

**Social Protection through Higher Education: Experiences of Community  
Work Programme Participants Studying for a Teaching Qualification by  
Distance Education Mode**

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## DECLARATION

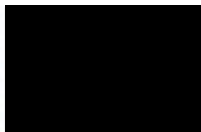
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Date: 08/01/2023



Wayne Hugo (supervisor)

Date: 09/02/2023

## ABSTRACT

Poverty and unemployment have led to the creation of social protection programmes by governments, which include public works programmes. In South Africa, the Community Work Programme (CWP) employs rural individuals living in poverty for a limited number of days each month as part of a second economy strategy project. To improve the chances of these participants to find full-time employment in the primary economy, the CWP partnered with North-West University and the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs to pilot a programme for selected participants to enrol for a Grade R teaching diploma by distance education. CWP participants in the Ugu District in the province of KwaZulu-Natal were selected. While studying, the participants worked at rural schools near their homes as CWP participants. This study sought to explore the experiences of the participants in the pilot before the project went to scale. Informed by the critical paradigm, the study used the extended case method, drawing on Bourdieu's field theory and Archer's concepts of structure, culture and agency for analysis. The study found that while rural participants experienced barriers in terms of physical and epistemic access to higher education, with adequate support many succeeded in earning their qualification and finding employment in the primary economy as teachers. Inherent challenges included the digital illiteracy of participants; travel distances and transportation costs; communication between partners and participants in the pilot; symbolic violence related to the language of teaching and learning; instability in the implementing structure resulting in diminished support for participants; and bureaucratic inefficiency and lack of alignment on the part of the partners to the programme. The exercise of agency was key to participants' success. The Work Integrated learning modules demonstrated complementarity between the requirements of the formal diploma qualification and the CWP requirement for useful work, although the increase in workdays as a teacher assistant reduced the time available for participants to study. The thesis contributes to the debate on Sustainable Development Goal 1 on strategies to end world poverty. The thesis argues that public works programmes can contribute to reducing unemployment with deliberate structuring of support and mentorship to enable students to acquire the higher education habitus required to succeed.

**Key words:** Pierre Bourdieu, habitus, Community Work Programme, public works programme, epistemic access, rurality, Extended Case Method; Grade R teaching diploma

## **DEDICATION**

I wish to dedicate this thesis to my late father,  
Zarare Pio Makwara,  
my mother,  
Laiza Makwara  
and my uncle,  
Jefta Gundidza.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education
AFSA	Aids Foundation South Africa
BBBEE	Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment
CA	Constructive Alignment
CD	Compact Disc
CHE	Council for Higher Education
COGTA	Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
CSG	Child support grant
CWP	Community Work Programme
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DCOG	Department of Cooperative Governance
DG	Director General
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DoE	Department of Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECM	Extended Case Method
EDTP	Education and Training Development Programme
EPWP	Expanded Public Works Programme
FFW	Food for Work
FGUS	First-Generation University Students
FS	Free State
GEM	Greater eThekweni Municipality
GPS	Geographical Positioning System
GRTD	Grade R Teaching Diploma
IA	Implementing Agent
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRBD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
IWB	Interactive whiteboard
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LA	Lead Agent
LIA	Local Implementing Agent
LSC	Learning Support Centre
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MRTEQ	Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications
MV	Mvula Trust
NDP	National Development Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
NOUN	National Open University of Nigeria
NPO	Non-Profit Organisations
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
NW	North West

NWU	North-West University
OASP	Old Age State Pensions
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OLG	Open Learning Group
OSS	Operation <i>Sukhuma Sakhe</i>
PDF	Portable Document Format
PIA	Provincial Implementing Agent
POPI	Protection of Private Information Act
RDF	Rural Development Foundation
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
RWIL	Grade R Work Integrated Learning
SACE	South African Council of Educators
SCA	Structure, Culture, and Agency
SCTE	School for Continuous Teacher Education
SES	Socioeconomic status
SESP	Second Economy Strategy Project
SETA	Sector Education Training Authority
SGD	Sustainable Goals Development
SMS	Short Message Service
SMT	School Management Team
SOE	State-Owned Enterprises
TA	Teacher assistant
TD	Teba Development
TIPS	Trade and Industrial Policy Studies
TSM	Technical Support Manager
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UDM	Ugu District Municipality
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation
UODL	Unit for Open Distance Learning
USB	Universal Serial Bus
Wi-Fi	Wireless Fidelity

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

In 2015, all members of the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Agenda sets out 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs), which identify 169 targets. These wide-ranging and ambitious goals interconnect and aim to transform our world. They are a call to action to end poverty and inequality, protect the planet, and ensure that all people enjoy health, justice and prosperity. This study has relevance to all 17 goals but focuses most specifically on the goals that address poverty eradication (SDG 1); quality education (SDG 4); gender equality through the empowerment of women and girls (SDG 5); decent work and economic growth (SDG 8) and partnerships for goals (SDG 17). In other words, the study is rooted in SDGs, particularly No. 4 on quality education especially for rural schools, while also supporting SDGs 1, 5, 8, 10, and 17.

In brief, Sustainable economic growth (SDG 8) underpinned the providing a Grade R teacher with a diploma which may potentially improve the quality of early childhood education, which has long-term positive effects on a child's development and eventually their economic prospects. A well-educated workforce contributes to sustainable economic growth and reduces poverty (SDG 1). Partnership for goals (SDG 17), suggests that achieving the SDGs requires collaboration and partnerships between various stakeholders. The acquisition of the Grade R teachers diploma in rural areas and poor backgrounds can be made possible through partnerships between education institutions, NGOs, and government initiatives, emphasizing the importance of collaboration in achieving sustainable development and empowerment of communities. This is illustrated in the ensuing paragraphs where Lima collaborated with Government departments as well as the universities to initiate the Grade R Teaching diploma that empowered participants to improve the quality of education (SDG 4).

Inequality, poverty, and unemployment are interdependent socioeconomic phenomena referred to as the 'triple challenge' in South Africa (Chisholm, 2020). While stakeholders agree that this challenge requires urgent attention from policymakers and leaders across all sectors of South African society, there is much less agreement on what drives inequality, poverty, and unemployment and, more importantly, how these can be addressed effectively. Chisholm (2020) claims that South Africa has not successfully eradicated the triple challenge for various reasons. While UNESCO (2015) has identified education as one of the ways of eradicating

poverty, Barber & Mourshed (2007, p. 13) argue that “the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers.” In its rural schools, in particular, South Africa has faced a challenge attracting and retaining experienced and qualified teachers (Mukeredzi, 2017; HSRC, 2005; Mulkeen, 2008).

Various initiatives have been undertaken to address these challenges. One of these is the Community Work Programme (CWP), an economic strategy project aimed at poverty alleviation and the provision of a social protection safety net by engaging them in ‘useful work’ at public institutions in their communities on a part-time basis. The CWP was initially conceptualised as a Second Economy Strategy Project (SESP) and then evolved into a government programme under the expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) in the Non-State Sector. In 2013, the CWP, through a lead agent Lima, launched a new strategy to assist participants in graduating from dependence on assistance through the second economy to independence in the mainstream economy by gaining a qualification that would enable them to secure full-time employment as Grade R teachers. Rural (mostly female) participants in the CWP were offered the opportunity to enrol for a Diploma in Grade R teaching programme offered by North-West University via a distance learning mode, with funding from the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Authority (COGTA).

This study explored the experiences of the CWP participants who participated in piloting the Grade R teaching diploma programme. The purpose of the study was to determine the success of the programme before it was scaled up.

This thesis offers a detailed account of the experiences of the students participating in the pilot programme. The competing and complementary logics of the different forces at play are identified and analysed using Pierre Bourdieu’s field theory. The actions and activities of the various actors and agencies that mediated the realisation of the goal of the Diploma in Grade R teaching qualification and the participants’ eventual graduation from the social protection strategy to mainstream employment as Grade R teachers are explored.

This chapter discusses the effects of rurality and poverty on individuals. It provides a brief history of public works as a strategy for poverty alleviation and the emergence of the CWP as a sub-programme of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) in South Africa.

Focussing on the CWP, the relevant actors are introduced, and their roles are described. The axiological assumptions of the researcher, which provided the motivation to pursue the study, as well as the research problem and aim, are presented. The significance of the study and the researcher's positionality are discussed. An overview of the research methodology is provided. It concludes with an overview of the chapters of the thesis.

## **1.2 BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION**

### **1.2.1 RURAL POVERTY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION**

The South African government has developed several programmes to provide social protection to its citizens. Social protection is provided for in the constitution as a right. It is described as “a set of formal and informal interventions that aim to reduce social and economic risks, vulnerabilities and deprivations of all people and facilitate equitable growth” (MoLSA, 2016). Thus, informal social protection already in place in rural and urban communities serves as a vital lifeline for most people not covered by formal social protection schemes (Devereux & Getu, 2013).

Cash-based social protection strategies provided by the government in South Africa include the Child Support Grant (CSG) for children, Old Age State Pensions (OASP) for the aged (those over 60), disability grants for the disabled and foster care grant for those looking after orphans (Pillay, 2008). The state, in 2020, added the Social Relief of Distress (SRD) as a cash grant of R350 for the unemployed (Philip, 2020). Pillay (2008) argues that cash-based social protection in the form of grants plays an integral part in the poverty paradigm, as they (i) reduce poverty, (ii) prevent people from falling into poverty, or (iii) help people to cope with poverty.

