

**TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES WITH
OVERCROWDED CLASSROOMS IN A
MAINSTREAM SCHOOL**

by

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This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfilment of the
academic requirements for the Degree of Master of
Education in the discipline of Educational Psychology,
School of Education,

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2015

ABSTRACT

The focus of this study is to explore teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms in a mainstream school. The study was conducted in one mainstream school in the Durban South area. The study adopts a qualitative research approach in which a case study design was adopted. The data generation process was obtained through unstructured questionnaires and observations with teachers. The overall findings of the research show that teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms are 'stressful'. Teachers themselves identified certain conditions that are stressful in an overcrowded classroom. These conditions were inadequate classroom space, issues related to safety and health, minimal learner and teacher interaction, disruptive behaviours, teachers experienced emotional and psychological problems, increased workload and inadequate teaching time. The findings of the research also show the contributing factors to stressful experiences. These factors included lack of support from management, policy implementation, teacher training and professional development and lack of resources. The findings also showed that teachers tap into, mobilise and map out individual resources in order to manage overcrowded classrooms.

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation presented to the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) as partial requirement for my Master's degree is my own original work. All research has been acknowledged and referenced.

Student's signature

Date

Supervisor's signature

Date

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the following individuals whom have helped, inspired and motivated me to complete this dissertation.

- To God for giving me the strength and guidance to complete this dissertation.
- To my parents Ronnie and Connie Muthusamy for their support and for assisting me and making my life manageable so that I could focus on this dissertation.
- To my brother Kriesan Muthusamy for motivating me and inspiring me to pursue this Master's degree
- To my supervisor Dr Fumane Khanare for the motivation, constructive criticism, valuable suggestions, consultations and on-going guidance.
- To Dr Lawrence Meda for the good foundation that he provided at the beginning of the research process and for the short period in which he supervised me.
- To my participants who responded to my consultations and took the time to fill in my questionnaire.
- To my work colleagues Nirisha Bridjbal and Megashree Jankey for their on-going support, motivation and encouragement.
- To Rubaina Manilal my colleague and friend for her motivation, constructive criticism and assistance during this entire period.
- To my friend Deepa Ramlachan for her on-going motivation, encouragement and support.

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	South African Institution for Race Relations
NCES	National Centre for Education Statistic
PPN	Post Provisioning Norm
SAIR	South African Institution for Race Relations
SGB	School Governing Body
UNESCO	United Nations Organisation for Education and Culture

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CHAPTER ONE

SETTING THE SCENE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Teachers around the world face many obstacles when attempting to teach in an overcrowded classroom which include instructional, management, assessment and discipline problems (Benbow, Mizrachi, Oliver & Moshiro, 2007). Amarat (2011) argues that one of the most serious problems faced by teachers in public schools is overcrowded classrooms. Overcrowded classrooms have resulted in frustration, learners becoming despondent and discouraged as well as negative attitudes (Oliver, 2006). Shah and Inamullah (2012) found in their studies that overcrowded classrooms have a direct impact on teaching and learning. Overcrowded classrooms have not only affected learner performance but also put immense stress on teachers (Shah & Inamullah, 2012). Fin (2003) contended that overcrowded classrooms impacted negatively on teacher morale and enjoyment of their profession. Overcrowded classrooms have created a scenario in which teachers face many challenges in the classroom. In light of this, this study is sought to explore the experiences of teachers in overcrowded classrooms.

This chapter presents a background to the study and a discussion of my rationale for study. The statement of the problem is also outlined together with objectives and critical questions guiding the study. This chapter also presents the importance of the study, overview of the research design and methodology and organization of the dissertation.

1.2 BACKGROUND

According to Baruth (2009) overcrowded classes have resulted from the historical background of South Africa. Prior to 1994, the government segregated the education system for different racial groups (Baruth, 2009). As a result, Steyn (2003) argues that the education system was deeply rooted with inequalities, imbalances and injustices. Baruth (2009) mentions that one of the injustices included high learner teacher ratios in previously disadvantaged schools.

The table 1.1 below shows the learner teacher ratio in South African schools prior to 1994.

Table 1.1 Average learner teacher ratio prior to 1994

Race	Learner-Educator Ratio
Whites	20:1
Indians	35:1
Coloureds	40:1
Blacks	75:1

Source: (South African Institution for Race Relations, 1996, p. 8)

Table 1.1 illustrates that the learner teacher ratios were aimed to benefit white schools and oppress the black schools. Overcrowded classrooms started in black institutions since the apartheid era. After the first democratic elections in 1994 one of the policies that was implemented to alleviate the injustices of apartheid was the Post Provisioning Norm (PPN) (Baruth, 2009). According to Baruth (2009) this policy aimed to reduce overcrowding by lowering the learner teacher ratios in all South African schools.

Although there are policies like the PPN put in place to alleviate the problem of overcrowded classrooms, the reality is that the inequalities of apartheid still exist. We are still faced with the problem of overcrowded classrooms. According to Venketess (2011) 150 pupils were crammed into one classroom in a school in Newlands East Durban. Venketess (2011) argues that teachers battle to teach children who are virtually packed on top of each other and pass out because of heat exhaustion. I have observed that in some classes in South African schools, up to 60 learners are crammed into one classroom, which has posed a challenge for many teachers.

According to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) (2014), the current learner teacher ratio for public schools in KwaZulu-Natal is 30.4:1. Although the PPN policy states that the learner teacher ratio is 30.4:1. Venketess (2011) indicated that this is not the case in some schools. Overcrowded classrooms are still an issue of concern that is impacting negatively on teachers in South Africa and the KwaZulu-Natal province in particular. Although schools can employ governing body educators to assist with the teaching load and management of classes, many schools do not have the funds to employ additional staff. Therefore teachers are left to manage

the situation of overcrowded classrooms. This poses a problem for many educators as it leads to many challenges in the classroom. Nesane (2008) postulates that some of the challenges include; lack of resources, instructional problems, high workload and discipline problems.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Overcrowded classrooms present difficulty for teachers in South Africa (Mtika, 2010). Although there are policies put in place to alleviate the problem of overcrowding in classrooms, this is not being implemented and is posing a problem for teachers. Teachers are faced with the challenges that arise in an overcrowded classroom as they are responsible for teaching and learning. Teachers' challenges are not being addressed as they are still required to deal with the problems that arise as a result of an overcrowded classroom. According to Lannoy and Hall (2010) the learner to teacher ratio relates directly to the quality of schooling. These problems impact enormously on teachers as the quality teaching and learning diminishes in an environment that is overcrowded. It is very easy for a teacher to become frustrated when experiencing problems that prevent them from achieving educational outcomes. In any classroom, there is diversity and learners have different needs. Learners learn at different levels and some learners may require individual attention due to a learning barrier. In a mainstream school teachers are not trained to deal with diversity. According to Pillay (2009) mainstream schools did not cater to special needs and disabilities. Pillay (2009) further stated that with the shift to inclusive education this has changed and a single education system is promoted. Mainstream schools are now required to cater to learners with special needs. This is what is required according to the policy White Paper 6, however in an overcrowded classroom this is not possible for teachers to implement. It appears as though policies are designed but teachers voices are not being heard in these policies as they are facing many challenges. Previous studies mentioned all the problems associated with overcrowded classrooms. This study explores the experiences of teachers in overcrowded classrooms.

1.4 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

As a teacher with personal experience I come across many challenges in the classroom and one of them is dealing with large numbers in the classroom. I find it difficult as a teacher to manage the workload in an overcrowded classroom. I also feel that as a teacher my voice is not being

heard as there is no assistance or support provided to deal with the challenges that arise as a result of an overcrowded classroom. These challenges have caused me to become stressed and frustrated and lose my passion to teach. From having 40 children in a class in 2005 the numbers increased drastically to 60 and 80 learners. Teachers at my school are currently sitting with an influx of learners in a class that is designed for 35. These increasing numbers have caused the classroom to become overcrowded, and caused teachers to become frustrated and face many difficulties. Some of the difficulties include discipline, lack of space in the classroom, inability of the teacher to assist weak learners, increased workload in terms of marking and instructional problems. According to Lannoy and Hall (2010) the learner to teacher ratio relates directly to the quality of schooling. The larger the class the harder it is for the educator to know the circumstances of each individual learner. There are policies in place that stipulate the learner teacher ratio, however the policies are not being implemented and schools are admitting more and more learners into the classroom without thinking about the impact this poses on teachers.

Teachers are required to provide the best learning experience for learners to learn. In circumstances such as an overcrowded classroom it is not achievable for learners to attain educational goals. According to Shah and Inamullah (2012) when a class size is reduced this allows for effective teaching and learning. Therefore, I feel that if the problem of overcrowded classrooms is addressed teachers will be able to provide quality teaching and learning. Mtika (2010) argues that smaller classes allow teachers to interact more with learners and give individual attention to slow learners. Overcrowded classrooms has impacted on teaching and learning but most importantly, my rationale for this study, is to make teachers voices heard. This will be achieved by unpacking their experiences since there is no support provided for teachers and their needs are not considered when policies are designed. Policies are designed and supposed to be implemented; however, teachers' needs are not taken into consideration in the design of such policies.

1.5 IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

This study provides an understanding on the difficulties and challenges that teachers experience with overcrowded classrooms. The information generated from this study enables the DBE to think about providing support structures, workshops and training that equip teachers with the

skills they require to overcome their challenges. This study also provides the DBE with information that may allow them to rethink strategies and funding for schools that will assist teachers to cope with overcrowded classrooms. The funds can be used to assist schools to build more classrooms and provide resources for learners. The study also generated knowledge for policy designers to take into account the issue of overcrowding in classrooms when developing policies that are not designed or cannot be adapted for overcrowded classrooms.

The current Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) is designed to accommodate 40 learners in the classroom (DBE, 2011). Although this is the case teachers are expected to teach in classes with in excess of 40 learners in accordance with CAPS which entails a comprehensive and detailed curriculum with numerous assessment tasks. As a researcher, I have discovered that there is a lot of research done on overcrowded classrooms but none of the research has given much focus to teachers' experiences therefore the researcher felt it is important to place emphasis on teachers' experiences. The researcher also felt that teachers are not being given adequate training to cope with overcrowded classrooms, therefore this study generated information that can also be useful to teacher training colleges. It enables the teacher training colleges to prepare future teachers to cope with situations like overcrowded classrooms.

1.6 FOCUS OF THE STUDY

The focus of this study is to explore teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms in a mainstream school in the Umlazi district of KwaZulu-Natal in the Republic of South Africa.

1.7 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are to:

- **Examine teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms.**
- **To find out why teachers experience overcrowded classrooms in the way they do.**
- **Examine how teachers manage overcrowded classrooms.**

1.8 CRITICAL QUESTIONS

In line with the objectives, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

- **What are teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms?**
- **Why do teachers experience overcrowded classrooms the way they do?**

- **How do teachers manage overcrowded classrooms?**

1.9 OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

1.9.1 Research Approach

This research adopts a qualitative approach. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) qualitative methods involve collecting textual or verbal data (data which cannot be counted). The researcher chose this approach because allowed her to gain insight into teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms. This research allowed participants to express their experiences and generated textual data which is why this research lent itself to the qualitative approach.

1.9.2 Research Paradigm

This research is guided by the interpretive paradigm which does not discover laws and rules. It understands how people make sense of the context in which they work or live. According to Cohen et al. (2011) the interpretive paradigm understands and explains actions. This research is underpinned by this paradigm because the researcher intends understanding teachers' experiences in overcrowded classrooms and explains why they have the experiences that they do. This paradigm enabled participants to explain and express their experiences so that the researcher may have an understanding of their behaviours, attitudes and perceptions.

1.9.3 Research Design

This research will be done in the form of a case study. Fry, Ketteridge and Marshall (2009) describe case studies as complex examples that give insight into the context of a problem as well as illustrating the main point. The case study method was used because only one particular school will be looked at. As proposed by Yin (2009) a case study can be exploratory, explanatory or descriptive. Therefore the case study design fits in with this study since it will be exploring and describing teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms. This allowed one to gain insight into teachers' experiences.

1.9.4 Sampling Techniques

According to Field (2005) a sample is a smaller collection of units from a population used to determine truths about that population. Kothari (2004) claims that there are different sampling procedures which can be used in research and this depends on the availability of the resources.

Two types of sampling methods were chosen for this study. The sampling techniques that were chosen are purposive sampling and convenience sampling.

1.9.4.1 Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling means that the researcher is looking for participants who possess certain traits or qualities (Koerber & McMichael, 2008). In this study, ‘purposive sampling’, a qualitative sampling procedure which allows the researcher to deliberately select participants, a learning site and research techniques was used (Cresswell, 2008). This method of sampling was chosen since only teachers with classrooms that are overcrowded were selected for this sample. These participants were selected based on the purpose of my research.

1.9.4.2 Convenience Sampling

Convenience sampling is one of the most commonly used sampling techniques (Farrokhi & Mahmoudi-Hamidabad, 2012). Farrokhi and Mahmoudi-Hamidabad (2012) further highlight that the convenience of the researcher as the most important criterion for selecting participants. This sample consisted of teachers at the researcher’s school since this was convenient and they were easily accessible.

1.9.4.3 The Sample

The sample size consisted of eight teachers. The eight teachers that were selected were the teachers with the highest enrolment in the entire school. Three classes with the highest number of learners in the entire school were observed. By using teachers with the highest numbers this allowed the researcher to gain in-depth information on their experiences since their numbers in the classroom are high.

