learning process (including the nature of classrooms and the availability of LTSM), subject knowledge remains

crucial because learners are assessed in terms of the knowledge, skills, and values that they have acquired in each subject, particularly at the end of Grade 12. Even though tests and examinations are written by learners, performance is also assessed continuously and this is analysed in terms of a teacher's ability to deliver subject knowledge in a way that learners are able to retain.

4.4 Findings and Discussion

The aim of the study was to explore the everyday experiences that selected novice teachers encountered as they first entered the profession as qualified teachers, and to determine the factors that influenced their learning and growth as developing subject specialists. Based on my analysis of the data elicited from Precious's stories, this chapter highlights that entering the profession is an exciting yet stressful experience. The mixed feelings that Precious experienced were due to the fact that, even though she as a newly appointed teacher was adequately equipped with the knowledge and skills to teach, she needed someone with more extensive teaching experience to support her and give her the assurance that she was competent and should continue to develop her sense of autonomy.

4.4.1 Empowerment and confidence building

This chapter explored novice teachers' transition from pre-service training to in-service teaching as a critical process for teacher empowerment and confidence building (Johnson, Down, Cornu, Peters, Sullivan, Pearce and Hunter, 2014). The findings highlight the relevance of mentorship, networking, and professional learning communities for phasing in of novice teachers and nurturing them as subject specialists. Glas, Tapia, Carrasco and Miralles Vergara (2019) discuss the socialisation process of novice teachers into the school culture and allude that early teacher autonomy is easy to resist when teachers are critical of their growth during the pre-service period. This argument highlights that even though there are external forces that play a part in nurturing the professional development of novice teachers, novices themselves play an active role in developing their competencies and skills, or not. This is evident in Precious' willingness to learn by networking and visiting Google frequently to keep her subject knowledge updated.

4.4.2 Professional relationships

Networking plays an important part in developing novice teachers as subject specialists (Lieberman, 2000). Knowledge and skills acquired at higher institutions of learning are to be trusted; however, these need to be interlinked with years of experience for most teachers to function effectively. Networking nurtures teachers' competencies as their communication skills and ability to work as a team are enhanced. It also develops the subject specialisation aspect because, as teachers interact, they share information and resources which is a practice that enriches what the novice teacher already has.

Evidently, based on Precious' experience, it may be argued that some novice teachers enter the profession in a happy yet nervous state of mind. However, this nervousness does not minimise their training or the pedagogical competencies they possess. However, these competencies need to be highlighted by a senior teacher to motivate and assure the novice that their knowledge and skills are of great value.

Support and motivation by senior teachers assist novices in believing in themselves and to trust their subject knowledge. Furthermore, novice teachers should understand the importance of collaborating with others for their continuous development as subject specialists. One cannot grow in a bubble, as this study affirms.

4.4.3 Development versus stagnation: A choice

The past, present, and future of a teacher's personal and professional development influence their urge to want to grow or deteriorate. Precious did not find it difficult to excel in her subject as she had also been taught in rural schools and her former teachers had given her the best knowledge as far as was within their power. She accepted that she owed her learners the passion that would drive her to offer them the best education in the same way her teachers had, even if it meant overworking herself. However, her initial passion seemed to have waned as she was feeling demotivated and considered leaving the teaching profession at some stage. Gaps in mentoring and teacher support programs often cause teachers to lose interest in the profession and to feel demotivated. They thus decide to discontinue in this field and many resign and follow a different career (Elafify, 2016)

It becomes easier for newly appointed teachers to learn to adapt to the job demands when constructive networks are established. Networking equips novices with advanced knowledge, pedagogical skills, and useful resources to be utilised towards their professional development as subject specialists. This is evident in Lieberman's (2001) emphasis on networking and learning communities that shape the development of a teacher.

4.4.4 Coping in a rural environment

The rural environment is not overwhelming for a teacher who has been exposed to such a setting as a learner. Moreover, being a subject specialist does not necessarily have an impact on one's subject knowledge. These assertions mean that I have learnt that developing as a subject specialist in a rural setting is not much of a challenge provided that novice teachers themselves are open to learning. Limited school resources should not limit the role of the teacher as a lifelong learner. When a novice teacher is willing to engage in continuous professional development, all the resources that are available in the school and in the community may be useful, such as pebbles, bottle caps, cool drink cans, etc. The data also imply that large classes do not necessarily cause conflict or minimise a teacher's subject knowledge, but rather impede classroom management.

Moreover, the literature and the findings suggest that class size rather than a teacher's content knowledge encourages or impedes learning. A large class in a small space makes it difficult for the teacher to get to know learners' individual needs. Marais (2016) explains that large class sizes also challenge teachers' classroom management skills. The phenomenon of large, unmanageable classes affects how teachers presents subject knowledge as they may spend a lot of time trying to maintain discipline instead of teaching. Metzler and Woessmann (2010) assert that there is a distinct correlation between the quality of teacher subject knowledge and learner achievement, but the point of the impact of class size on learners' achievement is not raised. Therefore, even though it does not interfere with a teacher's subject knowledge, demanding classroom management situations cause frustration and stagnate progress (Elafify, 2017)

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter presented an analysis of the data obtained from Precious, one of the two participants. The focus was on the experiences she had during the time she was phased into the school as a novice teacher. The purpose was to explore and understand what influenced her development as a subject specialist. The results identified that positive relationships and teacher collaboration were key in her professional development and growth. I also identified the importance of continuous personal and professional support and assurance by senior teachers that novice teachers would cope as key influences that encourage and support development. This suggests that SMTs and senior teachers should maintain a school's culture of support and encouragement through formal mentoring programmes and informal collegiality as ways of developing and supporting novice teachers, as this may not only be beneficial to the teacher but can also have a positive effect on achieving the school's vision and mission.

The following chapter presents my analysis of the data provided by Diamond. I again categorise the data under different themes as they emerged from her narrated lived story.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS OF DIAMOND'S STORY

-The amount of pressure a diamond experiences determines its shine-

5.1 Introduction

Chapter Five offers an analysis of certain patterns of Diamond's storied data as presented in Chapter three. Chapter five focuses on Diamond's experiences as she began her journey as a novice teacher. The experiences are presented under different themes and sub-themes that relate to the main research questions: *What are novice teachers' stories of developing as subject specialists in a rural school*? and *What factors influence the lived experiences of novice teachers and their development as subject specialists in a rural school*? The previous chapter outlined Precious' experiences under various identified themes and sub-themes. In Chapter five the same process is applied.