In the past, youth who were unemployed but not disabled tended to fall through the cracks between the social protection programmes. There was a lack of protective measures for youth who were unemployed and, hence, vulnerable (Philip, 2013; Ehmke & Fakir, 2014; Masondo, 2018). This led to the conceptualisation of other labour-based social protection measures as these utilise the most important resource available to youth – their labour.

The utilisation of public works programmes in South Africa stretches as far back as 1910 when it was used during a time of hunger and famine. As a source of livelihood, agriculture failed, leading to a category of “poor whites” (Friedman et al., 2007; Reynolds, 1984) who were

assisted by public works. The Carnegie Commission of 1932 alluded to the emergence of the poor white problem and its eradication using public works programmes. This eventually led to the creation of State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), namely the National Railways Company (now Transnet); ESCOM (now ESKOM), for electricity and employment in canals and irrigation projects. By 1945, all poor whites were employed; hence the poor white problem was eradicated (Reynolds, 1984; Friedman et al., 2007; Phillips, 2004; Du Toit, 2005). The state social protection through public works was not extended to the black population. Once rural and poor whites were adequately employed, the public works programme stopped.

In 2020, the South African Presidency implemented the Youth Employment Subsidy (YES), which has employed a significant number of qualified but unemployed youth who earn at the national minimum wage level.

### **1.2.2 PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMMES AS A SOCIAL PROTECTION INITIATIVE**

In asking whether public works are only for developing countries, Fishback et al. (2007) argue that the United States, with the largest free-market economy, can attribute its development to public works. The period after the Great Depression of 1929 saw Keynes (an American Economist) suggest the involvement of the state in fostering economic activity. The Roosevelt government is credited with embarking on massive measures as part of the “New Deal”, one of which was providing work as a relief measure (Bruce, 2016). Work commenced with the building of dams, highways, reforestation, and other emergency projects.

A striking similarity with the social protection measures employed in South Africa is that the stated purpose was

to provide useful work to millions of victims of the Great Depression and thus to preserve their skills and self-respect; the economy would in turn be stimulated by the increased purchasing power of the newly employed, whose wages under the programme ranged from \$15 - \$90 per month (Friedman et al., 2007 p. 23).

The value of these public works (labour-based social protection) projects is that participants reap the benefit of work, unlike with a cash-based grant. Work has the desired effect of preserving skills and self-respect. One public works participant in a CWP programme reported that “we are now also able to swipe [in the store] like learned people” (DCOG, 2015),

implying that participation in the public works programme played a role in restoring dignity. For the South Africans in this study, work with the CWP led to their inclusion in a programme to earn a formal qualification. The CWP provided regular monthly income to the participants working part-time at the schools while studying for their diplomas.

### **1.2.2 DISTANCE EDUCATION AND SOCIAL PROTECTION**

The CWP participants worked as teacher assistants (TAs) under the guidance of teachers in the school. Ideally, as TAs, they were to assist in whatever capacity was needed at the school. They could be reprographic assistants, helping with photocopying and distributing classwork in the schools. They could also assist with marking homework or provide in-class control for large classes (Prinsloo, 2013; Philip, 2010). In some instances, TAs could help with sports (extra-curricular activities) and homework, especially for learners who could not find adequate assistance at home given the socioeconomic status of their houses or for learners from rural contexts who lived with illiterate grandparents. HSRC (2005) argues that most rural learners stay with semi- to fully illiterate grandparents. The CWP could therefore bridge that gap by benefitting the community in their placement at schools.

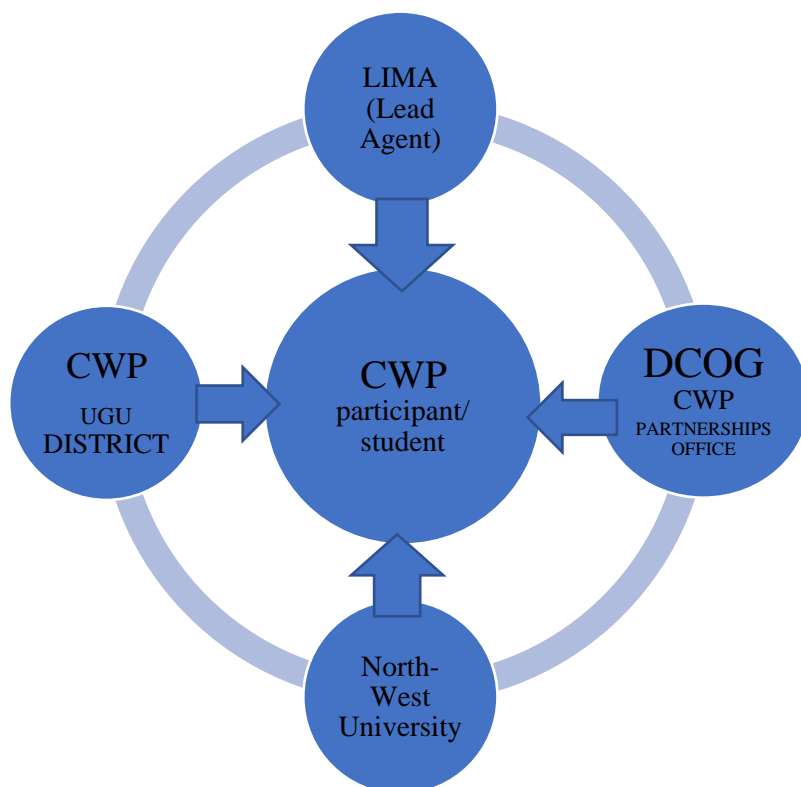
The Diploma in Grade R Teaching was offered through distance education. As they completed their valuable work as TAs, they also gained experience as Grade R teachers. This supported the aim of providing a graduation pathway from the second economy to the first. Therefore, through working for the CWP and studying for the diploma, CWP participants had the opportunity to participate in the social protection programme of the CWP, with a view to graduating and becoming full members of mainstream employment groups by working in the rural schools that lacked quality Grade R teachers.

### **1.2.3 ACTORS IN THE GRADE R TEACHING DIPLOMA**

Lima, Teba Development Trust, and Mvula Trust served as the Lead Agents (LAs) for the CWP, tasked with availing technical support and expertise to the Local Implementing Agencies (LIAs) who were to eventually manage the CWP at a local level (Fakier & Ehmke, 2016; Andersson & Alexander, 2016; Philip, 2010). As an emerging programme, the structure of the CWP was still evolving and was not entirely stable (Andersson & Alexander, 2016). The lead agency structure was to be eventually removed from the final structure of the CWP.

Lima conceptualised the CWP Grade R Diploma Pilot (GRDP) as it had worked in rural areas and understood the need to innovate and graduate rural participants from the social protection of the second economy strategy project (SESP) (the CWP) to mainstream employment in the first economy. Lima, therefore, brought together the Department of Cooperative Governance (DCOG), the CWP and North-West University (NWU) and a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between the different parties. In 2013, Lima, as the Lead Agent, worked with the Local Implementing Agent (LIA), the Aids Foundation South Africa (AFSA), to identify 25 candidates for enrolment in the second semester of 2014 at the NWU School for Continuing Teacher Education (SCTE) (Geduld, 2016), which evolved to become the Unit for Open Distance Learning (UODL) under a manager responsible for education (NWU, 2016).

Figure 1.1 visually represents the actors in the Grade R Diploma.



**Figure 1.1 Actors in the Grade R diploma**

The actors in the Diploma in Grade R were thus the government; the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs); local municipal site managers; rural primary schools; and the NWU. The Department of Cooperative Governance (DCOG) represented the government, whose CWP Partnerships section provided the bursary for the Grade R diploma. Municipalities in the DCOG were also supposed to appoint a municipal champion to drive the CWP local reference committees (LRC) (Ehmke & Fakir, 2014; 2016), to ensure the smooth running of the “useful work” in the community. The CWP local implementing agent(s) in the Ugu District were also to provide site managers who were to liaise with the schools and ensure the move from local CWP sites to schools by the CWP participants. The NGOs involved were the LA (Lima) and the LIA (AFSA). The fourth partner, North-West University, was to deliver the Grade R Diploma by providing tuition to all the students enrolled on the programme.

The CWP participants, who became the students, needed to comply with the Grade R Diploma prospectus requirements. They had to sign the CWP registers and submit them to the CWP; they reported all challenges and results to the partnership manager, Lima, and complied with the bursary's terms and conditions. Many reporting and support structures are both useful and cumbersome when studying at a distance.

### **1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM**

The following statement reflects how human empowerment can change the plight of people living in poverty and give them hope to forge a prosperous future (United Nations (UN) General Assembly, 2015, p. 6):

Empowering [the marginalised and vulnerable] people by giving them a good education, ... will prepare them to have a career and to hold a job that will make them more confident, ... [and] allow them to earn a good [standard of] living ....

The United Nations member states need to take this statement seriously as they strive towards attaining the first Sustainable Development Goal, which is eradicating poverty.

In the South African context, Thaba-Nkadimene et al. (2019, p. 69) found that South African “rural women live in absolute poverty and government initiatives to address and mitigate their circumstances are not effective”. Fransman and Yu (2019) asserted that educational initiatives that were aimed at addressing the situation of the working poor, instead worsened poverty in South Africa.

At the policy level, in 2011, South African Minister of Planning and Chairman of the National Planning Commission, Trevor Manuel, identified Early Childhood Development, inequality and unemployment as some of the top challenges in South Africa (NPC, 2011). Social protection was touted as one of the approaches to addressing the triple challenge of poverty, inequality, and unemployment by the National Planning Commission (NPC, 2011).