1.9.5 Data Generation

According to Gibbert and Ruigrok (2010) data in the case study approach are generated by multiple methods. This statement is relevant as the data that the researcher generates determines the findings of the study. It is important that the data generation tools are appropriate for the research and corresponds with the research approach, design and paradigm. In this study, two data generation tools have been chosen; an unstructured questionnaire and an observation.

1.9.5.1 Unstructured Questionnaire

According to Cohen et al. (2011) unstructured questionnaires ask questions that the respondents may answer as they like. Using open ended questionnaires will enable one to gain in depth information into the experiences of teachers in overcrowded classrooms. Teachers were free to describe their feelings and experiences. When respondents are free to answer questions, they are comfortable and can describe their experiences in detail.

1.9.5.2 Observation

Observation means that the researcher goes to a school or into a classroom and observes what is taking place (Simpson & Tuson, 2005). This method was useful for gaining insight into what is actually happening in the classroom. Teachers were observed while teaching and managing overcrowded classrooms. An observation schedule was used which assisted the researcher in focusing on the aspects in the classroom that is relevant to this research. Simpson and Tuson (2005) posited that an observation schedule determines what should be looked at and is organized into categories. The researcher's observation was non-participatory, which meant the researcher did not interact with or be a part of the classroom.

1.9.6 Data Analysis

The thematic analysis method was chosen to analyse the data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research questions and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) also mention that there are six phases of thematic analysis which include familiarization with the data, coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming the themes and writing up.

1.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS

“Trustworthiness is obtained through a process of testing the data analysis findings and conclusions” (Nieuwenhuis, 2011, p.113). Whilst credibility is an evaluation of whether or not the research findings represent a credible interpretation of the data drawn from the participants original data (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). For the purpose of this study more than one data

collection tool was used so that the data was strengthened. These instruments were examined by more than one person to check if they actually covered the area of teachers' experiences. A number of teachers at the school assisted in examining the instruments.

1.11 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

This research consists of five chapters.

Chapter One

Chapter one is an introductory chapter that provides a background into overcrowded classrooms. This chapter also entails the statement of the problem which highlights why overcrowded classrooms are a problem and how it has impacted on teachers. The rationale for this study and the importance of it is highlighted. The focus, objectives and critical questions are presented. A brief overview of the research design and methodology is provided as well as the organization of chapters and the conclusion.

Chapter Two

This chapter examines the literature surrounding the issue of overcrowded classrooms but mainly focused on teachers. The researcher unpacks the term overcrowded classrooms, discusses its challenges in the classroom and also examines the coping strategies. This chapter also provides detailed information about the theoretical framework underpinning this study.

Chapter Three

This chapter presents the research design and methodology used. This chapter also includes a discussion of the choice of research design, approach and paradigm. This chapter also outlines the data collection tools used, sampling techniques, data analysis, trustworthiness, ethical issues and conclusion.

Chapter Four

This chapter outlines the analysis of data and presents the findings of the qualitative design which emerged. Generation of data was through observations and unstructured questionnaires. Data was analysed following the six phases of thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). These phases included familiarization with the data, coding, searching for themes,

reviewing the themes, defining and naming the themes and writing up. The data is presented according to the themes that emerged from the data.

Chapter Five

This chapter summarises the findings and makes recommendations from the study. Recommendations were also be made for future research of the study.

1.12 CONCLUSION

The chapter presented an introduction and background to teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms. The challenges such as discipline, management, lack of space, emotional and psychological issues and increased workload faced by teachers in overcrowded classroom were identified and the statement of the problem was outlined. Teachers faced negative experiences with overcrowded classrooms that caused them to abandon the teaching profession and become deeply affected by this situation. The importance of this study was also outlined. This chapter also presented the rationale for the study as well as the objectives and critical questions guiding the research. The research design and methodology was also presented. The next chapter reviews literature about teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

A literature review is defined as a critical analysis of the relationship among the work of different authors, relating to the specific topic (Galvan, 2006). According to Okoli (2010) a literature review provides an understanding of what existing research has to say on a matter. Boote and Beile (2005) maintain that the purpose of a literature review is to provide a context for the research, justify the research, and outline gaps in previous research and show where the research fits in, into the existing body of knowledge. Meda (2013) claims among other reasons a literature review is done to delimit the problem and to have a deep understanding of the known and unknown around a specific study area.

This chapter reviews literature related to overcrowded classrooms. This chapter commences with a discussion on scholars' conceptualisations of overcrowded classroom and statistics. A thematic approach is followed comprising of the following themes, the implication of overcrowded classroom challenges for teachers in the school as well as coping and managing overcrowded classrooms. This chapter ends with the discussion of the theoretical framework underpinning this study, which is school improvement.

2.2 EXPLORING THE CONCEPT OVERCROWDED CLASSROOMS

Different institutions and situations give different definitions to overcrowded classrooms. In order to understand the impact of overcrowded classrooms it is important to explore how different scholars understand the concept overcrowded classroom. Whilst much has been written about overcrowded classroom, there is no universal definition or explanation for the concept "overcrowded classroom". In reviewing literature the researcher found that the word large class and overcrowded classroom are used interchangeably and is basically the same concept.

According to the DBE (2014) the learner teacher ratio for public schools in South Africa is 30.4:1. The DBE (2014) states that when the learner teacher ratio is exceeded this results in overcrowded classrooms. The National Centre for Education Statistics (NCES) (2000) defines an overcrowded classroom as one where the numbers of learners are larger than the number that the

classroom is designed to accommodate. Buchanan and Rogers (1990) define large classes as those with 80 or more students. Meanwhile Enerson (1997) regards 100 or more students as an overcrowded classroom. According to Matus (1999) overcrowded classrooms are often made up of large numbers of socially and economically diverse students. The International development in United States of America defines an overcrowded class as one with 40 or more learners in a class. According to the New York Independent Budget Office (2010) overcrowded classrooms are ones that exceed their enrolment capacity by 2.5%. Drawing from the above national and international definitions, it is evident that an overcrowded classroom presents challenges for teachers. This is a national and international problem that leads to limited opportunities for teaching and learning within the classroom.

2.3 OVERCROWDED CLASSROOMS ARE A REALITY FOR SCHOOLS

In a survey done in New York, Garland (2006) revealed 1719 classrooms in elementary middle schools were overcrowded. In countries like Brazil and Mexico the average learner teacher ratio is 24:1 while Hungary, Poland, Italy and Norway have an average ratio of 11:1. These ratios demonstrate a number that is way below countries like China, Indonesia and Korea and Japan which have average ratios of between 35:1 and 55:1 (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 2005). When looking at the class sizes in schools in different countries the statistics show that the European countries have a much lower learner teacher ratio in comparison to the Asian countries. It is also evident that the learner teacher ratio is higher in public schools than it is in private schools across the different countries. Sorto (2010) claims that in Botswana in the early 2000's had almost 13000 primary school teachers for about 330000 primary school students and a pupil teacher ratio of 26:1. This seems to be a fair pupil teacher ratio and overcrowded classrooms is not a major problem in Botswana. According to Benbow et al. (2007) some developing countries have up to 100 learners in a class. In Western Countries class sizes of 30 are considered large and in need of reduction. In addition, Santiago (2001) claims that teacher shortages and overcrowded classrooms are worsening in countries like New Zealand, Sweden and Germany. Class size is one of the factors that parents consider when choosing a school for their children. The United Kingdom International development claimed that the growing needs of the nation parents would have to cover the rising costs in education as schools strained financially due to large numbers.

The DBE (2013) conducted a School Network for Absenteeism Prevention (SNAP) survey on the number of learners and educators in ordinary public sector schools indicating the learner enrolment in each province and the number of teachers in each province. Table 1.2 indicates the statistics for this SNAP survey.

Table 2.1 Number of Learners, Educators and Ratio in Public schools

Province	Learners	Educators	Ratio
Eastern Cape	1910 265	65 861	29.0:1
Free State	641 219	23 203	27.6:1
Gauteng	1814 167	57 836	31.4:1
KwaZulu-Natal	2781 830	88 710	31.4:1
Limpopo	1645 746	55 672	29.6:1
Mpumalanga	1021 722	33 126	30.8:1
Northern Cape	271 474	8 664	31.3:1
North West	751 294	24 965	30.1:1
Western	970 319	32 037	30.3:1

Source: (Adapted from Department of Basic Education, 2013, p.4)

Although table 2.1 shows that the provincial learner /teacher ratio is within the PPN requirement, the researcher's observation has shown that it does not reflect the reality in many public schools. Therefore teachers are ending up with overcrowded classrooms. There are not enough teachers to service the influx of learners. When there is a shortage of teachers the problem of overcrowded classrooms result. According to Mchunu (2009) the learner teacher ratio in South Africa has been reduced from 34:1 in 2004 to 31:1 in 2014. However, overcrowded classrooms are still a problem in South African schools. Research has shown that overcrowded classrooms are a prominent problem in many rural schools. It is reported that 60% of black schooling takes place in rural areas (UNESCO, 2005).

2.4 THE IMPLICATIONS OF OVERCROWDED CLASSROOM CHALLENGES FOR TEACHERS IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS.

2.4.1 General Problems

According to Emmer and Stough (2010) teachers find difficulty in monitoring behaviours and activities in overcrowded classrooms. Overcrowded classrooms impact on classroom management. Onwu and Stoffels (2005) contend that the following constraints arise as a result of an overcrowded classroom which impacts on teachers.

- Lack of physical space for movement around the classroom.
- Diminished opportunities for all learners to participate actively in the learning process.
- The impersonalising of teaching.
- Excessive workload for teachers.
- Limited opportunities to meet individual learner needs for self-activity, inquiry, motivation, discipline, safety and socialization.

According to Norris (2003) teachers in overcrowded classrooms in America used class time to settle disputes and soothe feelings in the classroom. This takes away time from learning and impacts on the teachers' lesson. Norris (2003) argues that the classroom environment impacts negatively on the learning process. A school in New York City has an enrolment of 3000 students. Due to the overcrowding the school had a 66% drop out rate (Hiller, 2003). According to De Corby (2005) two public schools in North America were investigated on the quality of physical education. Various challenges were presented and one of them included overcrowded classrooms (De Corby, 2005). Physical education teachers were challenged in engaging in meaningful physical activity due to issues that resulted from overcrowded classrooms. Some of the issues included lack of space and lack of resources and equipment (De Corby, 2005). Physical activity is an essential part of maintaining good physical health. In North America the incidence of childhood obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease results from physical inactivity. Overcrowded classrooms diminish opportunity for physical activity (Hiller, 2003).

In Hong Kong a major problem regarding the classroom air quality was identified. Lee and Chang (1999) pointed out that the CO₂ level exceeded the norm in an overcrowded classroom. According to Lee and Chang (1999) the CO₂ levels depend on the occupancy of the classroom.

A classroom should not contain more than the number it is designed for. The high levels of CO₂ in the classroom can pose health threats to students and teachers (Lee & Chang, 1999). Overcrowded classrooms have not only demonstrated to be a teaching and learning problem, but also a health risk to teachers and learners.

Class size can affect how much time teachers give to individual students as well as the social dynamics among students (Ehrenberg, 2001). Class sizes are also a problem in Sub Saharan Africa and even present problems to trainee teachers in conducting learner centred lesson (Mtika, 2010). According to Mtika (2010) in Malawi large class sizes leave trainee teachers with only one choice of using convenient teaching methods which requires pupils to be mainly passive recipients of knowledge during lessons. This does not allow for learner-teacher interaction. Learner-teacher interaction is a critical component for teaching and learning it is through interaction that a teacher can actually assess and determine what learners already know and what difficulties they are faced with. Behavioural problems, absenteeism and high failure rates are experienced in overcrowded classrooms (Gibbs & Jenkins, 1992).

Mweru (2010) states that the introduction of free primary education by the Kenyan Government in 2003 resulted in a large influx of children to schools leading to overcrowded classrooms. Most schools were ill equipped to deal with such large numbers and could not cope (Mweru, 2010). Mweru (2010) argued that teachers in Kenya saw corporal punishment as the only way of controlling large numbers of pupils. Among the problems facing the Nigerian educational system was large classes. The social demand for formal education in Nigeria resulted in an upsurge increase in school enrolment with a dramatic increase in class size resulting into high pupil teacher rates (Onwu & Stoffels, 2005). According to Akinsolu and Fadokun (2003) class size in Nigeria is a big factor in determining educational goals and objectives. Kolo and Ojo (2006) noted that teachers in Nigeria perceived that class work takes a lot of time in teaching large classes. Large classes are not a better preference for teachers in Nigerian schools. According to Akinsolu and Fadokun (2003) large classes in Nigeria are a worthy crisis.

According to Ipinge (2005) there are many factors in Namibia that hamper the delivery of quality education. Ipinge (2005) contends that one of the factors is higher learner teacher ratios. Higher

learner teacher ratios make it extremely difficult to provide quality education (Ipinge, 2005). As a result, the quality of education is being lowered and the learning environment is negatively affected (Amkugo, 1993). Meanwhile in Tanzania, Edholm (2009) mentions that Tanzanian government wanted to make education accessible and available to all. According to Edholm (2009) the removal of school fees opened the opportunity for many families to send their children to school. This increased the enrolments in school which led to overcrowded classrooms and overcrowded schools (Edholm, 2009). Ijaiya (1999) argues that overcrowding in classrooms diminish quantity and quality of teaching and learning with serious implications for attainment of education goals.