The by-line in the heading of this chapter, 'The amount of pressure a diamond experiences determines its shine', suggests that entering the profession is both a thrilling and difficult process that is often fraught with challenges, or pressure. This emphasises the importance of mentoring as novices need reassurance from senior teachers as they continue to attain a sense of autonomy. The need to seek support from peers and seniors is real, and when this happens it results in constructive networking. 'We' are more powerful than 'me', which is a concept that appreciates the value of teamwork and how it leads to good results due to the development of novice teachers and their pedagogical skills.

Some themes that emerged in the previous chapter are also evident in Chapter five; however, some themes that emerged from Diamond's data are unique to her lived story. The key themes are *personal schooling background versus teaching in a rural school*, and *subject knowledge is the cornerstone of teaching and learning.* The need for Diamond to adjust to the setting that she had never been exposed to was pivotal in her development. She clearly experienced challenges when she was assigned to a mentor who did not address her needs, but her quest for support resulted in her understanding that subject knowledge is the cornerstone of teaching and learning, which was a theme Precious also endorsed. Various similarities and differences emerged when the data were analysed, and these will be discussed in the relevant sections.

5.2 Personal Schooling Background versus Teaching in a Rural School

5.2.1 Township schooling

Diamond attended township schools starting from junior primary until she matriculated in 2013. She completed her Matric (Grade 12) in a Comprehensive Technical High School which had adequate teaching and learning resources to support teaching and learning processes in this school. Even during her teaching practicals, Diamond went to a township school near her residence and also had a stint at a former Model-C school in a suburb to the south of Durban. She wrote in her journal: *"I went to a Comprehensive Technical High School in a well-known township here in KwaZulu-Natal."* This illuminated one difference between Precious and Diamond: Precious was familiar with rural schooling and limited resources while Diamond was not.

According to Clandinin (2013), the lives of teacher participants are impacted by the past, present, and the future, which means that their experiences and interpretation of these can change over time. I do not claim that one can predict the future through analysis of a participant's past and present stories no one knows what the future holds. However, this means that the past, present and future are interlinked and one can plan for what one wishes to do by understanding the links. For example, decisions taken for the future may be due to past experiences. I thus considered how the past and present can be linked to assist individuals to plan their professional journey.

Diamond wrote: *"My school was well equipped in terms of Learning and Teaching Support Materials in that it even offered technical subjects…"*. Diamond had never been exposed to rural schools either as a learner or pre-service teacher. It was thus a cultural shock when she was posted at a rural school as she encountered completely new dynamics and values. The bigger the cultural difference, the larger and more inconsistent the discrepancy is between the knowledge the novice teacher possesses and what the new environment requires, and the greater the feeling of strangeness. The school culture and that of the surrounding community influences the learning process, hence pedagogical approaches should relate to cultural approaches and expectations (Rowsell et al., 2007). In this instance, we can argue that novice teachers should

at least be prepared with information about the possible differences in the cultural background they might encounter when they are posted to rural schools.

5.2.2 Entering the teaching profession

Diamond got a job in a rural school in 2019 after spending the whole year as a full-time Bachelor of Education Honours student in 2018 at a much respected university in KwaZulu-Natal. The impacts of this shifts influenced her development as a novice at first because she had rarely related to any rural environment where there are limited resources. Reflecting on her secondary school days, Diamond had attended classes of not more than 45. Even though the teacher-learner ratio of 1:35 was not applied, learning and teaching materials were adequate. As a novice teacher, Diamond therefore struggled to empathise with the learners in an overcrowded classroom with little or no learning and teaching support materials.

> *My school was well equipped in terms of Learning and Teaching Support Material in that it even offered technical subjects such as Engineering Graphics and Design, Civil Technology, Mechanical Technology, and Information Technology.*

However, even though she attended school as a learner in a completely different setting as the rural school where she was posted, there were some similarities. She stated:

> *"My classes are not equal in numbers, especially in Grade 10. In one class they are 32 while in the other one they are 58. All classes in the 9th Grade are not smaller than 65, same the applies to Grade 8".*

The smaller class size in Grade 10 made her learning and teaching experience relatable to some extent and this was close to what she was used to. Large classes had thus become common in Diamond's experience a novice teacher, but such large classes as she refers to in the excerpt means more demands in terms of classroom management, and this may affect the presentation of teacher subject knowledge to learners.

The following theme highlights how Diamond was assisted to adapt to the rural school environment and suggests how induction had an effect on her transitioning process.

5.2.3 Mentoring: Challenges and opportunities

The aim of mentoring in schools is to assist newly qualified teachers to deal with job demands as they are absorbed in the new environment. Diamond got a job in a rural school after spending the whole year as a full-time Bachelor of Education Honours student. She had applied for various posts and felt lucky when she was appointed to this school. This means that she did not choose to teach at this rural school, but job availability in a rural school 'chose her'. Fortunately, Diamond was assigned a mentor when she arrived at the school. A mentor is a senior teacher who is appointed to assist a novice teacher in all aspects of school life while they are finding their feet. Mentoring is an important component of the induction process as it enables the newly appointed teacher to explore the school environment with the help of someone who has been exposed to it for some time (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). However, in Diamond's case, this did not happen as she asserted that her mentor was not helpful in any way:

> *I was assigned to a mentor who I was told would assist me with getting used to the new environment. All I remember as assistance from my mentor is that she gave me her Grade 12 Teacher's File to copy what needed to be included in my own file. To say the least, she did not give the support I needed.*

This experience affirms that not all mentorship relationships are productive and that some may not achieve the desired outcomes. One limitations might be that teachers are not fully aware of what is expected of them as mentors and how the relationship can be beneficial to them as well. Schools need to establish formal mentoring programmes and training where all stakeholders involved in the process are informed of the requirements, advantages, roles and goals of mentoring (Singh, 2003). When these are clearly outlined, appointed mentors will then have a good understanding of what is expected of them and act according to the expectations. Rousseau (2012) refers to this as 'structured mentoring'.