The Grade R diploma programme piloted by the Community Work Programme was the first of its kind. Efforts towards a formal educational qualification, while the working poor are still employed by a programme such as the Community Work Programme (Wong, 2017), can assist in breaking the poverty trap while reducing unemployment and inequality. The CWP participants worked as para-professionals at the schools where they were placed for useful work by the CWP while gaining teaching practice toward their Grade R teaching diploma, thus ensuring their income and boosting their employability upon graduation.

This thesis examines the participants' experience in the CWP's Grade R diploma pilot and the programme's struggle to deal with the many complex factors that arose.

#### **1.4 AIM OF THE RESEARCH**

The study sought to understand the experience of participants in a social protection programme (the Community Work Programme) who were enrolled for a Diploma in Grade R teaching at North-West University (NWU) as a strategy to enable them to graduate from the second economy (the CWP) to the first economy with full-time employment as Grade R teachers. In understanding the experiences, and the study also being rooted in the critical and emancipatory paradigm, the study sought to transform the participating students' lives by empowering them to succeed in the diploma programme and graduate to the first economy. The thesis, therefore, offers a detailed account of the Community Work Programme participant students' (CWPPS).

#### **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following questions guided the research:

- 1) What is the broader context within which the participants experienced the Community Work Programme (CWP)?

- 2) How did the intersection of the CWP with the field of distance education impact the experience of the Grade R Diploma pilot participants?
- 3) How did the participants' socioeconomic context impact their experience in the CWP Grade R Diploma Pilot?
- 4) How did the CWP participants experience the support they received as students participating in the pilot over time?
- 5) What emotions did the CWP participants experience during the pilot over time?

## **1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The study explored the interaction of the social protection programme (the CWP) and studying in the higher education context through distance education for participants working with the CWP. The study further sought to explore the students' academic experiences as they studied for a formal qualification. Many students from disadvantaged backgrounds are now enrolling at higher education institutions and studying via distance education. It is therefore imperative to explore how these rural students experience the distance programme and assess the effectiveness of this approach.

The social purpose of the study is to provoke conversations regarding the utilisation of bursaries offered by state agents in the higher education sector. It appears that studies may be taking place, but scant attention is given to funding – particularly in the case of rural students studying at a distance. This study illuminates a typical case which has instrumental validity to explore if the strategies employed in the Diploma in Grade R diploma pilot could be scaled up.

The study also sought to contribute to the body of literature documenting case studies of partnerships between the government as an employer of last resort (GELR) and higher education institutions to explore solutions to the triple challenge of alleviating poverty, unemployment, and inequality. It is rare to find a study that includes the state, rural communities, and a higher education institution. This study represents a unique addition to the literature, demonstrating, from an empirical perspective, that governments can partner with NGOs to work with institutions of higher education to empower unemployed individuals to obtain a formal qualification, enabling them to graduate to full-time employment in the mainstream employment with a reasonable income.

## **1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In critical ethnography, the research methodology emerges as the study progresses, rather than proceeding according to a strict, pre-determined plan. Areas of focus emerge as meanings are revealed and challenged from a position of ideological critique (Thomas, 1993). In this study, the case study that was initially conceptualised evolved to use Burawoy's (2009) extended case method, which is based on critical ethnography. This was underpinned by the researcher's ethical responsibility to help the research participants by creating an enabling environment for the success of the government's education-oriented programme, the Grade R Diploma Pilot (GRDP). Initially, research by Burawoy (1991, 1998) indicated that the Extended Case Method (ECM) values reflexive sociology, with emphasis on beneficence for the research participants. This may have initially resulted in a degree of paternalism, as the project coordinator reacted to challenges that arose and attempted to get the CWP participants past the starting blocks. As the project – and challenges – continued, the researcher's ethical responsibility perpetuated the culture of dependence to some extent. However, participants' exercise of their agency increased as they acquired the habitus of the higher education and basic education fields.

## **1.8 RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY**

The researcher brought to the study a habitus he developed as a student who, like the participants, was raised and then worked in a rural area.

The researcher was born to peasant farmers. His father's highest-earning job was as a petrol attendant. The researcher went to school barefoot and without a school uniform for most of his schooling. He owned his first pair of new shoes when he was seventeen and in Grade 11. He studied at night using paraffin lamps and only saw electricity when they travelled to town. The researcher's own experience gave him insight into the challenges in rural areas regarding early childhood education.

Like the CWP participants in this thesis, the researcher had been a beneficiary of a social protection strategy in the form of a social welfare grant from the Social Development Fund in Zimbabwe. Mtapuri (2012) argued that the Government of Zimbabwe had embarked on social protection strategies to cushion citizens from challenges since the 2000s. The Social Development Fund paid tuition and examination fees for the Ordinary Level of School Education, a school leaving certificate after Grade 11. The Advanced Level (an equivalent of

Grade 12 in the further education and training phase in South Africa) fees were paid for by an uncle (mother's brother), thus employing social capital. The researcher was the first child from his clan to get to university and assisted his siblings in acquiring a tertiary and university education.

The researcher's rural upbringing enabled him to empathise with the participants on many levels. He understood how their rural homes were not conducive to studying, and related to the challenges of poverty, poor phone reception and lack of access to the internet, as well as the logistical difficulties of travelling to the learning centres.

The researcher obtained a Bachelor of Commerce Honours in Economics with Education, studying through a residential and contact mode. The researcher then earned an Honours Degree in Development Studies through the University of South Africa (Unisa), studying via a distance learning mode. He also studied the discipline of academic development, which was offered by distance via block release, and also a higher certificate which was offered part-time. Through these experiences studying through different learning modes, the researcher acquired the habitus of a distance education student.

The researcher's postgraduate studies include a Master of Arts in Development Studies, which focussed on poverty and development challenges; his mini dissertation topic was about rural areas and education. The researcher also earned a Master of Business Administration, which included modules on Organisational Behaviour, Management Information Systems and Economics. The researcher's two master's degrees were sponsored as a staff benefit as the researcher was a university employee.

As a first-generation university student (Goward, 2018; Pelco et al., 2014), the researcher experienced his rural habitus not being valued by the university; neither were structures in place during his first-degree studies to support students from disadvantaged backgrounds to succeed. The researcher's choice of the extended case method, where the outsider becomes an insider, also emanated from his encounter with the habitus of studies in higher education, where the deficit narrative of students from disadvantaged backgrounds is challenged as incorrect. This motivated the researcher, within the confines of what was ethically allowed, to want to assist the participants, coming from the most marginalised rural backgrounds and poor socioeconomic status, to succeed.

The researcher went on to become a lecturer in a School of Education, which gave him an understanding of the policy framework governing the curriculum and funding of teacher education in South Africa. The experience of being a university lecturer also contributed to the ‘capitals’ that the researcher brought to this study.

The researcher has also worked part-time as a tutor and marker for assignments and final examinations at the Zimbabwe Open University. This experience enabled the researcher to critique marking, moderation, and feedback as assessment procedures during the Grade R diploma pilot.

All of these factors meant that when the researcher heard about an NGO that was going to assist students from the most marginalised rural areas in becoming qualified teachers, he knew this was going to be the focus of his doctoral research, especially as the Community Work Programme was a second economy strategy policy meant to assist the most vulnerable. That the participants were located in rural areas and were to be developed as teachers for rural schools also fed into the area of rural development, which dovetailed with the development studies the researcher had undertaken. The experience of CWP participants in the Grade R pilot project was thus a natural choice for the researcher as a topic for his doctoral study.

The researcher’s rural habitus, woven with the urban characteristics of a university lecturer who had acquired the higher education habitus, assisted the methodology and data-gathering process to benefit the Community Work Programme participants who had become university students. This embodied cultural capital gave the researcher the agency to advocate on the students’ behalf in the context of the Extended Case Method of research.

## **1.9 OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS**

This thesis is presented in nine chapters.

**Chapter One:** This chapter has presented the background to the study, with the Community Work Programme foregrounded as a second economy strategy project growing out of the National Development Plan for South Africa. The actors, and how the different fields interacted, were identified. The research problem was stated, and the research questions and methodology were defined.

**Chapter Two:** The theoretical and empirical literature on social protection and distance education were reviewed. Literature on teaching, learning, assessment, and the importance of support in a distance education context, were also examined.

**Chapter Three:** The theoretical framework of the study is discussed, presenting Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus, and capital, along with Archer's structure, culture, and agency.

**Chapter Four:** The methodology of the study, based on the transformative worldview and the critical paradigm – which valorises emancipation and empowerment – and the use of the Extended Case Method (Firdaus & Shalihin, 2021) was described. Being rooted in the critical paradigm meant that the researcher intervened to empower the CWP participants and collected data using ethnography over time. Data collection methods included semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, document analysis and ethnographic methodologies facilitated by the WhatsApp social media application (Goncalves & Cornelius Smith, 2018).

**Chapter Five:** The roles of different players – Lima (implementing agent), the DCOG (funder), and NWU (HEI) are presented, along with the challenges and successes that participants experienced in their engagement with these institutions throughout their journey from registration to graduation.

**Chapter Six:** The findings are presented according to the main themes that emerged from the data: communications; teaching and learning experiences; the assessment experience; and the support experiences of the study.

**Chapter Seven:** The students' emotional experiences are explored as a key theme. It was an emergent theme that arose whilst analysing the data for rural students engaging in distance education.

**Chapter Eight:** This chapter provides a synthesis of the study where the field theory and the concepts of structure, culture and agency are discussed in line with the macro, meso, and micro (individual) aspects of the study.

**Chapter Nine:** This final chapter presents the conclusions and implications of the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter gave an overview of the thesis. It introduced the Community Works Programme (CWP), a part of the public works programme within the South African government's social protection strategy. The CWP's innovative approach of creating a pathway for those in the programme to pursue formal qualifications to strengthen their opportunities for employment in the first economy after completing the programme was also discussed.