Oosthuizen and Van Staden (2007) mention numerous school related factors that heighten learners' propensity to engage in disruptive behaviour, one of the factors that were listed was overcrowded classrooms. Levin and Nolan (1996) state that some of the discipline problems faced by teachers in overcrowded classrooms; bullying, inattention, throwing objects, teasing and the use of vulgar language. Issues such as discipline, drop-out rates, space, raising academic achievement and attainment of educational goals impact directly on teachers. Holloway (2008) indicates that larger classes take a toll on a teacher's ability to manage time, manage tasks and behaviour. It is evident that there are many negative consequences associated with large or overcrowded classrooms. Wilson (2009) reports that overcrowded classrooms are much noisier and that pushing, crowding and hitting often occur in larger classes than smaller classes.

2.4.2 Psychological Problems

Teachers are the most critical component of the education system all over the world. According to Ali, Naz, Maqbool and Rana (2011) no dynamic of teaching is possible without a dynamic teacher. Teachers can however lose their effectiveness and are not as dynamic due to their teaching conditions. Mundt (1991) claims that teachers who are faced with teaching challenges could end up with lack of self-confidence, confusion, frustration and isolation. In Pakistan female teachers are facing great educational obstacles. Ali et al. (2011) claims that overcrowded classrooms in Pakistan are affecting female teachers' performances negatively. The performance of teachers affects learners and the effectiveness of the school. Overcrowded classrooms are a condition that does not only impacts on learners' performance but on the teachers as well.

Herzallah (2011) claimed that in Northern Gaza teachers faced many professional development obstacles. Teachers in Northern Gaza believed that overcrowded classrooms are one of the most important professional development obstacles from the nature of their work. Teachers develop with teaching experience but conditions such as an overcrowded classroom can limit teachers from achieving their goals and becoming effective teachers. Ali et al. (2011) mentions that overcrowded classrooms can be a hindrance to teachers' success.

Overcrowded classrooms have created a stress for teachers making it difficult for them to handle the learning needs of learners (Oliver, 2006). This creates a strain on the relationship between the teacher and learner and leads to problems and disruptions in the classroom. This can create a negative learning environment for the teacher and learner. Behavioural problems, absenteeism and high failure rates are experienced in overcrowded classrooms (Gibbs & Jenkins, 1992). Gibbs and Jenkins (1992) indicate that dealing with overcrowded classrooms leads to high teacher absenteeism, teacher apathy and teacher stress. The research that is presented from an international perspective has shown that teachers internationally are finding difficulty in handling overcrowded classrooms.

Overcrowded classrooms are an on-going concern for many educators nationally and internationally. There are many studies that have been done and have found that this issue is impacting negatively on teachers. Nesane (2008) argued that teachers are having negative experiences with overcrowded classrooms and therefore they are abandoning the teaching profession. This is a very important argument because a profession requires hard work and studying and people earn a living from their professions. If one abandons their profession, it suggests that they are unhappy and this could be as a result of a negative experience. According to Herzallah (2011) one of the professional development obstacles facing teachers in Northern Gaza is overcrowded classrooms. Herzallah (2011) and Nesane (2008) make very valid arguments. It is very difficult to develop as an educator in a classroom that is overcrowded as a result of challenges such as discipline, attainment of educational goals and quality teaching as you are restricted. According to Wilson (2006) class size also impacts on teacher motivation and job satisfaction.

Oliver (2006) claims that educators express frustration and difficulty in catering for individual needs in overcrowded classrooms. Frustration can be as a result of discipline problems, heavy workloads and shortage of resources. The frustration and difficulty that educators experience can inhibit them from achieving the educational outcomes in the classroom. Gibbs and Jenkins (1992) mentions that overcrowded classrooms impact on the culture of teaching. When teachers are faced with a challenge such as an overcrowded classroom it can affect the ability to provide quality teaching. According to Crute (2004) one third of new teachers leave the teaching profession after the first five years because of the stressful challenges. Bamberg (1977) points out that teachers identify large class sizes as detrimental to teaching. It is feasible to say that teachers prefer smaller classes as opposed to large overcrowded classrooms.

Gallen, Karlenzig and Tamney (1995) linked workload and stress to overcrowded classrooms. They describe teaching as a multi-track activity where teachers fill numerous roles under time pressure. It is evident that overcrowded classrooms or large classrooms impact enormously on teachers, and affects their ability to teach and also impacts on their social wellbeing, leading to stress and burnout. It has also resulted in teachers abandoning the teaching profession as a result of their negative experiences. Teachers are comfortable in teaching smaller classes as this benefits them more as opposed to a large or overcrowded classroom. Despite the challenges that teachers have to face with regards to overcrowded classrooms they still have to manage these challenges. The next section discusses how teachers cope and manage overcrowded classrooms.

2.5 COPING AND MANAGING OVERCROWDED CLASSROOMS IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS

There are many challenges associated with overcrowded classrooms; however, teachers have found ways to cope with these challenges. According to McDougall (2004) using positive behavioural support is one of the ways to manage tasks in large classrooms. McDougall (2004) claims that teachers should use positive verbal reinforcement as opposed to shouting and screaming. Tasks should also be modified to incorporate students interests (McDougall, 2004). Benbow et al. (2007) also contended that some of the ways to overcome the problems associated with overcrowded classrooms is through team teaching and peer teaching. I think this would be a very effective method in managing overcrowded classrooms as it allows more than one person to

teach the lesson as opposed to just one teacher managing and teaching which is stressful as research has indicated. Crute (2004) mentions that teacher support groups is also a useful way of managing problems. These groups discuss teacher challenges and solutions to problems (Crute, 2004).

According to Heard (2011) getting to know students is a very important part that will assist in understanding them better. Heard (2011) claims that introducing story time sessions where students share their experiences is a useful way of getting to know students. In this way students feel engaged and significant in the classroom. Bonwell and Eison (1991) indicate that one of the ways to enhance learning in large classes is through interactive learning. This is where student activity and engagement are the core elements of learning. Johnson and Christensen (2010) also mention that one of the ways to manage large classrooms is through collaborative learning where students work in teams to accomplish common goals. Students working in groups are an effective way of managing tasks especially in overcrowded or large classrooms since it is easier to control groups better.

Gibbs and Jenkins (1992) claim that in order for teachers to handle the challenges of overcrowded classrooms they need to employ structured lesson operative learning and group work strategies. However Jansen (2001) argues that group work is not working for South African teachers. From this argument it is evident that group work is a useful way of managing overcrowded classrooms however, it does not work for every teacher. Different strategies work for different individuals. I think teachers need to explore different options and look at what works best in their situations. According to Thompson (2012) a large classroom can be noisy, therefore it is important to establish guidelines early in the year to help control the noise levels. Routines are very important in a large class and therefore students should be taught how to get into routine and establish what they are supposed to do early in the year (Thompson, 2012).

According to Alber (2014) assigning duties to learners is also a way of managing overcrowded classrooms. Alber (2014) mentions duties such as class monitor which provides support to the teacher and also gives the learner a sense of responsibility where they feel valued and significant in the classroom.

According to Miller and Fritz (2003) student teachers at Iowa State were concerned with overcrowded classrooms. Miller and Fritz (2003) claim that student teachers are very concerned about the coping strategies with regards to overcrowded classrooms. The concern of these student teachers is important because if qualified teachers are facing challenges when it comes to overcrowded classrooms, student teachers should be concerned with preparing themselves for these challenges that result from overcrowded classrooms. This seems to be a prominent problem. This is an indication that teachers are not being adequately trained to deal with overcrowded classrooms, therefore specialised teacher training would allow teachers to manage and cope with overcrowded classrooms effectively if they were adequately trained.

Overcrowded classrooms pose many challenges for teachers. These challenges range from issues such as violence, discipline, management, health, emotional and psychological. Therefore schools need to look at implementation of strategies that are aimed at improving the situation so that teachers are equipped with appropriate knowledge and skills that may allow them to cope better in an overcrowded classroom. In order for schools to improve the situation for teachers, effective improvement plans are essential. Therefore, the researcher will be discussing the school improvement theory which forms the basis of this study.

2.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

At the start of any research study it is important to consider the relevant theory underpinning the knowledge base of the phenomenon to be researched (Sinclair, 2007). The theoretical framework of a research project relates to the philosophical basis on which the research takes place, and forms the link between the theoretical aspects and practical components of the investigation undertaken (Sinclair, 2007). This suggests that every research study must have a theoretical framework to form the basis of the study. According to Anfara and Mertz (2006) it is essential to have a theoretical framework for your research because it provides the lens through which your research is conducted. This study is underpinned by the theory of school improvement. This theory will assist in understanding the data generated in this study.

2.6.1 School Improvement

Thurlow (2003, p.9) defines school improvement as:

“A systematic, sustained effort at change in learning conditions in one or more schools, with the ultimate aim of accomplishing educational goals more effectively.”

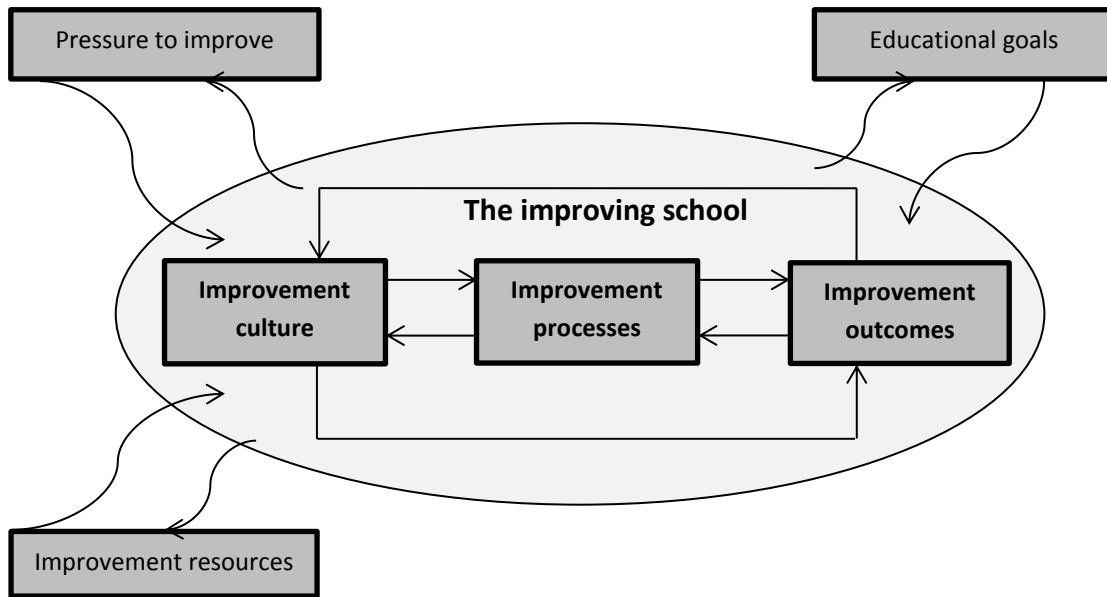
According to Jansen (2001) school improvement is necessary for a school and focuses on qualitative evaluation and change. With regards to overcrowded classrooms it is a worldwide problem for many teachers. In order to alleviate the problem for teachers in particular, school improvement plans are necessary. Creemers (2008) claims that a climate conducive to improved effectiveness is seen as essential for schools attempting to introduce intervention as this will help them become more effective. I find this theoretical framework relevant to my research since it demonstrates that with change and intervention educational goals are accomplished.

Although the school improvement framework takes into consideration all aspects related to schooling I will be focusing on how this theory can be linked to teachers' experiences and creates intervention, so that teachers are able to have positive teaching experiences in the classroom. According to Creemers (2008) teachers are considered an essential lever of change, because change is explicit in their classrooms and daily practices. However, for change to take place effective school initiatives are also necessary. In addition Creemers (2008) mentions that school improvement plans can also focus on teachers who may want to improve aspects of their teaching and support to improve teaching skills. With regards to overcrowded classrooms teachers may require support on how to deal with this situation. Teachers may also require training and support in order to equip them with the skills to deal with the problems that arise as a result of overcrowded classrooms. This theoretical framework provides an opportunity to improve teachers' skills and by improving teachers' skills this contributes towards the betterment of teaching and learning.

Creemers (2008) also indicates that improvement efforts will not only improve teachers' experiences but also the quality of teaching. As research has shown many teachers experience frustration in overcrowded classrooms and are not equipped with the skills to deal with overcrowded classrooms. This theory is relevant for this research since the researcher will be

evaluating teachers' experiences and the school improvement theoretical framework relates to qualitative evaluation. There is definitely a link between school improvement and teachers experiences as their experiences can lead to interventions and allow schools to rethink strategies and implement school improvement policies that support teachers to deal with overcrowded classrooms. Teachers are already managing and coping with overcrowded classrooms. Therefore, they have a sense of school improvement and how they cope could be adapted, strengthened and improved. 'School Improvement' is the best fit to make meaning of how teachers manage and cope with overcrowded classrooms. If schools are improved this also creates less stress for teachers and they are able to cope better in the classroom. Overcrowded classrooms are not just a problem but a way to create opportunities and rethink strategies for improvement.