Getting used to a new environment in the education context is easier when you walk the path with someone who has been in that space for a long time. Mentoring relationships are based on openness, trust, respect, and some sense of equality (Roff, 2012). Novice teachers experience a feeling of helplessness when they are not assisted by senior teachers. This can cause them to turn away from the teaching career. Long (2009) highlights that frustration in the early years of teaching can discourage teachers from continuing in the profession. Shy teachers who may

hesitate to ask for assistance are particularly prone to feel discouraged due to fear of rejection. Diamond wrote in her journal:

> *It also became a mission to seek assistance, as I could read between the lines that I was a burden to her. I approached her once so that we could try to work through our differences, but unfortunately it was not effective…*

Novice teachers sometimes fear reaching out to their mentors because there may be a huge gap in their age. This in turn leads to failed mentoring as mentees end up not asking for help. Phillip-Jones (2003) argues that mentor-mentee relationships should be encouraging and set good foundation for the novice teacher. This should be achieved by establishing positive and trusting relationships so that personal differences do not interfere with the goals of mentorship (Gray & Smith, 2000). Novice teachers gain knowledge and confidence through mentoring, hence schools need to establish a proper mentoring culture to support newly appointed teachers. Mentoring should be mandatory and goal-orientated so that both mentor and mentee are clear as to why they are working together.

5.2.4 The need for support: The role of senior teachers

Shuck et. al. (2018) emphasises the value of effective support for novice teachers not only to keep them in the profession, but to assist them in becoming proficient, effective teachers. School Management Teams are mandated to implement policies that foster a supportive school environment. The SMT should lead by example by encouraging a positive learning environment for subordinates that will make newly appointed ones feel welcome in the school.

When Diamond's mentoring process collapsed, her HOD took over to help her get used to the functioning, policies, and culture of the school and to help her with subject knowledge where needed help. She stated:

> *I then consulted with my Head of Department and she decided to take over the mentoring and we worked quite well with each other. She held my hand throughout the year. My HOD was, and still is, very patient with me. She always takes her precious time to assist me where needed. I remember this one time when we took the entire day creating a portfolio for Grade 9 English First Additional Language.*

The excerpt highlights what happens when leaders decide to work closely with their subordinates. It bridges many gaps and it becomes easier to reach out without fearing that one is in a higher position than the other. The HOD obviously had much experience and a good understanding of subject demands and information. Matters dealing with subject knowledge and other pedagogical issues are addressed easily when the HOD is kind and approachable. Mercer and Ri (2006) suggest that part of an HOD's job is to create a positive and effective working culture in the school as they have the privilege of being in the middle between educators and senior managers (the Principal and Deputy Principal). Good leaders have a significant impact on teachers' sense of efficacy if they create conditions that empower and motivate them to enhance their abilities (Tam, 2010).

Availing herself to assist Diamond meant that the HOD also gained experience as a subject specialist. In her drawing, Diamond used road signs to explain the assistance that she received from her HOD.

> *In this case I used road signs because I find them relevant as they are of great help to warn, guide and regulate traffic flow. Road signs are relevant in that my HOD played exactly the same part in shaping my career development.*

An HOD is part of the SMT, and the excerpt above highlights the role played by managers to direct new teachers on the right path towards achieving the school's and their educational goals. The metaphor of the road signs implies that experienced teachers give guidance but do not deprive novices of their sense of independence and autonomy. A driver who is in control of a car still has to follow the road signs to keep safe and reach the intended destination. This applied to the HOD who was familiar with the professional world but still guided the novice teacher's professional growth without taking control or interfering with Diamond's competencies.

According to Awaya, McEwan, Heyler, Linsky, Lum and Wakukawa (2003), guidance should be given to students and novice teachers by those who have been in the profession for some time, because this is a path that they have walked before and they understand how to deal with the challenges that always lurk along it. When senior colleagues are supportive, it yields positive results because it validates that they care about their subordinates and it creates a culture of openness across different levels within the school.

5.2.5 Networking with teachers outside the school

Diamond and Precious had one thing in common, which was that they both collaborated with educators from various schools to share their working resources and to improve their subject knowledge. Diamond said:

> *To keep updated with the content of the subject I work a lot with my peers from different schools. In most cases we work through a WhatsApp group and we make conference calls when needed.*

Working with people from different institutions is fruitful because one becomes part of a support structure that offers help both in the form of knowledge and in terms of LTSM. Diamond appreciated this as she stated:

> *Luckily my networks have expanded since I have attended some workshops and meetings where I met with teachers who we share a subject with.*

These quotes support the notion that Diamond regarded working with other teachers as beneficial to her professional development. Overall, schools should not belittle the value of forming a culture of collaboration as this eliminates the feeling of isolation, especially in newly appointed teachers. An important channel for involving teachers in enhancing their practice in schools could be networks and collaboration within and outside the school. Lieberman (2000) argues that bringing teachers together to share knowledge and learn from one another fosters a feeling of community and supports ongoing development. Teachers start to feel that they are a part of a group of people who genuinely care about them as colleagues and who share their deep concern for their welfare and growth.

5.3 Subject Knowledge Is the Cornerstone of Teaching and Learning

5.3.1 Moving beyond the textbook

Amongst the seven roles of a teacher the requirement to be a subject specialist. This is because learner achievement is evaluated in correlation to teacher subject knowledge. This means that the latter is an observable factor that is scrutinised through the results that learners obtain. Teacher subject knowledge is "the amount and organization of the knowledge per se in the mind

of the teacher" (Shulman, 1986, in Goulding et al., 2002, p.691). In some subjects, content knowledge changes with time, hence teachers are bound to use different platforms to enrich their subject knowledge.

5.2.3 Self-directed learning

During the interview, Diamond expressed that, as a developing subject specialist, she had the responsibility to go the extra mile to enrich her subject knowledge beyond what is presented in the textbook. When we discussed during the interview what other measures besides networking we used to keep updated with the content of our subjects, Diamond shared this experience:

> *I use Google quite frequently even though it cannot be as reliable at times but with Travel and Tourism you have to keep updated with everything that is going on around the world. Also, because I am a Masters' candidate I visit the library quite often, hence I utilise that opportunity to strengthen the subject content I have and find new knowledge. I also keep up with updates from the MEC of KZN Economic Development, Tourism & Environmental Affairs.*

There are many resources and platforms that novice teachers can use to enrich their subject knowledge. Exposure to these different platforms is beneficial as one gets to update one's knowledge, skills, and values through various sources. Besides networking, novice teachers need to establish alternative ways to improve their competences to master knowledge in their specialisation subjects.