This chapter reviews the literature that informs this thesis—the literature centres on two key themes: social protection and distance education. The literature on social protection provides a theoretical and empirical grounding for social protection through public works. Social protection and safety nets are discussed, including the need for safety nets for unemployed youth who do not qualify for social protection programmes such as child support grants or old-age pensions, and the emergence of the Community Works Programme, which was open to youth and provided a predictable income on an ongoing basis. The second section discusses distance education, as the participants in the community work programme (CWP) were offered a further opportunity to enrol for a formal qualification via distance education. As this study examined the experiences of CWP participants in the Diploma in Grade R programme, it is necessary to review the literature on teaching and learning delivery modes and activities, and the associated assessment processes and practices. Lastly, the chapter highlights the necessity of support in order for students to succeed in attaining the formal qualification, referencing the distance education student support model (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011) meant for the University of South Africa (Unisa).

### **2.2 SOCIAL PROTECTION**

This thesis explored a particular social protection strategy, the Community Work Programme (CWP), that was adopted as part of the public works programme in South Africa. The particular CWP under study in this research was implemented in the rural communities of Ugu District in KwaZulu-Natal. The participants were unemployed youths who had passed their school-leaving examinations and were unemployed. This section discusses social protection and public works programmes from an international outlook, considering examples from the USA and India before zeroing in on the South African public works programme.

Drahokoupil (2004) defines social protectionism as an “intervention into the market economy in order to secure the cultural and social integrity of humankind or society (e.g. the welfare state redistribution and regulation of the economy)” (p. 837) to mitigate the negative consequences of market forces. Social protectionism has emerged in response to the inequities that result in a market economy, also termed ‘market failure’ (Devereux, 2013; Du Toit, 2005; McCord, 2009; Philip, 2010). Social protectionism thus aims to reach where the market fails to, such as in contexts of the second economy, which includes rural areas and informal settlements where informal activities are most active. Social protection policies have evolved as international instruments have increasingly focused on the protection and realisation of people’s social, economic and cultural rights and mitigation of the risks faced in different stages of life in addition to the triple challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality (Cecchini et al., 2019; NPC, 2011).

Drahokoupil (2004) notes that there is no consensus on the value of social protectionism. A positive view emphasises the ‘balancing principle’, in which social protectionism insulates society against self-regulating markets. A critical view focuses on ‘market pathology’, where social protectionism is seen as interference in the self-regulating mechanisms of markets that will ultimately lead to their collapse. These contrasting interpretations mirror the different interests in a class struggle, with self-regulated markets serving capitalist interests and social protectionism serving the interests of labour. In the broader context, this is a struggle between economic and social concerns where the finance ministry, in its fiscal allocations, grapples with complaints from economists and businesses about the dependency syndrome while also having to deal with issues of sustainability or unaffordability of the labour market interventions, as well as social welfare programmes (Devereux, 2013).

Another definition of social protection is summed up by Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler (2004) as follows:

Social protection describes all public and private initiatives that provide income or consumption transfers to the poor, protect the vulnerable against livelihood risks and enhance the social status and rights of the marginalised; with the overall objective of reducing the economic and social vulnerability of poor, vulnerable and marginalised groups. (p. 9).

This definition refers to private initiatives, which may include contributory pension funds (alluded to in the discussion on the inappropriateness of European models to the African context in Section 1.2.2), as well as to public initiatives, which include the non-contributory old-age pensions, child support grants, conditional and unconditional cash transfers. Recent Social protection initiatives include the Social Relief of Distress (SRD) Grant and the presidential Youth Employment Subsidy (Philip, 2020).

In the Community Work Programme, unemployed youth use their most precious asset, their labour, for useful work and, in return, get a predictable income. Some of the vulnerable and unemployed participants later became students in the diploma in Grade R teaching. These participants were located in the Ugu District's rural municipalities, areas under traditional authorities in the hinterland with accessibility challenges. This rural outlook placed the participants in the margin. They were also among the poor and vulnerable.

Noting that social protection is a relatively new and evolving policy concept, Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler (2015) explains that there are not yet proper boundaries as to what this entails. Two key ideas appear in the definitions that are given, namely, social assistance (protection against poverty) and social insurance (protection against vulnerability). Other definitions include addressing social justice and inclusion, which protects against social risks like discrimination and abuse (Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2004). The all-inclusive definition given by the European Commission defines social protection for inclusive development as a “set of actions to address the vulnerability of people’s lives through social insurance, offering protection against risk and adversity throughout life; social assistance, offering payments and in-kind transfers to support and enable the poor; and inclusion efforts that enhance the capability of the marginalised to access social insurance and assistance” (European Commission, 2010, p. 1).

The more recent developments in social protection place emphasis on graduation and self-reliance. In other words, for families that have youth and non-disabled adults, social protection should provide only temporary support while promoting strategies that wean them from “dependence on handouts” (Devereux, 2014). As mentioned, some social protection measures, such as old-age pensions and child support grants, have tended to include cash transfers. These have excluded the youth and non-disabled adults, necessitating a second economy strategy project (SESP), which has come about as the CWP. This study focuses on CWP participants enrolled for a Grade R Teaching Diploma. This is an empowerment programme where, on

completion, participants become Grade R teachers in mainstream employment, thus graduating from the second economy strategy project, namely the Community Works Programme.

Social protection has its roots in the social safety net and humanitarian aid initiatives, where assistance was given to beneficiaries on a discretionary basis. Social protection has moved beyond emergency-level initiatives to quasi-welfare programmes such as social pension schemes that provide regular, ongoing support to the ‘recipients’, ‘claimants’ or ‘participants’ of these programmes. In this study, the CWP’s Grade R Teaching Diploma partnership forms part of what Devereux and Sabates (2004) call the ‘transformative social protection agenda’ that seeks to respect recipients’ dignity by impacting the relationships that are responsible for the persistence of the conditions of impoverishment, vulnerability and marginalisation that led to the need for social protection in the first place. In this study, the term ‘CWP participants’ refers to the recipients of the programme who are the least paid in the payment continuum (See Chapter 4). Other higher-level participants, such as site managers or supervisors, are referred to by their roles. It is a programmatic decision that the target beneficiaries of the CWP are referred to as ‘participants’ rather than ‘beneficiaries’.

The lack of consensus on whether social protectionism is necessary for the market economy can be traced back to the tension between liberal and Keynesian theories. According to pure liberalism, common welfare is brought about by the interplay of different factors and an inevitable convergence of private and public interests. Pure market theorists “believed that social justice was automatically achieved because every factor of production automatically received the equivalent of its marginal product” (Lambert, 2002, p. 342). In contrast, Keynes (1936)’s view was that there was a need for a visible hand to direct and moderate the excesses of the invisible hand of supply and demand. This view motivated the establishment of such supranational bodies as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development – IRBD). According to Keynes (1936), markets do fail, and government need to intervene and regulate economic activity as well as create an enabling environment, which includes ensuring the welfare of the most marginalised. Devereux (2011) argues that the essence of social protection is affording the protected ‘triple F’ (food, fuel, or finance). The primary goal is to protect minimum subsistence in low-income households. In the context of this study, the Community Works Programme guarantees participants a predictable amount of income (finance) every month that they can use to buy food and fuel.

### **2.2.1 SOCIAL PROTECTION IN AFRICA**

Devereux (2013) argues that the social protection strategies used in Africa are largely imported from the European social protection system and are often inappropriate for the African context in which they are implemented. Social protection strategies began with contributory pension schemes for employed labour and unemployment insurance and, more recently, have included targeted cash transfers as social pensions (Devereux, 2013). The programmes of interest to this thesis started...

...with ad hoc humanitarian response by international agencies to food security shocks in Africa and developed towards quasi-institutionalised social assistance and social insurance mechanisms such as public works programmes for the seasonally underemployed and weather-indexed insurance for farmers (Devereux, 2013, p. 13).

The basis of social protection programmes was to temporarily address a shock. The challenge emerges where chronic poverty (McCord, 2009) characterises African situations which need more-or-less ongoing, or permanent assistance. In this study, the enrolment of participants in a Grade R diploma programme raises their prospect of graduation from the second economy.

Other social protection initiatives in Africa have included food for work (FFW) programmes to address food insecurity that arises during the transition between the seasons. Devereux (2010) explains that poor households received inputs accompanied by fertilisers, while food-for-work or cash-for-work schemes were labour-based. Other initiatives were trade-based – such as food price controls – or transfer-based, where the poor received food aid or cash transfers. In other words, different initiatives were utilised depending on the circumstances in which they took place.

### **2.2.2 INAPPROPRIATENESS OF EUROPEAN SOCIAL PROTECTION MODELS FOR AFRICA**

The social protection strategies imported from Europe have been inappropriate for the African context for several reasons. Firstly, as most African countries have not realised Europe's rural-urban and industrial transitions, most Africans still reside in rural areas where they depend on farming, and neighbours and relatives when their livelihoods fail. In other words, substantial forms of reciprocity, householding and redistribution still exist (Devereux, 2013), which makes the European model inappropriate.

Secondly, given the size of the formal sector, the possibility of social protection deductions such as pensions is greater in Europe. At the same time, the majority in Africa are employed in the informal sector with no job security and unpredictable incomes from which there is no opportunity to make regular social security contributions (Devereux, 2013). Furthermore, in the African context, contributory social security has the potential to reach, typically, less than 15% of the population. Therefore, the challenge is extending social security to the remaining 85%, including the self-employed and those living in the informal (second) economy, often earning meagre incomes, and living precariously. In this context, CWP becomes one such endeavour which seeks to provide social protection to these vulnerable groups. The CWP augments other non-contributory schemes, such as old age pensions for the elderly and child support grants for children.