Figure 2.1: Effective school improvement related to overcrowded classrooms



Source: (Creemers, 2008, p.7)

According to Creemers (2008) this model demonstrates that effective improvement leads to improved outcomes meeting educational goals. It summarises the school improvement theory and indicates the important constructs of the school improvement theoretical framework. If we improve teachers' skills, teaching and learning improves and this in turn leads to meeting educational goals.

2.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, various literatures of overcrowded classrooms was reviewed. The discussions by various authors demonstrate common challenges which impact on their ability to cope and manage overcrowded classrooms in mainstream schools. A discussion of the school improvement theoretical framework that underpins this research was also provided. The next chapter provides the research methods that were used to examine teachers' experiences in an overcrowded classroom.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The research methodology of the study comprises of a multi-faceted approach made up of various techniques for purposes of answering the research questions. This study advocates a number of ways in which usage of different research methods can be truly complementary. Moodley (2002) posited that these methods are deliberate, logical and aim to be value-neutral. He further posited that this implies that good research methods must be cautiously created and purposely engaged in a way that is designed to capitalise on the precision of the results.

This chapter focuses on the design and methodology employed to conduct the study in order to answer the following key research questions generated in Chapter One:

- **What are teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms?**
- **Why do teachers experience overcrowded classrooms the way they do?**
- **How do teachers manage overcrowded classrooms?**

This chapter presents detailed and in-depth information about the research approach, paradigm and design. This chapter will also elaborate on the data collection methods used, sampling techniques and how the data were analysed. This chapter will also present an explanation of the ethical issues related to the study as well as the limitations of the study.

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

This study adopted a qualitative approach. According to Cohen et al. (2011) qualitative methods involve collecting textual or verbal data. In addition Berg (2011) contends that qualitative research is useful for obtaining insight into situations. Myers (2013) mentions one of the key benefits of qualitative research is that it allows a researcher to see and understand the context within which decisions and actions take place. This approach was preferred because the researcher was exploring teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms. According to Liamputtong (2007) qualitative methods allow participants to express their experiences.

Teachers were able to give in-depth narratives of their experiences with overcrowded classrooms due to the fact that a qualitative approach was used. Berg (2011) pointed out that this method is commonly used for exploring behaviours and opinions on particular issues. This approach also allowed teachers to express their feelings and thoughts freely about teaching in an overcrowded classroom. The qualitative approach is used when the researcher intends to obtain complex textual descriptions of the participants experiences (Mack, 2005). This approach was ideal since it allowed the researcher an opportunity to gain in depth textual data concerning teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms.

3.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Mertens (2012) describes paradigms as frameworks of philosophical assumptions that guide researchers. Most qualitative research is underpinned by the interpretivist paradigm. Lapan, Quartaroli and Riemer (2012) supported this view and further argued that every qualitative research has an interpretive perspective which focuses on uncovering participants' views.

This research is guided by the interpretive paradigm. According to Cohen et al. (2011) the interpretive paradigm is based on people's beliefs, attitudes and perceptions. This paradigm was appropriate for this research because the researcher wanted to understand, explain and describe teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms in a mainstream school. This paradigm allowed participants to express their own feelings, attitudes and perceptions about how they felt about teaching in an overcrowded classroom. This research was based purely on the experiences of teachers. Willis (2007) mentions that interpretive researchers focus on peoples subjective experiences of the external world.

In allowing teachers to express their experiences this allowed me to gain in-depth details about how they felt when teaching in an overcrowded and why they were having the experiences that they do. Lincoln (2010) argues that interpretivist theories strive to answer the how and why questions. The interpretive paradigm is underpinned by observation and interpretation, thus to observe is to generate information about events while to interpret is to make meaning of the information by drawing inferences. This paradigm also fitted into this research because the researcher was able to collect information from teachers on their experiences with overcrowded

classrooms as well as observe them in the classroom and interpret and make sense of the data that was generated. This paradigm was preferred since it allowed the researcher to obtain subjective experiences, beliefs, attitudes and views of the participants.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

This research takes the form of a case study. The case study aims to understand the case in depth and in its natural setting, recognising its complexity and its context (Punch, 2009). In addition, Neale, Thapa and Boyce (2006) postulated that a case study gives the story behind the result by capturing what happened to bring about a situation. Neale et al. (2006) claim that case studies are appropriate when there are unique or interesting stories to be told. Case studies provide much more detailed information (Neale et al., 2006). This is also supported by Lee and Brennenstuhl (2010) who assert that a case study provides an in-depth description, exploration or explanation of a study.

Moreover, the central assumption of a case study is that it is suitable where the 'how' and 'why' questions are being explored with the participants (Lincoln, 2010). The case study design therefore assisted the researcher to gain in-depth information from teachers and how they experienced overcrowded classrooms in the mainstream school. The data generation tools employed, allowed the researcher to pose and probe the 'how' and 'why' questions. This was important as it provided an opportunity for teachers to provide in-depth information about their experiences of overcrowded classrooms. Additionally Creswell (2008) contended that a case study is linked to providing a detailed description of the situations in the research study involving people, events, and how their interaction with their environment is shaped. In the same vein, Cohen et al. (2011) posits that case studies are very specific. For this study, the researcher chose a case study in order to explore a specific group of teachers, within one particular school in order to explore their experiences of overcrowded classrooms.

3.5 STUDY AREA

Cosmo Primary School is a pseudonym that I have chosen for this case study. Each teacher participating in this study is also given a pseudonym which is TA, TB, TC, TD, TE, TF, TG, and TH. This school consists of majority black learners with numbers of fifty to hundred per classroom. It is a public school, semi-urban in the Umlazi district in KwaZulu-Natal. Teachers mentioned in their questionnaire that teaching and learning resources are very limited and learners do not pay school fees as they come from poverty stricken backgrounds where the finances are also very limited. The staff comprises of 25 educators and 20 classrooms. This school was preferred for two reasons; the enrolment in each classroom exceeded what the policy requirements are, and the classrooms were packed and desks were crammed and there was no space.

3.6 SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

According to Field (2005) a sample is a smaller collection of units from a population used to determine truths about that population. Thomas (2005) further argues that in situations where an investigation of an entire population is not practical, a subset of the larger population is used. The researcher chose two types of sampling for this study. The sampling techniques that the researcher chose were purposive sampling and convenience sampling.

3.6.1 Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling means that the researcher is looking for participants who possess certain traits or qualities (Koerber & McMichael, 2008). In this research only those teachers who teach in a school with overcrowded classrooms were chosen. Palys (2008) contends that purposive sampling is synonymous with qualitative research. Teachers who have overcrowded classrooms were chosen so that the researcher could gain in depth information about their experiences in these classrooms. Creswell (2008) states that when a sampling method is chosen the researcher must consider the purpose of the research.

The participants that were chosen were selected based on the purpose of this research. Palys (2008) mentions that the biggest question any researcher needs to ask him or herself is what exactly he or she wants to accomplish. In this research, the researcher wanted to explain and

describe the experiences that teachers have in an overcrowded classroom. The purposive sampling technique was ideal since it fitted the purpose of the research objectives of this study.

3.6.2 Convenience Sampling

Farrokhi and Mahmoudi-Hamidabad (2012) define the convenience sample as consisting of participants who are readily available to contact. According to Koerber and McMichael (2008) although this definition emphasises readily available, some convenience samples are more readily accessible than others, so even if a sample is convenient, some amount of effort will likely be involved in reaching participants from that sample. This sampling technique was used because participants were selected from the researchers' school and were easily accessible to generate data from and this was convenient.

3.6.3 The Sample

There were eight participants in this study and three classrooms were observed. The sample included the following:

- Teachers with the highest number of learners in their classrooms were chosen to participate in the study.
- Classrooms with the highest enrolment in the entire school were chosen to be observed.
- Eight teachers participated and three classrooms were observed.

A brief profile description of teachers who participated in this study was compiled.

Table 3.1: Teachers' Profile

Teacher's name	Sex	Age	Highest Qualification	Teaching Experience	Years of service in this school
Teacher A (TA)	Female	42	Bachelor of Pedagogics	13 years	12 years
Teacher B (TB)	Female	32	Bachelor of Education	9 years	6 Years
Teacher C (TC)	Male	48	National Diploma Education	17 years	13 Years
Teacher D (TD)	Female	30	Bachelor of Education	8 years	8 Years
Teacher E (TE)	Female	38	Bachelor of Education	15 years	13 Years
Teacher F (TF)	Female	42	Bachelor of Pedagogics	20 Years	17 Years
Teacher G (TG)	Female	32	Bachelor of Education	9 years	6 Years
Teacher H (TH)	Male	29	Bachelor of Education	2 years	2 years

Table 3.1 indicates that eight teachers participated in this study. These teachers provided the researcher with rich information on their experiences of overcrowded classrooms in the mainstream school in the Durban South district, KwaZulu-Natal.

3.7 METHODS OF DATA GENERATION

Adejmi et al. (2010) claim that data generation is a very crucial step in any research process and research involves the collection of pertinent data. According to Kothari (2004) generating appropriate data is necessary for all research. This statement is very relevant as the data that is generated determines the findings of your study. It is the responsibility of the researcher to select data collection tools that he or she thinks will provide him or her with rich and appropriated data in order to respond to the research questions. For this qualitative study, the researcher chose unstructured questionnaire and observation as methods of data generation.

3.7.1 Unstructured Questionnaire

In this study a questionnaire was used as the primary data generation tool. Questionnaires are usually associated with quantitative research. However, Adejmi et al. (2010), contend that a questionnaire can be structured to add more qualitiveness by including more open ended

questions so as to give the research a richer and meaningful result especially when such research involves personal opinions and experiences. In support of this Fife Schwa (2001) claims that a questionnaire is the single most common research tool used due to its simplicity and versatility. Thus, the researcher can use a questionnaire as a data generation method in various ways depending on the nature of the study and the type of data the researcher intends to generate. Therefore, this method of data generation was adopted as an appropriate method for this study.

There are different types of questionnaires namely: structured and unstructured. In this study, an unstructured questionnaire was used as a method of generating data. According to Cohen et al. (2011) an unstructured questionnaire asks open ended questions. Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003) maintain that open ended questions are central to unstructured questionnaires and impose no restrictions and they allow for any response to a question provided by the respondent. This type of questionnaire was preferred since the researcher wanted respondents to express their experiences freely without any restrictions. It also gave respondents ample time to think about their responses and complete his or her questionnaire and return it to the researcher on completion. This questionnaire was designed with numerous how and why questions as this would enable one to retrieve rich meaningful data about teachers experiences in overcrowded classrooms. It is also a very simple research tool to use and allows you to ask as many questions as possible. The questionnaire generated personal opinions, beliefs, emotions and experiences.

3.7.2 Observation

According to Simpson and Tuson (2005) an observation is taking note of peoples' behaviours, events, settings, artefacts and routines. Cohen et al. (2011) mention that one of the distinct features of observations is that it offers the researcher the opportunity to gather 'live' data from naturally occurring social situations. In this way the researcher can look directly at what is taking place. The observation method was chosen as one of the data collection tools since it would allow the researcher to observe teachers teaching in overcrowded classrooms and take note of their behaviour, attitude and interaction with learners, teaching methods, language, discipline and management strategies. This was accomplished through the use of an observation schedule. Simpson and Tuson (2005) maintain that an observation schedule determines what should be looked at and is organised into categories. Teachers were observed teaching in three classrooms.

The classrooms that were chosen to observe had the highest enrolment in the entire school. It was felt that it was important to observe these classrooms and include in this sample so that the researcher could also have first-hand experience into what goes on in an overcrowded classroom and observe learner-teacher interaction, teacher attitude and presentation as well as the teaching style.

The researcher was a non-participatory observer as she did not interact with or was a part of the classroom and tried to remain as inconspicuous as possible. The researcher observed lessons closely and sat at the back of the classroom. A colleague assisted with the recording of the observation for the purpose of comparing notes. An accurate recording of exactly what was happening in the classroom was done. This allowed the researcher to gather rich data as she was recording what was taking place in a natural setting.

Cohen et al. (2011) point out that what people say differs from what they do and an observation provides a reality check. This data collection method was ideal since it allowed the researcher to have first-hand experience into what was happening with overcrowded classrooms. Cohen et al. (2011) further claim that observations are powerful tools for gaining insight into situations. Therefore this was a preferred method as it allowed the researcher and opportunity to gain insight into teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

A thematic analysis approach was used to analyse the data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research questions and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006, p.79) also mention that there are six phases of thematic analysis which include:

- Familiarisation with the data: which is transcribing the data, reading and re-reading the data and noting initial ideas.
- Coding: This refers to searching for interesting patterns or features across the entire data set.

- Searching for themes: Collating codes into potential themes and gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
- Reviewing themes: Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set.
- Defining and naming the themes: Clear definitions and names for each theme.
- Writing up: producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

For the purpose of this research the data was read carefully and thoroughly and then transcribed and analysed. When the data was coded, the researcher then looked for patterns in the data and placed them into the different categories. The researcher then grouped similar categories together and placed them under 4 themes which were defined. Each theme was discussed in in-depth detail. Thematic analysis was chosen for the purpose of ensuring the rich description of the data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis provides a rich thematic description of the entire data set, so the reader gets a sense of the pre dominant and important theme.