5.4 Findings and Discussion

This analysis chapter focused on the data that Diamond provided. These data were analysed in line with the aim of the study, which was to explore the lived experiences of novice teachers and their development as subject specialists, and to identify what aspects influenced those experiences. The data provided by Diamond demonstrated that the transition from being a student to a fully employed teacher was not an overnight process for her. This finding affirms that it takes time to adjust to new job demands, especially when one has been allocated to a person for assistance during this period, but that assistance is not forthcoming. Sometimes the entire induction process is misunderstood, which leads to inadequate supervision of the mentee

who is left high and dry (Long, 2009). SMTs therefore need to establish a properly planned and formal mentor-mentee programme with clearly set goals and continuous evaluation to determine the impact of these relationships and to see if they are achieving the set goals.

The findings suggest that some mentors do not understand what is expected of them when they have been included in the mentoring program. Also, the benefits of the process are blurred if they are not outlined to each party, and the mentor may thus believe that this programme is only beneficial for the mentee. Mentees find it difficult to seek assistance from mentors if a positive and goal-oriented relationship has not been established at the initial stage of mentorship. Failure to receive assistance causes novices discomfort and they do not enjoy job satisfaction; and thus some divert to other careers due to a lack of support (Long, 2009).

Diamond's shared experiences allowed me to see a clear pattern of school managers who work closely with subordinate educators and those who do not. School managers who possess leadership skills and serve the school in the best interest of their team are likely to provide a sense of welcome in the school and novice teachers may then feel that they are valued. SMTs should be willing to work closely with post level 1 teachers to understand the challenges they experience and to be able to address these without fail. Rhodes and Beneicker (2002) raise the point that school managers should think about how their schools might foster effective teacher-manager collaboration for teacher professional development that will ensure that the school's goals are reached.

Networking with peers within and outside the school seems to be a common practice that allows novice teachers to communicate and share useful resources with more experienced teachers. In this regard the Cluster structure, which was a DBE initiative, seems to play an important role. As stipulated by Rhodes and Beneicker (2002), peer networking among colleagues has an impact on professional development because it fosters mutual support, increases teacher confidence, and makes it easier for teachers to learn as a part of enhancing professional practice. Newly appointed teachers can therefore greatly benefit from this.

Our schooling experiences seem to have an influence on the kind of teachers that we become. As Ruohotie-Lyhty and Kaikkonen (2009) allude, teaching strategies need to be devised when novice teachers enter the profession, and many are compelled to apply their own schooling

experiences due to lack of sufficient practical experience. They further assert that the ability to effectively apply the skills acquired during pre-service training in the classroom context is related to teachers' ability to reflect on and utilise their own school schooling. This is because many teachers tend to teach the way they were taught, as was evident in the respect the participants accorded their teachers. This often occur to the extent that they apply strategies that their teachers used during their pedagogical applications. However, novice teachers struggle to adapt to school settings that they have never been exposed to. It is therefore essential that, during teaching practicals, pre-service teachers are exposed to different school settings, for instance rural, Model-C, and township schools so that it does not become too much of a challenge to adapt to schools of a different character than what they were used to.

The data also revealed that that novice teachers understood the importance of possessing enhanced knowledge as subject specialists, as the participants were willing to use different information platforms to update their subject knowledge. Developing competencies within their subject was not influenced by the fact that they were in rural school and that they had large classes, and it was evident that their knowledge and skills sustained them and were utilised regardless of the challenges they experienced. Rural schools might pose challenges in terms of infrastructure and LTSM, but teachers, like the participants, should not be shaken by this; rather, they possess competencies and knowledge of a high standard which they should apply in the best interest of their learners.

5.5 Conclusion

The purpose of Chapter five was to analyse the data obtained from Diamond. Of the various themes that emerged from the data, two were similar to those associated with Precious: (i) The need to seek support; and (ii) Subject knowledge is the cornerstone of teaching and learning. The findings suggest that the process to becoming an in-service teacher is not easy if it has to happen in a setting that one has never experienced before. Secondly, sometimes novice teachers are given resources to assist them in adapting to their new environment, but that does not mean they are effective. SMTs therefore need to frequently evaluate induction programmes and mentoring to establish if they are effective enough for newly appointed teachers. Similar to Precious, Diamond found networking very helpful as this contributed positively to her professional development, especially as a subject specialist. Shuck et al. (2018, p.211) refers to

these networks as "collegial support where colleagues work together with new teachers to improve their confidence and pedagogical skills to influence their professional development". Finally, teachers understand the value of subject knowledge and that they need to take measures to update their content knowledge regardless of the setting where they work.

The next chapter concludes this study report. It outlines the findings and conclusions in line with the main research questions. It expands on similarities and differences identified between the responses and provides a review of the dissertation. In conclusion, recommendations the way forward are addressed.

CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND THE WAY FORWARD

-Professional growth is fuelled by networking within and outside the school-

6.1 Introduction

This concluding chapter wraps up the entire study. I review the procedures and methodological approaches I had employed with specific reference to data collection and analysis methodology that guided me in identifying themes and patterns from which I could draw conclusions. The focus of Chapter six is to present the key findings in line with the main research questions. First I refer to the constructivist theory of learning and how it underpinned the study, and I then proceed by discussing the predominant similarities between the narrated stories of Precious and Diamond as they emerged from the data. I also discuss what I have learnt as a researcher and conclude by offering a pertinent recommendation to future researchers and sharing my perspective on the way forward.

6.2 Overview of the Study per Chapter

The aim of the first chapter was to outline the study's background and objectives. I explained the research problem and focus in detail, with specific reference to key terms such as teacher subject knowledge, novice teachers, rurality, and rural education. In Chapter one I also expressed the aim of the study which I hoped to achieve by utilising scholarly research processes. I acknowledged that the study did not intend to bring about change in any of the examined characteristics that were explored and illuminated, but that my purpose was to understand the lived experiences of the novice teachers in the rural school under study.