Devereux (2013) argues that rural livelihoods also differ from urban livelihoods. Rural livelihoods depend on agriculture and therefore face predictable cycles of full and empty granaries (seasonality), which lead to low prices and high prices when the crops are still in the fields, as the market forces describe the supply and demand patterns. Farmers face crises when there are drought situations due to unpredictable weather patterns, whilst those in urban areas are more susceptible to price shocks – especially where their incomes are not predictable or guaranteed, as in the case of those in the informal sector (second economy). In rural areas, small landholdings and the struggle to afford seeds and fertilisers result in low yields, chronic hunger, and chronic poverty (McCord, 2009), rendering the European-based models of social protection inappropriate. Sen (1999) coins the term ‘entitlement failure’ to describe problems accessing inputs and food as signs of low income.

In response, cash transfers replaced food aid to address chronic poverty and food insecurity. Debate continues as to whether cash transfers are the most effective way of dealing with the vulnerability of African livelihoods. The emergence of the Community Work Programme (CWP), where useful work precedes receiving predictable monthly income, may represent a way for participants to benefit from the usefulness of work alongside cash transfers (Friedman et al., 2007).

Aliber (2003) posits that the South African rural populace has low reliance on agriculture because rural areas were de-agrarianised. Where the food-for-work programmes could have been seasonal, they have become inappropriate in South Africa. CWP, which is ongoing and is not seasonal, reflects this South African reality, in contrast to the food-for-work programmes

that have been put in place in countries such as Ethiopia (Del Ninno et al., 2013), Malawi and Zimbabwe (Mtapuri, 2012).

### **2.2.3 RATIONALE FOR SOCIAL PROTECTION**

Devereux (2007) explains that, in South Africa, social pensions were extended to urban Africans in 1944; rural Africans were excluded, however, because the Social Security Commission argued against providing benefits which would conflict with African culture by breaking “down their traditional food sharing habit” (p. 543). The rise in urbanisation meant the responsibility for caring for one another shifted from the extended family, relatives and neighbours to the responsibility of the market and the state. Formal social protection instruments were devised to ensure the reproduction of labour. Adults joined contributory schemes, such as retirement pensions, unemployment insurance and paid maternity and sick leave, to protect themselves during unemployment. For dependants who were not working, non-contributory transfers in social welfare were provided (Devereux, 2013).

Another reason for the emergence of social protection in Africa was the dissatisfaction with humanitarian relief, particularly emergency food aid. Humanitarian relief does not target individuals but offers a blanket approach to communities that have lost their livelihood – for instance, when harvests fail because of a drought. Although food aid comes with the backdrop of crisis, it can also be seen as a destructive agent in rural communities by encouraging a ‘dependency syndrome’; the CWP approach is better in this regard, as it encourages community agency and does not reduce or displace, but augments, the existing rural livelihood strategies (Philip, 2013).

### **2.2.4 SOCIAL PROTECTION THROUGH SAFETY NETS**

Safety nets are programs which protect a person or household against two adverse outcomes of welfare: chronic incapacity to work and earn (chronic poverty) and a decline in this capacity from a marginal situation that provides minimal livelihood for survival with few reserves (transient poverty) (Subbarao et al., 1997).

Social protection takes place through ‘safety nets’ designed to assist those left behind (Ellis, Devereux & White, 2011) as the economy grew and the living standards increased for other members of society. To discourage those already attaining that standard from joining, the wage rate offered for joining the programmes was lower than that of the subsistence level (McCord,

2008). The South African examples cited by McCord (2008) were the Zibambele project introduced by the KwaZulu-Natal Transport Department and the Gundo Lashu project in Limpopo province. The Zibambele project was still in place during this study's data collection period and was mentioned as a source of household income by some CWP participants. The Gundo Lashu was a road rehabilitation project that initially involved contractors and learnerships with technical assistance from the International Labour Organisation. The safety nets theory was unsuccessful as targeting individuals for assistance was ineffective in facing systemic challenges such as drought, famines, and stagnating economies. Fiscal sustainability became a challenge, especially after the abandonment of the subsidy social protection strategy where basic commodity prices were subsidised. Rural communities that did not participate fully in the money economy did not seem to benefit from the intervention.

Safety nets have been found to have holes (McCord, 2008, 2012; Devereux, 2013, 2005, 2010), resulting in other economic agents being left out. For instance, the need for able-bodied labour in food-for-work or cash-for-work programmes has acted as an exclusionary criterion for the hungry and destitute who cannot work (the elderly, disabled and women caring for children) (McCord, 2008). However, Philip (2013b) and Du Toit (2005) argue that social protection programmes in South Africa, especially the cash-based systems, have tended to exclude able-bodied youth who can work and are not disabled but are also vulnerable and unemployed. Hence, the need to create programmes where the social safety nets could also capture such youth contributed to the emergence and implementation of the Community Works Programme.

The CWP is one of the most recent safety net programmes to be developed in South Africa (Philip, 2013), alongside the Social Relief of Distress (Philip, 2020) and the Presidency-sponsored Youth Employment Subsidy designed to capture unemployed, non-disabled young people.

Discussed next is the concept of unemployment, which occurs when labour is available, yet the opportunities for its utilisation are limited.

### **2.2.5 SOCIAL PROTECTION AND EMPLOYMENT**

The absence of employment opportunities for the human factor of production and the entrenchment of poverty necessitates social protection. Unemployment has a narrow (strict) and a broad (expanded) definition. The former, according to Gumede (2004) and Mohr (2015),

defines unemployment in terms of three criteria of people constituting the economically active population: a) they did not work in the last seven days before the interview; b) they want to work and are available to start work within two weeks of the interview; and c) they were actively looking for work including self-employment in the four weeks before the interview. The expanded definition of unemployment thus includes those who have not looked for work or tried to start a business in the past (Centre for Democratic Enterprise, 2013). It is important to add that, according to Mohr (2015), students in institutions do not form part of the unemployed as they form part of those institutions. Statistics from 2013 showed that unemployment by the strict definition was 24.5%, while by the expanded definition was 35.6 % (Mohr, 2015). According to the strict definition, unemployment increased to 29% in 2019 (Statistics SA, 2019; Kimberly, 2019). These figures indicate that unemployment is a serious problem and part of the triple challenge (National Planning Commission, 2011) of inequality, poverty and unemployment. High unemployment positively correlates with poverty and is a major contributor to inequality (Bhorat et al., 2014). It is noteworthy that South Africa has the highest income inequality index measured by the Gini coefficient in the world. Of the three variables in the triple challenge, unemployment is the most significant variable to be alleviated through the social protection programme.

Antonopoulos (2007) suggests that underemployment, unemployment and forced inactivity are challenges affecting developing and developed countries. Being discouraged from looking for work has a substantial racial and rural bias in South Africa and so should not be ignored in the definition of unemployment (Du Toit, 2005). Furthermore, youth unemployment is a huge contributor to the overall level of unemployment, where the rate for 15- to 30-year-olds in 2010 was at about 42% (Bhorat, 2014).

Definitions of unemployment are instructive as they help describe the CWP participants who were also participants in this study who were unemployed youth in rural municipalities. The participants became unemployed after completing basic education (Grade 12). At the time of the study, most were no longer looking for work despite falling within the age groups defined as economically active (15 to 65 years of age). They were thus unemployed by the expanded definition of unemployment.

It is also important to explore the theories of unemployment because they form the theoretical underpinnings of public works programmes (PWP). It should also be mentioned that while the

PWP offers some respite to unemployment, they have also emerged as part of social protection strategies alongside conditional cash transfers and other transfer payments from the state to the members of society at the margin, described as the second economy (Phillips, 2004). The CWP emerged as part of the expanded public works programme (EPWP) that was located in the non-state sector (Wong, 2017) as it was implemented through non-governmental organisations, one of which (Lima) proposed that CWP participants could enrol for a formal qualification, the Diploma in Grade R Teaching.

### **2.2.5.1 SOCIAL PROTECTION AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON UNEMPLOYMENT**

According to classical economics, also known as pure liberalism, unemployment will automatically disappear without any policy intervention (Limosani & Monteforte, 2017). This implies that apartheid policies, droughts and other shocks would disappear over time, and the economy would revert to full employment. In contrast, the Keynesian school postulates that unemployment is a consequence of a deficiency of aggregate demand (Keynes, 1936; Mohr, 2015; Nikensari et al., 2019) and, consequently, the government ought to intervene with expansionary fiscal policies to increase aggregate demand to stimulate the supply of goods and services, the production of which will increase employment in the labour market. Keynesians, therefore, claim that unemployment is a result of misplaced policies, changes in economic structures and the lack of responsiveness of education to the labour market (Banda et al., 2016; Wong et al., 2019). Whilst unemployment can be explained using Marxian and Keynesian theories, the causes of unemployment are more complex in developing countries than in developed countries (Todaro, 1997; Devereux, 2013). This view is supported by Aliber (2003), Du Toit (2005) and Philip (2013b), who, based on their investigation of unemployment in South Africa, argue that it is structural. Social protection strategies are thus needed to reduce its effects. A study by the Centre for Development Enterprise (CDE) (2013) found that “the labour market institutions and regulations at least partially cause high unemployment in South Africa... Labour market regulations are generally perceived as burdensome...” (CDE, 2013, p. 2). The South African labour market is highly regulated and characterised by higher wages and skills requirements (September, 2007).