3.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness was obtained through a process of testing the data analysis findings and conclusions and obtaining how credible the data is (Nieuwenhuis, 2011). With this in mind, Guba and Lincoln (2005) claim that the strategy to ensure trustworthiness of qualitative research was therefore applied, which include: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

- Credibility is an evaluation of whether or not the research findings represent a credible interpretation of the data drawn from the participants' original data (Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

According to Morrow (2005):

- Transferability refers to the extent to which the reader is able to generalise the findings to his or her context.
- Dependability refers to the way the study is conducted and states that the study should be consistent across time.
- Confirmability is based on the acknowledgement that the research is never objective.

For the purpose of this study, more than one data collection tool was used in order to strengthen the data. Participants were also asked to read their transcripts once they had been transcribed so that they could verify that the information was interpreted accurately. A colleague was also asked to observe classrooms jointly with the researcher so that there was more than one observer and the researcher is able to compare notes and strengthen the data. For the purpose of this research, content validity will be used. Content validity means the data collection instruments actually cover the area that they say they cover (Wilson, 2009). These instruments will be examined by more than one person to check if they are actually covering the area of teachers' experiences.

3.10 ETHICAL ISSUES

Turner and Fozdar (2010) stated that ethical responsibility is fundamental in all research.. Drew (2007) points out that attention to ethics in an investigation; requires extra thought and effort. The Ethical Standards of American Educational Research Association (AERA) (2002) states that it is important that educational researchers respect the rights, privacy, dignity and sensitivities of all participants involved in research. Drew (2007) further claims that a researchers primary responsibilities are to obtain consent, protect the participants from harm and maintain privacy. Mertens (2012) points out that researchers are obliged to promise confidentiality to participants in a study.

For the purpose of this study:

- Ethical clearance was obtained from the university (**Appendix A**).
- Consent was requested from the Department of Basic Education informing them of the intention to use Cosmo Primary School in this research (**Appendix B**).
- A request letter was written to the Principal of the school informing him about the purpose of the study and advised him of the intention to use teachers in this research and observing teachers teaching in the classroom (**Appendix C**).
- The researcher ensured that the Principal signed a consent form to grant permission to use teachers at this school in this research (**Appendix D**).

- Teachers that were participating in my study were also informed about its purpose, what was expected of them, its duration and their involvement. All teachers participating in my research signed a consent form as well (**Appendix E and F**).

Consent involves the procedure by which an individual may choose whether or not to participate in the study (Drew, 2007). The researchers' task is to ensure that the participants have a complete understanding of the purpose of the research, the methods used in the study as well as the risks and demands placed upon the participant (Best & Kahn, 2006).

All participants as well as the school involved in this study were assured confidentiality and anonymity. No participants' true identity was revealed. The real name of the school was also not mentioned. The researcher also used pseudonyms to represent the participants. Participants were also informed that they were free to withdraw from the study at any point in time. Participants were assured that once the data was transcribed they could read through the transcripts to ensure that no information was misrepresented. Participants were also assured that the research would not cause harm in any way but will be beneficial by contributing to improvements that will enhance the teaching experience.

3.11 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Cohen et al. (2011) assess multiple limitations associated with research and one that is relevant to this study is generalisability. This study contains teachers' experiences in one particular school so the findings cannot be generalised to a larger population. This research focuses on teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms in one mainstream school and provides data that may contribute to effective teaching and learning in this school. This research is conducted in the context of one mainstream school, therefore conclusions cannot be generalised. According to Gay, Millis and Airasian (2009) in qualitative research, the findings are context bound and do not draw conclusions that can be generalised to a larger population.

3.12 CONCLUSION

This chapter outlined a discussion and description of the research methodology, including the paradigm, approach and data collection tools used in the study. The sample size and procedures were also discussed. Lastly the data analysis, trustworthiness, ethical considerations and limitations were presented. The next chapter is a presentation and discussion of the findings that emerged from the data generated.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the analysis, findings and discussions of the data generated from observations and unstructured questionnaires. The data is presented according to the themes and categories that emerged from the data. Further, in the presentation of data, teachers' verbatim quotations are also used. Literature is also infused in the discussions.

Generation of data, as indicated in chapter three was analysed following the six phases of thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). These phases include familiarisation with the data, coding, searching for themes, reviewing the themes, defining and naming the themes and writing up.

4.2 DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Three themes emerged from the observation and unstructured questionnaire in response to teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms in a mainstream school. Theme one answers research question one, theme two answers research question two and theme three answers research question three. Table 4.1 below shows themes and subthemes.

Table 4.1 Teachers' responses towards overcrowded classrooms

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Theme One: RSQ 1 Teachers experience overcrowded classrooms as 'stressful'	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inadequate classroom space• Issues related to safety and health• Minimal learner and teacher interaction.• Disruptive behaviours• Teachers experienced emotional and psychological problems• Increased workload.• Teaching time

<p>Theme Two: RSQ 2 Contributing factors that lead to teachers’ stressful experiences are multiple and complex.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of support from management • Policy implementation • Teacher training/Professional development • Lack of resources and finances
<p>Theme Three: RSQ 3 Teachers’ experiences of managing overcrowded classrooms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher individual support • Hope

4.2.1 Teachers’ experience overcrowded classrooms as ‘stressful’

The experiences of teachers in dealing with overcrowded classrooms are ‘stressful’. The following sub-themes were identified as conditions that teachers find themselves: inadequate classroom space; issues related to safety and health; disruptive behaviours; teachers experienced emotional and psychological problems and increased workload and inadequate time.

4.2.1.1 Inadequate classroom space

All the participating teachers indicated that in an overcrowded classroom insufficient space is a major challenge. The majority of the participants indicated that they were able to identify this by noticing that learners cannot move freely in the classroom. Teachers also expressed how an overcrowded classroom restricts their movement in the classroom.

TA commented:

“There are too many children in one classroom. The space in the class is insufficient for the no of learners in the classroom. Movement is minimized.”

“Learners are many and there is not enough moving space in the classroom.”(TH)

During the observation, the researcher also noticed that there were a large number of learners in a classroom.

Some participants indicated that another way of identifying an overcrowded classroom was the fact that classroom desks were not able to accommodate all the learners in a conducive way. In some instances learners have to share desks and chairs, while others sit on the floor.

TE asserted:

“Desks are tightly packed. Children are sitting and can barely move between tables.”

TF also stated:

“There is limited space for learners to sit, instead of 2 per a desk, 4 learners are forced to share. Learners have to sit on the floor as well.”

The above findings were also supported by data from observations. During classroom observations, the researcher also observed that the classroom was very small and learners were crowded behind the desks. She also noticed that the learners did not have space for their bags and their bags were kept outside unattended. Some bags were left outside in the corridor.

Some teachers indicated that overcrowded classrooms restricted teachers’ movement in the classroom, hence stressful. Teachers seemed to be confined to one place and could not implement some of their teaching strategies which they believed could be beneficial if classrooms are not overcrowded. The following participants expressed their situations with overcrowded classrooms:

TB stated:

“I cannot move around in the classroom.”

Similarly TC stated:

“I try to move around though it is hard to do so.”

TD expressed his concern about overcrowded classrooms that constrain desired teaching.

“I am unable to use the classroom to have a reading corner or fantasy corner.”

Furthermore from the observations, what was noticed was that there were no reading corners in the classroom or any other additional resources as there was no space. The only thing that was present in the classroom was the desks and chairs.

The above quotations show that teachers' experiences with overcrowded classroom pose stressful conditions in a variety of ways, particularly leads to minimal interaction and movement of learners and teachers in their classrooms. The findings in this study correlate with (De Corby, 2005) who found that in North America one of the issues associated with overcrowded classrooms is lack of space. In a similar way, a study conducted by Baruth (2009) on overcrowded classrooms in the Inanda area revealed that insufficient space was a problem for teachers. The researcher agrees with the findings of this study. In addition, lack of space in a classroom can also present health and safety issues.

4.2.1.2 Issues related to health and safety

Majority of the teachers responses also indicated that due to the classroom being crammed and desks tightly packed it becomes extremely uncomfortable in summer and teachers experience unpleasant smells due to the overcrowding.

TE stated:

“Sixty four learners in a class in summer is a nightmare. Fans do not work. Learners are uncomfortable, very restless and not focused.”

TF stated:

“There isn't enough ventilation leading to extreme heat and sometimes unpleasant smells.”

TG stated:

“Due to lack of space classrooms become extremely hot and uncomfortable causing learners to become restless.”

The above responses highlighted that ventilation in an overcrowded classroom causes discomfort for teachers as well learners in the classroom. The above responses are also an indication that it affects learners' focus in the classroom.

During the observations, what was observed was that there were no fans and the classrooms were small and cramped causing it to become very humid. The observations revealed that learners were restless and not focused.

The findings also correlate with Lee and Chang (1999) who found that due to the lack of space in an overcrowded classroom and the high number of learners' high levels of CO₂ can pose a health threat to learners and teachers. Lee and Chang (1999) points out that in an overcrowded classroom the CO₂ levels exceed the norm. This is consistent with the responses that teachers mentioned on ventilation and how they sometimes experience extreme heat and unpleasant smells. Baruth (2009) also conducted a study on overcrowded classrooms and found that teachers are not keen to teach in poor classroom conditions such as overcrowded classrooms. This poses a major challenge for teachers and leads to stressful experiences. In conditions such as an overcrowded classroom it is very difficult for the teacher to interact with learners as these conditions can restrict interaction.

4.2.1.3 Minimal learner and teacher interaction

Teachers at Cosmo Primary School indicated that they do most of the talking and stand in front of the class and teach. They also expressed that it is difficult to give learners individual attention. They also indicated that it is difficult to know the situation of every single learner. They are also unable to help weak learners which impacts on learner performance. Teachers also indicated that the learners are not enthusiastic to engage in lessons and are very disinterested.

TA stated:

“I basically do most of the talking. Learners do not respond to questions sometimes. It is difficult to give individual attention.”

TF stated:

*“You lose personal connection with learners and it is difficult to place a name to a face.
As a result of not knowing the names of learners some feel they are insignificant.
Learners cannot receive individual attention.”*

TH stated:

“It is difficult to engage learners in the lesson. It is noisy and you cannot give individual attention.”

I also observed that learners seemed very disinterested. I could see that when they were given activities to do learners were confused and were answering incorrectly. They didn't raise their hands to ask for assistance. The teacher also did not walk around and monitor the activities or assist any of the learners.

The teachers' responses indicate that they do not interact with learners due to the situation of overcrowding. Teachers are unable to assist weak learners who require individual attention. As a result of having so many learners in a class, teachers are not familiar with the names of learners and as a result learners feel insignificant. Personal connection is also lost with the learners. It is evident that there is minimal learner and teacher interaction in Cosmo Primary School. Other studies have also indicated that there is minimal learner and teacher interaction in overcrowded classrooms. Class size can affect how much time teachers give to individual students as well as the social dynamics among students (Ehrenberg, 2001). According to Mtika (2010) in Malawi large class sizes leave trainee teachers with only one choice of using “convenient” teaching methods which requires pupils to be mainly passive recipients of knowledge during lessons. Van Amerom (2005) also stated that students experience anonymity in an overcrowded classroom. Gibbs and Jenkins (1992) also mention that large classes have minimal learner and teacher interaction creating fewer hands on experience for learners thus affecting their performance. As the findings indicate that there is minimal learner teacher interaction in an overcrowded classroom, it can lead to discipline problems as learner's feel insignificant which could cause them to engage in disruptive behaviour.

4.2.1.4 Disruptive behaviours

Discipline in an overcrowded classroom is a major challenge for teachers. The teachers at Cosmo Primary School expressed that they experience numerous discipline problems since numbers in the classroom are large. Teachers' responses indicated that the discipline problems have impacted on teaching and learning and that teaching and learning is not as effective in a classroom where there are discipline problems. Some of the discipline problems that teachers were faced with were violence, theft, sexual behaviour and sexual harassment, disruption and noisiness during lessons. When teachers were asked about their experiences discipline was a prominent issue that they mentioned.

I asked about learner discipline in the context of overcrowded classrooms. All teachers expressed that they had discipline problems and it has an impeded effect on teaching and learning.

TA stated:

"I personally experience discipline problems. Learners are too noisy especially when there is a function happening children become in a frenzy."

TB stated:

"There is too much noise, learners are always talking and disturbing the class. It is difficult to discipline learners because of the numbers are high learners are always talking and fighting."

TC stated:

"I have experienced bullying, verbal abuse, violence, racial tensions, teasing, theft, sexual activity (touching others and themselves and sex talk)."

TD stated:

"Violence, theft and disruptive behaviour is a common. Learners have a bad attitude and they are disrespectful."

TE stated:

“Learners fight a lot over minor issues like tramping one another missing their belongings as there is no space for their belongings. So I find myself solving minor issues that provoke severe discipline problems. This takes away time from teaching.”

TF stated:

“Learners are violent, stab each other. Theft is a major problem. They are sexually active and sexual harassment is also a problem.”

TG stated:

“Violence, theft, sexual behaviour and persistent disobedience is frequent. Learners do not follow schools code of conduct.”

Furthermore, what was observed was that learners failed to listen. They continued to talk and get into little discussions. The teacher ignored these issues and continued to teach. It seemed as if she didn't care whether the learners were listening or not. Learners also do not have their own stationery; they share stuff and fight over stuff. Further observation showed that during the lessons when reading took place learners were pulling a book from each other.