The research methodology process was presented and discussed in Chapter two with reference to literature guidelines and underpinnings. I provided a detailed description of the methods I had used to conduct this research study and referred specifically to the interpretivist paradigm that was used to direct the collection and analysis of the data. The methods and tools I had used to obtain and analyse the data were also discussed in logical sequence. Data were gathered by

means of rich hand-drawn images, a telephone interview between the two participants, and journal entries. The trustworthiness of the study was also discussed and affirmed.

In Chapter three I presented the data in reconstructed narratives (i.e., the data obtained from the three collection tools were merged) to elucidate the stories of the lived experiences of the two novice teacher participants. These stories were narrated as raw data from the life stories of each participant. The stories were narrated to reflect the personal and authentic experiences of the participants and were thus presented from a first person perspective.

In Chapter four and Chapter five I presented my analyses of Precious' and Diamonds' stories respectively. I referred to the literature review findings to corroborate or refute my findings based on thematic data analysis. The voices of the participants were given authenticity by reporting their words verbatim.

The current chapter (Chapter six) concludes this study report. The constructivist theory of learning is contextualised and the key findings that indicate similarities between the participants' life stories are highlighted as these could possibly contribute to improved novice teacher induction in the school context, regardless of the small sample size of this study.

6.3 The Constructivist Theory of Learning

This theory posits that individuals create their own meanings based on what they already know and events they encounter in life. Richardson (1997) agrees, and argues that individuals make sense of current situations based on existing knowledge and life experiences. Precious created meanings based on her experiences as a learner in various rural schools from Grade 1 to Matric and applied her knowledge even when she was an adult teacher in a fairly similar school setting. As a learner she attended rural schools, thus she had first-hand knowledge and utilised it to cope in the rural school. With reference to constructivism as a meaning-making theory as posited by Richardson (1997), the fact that Precious and Diamond worked in the same school yet had different experiences and perspective and made sense of this environment differently seems logical as they were not exposed to the same subjective processes of creating meaning and were not influenced by the same experiences.

6.4 Key Findings

6.4.1 Teaching subjects that were studied at university

It was heartening to find that both participants had been assigned to subjects in which they majored at university. Precious obtained her Bachelor's degree in History and English and taught History to Grade 12 candidates, while Diamond obtained a Postgraduate Certificate in Tourism and Life Orientation and taught Life Orientation to learners from Grades 8 to 11. By comparing their deployment in the school based on their subject training, it was found that these novice teachers' challenges were diminished when they were assigned to teach a subject that they were familiar with and had specialised in during their pre-service training. They already had sound knowledge and networking helped to enhance both their content knowledge and pedagogical skills.

6.4.2 Ineffective induction and mentoring support

When the participants first entered the profession they were excited, yet both experienced feelings of anxiety and apprehension at the same time. Both had finally accomplished their dream of becoming qualified teachers, but neither was sure if she would be able to cope and meet the many demands she faced. Hakanen, Bakker and Chaufeli (2006) agree that, when novice teachers enter the profession, they experience a feeling of frustration as they want to live up to the expectations of the school regardless of their unfamiliarity with it, especially in the first few days, weeks, and months. Many unknown factors lurk in the school environment such as policies, 'politics', and the school culture. When induction does not serve the purpose of addressing novice teachers' fears and sense of being lost, it may lead to early attrition (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Precious was not assigned to any mentor while Diamond was, which is puzzling considering that they started their careers at the same school, but admittedly not at the same time. Diamond felt that the mentor-mentee relationship was not effective in assisting her during her initial few weeks, while Precious also experienced inadequate mentoring at first. However, her confidence was greatly boosted by her principals' confidence in her as a qualified teacher. According to

Ingersoll and Strong (2011), mentoring is a very important process and schools need to establish effective mentoring programmes to induct newly appointed teachers by appointing senior teachers to mentors and guide novice teachers (Zachary, 2005). Moreover, these professional mentoring relationships should be monitored and evaluated by the SMT to determine if they are beneficial to the participants. Johnson et al. (2014) support this notion, arguing that novice teachers are exposed to ineffective induction and mentoring support when school leaders lack the skills and strategies to develop effective induction programs. Fortunately, the perceived responsibilities of the SMT at the school under study filtered through to the most junior teachers as Precious reported that she had gained much confidence from assurances of her abilities by the Principal.

6.4.3 The pivotal role of networking

Diamond emphasised the role played by her HOD after she had consulted with her, seeing that her mentor had not been helpful. Leaders who work hand-in-hand with their subordinates are likely to yield positive results in terms of novice teacher development as they help them to bridge the gap between student and qualified teacher and are guided to understand the different roles colleagues have to fulfil in the interest of learners. Networking plays a vital role in teacher development and this was apparent in both participants' stories as they asserted that, after attending workshops and cluster meetings, their networks expanded across different schools within their cluster and even beyond. Through these established networks and constructive professional relationships, the novice teachers were both able to share useful information and resources that assisted them in enhancing their subject knowledge and pedagogical skills, which is a process that is supported by Lieberman (2000).

Chapter six is the final chapter and I provide a discussion of the key findings in it. I highlight my own learning as a researcher by focusing on my personal, professional, methodological, conceptual, and theoretical learning. The chapter is concluded with final remarks on how I perceive the way forward as a life-long learner.

6.5 Overall Interpretive, Personal, and Professional Learning

My overall interpretive response to the study, and drawing from the analysis of authentic data obtained from two novice teachers, is that they were excited to work as professionals in a rural school. However, novice teachers require intervention by senior teachers to assist them to cope with their new and demanding responsibilities at a time when they are still overwhelmed by the transition from student to full-time teacher.

The data suggest that an individuals' past experiences have a significant effect on their present and most probably their future (Ruohotie-Lyhty & Kaikkonen, 2009). For instance, Precious did not find the rural setting as overwhelming as Diamond did because she was familiar with rural school settings as she had attended such schools as a learner. This is correlated with the constructivist theoretical perspective that posits that individuals create meanings of their lives based on what they already know and experienced (Richardson, 1997).