The Keynesian theory of unemployment, developed by Keynes (1936), is also called the deficient-demand, or cyclical, theory. It is cyclical because unemployment follows the ebb and flow of economic activity described by the business cycle. There are periods of high economic activity known as recovery and prosperity/boom, and then there are also periods of downturn in economic activity where there are recessions and depressions. High unemployment characterises periods of low economic activity. In a recession, there is also low aggregate demand for goods and services, which leads to a decline in output which also causes lower demand for labour; thus, unemployment results. Keynes argued for the need to stimulate the economy out of a recession through expansionary fiscal policy (1936). When aggregate demand is increased by government expenditure, this will stimulate aggregate supply, which is made possible by employing more labour – hence eliminating unemployment. Mathende (2015) argues that Keynesian theory informed the government of South Africa when, post-1994, it embarked on the Community Based Public Works Programme (CBPWP).

Todaro (1997) argues that unemployment in developing countries cannot be reduced to socio-economic factors emanating from the environment – as argued by Keynes – but, rather, is attributable to external factors such as government intervention, level of aggregate demand, and market structure. In this study, the use of public works by the South African government is in line with the decent work agenda (DWA) as an attempt to provide some form of livelihood to people in the ‘second economy’ (Mbeki, 2003; Samson, 2007; Philip, 2010).

Conversely, Marxists view unemployment as emanating from an unstable capitalist system in a free market. Using their capitalist power, the bourgeoisie class slashes wages to levels that reduce the proletariat's participation in the labour market. The ‘poverty wages’ cause labour not to take up available job opportunities whilst those in employment remain trapped in poverty. In this study, opportunities for poverty wages seem not to be available. CWP participants staying in the rural areas did not have opportunities available; hence they took up the safety net programme - the community work programme. Cochrane (2011) explained that whilst CWP provides employment safety for participants, it is not an employment solution. This can partially explain the low stipends and the need for training for a formal qualification, such as in the Diploma in Grade R Teaching, for participants to exit the programme.

### **2.2.5.2 UNEMPLOYMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA**

Gumede (2008) argues that South Africa is characterised by socio-economic dualism, where there is a first economy that benefits from globalisation and a second economy that is peripheral. In the latter exist not only the marginalised and unemployed but also the unemployable, who do not benefit from growth in the first. COSATU (2010) and Gumede (2008) view unemployment in South Africa as a result of the ANC's pursuit of neo-liberal policies, which has reduced the participation of the proletariat in the market and resulted in socio-economic dualism. In light of this, the South African Presidency commissioned a study on the feasibility of starting a community works programme through the Trade and Industry Policy Studies (TIPS). Department of Cooperative Governance (DCOG) was to also task Lima Rural Development Programme ('Lima', henceforth), along with two other lead agents (Mvula Trust and Teba Development), with creating opportunities for participants to be able to exit from the programme (Andersson & Alexander, 2016) and from the second economy to the first. Lima's motivation for developing the Diploma in Grade R teaching pilot programme was its potential as a route for participants to graduate to the first economy.

Philip (2013a) argues that the New Growth Path pursued after 2009 by President Jacob Zuma was just an updated version of neo-liberalism since the policy promoted an outward-looking, competitive and capitalist economy, which tends to be capital intensive. South Africa is also accused of following a neo-liberal agenda characterised by competitiveness which encourages the use of technology and capital deepening, which displaces labour and relies on highly skilled labour (Banerjee et al., 2006; Lam et al., 2008; Burns et al., 2010). Capital-intensive production makes employment creation expensive. Machines displace labour resulting in unemployment. Second economy activities, such as small to medium enterprises, are crowded out, exacerbating unemployment. The neo-liberal policies, therefore, encourage capital-led growth, increasing labour abundance, leading to unemployment in South Africa.

Unemployment in South Africa has reached such alarming levels that some have said it qualifies as a national disaster (Yu, 2013). Furthermore, Yu (2013) explains that youth unemployment in South Africa emanates partly from the legacy of apartheid and the fact that youth who did not complete school lack the necessary skills for employment, while those who have graduated from university lack softer skills and the needed experience for employability. In this study, the unemployed youth that participated in the CWP Grade R diploma had

obtained their school leaving certificate and thus were eligible to enrol in a diploma programme.

South African youth may also be unemployed because they do not have sufficient networks to obtain information concerning employment opportunities and lack the financial resources and mobility to look for work as well as the capacity to relocate for better work opportunities (Mlatsheni, 2007; Guma, 2011; Smith, 2011). Unemployed graduates may also lack key soft skills – such as communication, personal presentation and maturity – which are sought after by employers (Rees, 1986; Pauw et al., 2008; National Treasury, 2011).

Concerning graduate unemployment, for students from universities and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) colleges, there is an influx of graduates in the fields such as humanities and education compared to engineering and medicine. Engineering and medicine face an undersupply of students because of a reduction in the number of students taking up mathematics and physical science in high school (CDE, 2007), so the graduates are few. There is a tendency to have unemployed graduates in humanities compared to the sciences and technology fields.

Another factor linked to youth unemployment is that some obtain qualifications from institutions not recognised by employers. For example, the Department of Education stopped employing Grade R educators with qualifications from non-governmental organisations in 2019. It replaced them with teachers with Grade R qualifications from universities. Preference was given to holders of the Diploma in Grade R teaching (Atmore et al., 2012), which the CWP participants in this study pursued.

## **2.2.6 SOCIAL PROTECTION AND PUBLIC WORKS**

The basis of embarking on public works is to create employment to stimulate aggregate demand, as has been discussed. According to Thwala (2008), public works have a long history in industrialised countries as an economic policy tool, both as a fiscal measure to expand or contract public spending in periods of imbalanced domestic demand and as a short-term measure to alleviate unemployment. Public works are based on the functional concept that the most abundant asset of the poor is their labour (Bhorat et al., 2014; Du Toit, 2007; Phillips, 2004). In a public works scheme, the state – or an agent acting on its behalf – develops programmes of public works to increase the demand for labour, often using labour-intensive

techniques to enhance the amount of labour absorbed (McCord, 2012). The goal of public works is most frequently to absorb labour to effect an income transfer and reduce poverty. This is done in association with the creation of infrastructural assets and may entail secondary objectives such as skills transfers or political objectives implicitly aimed at the diffusion of instability.

Public works programmes exist in developed and developing countries (Du-Toit, 2005). These programmes highlight the need to challenge and eliminate the causes of both poverty and unemployment. Public works were initially introduced as intervention strategies in crisis situations such as famines and drought. Azam, Ferre and Ajwad (2013) argue that this was the case in Latvia following the 2008-2010 global financial crisis, in Ethiopia in response to famine and drought, and South East Asia following the tsunami of 2006. Public works have thus been employed in response to crises threatening livelihoods and have been sponsored by the state.

Subbarao et al. (2012) argue that public works programmes are used as social protection instruments in diverse circumstances in both low- and middle-income countries with the dual objectives of providing temporary employment and generating, and/or maintaining some labour-intensive infrastructural projects and social services. This is in tandem with the history of public works having been implemented in many countries with a focus on labour-intensive aspects to ensure the employment of those lacking skills.

Programmes vary from country to country. They must be designed to suit the uniqueness of the milieu and the purpose, scope and content (Du Toit, 2007; McCord, 2012). In developed economies, the long-term unemployed are targeted; public works programmes are thus designed as tools to rectify the long-term unemployment malaise. In developing countries, however, poverty alleviation is the central theme of these programmes, and thus the creation of direct employment for the poor is the central goal (McCord, 2012; Del Ninno et al., 2013).

Del Ninno et al. (2013) indicate that public works have had a long history. A section of a road in India between Islamabad and Peshawar, today noted as a tourist attraction, was constructed in a 12<sup>th</sup>-century public works relief program. In England, the 18<sup>th</sup> century Poor Employment Act (PEA) was used to hire surplus labour to build canals and roads to drain marshes, laying the foundation for the industrial revolution. Del Ninno et al. (2013) further argue that public

works programmes were introduced in Africa and much of South Asia at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

One initiative in British India began in the 1870s and expanded during the 1950s through several food-for-work (FFW) programmes. Italy instituted a public works programme on the marshes during the Mussolini era of the 1930s, while Germany introduced public works to support post-war reconstruction during 1946-48. Public works have been used to prop up government programmes as and when the need arose, whether in the global North or the global South. In the political economy of public works, McCord and Winder (2016, 2017) explained that it is expedient for governments to use public works programmes as a campaign strategy because of their visibility.

In the United Kingdom (UK), public works programmes were known as anti-famine programmes, as their main objective was to mitigate the consequences of famine. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, public works programmes were seen as the key policy instruments for reviving and accelerating the recovery of the market-based and transition economies (Du Toit, 2005; Fishback et al., 2007). The International Labour Organisation (ILO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank facilitated most of the public works programmes of the 1950s and the 1960s.

In the late 1970s, public works programmes in developing countries, particularly in Africa and Asia, were integrated into mainstream policy instruments. Specialized public works programmes created for and undertaken in the rural areas of developing countries included the implementation of soil conservation, road construction, road repair and maintenance, irrigation and water supply and other social infrastructure (Gaude & Watzlawick, 1992; Gaude et al., 1984). In the late 1980s and mid-1990s, developing countries in sub-Saharan and southern Africa – including Botswana, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Rwanda, Malawi Cape Verde, Ghana, Mali, Ethiopia, Uganda and Tanzania – implemented public works programmes focussing on soil conservation, road maintenance and other social infrastructure. These defined policy procedures were introduced to alleviate poverty. (McCutcheon, 2018; Bhorat et al., 2014).