The responses indicate that discipline problems arise as a result of overcrowded classrooms. The teachers' responses at Cosmo Primary School indicated that they have severe discipline problems. This takes away time from teaching and also impacts on learning as it is difficult to teach in a classroom that is not conducive to teaching and learning. Teachers' responses indicate that the most common discipline problems are violence, theft, sexual behaviour and disruptive behaviour. Teachers indicated that they find themselves settling minor problems that provoke serious discipline problems. Teachers' responses also indicated that learners are disrespectful and they also experience bullying and teasing. The responses from the teachers at Cosmo Primary School are consistent with the findings of other studies that carried out research in overcrowded classrooms. Oosthuizen and Van Staden (2007) mention numerous school related factors that heighten learners' propensity to engage in disruptive behaviour, one of the factors that were listed was overcrowded classrooms.

Levin and Nolan (1996) state that some of the discipline problems faced by teachers in overcrowded classrooms were bullying, inattention, throwing objects, teasing and the use of vulgar language. According to Norris (2003) teachers in overcrowded classrooms in America used class time to settle disputes and soothe feelings in the classroom. According to Emmer and Stough (2010) teachers find difficulty in monitoring behaviours in an overcrowded classroom. Wilson (2009) reports that overcrowded classrooms are much noisier and that pushing, crowding and hitting often occur in larger classes than smaller classes. Issues such as discipline can cause teachers to become very stressed and frustrated leading to them experiencing psychological and emotional issues.

4.2.1.5 Psychological and emotional issues

Most of the teachers that participated in this study expressed that they are stressed due to the increased workload. They also expressed frustration due to discipline problems, large numbers and learners' attitudes. Teachers' responses also indicated that they are taking most of their work home which takes away family time and impacts on their personal life. Teachers also mentioned resigning or changing their careers. The responses also indicated that the learner attitudes impacted on the teachers attitudes. Teachers were asked what their experiences with overcrowded classrooms were and they responded according to the issues below.

Stress and frustration was a common response from teachers. This is evident in the responses below. The stress arose from many different issues such as discipline, increased workload, lack of resources and lack of support.

TB stated:

"I don't cope at all. I am always stressed. I am always stressed and shouting."

TC stated:

"I am very frustrated and I cannot achieve what I expect to achieve during a lesson I don't have enough resources."

TD stated:

“I am always stressed because I am not assisted by my HOD and Principal.”

TF stated:

“I am very frustrated and despondent learners are badly behaved and don’t care.”

The responses indicate that the teachers are stressed. The stress is as a result of not achieving what they need to do in the classroom. The discipline problems are also stressing teachers out. Further observations revealed that the teachers did not seem happy being in the classroom. What was observed was that they didn’t seem like they were enjoying what they were doing and this was evident in the delivery of the lessons. There was no sign of passion and enthusiasm. This is consistent with the findings in other studies. Overcrowded classrooms have created a stress for teachers making it difficult for them to handle the learning needs of learners (Oliver, 2006). Oliver (2006) claims that educators express frustration and difficulty in catering for individual needs in overcrowded classrooms. Gallen et al. (1995) linked increased workload and stress to overcrowded classrooms. The teachers’ responses at Cosmo Primary School were consistent with the findings in other studies. The responses indicated that stress and frustration are linked to overcrowded classrooms.

The stress and frustration that the teachers at Cosmo Primary School were experiencing were causing them to feel demotivated, discouraged and to consider leaving the teaching profession.

TE stated:

“I often consider abandoning this profession.”

TF stated:

“I prefer changing my career since I am not interested in teaching. I just do what I have to do whether they learn or not is not my problem.”

Similarly TG stated:

“I am not enthusiastic about teaching and I have lost interest and motivation.”

The responses have indicated that teachers are stressed to a point where they are considering leaving the teaching profession. In a study carried out by Nesane (2008) he argued that teachers are having negative experiences with overcrowded classrooms and therefore they are abandoning the teaching profession. Gibbs and Jenkins (1992) also found that handling large classes leads to teacher stress. These responses are consistent with findings mentioned in other studies. Teachers can also experience emotional and psychological issues due to an increased workload. Overcrowded classrooms have a large number of learners and therefore teachers' workload would increase in terms of marking and assessments and this could also become stressful for teachers.

4.2.1.6 Increased workload

Due to the high numbers of learners in the classroom teachers' workload is increased. Teachers indicated in their responses that most of their marking and planning were done at home which takes away family time and this has impacted on their personal lives.

TF stated:

“All my marking is done at home most of my family time is sacrificed because this is the only way to get marking done.”

Similarly TG stated:

“I take marking home since it is impossible to mark at school. This takes away my personal time. My daughter complains that I am neglecting her. I sometimes ignore her needs to get my work done and this causes problems.”

TH stated:

“I am up late in the night marking while my family is asleep. Sometimes on Saturdays I cannot watch my son's soccer games because I am busy stressing about completing my own work.”

The teachers' responses have indicated that the increased workload has caused them to give up personal and family time. They are unable to complete marking at school because there is not

enough time and many learners' books to go through. TG stated that her daughter complains about her neglecting her and TH misses her sons soccer matches, this is an indication that the workload in an overcrowded classroom is increased and the teachers are forced to take their marking home to get it done timeously. This is also consistent with the findings in other studies conducted. Crute (2004) mentioned that overcrowded classrooms were associated with increased workload and led to teacher burnout. Nesane (2008) also mentioned that teachers struggled with the increased workload in an overcrowded classroom. One can conclude from the above responses and literature that overcrowded classrooms lead to increased workload and this can impact on teachers personal lives as they have to give up personal time to manage their workload. The time at school is not enough to allow teachers to complete their work. Therefore time is also an issue that makes teachers' experiences stressful.

4.2.1.7 Teaching time

Teachers at Cosmo Primary School responses indicated that there is not enough time in an overcrowded classroom because numbers are high. There is not enough time to monitor activities and complete tasks. They also spend time settling disputes which takes away time from teaching and learning. They also do not have time to give learners individual attention and to mark every single learner's book.

TA stated:

"I try to do reading during the lunch breaks."

TB stated:

"I find myself solving minor discipline issues and this takes away time from teaching. I also take home marking as there is not enough time to mark learners work"

TE stated:

"Numbers are large, school day is short, too much of administration work and planning."

Time is a factor that impacts on teaching and learning as the teachers at Cosmo Primary School indicated in their responses. TA stated that she tries to do reading during breaks which indicates

that there is not enough time during lessons to do this. TE also mentioned that administrative work and planning is too much and the school day is short.

I also observed that the teachers did not begin their lessons immediately because they come into the classroom and settle problems and wait for learners to settle down. I also observed that the teacher just had enough time to explain a concept and give an exercise and the period was over and the next teacher was ready to come in for her lesson. There was no time to monitor if learners completed the activity or to assist learners or even mark learners' books. This is also consistent with the findings in other studies. According to Norris (2003) teachers in overcrowded classrooms in America used class time to settle disputes and soothe feelings in the classroom. This takes away time from learning and impacts on the teachers' lessons. Olivier (2006) also indicated that managing time in an overcrowded classroom is very difficult since the numbers are high and there is not enough time. Kolo and Ojo (2006) noted that teachers in Nigeria perceived that class work takes a lot of time in large classes.

The findings in this study indicate that teachers experiences with overcrowded classrooms is stressful and these teachers face a plethora of barriers including inadequate space, issues related to safety and health, minimal learner and teacher interaction, discipline, emotional and psychological problems, increased workload and inadequate time are contributing factors to stressful experiences. The next theme responds to research question two.

4.2.2 Contributing factors that lead to teachers' stressful experiences are multiple and complex

Teachers were asked to talk about what they think and feel are the contributing factors that lead to them having the experiences that they do. The following sub themes were identified as factors that lead to teachers having the experiences that they do: Lack of support from management, lack of resources, policy implementation, teacher training and professional development.

4.2.2.1 Lack of support from management

The responses from educators indicated that there is a lack of support from management. Teachers indicated that they are not assisted with the challenges that they experience. They are not motivated. They receive no guidance or support from school management, especially the

Principal. Teachers who experience discipline problems and problems related to teaching and learning are not assisted by the management of the school. When teachers were asked why they have the experiences that they do, they expressed lack of support from school management, especially the Principal and Head of Department (HOD) as evidenced below.

TD stated:

“I am not assisted by HOD or principal to resolve issues.”

TE stated:

“I am not motivated sometimes I am confused and I don’t know how to handle certain issues and nobody wants to assist. So I figure out on my own what to do.”

TF stated:

“I am tired of dealing with discipline on my own. Management does not assist

Teachers at Cosmo Primary School indicated that they are having the experiences that they do because they are not receiving support from management. Classrooms are overcrowded, teachers are frustrated as they are experiencing discipline problems and are not being assisted, as a result they deal with issues on their own and they end up sacrificing teaching time. They also do not feel encouraged and motivated. They require the support of management. Moreover, what has been observed is that teachers didn’t refer any discipline problems to management. It is also evident from the findings that the policies are not being implemented since the learner-teacher ratio exceeds what the policy stipulates and as a result teachers are left to deal with overcrowded classrooms which have resulted in stressful experiences.

4.2.2.2 Policy implementation

Policy implementation is a major problem at Cosmo Primary School. The responses from teachers indicated that the learner-teacher ratio policies are not being implemented because the enrolment in each classroom exceeds the learner-teacher ratio.

The responses from the teachers at Cosmo Primary School indicated that the policies are not being implemented. Firstly, the enrolment in each classroom exceeds what the policy says.

According to the DBE (2014) the learner teacher ratio is 31:1. The enrolment at Cosmo Primary School exceeds the learner teacher ratio, which means that the policy is not being implemented at this school. On being asked why they have the experiences that they do, the teachers responded by saying that the school is not implementing policy.

TB stated:

“The amount of learners is 50-100.”

Similarly TC stated:

“The classroom has numbers of learners. There are over 50 learners in one classroom.”

TD stated:

“The number of learners exceed the number as per department of education.”

TE stated:

“Class can accommodate 30 learners. Classroom sizes exceed the learner teacher ratio.”

The responses have indicated that Cosmo Primary School is not implementing the policy when it comes to learner-teacher ratio and teachers are sitting with overcrowded classrooms. The teachers indicated that their classrooms are designed to take 30 learners and they have 50 to 100 learners which is way above what the departmental requirements are.

There is no indication that this policy is being implemented at Cosmo Primary School. Furthermore, what was observed was that the classrooms are small and packed to the point where there is no space. Further observations revealed the discomfort that teachers experience with regards to teaching. They are not comfortable in their teaching environment. This is also affecting the quality of education. One of the policies that were implemented to alleviate overcrowded classrooms was the Post Provisioning Norm (PPN) (Baruth, 2009). According to Baruth (2009) this policy aimed to reduce overcrowding by lowering the learner-teacher ratios in all South African schools. In addition to Ipinge (2005) states that many factors in Namibia hamper the delivery of quality education. Ipinge (2005) also contends that one of the factors is

high learner-teacher ratios. A high learner-teacher ratio makes it extremely difficult to provide quality education (Ipinge, 2005). Moreover teachers expressed that they did not receive training to deal with large classes and this impacts on their ability to perform effectively as teachers. Teachers' experiences are also stressful because they did not receive adequate training to deal with overcrowded classrooms. Furthermore they are not developing as professionals.

4.2.2.3 Teacher training and professional development

The teachers at Cosmo Primary School have indicated that the situation of overcrowded classrooms has affected their professional development. They cannot be effective and make lessons interesting and exciting because of the lack of resources, the discipline issues and lack of support. Teachers feel that this has affected their professional development and they were not equipped with the skills to deal with this situation.

TC stated:

“Teachers colleges must prepare prospective teachers for overcrowded classrooms. It is a big problem that is hard to handle. You have no choice, you have to accept it and teach.”

TF stated:

“Teacher dissatisfaction results in low morale. Teachers are overwhelmed and this comprises the level of education.”

Similarly TG stated:

“I cannot give of my best. I was not trained to cope with this. The department needs to provide workshops for teachers who deal with overcrowded classrooms.”

TH stated:

“I was not trained for this. This situation has made me dislike teaching and I cannot plan because there are so many challenges that come in the way.”

Further observations revealed that teachers were not passionate and enthusiastic. Lessons were of a sub-standard quality and it was evident that there was inadequate planning because learners

were disinterested and not engaged. The responses also indicated that teacher training is a concern for teachers as they were not trained to deal with this situation and feel that overcrowded classrooms is an issue that teacher training colleges need to consider.

The teachers' responses indicated that overcrowded classrooms have not allowed them to develop as professionals. They are unable to plan and create interesting lessons because of this. They experience dissatisfaction because of the challenges that they face. The responses also indicated that the situation has affected their performance. Some of the teachers also expressed that they were not trained for this and that teacher training colleges should consider training teachers to teach in overcrowded classrooms. This is consistent with the findings in other studies. Ali et al. (2011) claim that overcrowded classrooms in Pakistan are affecting female teachers' performances negatively. Teachers in Northern Gaza believed that overcrowded classrooms are one of the most important professional development obstacles from the nature of their work (Herzallah, 2011). Teacher training and professional development is a concern for teachers and has impacted on their experiences. However, resources are also an important aspect in ensuring lessons are effective and interesting. Resources are an important part of teaching and learning.

4.2.2.4 Lack of resources

Lack of resources was a major problem at Cosmo Primary School and this affected teaching and learning. Teachers indicated that lessons cannot be interesting and exciting due to lack of resources and the resources that are available are not enough and learners are forced to share. Teachers at Cosmo Primary School also indicated that with subjects like science there are not enough resources to conduct experiments and learners are unable to purchase materials since most of them come from low income households. The school is also unable to provide materials due to finances. Learners do not pay school fees so funds are minimal.