In addition, novice teachers have an impact on how learners will grow and develop competencies in their educational and professional worlds. If motivated, they will grow and value their careers regardless of unfavourable working conditions. Precious said, "*I want to go all out for my learners*". She remembered that her teachers never imparted bare, minimum knowledge just because they had few resources to assist during teaching and learning. Diamond emphasised that, even though she felt overwhelmed by the rural setting, her love for children eased the burden. She stated:

> *Hard as the days may be, the smiles on my learners' faces make me look forward to the day. Their excitement when you walk in lights up the whole class. From then you know that you have to outdo yourself for their sake.*

Learners do not have an influence on teacher-subject knowledge; however, the way teachers relate to them in class will determine their willingness to seek enriched knowledge in a way that suits their learning needs even though they have limited learning support materials.

My primary motivation for researching this phenomenon stemmed from my observations during my teaching practice sessions. I struggled to fully engage all my learners even when I had over planned my lessons. I realised that a lot of time was spent trying to keep order in class

rather than utilising that time to provide learners with enriched knowledge. As a result, I wanted to find out what factors impacted teacher subject knowledge. As this study was prompted by personal observations and motivation it had, and will continue to have, an impact on me both as a researcher and an educator. As a teacher it made me pay more attention to detail and the important factors that play a part in my development as a subject specialist. I learnt to look at issues that occur in class with deep interest, such as wanting to understand what causes certain learner behaviours, how these affect teaching and learning, and what influence the rural environment has on teaching and learning processes.

My perspective as an educator was altered in the sense that I now recognize the importance of continuing my academic growth as a professional even after receiving my qualification. The world is constantly changing, and so are education policies and the curriculum. As a result, it is critical to stay abreast with the latest subject content in order to achieve growth in my educational practices. As was previously stated, my purpose was not to change the issues that this study highlighted, but to interpret and understand the participants' actual experiences so that my findings might have applicability for a variety of educators.

Based on the findings, I conclude that the learners of these teachers benefited because these educators were able to devise ways to relive their classroom experiences and then re-learn from them after sharing their lived stories. This may inspire them to be willing to adapt any ineffective strategies for classroom teaching and learning. Sharing one's lived experiences lays the foundation for reflection and this practice may very well improve professional practices in the classroom.

This research may also encourage policymakers to devise and implement appropriate guidelines that are applicable to diverse school contexts, rather than insisting on a one-size-fits-all approach. The insights that are shared based on the basis of the findings of this study may encourage educators to trust their knowledge and skills and to embrace and adapt to the environment where they are called to teach regardless of contextual challenges. A teacher never needs to teach in isolation, as support and guidance are always readily available even in rural environments. One must just be willing to learn and embrace development.

6.6 Methodological Learning

Some of the data generating practices I had envisaged could not be executed due to unforeseen circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Initially, the plan was that participants would work collaboratively to create collages, but this was not possible because they could not meet or access the necessary resources. I adapted this plan and we drew rich pictures that represented our life stories instead. Even though this change did not compromise the richness of the data as we could freely draw what was on our minds and in the heart, it was disappointing. However, the richness and creativity in the drawings produced much useful data that, when merged with those from the other two instruments, resulted into meaningful stories.

I had also envisaged that I would personally meet the original number of participants and engage in face-to-face focus group discussions where pre-set questions would be addressed. This would have allowed free-flow conversation and probing for clarity. However, I had to resort to a telephonic interview between one other participant and myself as the others had pulled out of the study before data collection could commence.

The withdrawal of potential participants when I was already behind the timeframe for data generation was a great disappointment and an acknowledged limitation that impacted the study. However, I understood their reasons because everyone was frustrated by COVID-19 restrictions and focused on how to survive in 'the new normal'. The most challenging aspect I then had to contend with was to ensure that we as the two remaining participants sustained our journal writing activity. It was hard checking up on the other participant every week as I could see that it did not sit well with when I did so, and I finally let her be.

Ensuring the quality of the data that I collected by means of qualitative methodologies was not an easy task as the processes did not occur under controlled conditions as is the case in most quantitative studies. However, I remained within all guidelines for a research study of this nature and adhered to all applicable ethical requirements in response to my research proposal. The quality of this study is affirmed as I followed all the guidelines, yet I cannot guarantee that the participants adhered to all these guidelines as rigorously as required for the data generation sources I used.

By using narrative inquiry methodology, I learnt that it is better when you work closely with participants as you get to establish a positive relationship with them. Participants then feel more comfortable and are more ready to share their stories of their lived experiences. I learnt that this is an open and accommodative approach as it allows the use of different data sources for data collection. It also allows flexibility as I could devise follow-up questions to gain additional information when I was uncertain about an issue. Overall, using narrative inquiry taught me that our lives are lived as stories. Using narrated stories gave voice to the participants. We live and gain experiences and these experiences become a story that we can revisit and share with other people. The ability to bring in abstracts as support to claims provided sound concreteness and brought participants to life. Participants are open to share their lived experiences, provided that trust is established between the researcher and participant. In the case of my study, my fellow participant was open because I was also participating in the study which bridge the researcher-participant gap.

I also learnt that subjectivity always reveals itself in qualitative interpretative study. Hence as a researcher one needs to constantly acknowledge this aspect as it may pose some implications during data generation and analysis. Furthermore, this puts forth the importance of reflexivity. That as a researcher I need to continuously reflect to encounters that arise during the conduction of the study so that I minimise the manner in which data can be modified to suit the objectives of the study.

When I was working on data analysis, I realised that each data source elicited the participants' subjectivity in different ways because they brought unique experiences to the study. I realise that some human participants will express themselves best through writing, while others will prefer drawing pictures or sharing their stories verbally. I learnt that if the opportunity presents itself, the researcher should use as many different data sources as possible so that participants are not limited to one data source, particularly if they are not comfortable with it. In this regard, the study endorses and encourages the use of triangulation, as proposed by Oliver-Hoyo and Allen (2006).

6.7 Conceptual and Theoretical Learning

An important lesson I learnt is that personal assurance and confidence are pivotal when embarking on a study of this nature. If you enter the profession for the first time as a qualified educator, confidence will translate into good teaching regardless of the working conditions. Courage to face every milestone also comes from confidence, and vice versa. In my view, professional development is built on a foundation of personal awareness and motivation.