Del Ninno et al., (2013) argue that although public works programmes take a safety net approach to generate income for participants while creating assets, they are flexible programs that can respond to country-specific situations by prioritising programme objectives and

adjusting programme design elements. This observation is instructive because the CWP's useful work was location specific, and its design was flexible to local conditions.

As already mentioned, the objectives of a safety net-oriented social protection programme are mitigation of covariate shocks (both unexpected and seasonal), mitigation of idiosyncratic shocks in response to a temporary or structural job crisis, poverty relief, and as a bridge to more permanent employment. The core objective behind the CWP was to address the structural nature of South African unemployment.

In terms of the examples of programmes designed to mitigate covariate shocks, the public works programmes are designed to provide temporary incomes via wages to smooth the consumption of poor households in response to shocks and attacks on livelihoods. Examples are the public works launched in Latin America in 2002 and those established after the 2005 tsunami that affected many Asian countries. The more recent wave was introduced after the food, finance, and fuel crisis of 2007-2009. The World Bank alone supported at least 24 countries in mobilising public works programmes to respond to these crises. *Promotion Nationale*, with 50 years of implementation in Morocco, is the oldest and most important programme whose main goal was to mitigate external shocks of drought by improving local income availability and living conditions. In 2005, the programme provided nearly 14 million workdays of employment (Jalal, 2007).

Bangladesh's food for work program was a long-term initiative designed for flexibility in response to crisis. It has operated since 1975 and was scaled up in response to a major flood in 1998. Bolivia's *Plan Nacional de Empleo de Emergencia* (National Plan for Emergency Employment) shifted in a converse manner. Having been formed as an employment vehicle for low-income families during the economic crisis in 2000, it was extended and incorporated as a permanent anti-poverty instrument in the *Red de Protection Social* (Social Protection Networks) created by the government in 2004. Yemen's public works programme was implemented by the social fund for development (developing infrastructure for schools and health clinics in the country's poorest communities). Mexico also launched the program *de Empleo Temporal* (Temporal Employment Program) in 1995 in response to a severe economic crisis (Dei Ninno et al., 2013).

### **2.2.6.1 PUBLIC WORKS IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (USA)**

The public works programme carried out during the Great Depression of the 1930s is recorded in many history books. The period coincided with the rise of Keynesian economics, which popularised government intervention as a solution to unemployment identified as coming from demand deficiency. According to Fishback, Price, Michael and Shawn (2007), Franklin Roosevelt felt the need to address a “national peacetime emergency”. Unemployment had soared to an all-time high of 20%. In 1933, the Federal Administration established the Federal Emergency Relief Agency (FERA). This agency was to distribute federal funds to states to provide work relief or direct relief to households. Fishback et al. (2007) note that between March and November 1933, the Civil Works Administration (CWA) put 4 million people to work.

Instructive from the USA study, the works relief projects were traditional government projects: buildings and maintaining civil infrastructure such as public buildings, schools, parks, roads and sanitation facilities. This parallels public works initiatives in the global South, such as the safety net programmes in Malawi and Ethiopia or the Zimbabwean food for work (FFW) programmes that also focused on public infrastructure such as roads and bridges, schools, clinics and sanitation facilities (Del Ninno et al., 2013).

### **2.2.6.2 PUBLIC WORKS IN INDIA**

Del Ninno et al. (2013) argue that much of the current momentum for introducing and scaling up public works programmes derived from India’s experience in the 1970s when Maharashtra was hit by a massive drought that forced 70% of its rural population into poverty. An innovative programme – the Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Scheme (MEGS) – was introduced. MEGS has had a striking impact in reducing rural poverty while improving the state’s irrigation infrastructure and rural road network and enhancing resilience to shocks.

A more recent example of a major public works initiative in India is the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) (Philip, 2013a). The programme, launched in 2006 as an Act of the Indian parliament, builds on the successful Maharashtra experience. NREGA aims to provide a strong social safety net for vulnerable groups by providing a fall-back employment source when other alternatives are scarce or inadequate. It aims to act as a growth engine for sustainable development in the agricultural economy, strengthen the natural resource

base for rural livelihoods, create durable assets in rural areas, and empower the rural poor through the processes of a rights-based law, providing a model of governance reform “anchored on the principles of transparency and grass-root democracy” (Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, 2008). Through the programme, the state assures a minimum of 100 days of wage-earning work to any rural household with unemployed adults available for unskilled work. According to Philip (2013a), by June 2010, more than 55 million households were participating in the programme – or approximately 4.5% of the population of India. The equivalent participation rate in South Africa would be 2.2 million people.

The Indian experience is important as it formed the theoretical basis for the CWP (Bhorat, 2014; Ehmke & Fakier, 2016; Philip, 2017), which is the basis for this study. Although the CWP is not an employment guarantee, most features are based on the NREGA model. For example, it offers work for two days a week, up to 100 days per year, and the work is determined at the community level. The useful work aims at creating and maintaining social infrastructure for participants from marginalised areas. In this study, all the participants were living in rural areas.

In the next section, the Expanded Public Works Programme, under which the CWP was launched in the non-state sector (Wong, 2017), is explained.

### **2.2.6.3 PUBLIC WORKS IN OTHER SOUTHERN AFRICAN COUNTRIES**

It is important to look at studies from Africa because South Africa's genesis of unemployment and poverty has racial overtones emanating from apartheid. Therefore studies in postcolonial states –Zimbabwe and Malawi – are alluded to. Still, the common thread in the studies is that they had a top-down approach, where communities were not included in plans and decisions for the programme.

Intrigued by the continued prevalence of poverty despite a national poverty alleviation programme, Tandi (2015) studied public works in the Zimbabwean rural context. His premise was that public works programmes exist to make the unemployed employable by providing temporary employment and skills training to graduate the participants into mainstream employment. This resonated with an earlier study by Mgemzulu (2008) in Malawi about

safety nets and the delivery of targeted relief interventions. As Malawi is largely an agrarian economy, Mgemezulu interrogated the agricultural input subsidy scheme. While acknowledging the positive spinoffs from the public works programme, Tandi (2015) recommended that a meaningful poverty alleviation strategy should be based on a partnership between the government and the rural people to promote self-reliance, growth and development. This resonates with Mgemezulu's (2008) sentiments that communities generally share resources to prevent social costs.

#### **2.2.6.4 PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMMES IN SOUTH AFRICA**

The studies from Zimbabwe and Malawi are particularly relevant to this research because they share the rural outlook and the necessary community involvement in the choice of participants that characterise the South African Community Works Programme under study in this research. Initially, entry into the CWP was community-based – using what the KZN government called 'war-rooms', created during Operation *Sukhuma Sakhe* (OSS). The names of the vulnerable were registered in the war rooms so that when public works programmes such as the Zibambele (McCord, 2003, 2009) were implemented, there was a database of those identified as most vulnerable. This innovation made it possible for one household member to participate in more than two of the programmes, having a greater impact on the household's poverty.

Anna McCord, then a fellow of the Department for International Development (DFID), based at the Southern African Development Institute (SALDRU), studied the public works programmes for a sustained period from 2003, culminating in her PhD in 2009 and a book on chronic poverty in 2012. McCord (2003) explained that public works programmes were the only social protection option available to the working-age, able-bodied population in South Africa. She argued that, despite occupying role and policy prominence, there seemed to have been a paucity of research on the targeting effects of public works. She sought to close this intellectual gap and provide evidence-based policy directions through her investigations (McCord, 2004). In her research, unemployment and poverty were explored, because unemployment in South Africa had reached 31% by the narrow definition of unemployment in 2003 – and 41% by the broad definition. The black African population constituted a disproportionately high proportion of these unemployment statistics. Unemployment and poverty had increased due to a shift in the labour intensity and a reduction in the proportion of primary sector production, leading to reduced growth in employment in the 1990s (McCord &

Bhorat, 2003); and, consequently, reduced demand for unskilled labour (Bhorat & Hodge, 1999). South African unemployment is described as structural (Tshishonga & Matsiliza, 2021; McCord, 2009; Philip, 2018) and consequently cannot be reduced significantly without major state intervention. This condition provided a basis for chronic poverty (McCord, 2009); hence, interventions were developed that ensured predictable incomes, such as the Gundo Lashu in Limpopo and Zibambele in KZN (McCord, 2013) and later, the CWP.

While social protection and labour market policy exists, it provides limited support to the working-age, unemployed poor who cannot access social grants (McCord, 2004). The labour market policy is viewed as having focused on GDP growth and has had few skills training interventions. McCord (2012) pointed to the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) as the only option for unemployed youths, providing short-term employment episodes in 2004. The programme has since been expanded to include the Community Work Programme (CWP) concerned with the second economy (Philip, 2013), which provides part-time, but predictable, income streams to the working and able-bodied age group. The participants in this research – the CWP participants in the rural schools studying via distance education in KwaZulu-Natal – who, by extension, were also EPWP non-state sector (Wong 2017) fell within this age group.

#### **2.2.6.4.1 THE EXPANDED PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME (EPWP)**

The South African Expanded Public Works Programme originated in the Growth and Development Summit of 2003, where one of the themes adopted was ‘more jobs, better jobs, decent work for all’ (Mbeki, 2003). It was agreed at the summit that public works programmes can provide poverty and income relief through temporary work for the unemployed to carry out socially useful activities (Streak & van der Westhuizen, 2004). These elements are important as they explain the socially useful work that ‘enabled flexibility during the Community Work Programme activities.

Following the ANC policy conference at Stellenbosch in the Western Cape province in 2002, President Thabo Mbeki announced the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) in his State of Nation Address in February 2003 (Mbeki, 2003). The cabinet later approved the programme's conceptual framework in November 2003 (Philip, 2013), although it was not launched until March 2004. Like other types of public works programmes, the EPWP is a short-to medium-term programme covering all spheres of government and state-owned enterprises.