TA stated:

“There are not enough resources especially when you need to conduct experiments for natural science. When technology projects are done, learners are unable to purchase materials and school is unable to provide materials for learners. This makes teaching very difficult.”

TB stated:

“Lessons cannot be exciting because classrooms are so overcrowded and resources are not enough you just lose hope.”

Teacher C stated that although they don't have resources she tries to improvise because she has been teaching in Cosmo Primary School for years and nothing has changed.

TC stated:

“Practical's are too hard to conduct. There are not enough resources to make lessons interesting and exciting. I don't have a proper chalkboard it is broken. It is difficult but I improvise.”

TE stated:

“Learners share what we have. There are not enough resources and not enough funds to provide resources as school fees are a big problem.”

I also observed that there were no resources present in the classroom. The teacher mostly used the chalkboard and learners had to share whatever resources they had. The school cannot attempt to purchase any resources as they do not have the finances.

Teachers' responses indicated that a lack of resources is a problem for teaching and learning. Even if there are some resources available, it is not enough and learners have to share. The school is also unable to provide resources due to finances. Teacher C mentioned that she has been teaching at Cosmo Primary School for years and nothing has changed so she decided to improvise. Teacher B also mentioned that lessons cannot be exciting and interesting since the lack of resources is impacting on teaching and learning.

It is evident from the above findings that teachers have the experiences that they do because there is a lack of support from management, policies are not being implemented, teachers have not been trained to deal with overcrowded classrooms and there is a lack of resources which restricts them in terms of teaching and learning. These findings were also consistent with the literature. Although teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms are stressful, they are

still managing these classes. The next theme responds to research question three which is how teachers manage overcrowded classrooms.

4.2.3 Teachers' experiences of managing overcrowded classrooms

Managing overcrowded classrooms is a difficult task for teachers since the number of learners is high and hard to control. Managing discipline and learners work in an overcrowded classroom was a challenge for teachers.

4.2.3.1 Teacher individual support

Teachers were asked how they manage an overcrowded classroom and what management strategies they employ. At Cosmo Primary School there is no shared support and teachers manage this individually. Teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms are stressful; however they still navigate ways to manage overcrowded classrooms. The responses below indicated some of the teachers tap into, mobilise and map out individual resources in order to manage overcrowded classrooms. The following individual resources were significant to teachers: employing creative teaching strategies; severe strategies such as shouting and corporal punishment; teacher's personal traits, as I turn to discuss next.

TA stated:

“Group activities are done outside to minimize movement and noise. I take it one step at a time ensuring that all work prescribed is complete. I tend to shout a lot. I sometimes reward them with sweets. No one talks unless they put their hand up.”

TE stated:

“Group work is an effective method of giving instructions and checking work of learners. It is easier for me to consolidate and check work in groups.”

TB stated:

“I group them according to their mental abilities.”

Managing overcrowded classrooms require proper planning that involves being able to use activities that will engage the learners in an active way as the teachers' responses indicate:

TC stated:

“A Practical is hard to conduct. I use corporal punishment and I give learners lots of notes to copy and write so that they are busy, but they still scream and shout and act like you are invisible”.

TD stated:

“I try to plan so that learners are actively involved but this is not possible. I try grouping learners and talk to them outside as group work cannot be done in class.”

TF stated:

“I deal with issues effectively to prevent it from escalating. I try to keep the learners constructively engaged from the beginning of the lesson to the end so that they do not get restless and disrupt other learners. I plan lessons that allow for interesting discussions.”

Planning for overcrowded classrooms also involves clear rules and regulations as indicated in the teacher’s responses:

“I make clear rules concerning classroom management. I do not ignore minor discipline problems because it saves me time to deal with a small problem then larger ones. I deal with discipline without disrupting the lesson. I provide rules and provide rewards for good behaviour.”, said TF.

What was observed was that teachers preferred working outside to manage group work. Moreover the researcher also observed one teacher asking the class to raise their hands and also not to talk while she is talking.

Teachers’ responses indicated that teachers are able to navigate difficulties brought by overcrowded classrooms. They were able to provide useful tips which teachers employ in order to manage overcrowded classrooms. Teachers mentioned that group work helps as it is easier to monitor work and consolidate as well as give out instructions. Teachers at Cosmo Primary School also mentioned that they try to plan so that learners are constructively engaged from the beginning of the lesson to the end. The researcher further found TF’s response to be very useful

as she stated that she does not ignore minor discipline problems and provides rules and also rewards good behaviour.

Although it is a challenge to manage overcrowded classrooms, teachers' responses indicate that they are trying to manage it in the best possible way. Norris (2003) argued that the classroom climate greatly impacts on the learning process. In order to achieve success the classroom has got to be managed effectively. Holloway (2008) indicates that larger classes take a toll on a teacher's ability to manage time, manage tasks and behaviour.

While the findings show that some teachers use their abilities to navigate and manage overcrowded classrooms, the teachers that shared their experiences of managing overcrowded classrooms as also being forced to use some of the unpleasant strategies as shown in the following section.

The teachers at Cosmo Primary School also stated that they had to use some of the difficult measures such as verbal and physical means and link them to management processes of overcrowded classrooms. The following were expressed by the teachers:

TC stated:

"I use corporal punishment and I give learners lots of notes to copy and write so that they are busy, but they still scream and shout and act like your invisible."

TA stated:

"I tend to shout a lot. I sometimes reward them with sweets. No one talks unless they put their hand up."

The researcher also observed that teachers preferred working outside to manage group work. Moreover she also observed one teacher ask the class to raise their hands and also not to talk while she is talking.

TC also stated:

"Corporal punishment works that is the only thing they respond to immediately."

TD stated:

“I attempted to apply corporal punishment when learners don’t complete work and give me discipline problems.”

Similarly TE stated:

“I use corporal punishment for discipline because that is the only thing that works.”

Although teachers stated in my questionnaire that they are applying corporal punishment in the classroom, this was not observed in the classroom. It is evident that the teachers are frustrated and are resorting to corporal punishment. These responses are consistent with the findings in previous studies. Mweru (2010) points out that teachers in Kenya saw corporal punishment as the only way of controlling large numbers of pupils. Gibbs and Jenkins (1992) mentioned that teachers spend more time on behavioural management rather than instructional time which impacts on learning. The findings of this study also show that teachers at Cosmo Primary School do not just give up but seem to find even the smallest of evidence that managing overcrowded classrooms is worth doing. Their ability is linked to teachers’ personal traits such as hope and staying positive towards learners in their school contexts. The following section highlights hope and staying positive enabled teachers in this study to manage the situation of overcrowded classrooms.

4.2.3.2 Hope

Although some of the teachers at Cosmo Primary School were discouraged, demotivated and not interested there were also teachers who indicated in their responses that they still have hope and remain positive. They had the learners’ best interests in mind and expressed in their responses that they want what is best for learners. They also accepted that they tend to manage if they are in this situation.

TC stated:

“I try to stay positive because I want what is best for learners. There are some learners who eager to learn.”

TA stated:

“You tend to manage if you are in this situation. We have to have Hope that each day will be a better day. We need to educate the children.”

Similarly TF stated:

“I try to maintain a positive and calm attitude I try to find solutions to challenges. I understand that the learners are victims. They do not have a choice with regard to which school they attend.”

Although majority of the teachers at Cosmo Primary School have lost hope and been discouraged there are some teachers who still remain positive and have the learners’ best interests in mind. TF stated that she understands that the learners are victims and don’t have a choice with regard to which school they attend. It was pleasing to read the positive responses that there are teachers who embrace their situations and try to find solutions in these situations. The positive attitude is an indication that they are trying to manage the situation in the best way that they can. These attitudes need to be nurtured. This can improve the school towards teachers managing the situation of overcrowded classrooms better.

In summary, the findings of the study indicated that teachers’ experiences with overcrowded classrooms involve a plethora of challenges. The findings also reveal that the ‘little efforts’ and sometimes difficult measures that teachers employ emphasised the significance of teachers as agents of change in managing overcrowded classrooms and improving their classrooms and schools (Khanare, 2009). The emphasis of the school improvement framework which guides this study highlights the dimensions of how even the smallest efforts could be nurtured in psycho-social well-being of children (Donald & Lolwana, 2006). Teachers’ experiences are fundamental assets that could be adapted, strengthened and improved in trying to respond to issues of overcrowded classrooms (Khanare, 2009). In the findings, the researcher indicated why teachers have the experiences that they do. Despite the challenges of managing overcrowded classrooms, teachers still manage this. Some teachers indicated hope and positivity. This research is underpinned by the school improvement theoretical framework and it best fits this research because teachers are already managing and coping with overcrowded classrooms, therefore they have a sense of school improvement and coping strategies. According to Creemers (2008)

teachers are considered an essential lever of change, because change is explicit in their classrooms and daily practices, however for change to take place effective school initiatives are also necessary.

4.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented the findings and discussions from an unstructured questionnaire and observations. The focus was on teachers experiences with overcrowded classrooms and why they have the experiences that they do and what management strategies they employ to deal with overcrowded classrooms. The next chapter (chapter five) and final chapter summarises the findings and makes recommendations thereof. The recommendations are made for this study and future research.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study was to explore teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms in a mainstream school. The purpose of the study was to provide an understanding on the difficulties and challenges that teachers experience with overcrowded classrooms. This chapter focuses on two issues, namely it provides a summary of the findings and makes recommendations from the study and for future research.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

In this section the researcher presents a summary of the findings that were drawn in relation to the findings of this study. The study summarises the following:

5.2.1 Teachers' experience overcrowded classrooms as 'stressful'

The findings of this study indicated that teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms are stressful. Teachers themselves identified certain conditions that are stressful in an overcrowded classroom. These conditions were inadequate classroom space, issues related to safety and health, minimal learner and teacher interaction, disruptive behaviours, teachers experienced emotional and psychological problems, increased workload and inadequate time. Teachers don't have enough space in the classroom since desks are tightly packed and learners are crammed. The movement is very restricted and teachers were unable to walk around the classroom. The lack of space also presented health and safety issues. It is very difficult for the teacher to interact with learners as these conditions restricted interaction. As a result of the minimal learner teacher interaction learners feel insignificant which caused them to engage in disruptive behaviour. Teachers also became very stressed and frustrated in an overcrowded classroom causing them to experience psychological and emotional issues. Due to the high number of learners in the classroom, teachers' workload is increased. Teachers indicated in their responses that most of their marking and planning is done at home which takes away family time and this has impacted on their personal lives. There is not enough time to monitor activities and complete tasks. They also spend time settling disputes which takes away time from teaching and learning. All the

conditions mentioned above revealed that teachers experiences with overcrowded classrooms is ‘stressful’.

5.2.2 Contributing factors into teachers’ stressful experiences are multiple and complex

It was revealed from the teachers’ responses and observations that there are multiple and complex contributing to teachers stressful experiences with overcrowded classrooms in a selected mainstream school in South Africa. These factors included lack of support from management, policy implementation, teacher training, professional development and lack of resources. No guidance or support is received from school management, especially the principal. The findings also indicated that the policies are not being implemented at Cosmo Primary School. Firstly the enrolment in each classroom exceeds what the policy says. According to the DBE (2014) the learner teacher ratio is 31: 1. The enrolment at Cosmo Primary School exceeds the learner teacher ratio which means that the policy is not being implemented at this school. Teachers are also not trained to deal with overcrowded classrooms and this affected their ability to deal with this situation. Lack of resources was a major problem at Cosmo Primary School and this affected teaching and learning. Teachers indicated that lessons cannot be interesting and exciting due to lack of resources. All of the above factors contribute to teachers experiences being stressful.

5.2.3 Teachers’ experiences of managing overcrowded classrooms

Although the teachers’ experiences with overcrowded classrooms are stressful, they are still managing this situation. Teachers tap into, mobilize and map out individual resources in order to manage overcrowded classrooms. Teachers used group work activities; they also increased work and planned lessons to engage learners in active ways. Rewards were also used to reinforce good behaviour. Teachers also indicated that they set clear rules and guidelines. While it was revealed that some teachers used creative strategies to manage overcrowded classrooms there were some who employed unpleasant strategies such as screaming, shouting and corporal punishment. Findings of this study also indicated that teachers at Cosmo Primary School do not just give up but seem to find even the smallest of evidence that managing overcrowded classrooms is worth doing. Responses also indicated that they still have hope and remain positive. They had the

learners' best interest in mind and expressed in their responses that they want what is best for learners. They also accepted that they tend to manage if they are in this situation.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE STUDY

There are a variety of strategies that schools can employ to improve teachers' capacities and the schools capacities in order to deal with overcrowded classrooms in mainstream schools. The recommendations mentioned below are some which the schools under study can consider stepping stones towards addressing overcrowded classrooms. Other schools in a similar context can also adopt and adapt some of the strategies that are recommended in this study, where applicable. With that in mind the following recommendations were made for this study in accordance with the findings:

5.3.1 Teachers' experience overcrowded classrooms as 'stressful'

Teaching overcrowded classrooms is a reality in some schools in South Africa and elsewhere. This is a reality that is likely to continue and teachers have to survive the stress that overcrowded classrooms present. The following recommendations might help to improve teachers' daily experiences with overcrowded classrooms:

- Teachers teaching in overcrowded classrooms need to work together, particularly when drawing up lesson plans. Lesson plans should encompass various activities including those that can be performed outside the four walls of the classroom.
- Teachers should consider engaging in team planning and team teaching which may reduce stress as result increased workload. There are various guidelines that the teachers can read and use as guide. However, it is recommended that teachers draw their own guidelines which are specific to their needs and context.
- There should be debriefing sessions where teachers share things that stress them and provide moral support to each other. The debriefing sessions can be done every Friday after school so that immediate measures can be addressed before it is 'too late'. Where possible, these stressors should be noted and presented to School Management Team members as they responsible for day-to-day activities in the school, including, the welfare of teachers.