I learnt that teacher subject knowledge is an essential anchor for sound teaching and learning practices. Teachers need to be equipped with enriched knowledge, skills, and values to teach a subject and be able to deliver the content to learners in a way that goes beyond rote learning so that they will not only remember facts for assessments, but also acquire skills and values that will sustain them throughout their lives. The study suggests that teacher subject knowledge is easy to keep updated as long as one maintains positive networking with peers to share ideas and learning and teaching support material. Another factor that emerged that I wish to highlight is that novice teachers also need to learn by using non-human platforms to obtain updated subject knowledge and even visual stimuli that can be used to enrich content knowledge. I acknowledge, however, that most rural schools are deprived in this regard as very few have access to the Internet, and using one's personal data is costly and not sustainable.

Based on the stories that my colleague and I presented that I objectively analysed, I learnt that, regardless of anxiety in the first early days of teaching, novice teachers are able to adapt to a school's environment provided that they are sustained by the necessary support such as induction workshops, supportive colleagues, and a sympathetic School Management Team. The study affirms that proper induction into the teaching profession will ensure that newly appointed teachers are retained and that they will then be encouraged to engage in activities that will promote their personal and professional development. The data undoubtedly suggest that novice teachers will feel helpless when they are not assisted by senior teachers, and this can result in them leaving the profession untimely.

Rural schools are located far from urban areas where support facilities are easily obtained. The lack of support material in rural schools makes it challenging for teachers to facilitate sound teaching and learning practices. For instance, the lack of textbooks means that learners have to

share, while other learning materials such as overhead projectors are also not available in most rural schools. It is not easy for novice teachers who have never been exposed to a rural school to adapt and become self-sufficient. It is a well-known fact that only very basic resources are provided by the Department of Basic Education. Novice teachers then feel demotivated and fail to excel as this limitation becomes strenuous. However, novice teachers who have some idea of what rural education entails are able to compromise and utilise what is available to make teaching and learning productive. I learnt that learners in rural schools are not as privileged as those in urban areas; however, teachers in these school try their level best to fill the gaps even though it is a draining process for most.

Secondary schools in rural areas are overcrowded and learner enrolments mean that they cannot abide by the learner-teacher ratio of 40:1 as recommended by the Minister of Education. However, this issue does not only occur in rural schools as one of the participants stated that it was also her experience in township schools. I maintain, based on information in the literature Marais (2016) and anecdotal evidence such as discussions with teachers in my Cluster, that overcrowding in South African schools is the norm rather than the exception. An important finding, however, is that class size does not necessarily interfere with teacher subject knowledge. Class size has only an impact on how the knowledge is delivered as it becomes difficult to manage large classes.

This study adopted the constructivist theory which acknowledges that individuals create their own meanings through knowledge and experience. As stipulated by Richardson (1997), individuals make sense of events in relation to their past experiences. Diamond asserted that she had attended a fairly well-equipped township school which differed in many ways from the rural school where we were teaching. Even when she did her teaching practice sessions, she was never exposed to a rural school. This had some effect on her professional development because she felt that, even during her tertiary studies, she was not fully prepared for what she encountered in the rural school. However, she agreed that the environment and ethos teachers are exposed to can either make or break them: novice teachers are either flexible and adapt, or they are inflexible and collapse under the strain.

Precious supported the relationship between self-awareness and professional development when she argued that she had not admitted the truth to herself about certain History topics that

were unfamiliar to her. She would have drowned under the pressure if she had not taken the hands of experienced teachers who groomed her into becoming a well-informed History teacher. This attests to the fact that the people you associate yourself with play a major role in how you adapt to a schools' environment.

By applying the theoretical perspective that teachers create their own meaning through lived experiences, I learnt that the findings that emerged had both common and diverse impacts on individuals. The lived experiences of novice teachers in rural schools are overwhelming at first; however, with time most novice teachers, such as the two participants, are able to find their feet and adapt to the environment. Lived experiences are influenced by prior knowledge, events, experiences, as well as the socialisation process that takes place during the time of adapting to the school and getting used to the environment. Judging from the gathered data, the other participant and I had the common experience as students that we were equipped with theory about what to expect in classrooms, yet when we arrived at a deep rural school theory did not help at all. This emphasises that theory and practice, even though related, often do not meet in certain contexts. This impacts the lived experiences of novice teachers because when they enter the profession, they have certain expectations based on what they were taught and experienced during their pre-service training, but this presents a challenge when what they find in reality in a rural school does not meet their expectations.

One's lived experiences thus influence one's adaptability. This was evident as Diamond experienced a cultural shock when she arrived at the rural school, while Precious took it more in her stride. Diamond at first failed to empathise with her learners as she had never been exposed to a rural school before, whereas Precious was able to 'climb into the shoes' of her learners as she had been in that situation as a learner herself. This impacted the kind of teacher she became in a short while, as she could empathise more quickly with the overcrowded classroom conditions and the limited teaching and learning resources. This clearly demonstrated that, because of their lived experiences, teachers relate to school conditions and contexts in different ways. This is why I argue that, even when teachers work in the same school, their experiences and emotions will differ as the stories that shape their lives differ, and so do their responses to their encounters.

As novice teachers socialise with their peers and seniors and develop a deeper awareness of their role in the school, they either find ways and moral support to adapt to this new environment, or they don't. Fortunately, the participants agreed that they had received a warm welcome with plenty of assistance so that they were able to fully immerse themselves into their tasks. It is noteworthy that, although they were teaching at the same school, Precious felt that she received more worthwhile assistance from her peers who taught at other schools than form teachers at her own school. This may suggest that the school lacked a holistic induction plan and that assistance for novice teachers was subject- and individual-based rather than a coordinated effort.

6.8 Moving Forward

6.8.1 Recommendations for future research

Future studies that embark on research in a similar field should involve as many participants as possible. The small sample that I engaged taught me that such a small number of respondents limits the richness of the findings as only limited data could be obtained. Also, should journaling be used as a data collection method, the researcher should monitor participants' journal entries continuously to check if they are on the right track and that they share journal entries that are relevant to the topic at hand. This is because my fellow participant was not closely monitored and she thus did not write much of value in her journal.

I advise researchers who have an interest in using narrative inquiry for their future studies to always keep in mind that this approach seeks to understand the life stories of participants. Hence, as researchers they ought to find these lived stories and provide thick, deep descriptions. Also, researchers should always remember that not all data generation methods will encourage participants to share their stories. They should thus choose methods that are related to one another to avoid digression or tardiness and to ensure conciseness and clarity in the findings.

I also advise researchers who potentially want to fulfil the roles of both participant and researcher to fully prepare themselves for this is as it is not an easy task. Sometimes, what you want to share as a participant interferes with what you want to discover as a researcher. This in turn may cause data to be modified in a way that will not address the objectives of the study.

6.8.2 A personal future perspective

The study findings suggest that subject-knowledge is not affected by a school's setting and context. In the future, I shall thus plan to deliver my lessons using self-made support material where possible so that my learners will better understand the subject content. This study thus taught me to appreciate the importance of networking with colleagues from inside and outside the school. I shall continue to work in collaboration with other teachers so that I can ask for assistance when I feel the need to do so. I learnt that this will inspire me to stay in the profession, particularly if I remain realistic and willing to learn so that my development as a subject specialist is continued and sustained.

6.9 Conclusion

This research project aimed to better understand the development of newly qualified teachers in a rural school into subject specialists. This was a narrative inquiry study because participants' told stories of their lived experiences were used to derive meanings and narrative explanations.

The study focused on the experiences of teachers who had been in the profession in a rural school for just under three years, and aimed to determine how their experiences impacted their ability and motivation to develop as subject specialists. In the process I discovered that urban and rural school contexts differ considerably and that novice teachers with no rural school experience may take much longer than those with such experienced to adapt to the rural school environment. I also found that context-inconsiderate policies impact rural teachers negatively as it is virtually impossible to function effectively when rural teachers are obliged to adhere to one-size-fits-all policies; this is because their schools' conditions and LTSM provisioning differ vastly from those of urban schools. The purpose was not to change the conditions of the school or the policies in place, but rather to learn from the newly appointed teachers how these affect their development as subject specialists.

As this study explored the lived experiences of two novice teachers who taught in a deep rural school, I adopted a narrative inquiry approach. This means that the findings that emerged from data that were revealed by the stories that two participants told of their lived experiences in the

rural school under study. I acknowledge that what is presented in this dissertation as findings may be not by applicable to other novice teachers in other the rural schools as the sample and study site were limited.

The stories that were explored related to the lived experiences of Precious and Diamond's professional journeys as novice teachers. The key findings suggest that novice teachers enter the profession with a feeling of anxiety and that they experience fear as they now have to function and achieve success as fully qualified teachers. However, anxiety eases as they build networks with colleagues and their managers who assist them with advice, encouragement, and materials to enhance their subject knowledge and classroom practices.

The participating novice teachers understood the value of teacher subject knowledge, and they therefore frequently went online for in-depth information to enhance their knowledge, skills, and values with reference to the subjects that they were teaching. Moreover, even though large classes seem to be the norm in many schools in South Africa, the issue of class size does not necessarily interfere with teacher subject knowledge as this is stored in the mind of the teacher and does not depend on class size. Delivery of this knowledge is, however, impeded by overcrowded classrooms and a lack of support material.

In conclusion, networking with colleagues within and outside the school, support offered by the SMT, accessing non-human structures for information, and positive personal experiences all play a significant role in the lived experiences of novice teachers who are on their journey of developing as subject specialists.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: THE ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTFIFICATE

**UNIVERSITY OF ™
KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI**

28 April 2020

Miss Nokuphila Thobeka Ngcobo (214583553)
School Of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Miss Ngcobo,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00001163/2020
Project title: Developing as subject specialists in overcrowded classrooms in a rural area: Narratives of novice teachers.
Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 20 February 2020 in connection with the abov was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol h been granted **FULL APPROVAL**

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

This approval is valid until 28 April 2021.
To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must k submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out repo to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,

Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

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APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT LETTER: PARTICIPANT

55946 Nsimbini Area
Umbumbulu
4105

Dear Sir/Madam

I, Nokuphila Thobeka Ngcobo, am a Master of Education Candidate at University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus, South Africa. I am currently engaged in a research study with the title "Developing as subject specialists in overcrowded classrooms in a rural area: Narratives of novice teachers."

The objectives for this study are: 1. To explore the experiences that novice teachers encounter as they begin their teaching career as subject specialists, and 2. To understand the influences on these lived experiences of novice teachers.

 As part of my research I would like to involve you as my research participant. I will ask you to engage in three different activities as a way to obtain information that will serve the purpose of this study. First, you will be asked to keep a journal to record your daily experiences during teaching and learning in a large class. Secondly you will be asked to develop and discuss a collage to present your development from your first day of teaching up to date. And lastly, we will meet as a group for approximately 2 hours to discuss interview questions about your lived experiences as a novice teacher. May you kindly allow me to conduct my research with you as my participant?

I would like to assure you that the name of the school and participants in the study will be kept anonymous. Moreover, the research will only be conducted after hours using one of the rooms in the school.

I can be contacted at: Email: Ngcobophilat@gmail.com ; Cell: 061 208 0638

My supervisor is Prof. Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan who is located in Education Studies on Edgewood campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Email: Pithousemorgan@ukzn.ac.za; Tel: 031-260 3460

The contact person in the Research Office is Ms Mariette Snyman who is located on the Westville campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Email: snymanm@ukzn.ac.za ; Tel: 031 260 8350.

I thank you in advance for your on-going support and co-operation.
Yours Faithfully

Ngcobo Nokuphila T.

DECLARATION

I ……………………………………………………………………………………………
(full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research study: *Developing as subject specialists in overcrowded classrooms in a rural area: Narratives of novice teachers.*

I am fully aware of my rights as a participant, that I may contact the supervisor should there be any questions that I would like to ask clarity on. I declare that my participation in this project is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw my permission at any stage and for any reason. I give consent to my contributions being used in the dissertation and subsequent publications and presentations.

I hereby provide consent to:

a) The use of my:

     Journal entries   YES/NO

     Collage Presentations   YES/NO

     Audio recordings for the group discussion   YES/NO

b) Please give a pseudonym that you would like to use to protect your right to privacy

_____

Signature of participant _____   Date _____