- Department of Basic Education should provide more support and guidance as well as motivational workshops that inspire teachers and train them for these situations.
- The Department of Basic Education should provide schools with psychological services for the counselling of teachers that are dealing with the stress of overcrowded classrooms.

5.3.2 Contributing factors into teachers' 'stressful' experiences are multiple and complex

Contributing factors into teachers' 'stressful' experiences with overcrowded classrooms are multiple and differ from context to context as this study has revealed. Guided by teachers' debriefing sessions as recommended under section 3.5.1, issues stressors can be identified and listed. Once done, the school Management Team under other goals of 'the school' can add 'addressing overcrowded classrooms' as another goal that the school needs to achieve. This could be presented to whole school, that is, teachers, learners and parents.

- Each group can be asked to brainstorm steps and resources needed in order to reach this goal and to submit to the school Management Team members who will summarise the ideas provided into different categories. For example, improving teachers' skills and knowledge, management strategies, school infrastructure, raising funds to build more classes to mention but few.
- School Management Team together with teachers, especially those teaching in overcrowded classrooms can now do a 'priority' list and include clear timelines of achieving priority.
- School policies should be used as reference and where necessary the school invited the relevant stakeholders from the DBE for support. In these forums, policy implementation should be addressed in relation to the enrolment of learners in each classroom. The management of the school should have regular meetings that promote professional development and team building. They also need to look at ways of assisting teachers with discipline and curriculum related matters so that more time can be given to teaching.
- The management of the school should have regular meetings that promote professional development and team building. They also need to look at ways of assisting teachers with discipline and curriculum related matters so that more time can be given to teaching.

5.3.3 Teachers' experiences of managing overcrowded classrooms

Teaching overcrowded classrooms does not only present stressful situations to the teacher but also required teachers to be innovative and cultivate strategies of managing overcrowded classrooms. Essentially, teachers' individual support and sense of hope characterised such strategies. In the case of this study, teachers' extra measures when dealing with discipline in overcrowded classroom, involves the use of corporal punishment and sometimes shouting at the learners. This disregards the fact that there is a clear policy on non-use of corporal punishment. It is therefore recommended that:

- The extra-ordinary efforts that the teachers are taking to manage overcrowded classrooms should be identified and applauded. However, there is a need for co-ordinated efforts in schools so teachers do not feel the burden alone and resort to undesirable alternatives.
- In order to improve existing skills of teachers, teachers have to attend the workshops not only as participants, but also be given a chance to present how they manage these classes in the schools.
- Teachers also need to stop corporal punishment as this is against policy. Management needs to adopt a firmer approach to teachers using corporal punishment as this is against learners rights.
- Teacher training colleges should incorporate courses that prepare teachers with the skills to deal with overcrowded classrooms. DBE should provide special funding for teachers who are faced with overcrowded classrooms in their schools.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The following recommendations for future research have been provided below:

- This study has only explored teachers' experiences of overcrowded classroom in a mainstream school in a semi-urban area. Therefore, a much larger study involving a range of schools from other contexts such as urban and rural areas is needed in order to get a better picture and clear perspective of the magnitude of overcrowded classrooms in schools.
- The study involved teachers' experiences only; it would be interesting to conduct a study with more participants including learners using a range of child-friendly methodologies

such as arts-based methods in order to get the voices of the learners in relation to overcrowded classrooms in their schools.

- Although an overcrowded classroom is considered a problem it is also an opportunity to manage large classrooms. Therefore, it will also be interesting to conduct research on teachers' best practices of managing overcrowded classrooms. Such research can adopt an asset-based approach over and above deficit model as a theoretical framework to undertake such a study.
- This study employed a theoretical framework, namely, 'improving school' to frame teachers' experiences and management of overcrowded classroom. It will be interesting to conduct a participatory action research (PAR) to determine the efficacy of this framework in a mainstream school.

5.5 CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

Teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms are 'stressful'. There are contributing factors that lead to teachers stressful experiences; however they still manage the situation of over crowdedness. Improvement is the key element in order for intervention to take place. Intervention is necessary in order to alleviate this problem. This will improve the teaching and learning experience for both teachers and learners.

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Publications.

Appendix A: Ethical Clearance



25 November 2014

Miss Nirashnee Muthusamy (204519973)
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Miss Muthusamy,

Protocol reference number: HSS/0435/014M
Project title: Teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms in a mainstream school

Approval Notification – Amendment

This letter serves to notify you that your request for an amendment received on 24 November 2014 has now been approved as follows:

- Change in Supervisor

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form; Title of the Project, Location of the Study must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully

Dr Shenika Singh (Chair)

/ms

cc Supervisor: Ms FP Khanare
cc Academic leader Research: Professor P Morojele
cc School administrator: Ms Bongzi Bhengu

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Dr Shenika Singh (Chair)

Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

Postal Address: Private Bag 354001, Durban 4000

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3567/8350/4567 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4809 Email: ethics@ukzn.ac.za / ethics@ukzn.ac.za / ethics@ukzn.ac.za

Website: www.ukzn.ac.za



Faculty Campus: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

Appendix B: Application letter to the Department of Basic Education(DBE)

Consent to Participate in this Study

University of KwaZulu-Natal
School of Education
Durban
4041

Department of Basic Education

RE: Consent to participate in this Study: Teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms in a mainstream school.

My name is Nirashnee Muthusamy. I am currently completing my master's degree in educational psychology. On the basis of my degree requirements, I intend carrying out a study that involves exploring teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms. My research will be targeting teachers' experiences and will involve questionnaires and observations.

The importance of this study is as follows:

- To address the problem of overcrowded classrooms in schools.
- To consider the difficulties teachers face with overcrowded classrooms and to rethink teachers needs within the classroom.

Hence I request the permission for teachers to participate in interviews and fill out questionnaires and for me to observe teachers teaching in the classroom. All information will be treated in the strictest confidence and used for research purposes only. All participants in this study will be on a voluntary basis and participants will be free to withdraw from the study at any point in time. The highest level of confidentiality and anonymity will be assured and names will not be disclosed. The research will cause no harm to the school or the participants. Information will be made available to participants before publication.

Thank You

Kind Regards

Nirashnee Muthusamy

Contact Details:

(0736496158) nirashnee.muthusamy@hotmail.com

Supervisor: Ms Fumane Khanare

Email: khanare@ukzn.ac.za

You may also contact the Research Office through:

P. Mohun

HSSREC Research Office,

Tel: 031 260 4557 E-mail: mohunp@ukzn.ac.za

Appendix C: Request letter to school Principal

Consent to Participate in this Study

University of KwaZulu-Natal
School of Education
Durban
4041

Dear Principal

RE: Consent to participate in this Study: Teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms in a mainstream school.

My name is Nirashnee Muthusamy. I am currently completing my master's degree in educational psychology. On the basis of my degree requirements, I intend carrying out a study that involves exploring teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms. My research will be targeting teachers' experiences and will involve interviews, questionnaires and observations.

The importance of this study is as follows:

- To address the problem of overcrowded classrooms in schools.
- To consider the difficulties teachers face with overcrowded classrooms and to rethink teachers needs within the classroom.

Hence I request the permission for teachers to participate in interviews and fill out questionnaires and for me to observe teachers teaching in the classroom. All information will be treated in the strictest confidence and used for research purposes only. All participants in this study will be on a voluntary basis and participants will be free to withdraw from the study at any point in time. The highest level of confidentiality and anonymity will be assured and names will not be disclosed. The research will cause no harm to the school or the participants. Information will be made available to participants before publication.

Thank You

Kind Regards

Nirashnee Muthusamy

Contact Details:

(0736496158) nirashnee.muthusamy@hotmail.com

Supervisor: Ms Fumane Khanare

Email: khanare@ukzn.ac.za

You may also contact the Research Office through:

P. Mohun

HSSREC Research Office,

Tel: 031 260 4557 E-mail: mohunp@ukzn.ac.za

Appendix D: Principals consent form

Consent to Participate in this Study

Thanking you in advance for your co-operation to participate in this study. Please sign the consent form below.

I _____ (name of participant) hereby willingly participate in the study entitled: **Teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms.**

I understand that:

- The research is about Teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms in a mainstream school.
- My participation in the research is voluntary.
- I can withdraw from the research process at any time without any negative consequences
- My identity will not be disclosed.
- My participation in this research will not affect my position as a principal/teacher.
- The research will not impact on my teaching time.
- The information obtained will be used with strictest confidence.
- Data will be kept in a secure storage for 6 years and destroyed thereafter.

I **agree** to participate in a study that Nirashnee Muthusamy is conducting

Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Or

I **do not agree** to participate in this research study

Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix E: Request letter to Teachers

Consent to Participate in this Study

University of KwaZulu-Natal
School of Education
Durban
4041

Dear Principal

RE: Consent to participate in this Study: Teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms in a mainstream school.

My name is Nirashnee Muthusamy. I am currently completing my master's degree in educational psychology. On the basis of my degree requirements, I intend carrying out a study that involves exploring teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms. My research will be targeting teacher's experiences and will involve interviews, questionnaires and observations.

- The importance of this study is as follows: To address the problem of overcrowded classrooms in schools.
- To consider the difficulties teachers face with overcrowded classrooms and to rethink teachers needs within the classroom.

Hence I request the permission for teachers to participate in interviews and fill out questionnaires and for me to observe teachers teaching in the classroom. All information will be treated in the strictest confidence and used for research purposes only. All participants in this study will be on a voluntary basis and participants will be free to withdraw from the study at any point in time. The highest level of confidentiality and anonymity will be assured and names will not be disclosed. The research will cause no harm to the school or the participants. Information will be made available to participants before publication.

Thank You

Kind Regards

Nirashnee Muthusamy

Contact Details:

(0736496158) nirashnee.muthusamy@hotmail.com

Supervisor: Ms Fumane Khanare

Email: khanare@ukzn.ac.za

You may also contact the Research Office through:

P. Mohun

HSSREC Research Office,

Tel: 031 260 4557 E-mail: mohunp@ukzn.ac.za

Appendix F: Consent from Participants (Teachers)

Consent to Participate in this Study

Thanking you in advance for your co-operation to participate in this study. Please sign the consent form below.

I _____ (name of participant) hereby willingly participate in the study entitled: **Teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms.**

I understand that:

- The research is about Teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms in a mainstream school.
- My participation in the research is voluntary.
- I can withdraw from the research process at any time without any negative consequences
- My identity will not be disclosed.
- My participation in this research will not affect my position as a principal/teacher.
- The research will not impact on my teaching time.
- The information obtained will be used with strictest confidence.
- I will be given my transcripts to read to verify that the information is accurate.
- Data will be kept in a secure storage for 6 years and destroyed thereafter.

If you are willing to be interviewed, please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you are willing to allow the interview to be recorded by the following equipment:

	Willing	Not willing
Audio equipment		
Photographic equipment		
Video equipment		

I **agree** to participate in a study that Nirashnee Muthusamy is conducting

Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Or

I **do not agree** to participate in this research study

Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

5. What are your experiences with overcrowded classrooms?

6. Why do you have the experiences that you have?

7. How do you cope with overcrowded classrooms?

8. What strategies do you use?

9. Do your strategies work? Comment on how they work.

10. How has your experiences impacted on your teaching?

11. How has your experiences impacted on your relationship with your learners?

12. What experiences do you have with discipline also state the most severe discipline problem you have had in the classroom?

13. Are you stressed or calm in the classroom? Explain.

14. Are learners actively involved and enthusiastic about your lesson?

15. Do you mark every single learner's books and how do you manage marking?

16. Are resources available to every single learner? If not how do you manage this?

17. Other comments.

Appendix H: Observation schedule

OBSERVATION SHEET

Example of an open ended observation schedule

School:	Date:
Class:	Time:
Teacher Name:	Grade:

The table below contains the contents that was observed within the classroom.

1. Number of learners in a class	
2. School background	
3. Arrangement of classroom and utilisation of space	
4. Size of classroom	
5. Resources	
6. Teacher-learner interaction	
7. Learner participation	
8. Discipline	
9. Teacher attitude	
10. Teaching Methods	
11. Other issues within the classroom	

APPENDIX I: Editor's letter



From the desk of

Dr Anneline Chetty (B.A (Soc.Work); MTRP, PhD)

11/21/2014

Dear Sir/ Madam

This serves to confirm that I have edited the dissertation of Nirashnee Muthusamy in the topic: TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES WITH OVERCROWDED CLASSROOMS IN A MAINSTREAM SCHOOL. I have made significant corrections. I believe that it is now in order to be presented for further assessment.

A Chetty

Yours Sincerely

Dr Anneline Chetty (083 459 8083)

Anneline.chetty@durban.gov.za

APPENDIX J: Turnitin report

Teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms

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