The government's medium- to long-term programmes addressing unemployment include increasing economic growth, improving skills through education and training, and improving the enabling environment for industry to flourish. The EPWP is intended to continue until these programmes successfully reduce unemployment. Central to the programme is reorienting line function budgets and conditional grants so that government expenditure will generate more work opportunities for disadvantaged groups – the unskilled and the poor (DSD, DoE & DoH, 2004).

The EPWP targeted the unemployed, under-skilled and underqualified people, especially women, youth and the disabled, and had the following aims: to draw significant numbers of the unemployed into productive work to enable them to earn an income within the first five years of the programme; to provide unemployed people with education and skills within the first five years of the programme; to ensure that participants in the EPWP could apply their experience by either setting up their businesses or services or becoming employed; and to use public sector budgets to reduce and alleviate unemployment. Precautions were needed to ensure that the EPWP did not displace existing workers and contracts, as had occurred with other active labour market policy measures in some of the member countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (Du Toit, 2005).

Central to the realisation of the work of the EPWP has been what Subbarao (1997) argued as the need for the income to be at the barest minimum so that it targets the correct group of people whose opportunity cost of not being in the programme would be less than the gain they realise from participation. This is in line with efforts by the United States during the Great Depression to ensure the programme did not interfere with private-sector employment creation (Fishback et al., 2007).

The EPWP aimed to create employment in four sectors: infrastructure, the environment, the social, and the economic. Initially, it focused mainly on infrastructure and environment-related work opportunities, but it was later expanded to the social and economic sectors. Before designing and implementing new programmes, evaluation studies were conducted on the performance of community-based public works programmes (CBPWPs). The results showed that these programmes had, to a large extent, failed to generate sustainable labour-intensive jobs and to alleviate poverty because of constraints such as poor institutional capacity and project management skills at government and community levels, lack of incentives for

provincial ministries to use labour-intensive techniques, and lack of skills in the construction industry in labour-intensive techniques (McCutcheon, 2001; Adato & Haddad, 2002).

In the public sector and within communities, the specific key institutional constraints identified include the following: lack of project management; lack of norms for processes or procedures; inconsistencies between projects (wages, terms of employment, etc.); duplications of efforts by different line ministries; lack of efficiencies of scale; lack of social development expertise; limited community participation; and the lack of credible Integrated Development Plans to guide asset selection (McCutcheon, 2001; Adato & Haddad, 2002; McCord, 2003a). Other constraints noted by Du Toit (2005) include:

institutional capacity building was limited at all levels: local, provincial and national; internal planning and data collection, monitoring and control were severely lacking; there was a notable absence of independent evaluation; much of the expenditure failed to reach the intended target group, the poor; and training, where given, was not appropriate or focused.

(p. 660)

Having studied the South African expanded public works programme, McCord (2003a) postulates that EPWP could be successful in creating sustainable jobs and poverty alleviation if the mistakes of the past are avoided, a substantially increased proportion of government expenditure is allocated to the programme, and if the institutional constraints in both the public and private sectors are addressed. It may be important for a programme like the Diploma in Grade R teaching, given its scale potential, that challenges be identified so that they can be avoided in the programme's next iteration. This points to the public policy utility of the current research. Du Toit (2005), explaining the background to the Community Works Programme that is the concern of this study, argues that public works have favoured infrastructure because of its employment generation potential and because the government has a say in its contraction and expansion. This study examined the experiences of CWP participants while enrolled for the Grade R teaching diploma so that lessons learnt can guide subsequent intakes of CWP participants.

#### **2.2.6.4.2 SHORTCOMINGS OF THE EXPANDED PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME**

Employing modernisation theory, Ehmke and Fakier (2016) argue that the 1950s and 1960s should have seen the transformation of traditional economic activities into industries with the

potential to absorb the rapid flow of people to developing towns. This did not occur in third-world countries. A dramatic explosion in the urban population, surviving on informal economic activities rather than formal employment (Devereux, 2013; Ehmke & Fakier, 2015), was one of the major differences to first-world countries. Bhowmik (2008) argued that the informal sector emerged to describe the invisible and unregulated activities of the urban poor to eke out a livelihood in developing countries. The returns (or income) from these informal economic activities were irregular, unpredictable and low. This formed the basis upon which social protection could be premised.

Samson (2007) notes that public works often bridge between the formal ‘first’ and informal ‘second’ economies (Mbeki, 2003; 2006). She argues that, in the case of the EPWP, instead of acting as a bridge between the two economies, initiatives aggravated the very circumstances that public works had initially aimed to alleviate. Samson also argues that public works bore all the characteristics of second economy activities – including the creation of inferior jobs with low incomes – and reduced the potential for new jobs in some sectors (especially waste management). She concludes, therefore, that public works projects contributed to the production of the very problem that they were intended to alleviate, belying both the myth that a structural divide separates the two economies and the policy claims that the EPWP would provide an effective way to bridge this divide (Samson, 2007).

Samson’s argument is borne out in that participants typically exit back to unemployment (McCord, 2009) at the end of the projects. Whilst the researcher concurs that the kinds of jobs EPWP workers – and, by extension, CWP workers – were employed in were inferior, this study chose to focus on an education sector intervention that involved participants enrolling for a diploma qualification that would enable them to graduate from the second economy to the first as Grade R teachers.

Hart (2006) argues that the first and second economy discourse has served political purposes; Faull (2005) claims that the ‘two economies’ debate allowed the African National Congress to address the needs of the two economies separately. On the one side is the first economy – with its capital, the taxpayers and the middle class; on the other side is the second economy – with the workers and the unemployed poor. This distinction allows the government to play an active ‘developmentalist’ role in the second economy “without swerving from market-based policies in the mainstream first economy” (Samson, 2007, p. 253).

Tshishonga and Matsiliza (2021) explored the EPWP and the CWP attempt to address poverty and unemployment using a desktop literature review search. They argue that poverty, structural unemployment, and inequality make South Africa one of the most unequal societies in the world. The poor have become poorer and locked in the deprivation trap of marginalisation and economic exclusion, partially owing to the legacy of apartheid. They concluded that the CWP provides a short-term relief safety net for the unemployed. Inhibitors to full programmatic implementation of the CWP include implementation at a small scale, lack of community participation by communities and the unemployed, poor coordination and infrastructure inadequacy. They recommend pluralistic approaches to promote active participation. On the other hand, Khawula (2019) adds that the EPWP is a cross-cutting government programme which draws a massive number of unemployed to productive work, after which they gain skills and an income. Besides income, the most useful benefit of the projects is that beneficiaries also receive skills when on the programme. The study recommended that EPWP also provides employment opportunities to graduates who are unemployed for them also to gain work experience. In other words, both Tshishonga and Matsiliza (2021) and Khawula (2019) concur that the EPWP is useful in poverty alleviation by providing income to the unemployed. While the former recommends more inclusive participation, the latter worries about the unemployment of skilled graduates. In other words, Khawula (2019) desires that the graduates of programmes such as the diploma in Grade R teaching be employed even on a temporary basis in the EPWP as a bridging programme to mainstream employment which is probably happening since the CWP participants only exit the programme once they are fully employed and getting the Grade R teacher's salary.

Glen and Means (2021) studied the transitioning of EPWP participants to tourism in South Africa using an action research approach to analyse the possibility of two organisations working together to address development gaps and improve not only the working conditions but also living conditions and learning conditions for EPWP participants. The research assessed the possibility of collaboration between two organisations to create opportunities for participants once they exit the programme in line with the objectives of poverty alteration and employment creation. This study resonates with the need for collaboration between different organisations. Still, it differs in that the CWP participants worked themselves out of the CWP into mainstream employment as Grade R teachers. In contrast, the EPWP participants had to enter the tourism industry and create employment. The CWP diploma in Grade R programme

was a multi-sectoral programme, as explained by Khawula (2020) and involved more than one organisation. The presence of a mentoring organisation or entity for the bursary programme resonates with the recommendations of this thesis.

## **2.2.7 COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAMME**

The conception of the first and second economies informed the development of the Community Works Programme (CWP). Trade and Policy Studies (TIPS), a non-governmental research organisation (NGO), was commissioned by the South African Presidency to embark on a second economy strategy project (SESP) (Philip, 2013; COGTA, 2010; 2011). The CWP was established as an extension of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) in the social sector extended to the non-state sector (Mathende, 2015; Wong, 2017; Masondo, 2018). The CWP is consistently referred to as a second economy strategy project (SESP). This part reviews research conducted on the CWP.

In South Africa, three academic studies have been carried out on the CWP: two at the University of Johannesburg by Mathende (2015) and Shumba (2014) and one at the University of Witwatersrand by Masondo (2018). Other studies have been conducted under the auspices of the Trade and Industrial Policy Studies (TIPS). A study was conducted in 2013 by the Centre of Democratising Information (CDI), which focussed on the CWP and primary schools. The Centre conducted several other studies for Violence Prevention and Conflict Resolution (CVPCR) at the University of Witwatersrand. The studies by the CVPCR generally focus on the CWP and peace or violence prevention. Besides the CDI (2013) study, which focused on CWP and primary school education, many studies looked at the CWP descriptively.

In Masondo (2018) and Shumba (2014), there was an attempt to explore the emancipatory part of the participants' activities in the CWP – for example, through training to be petty traders or other livelihood pursuits such as cooperatives. There was no exploration of the enrolment of CWP participants in a formal qualification at a higher education institution. Training offered to the participants was informal, and the learning was not significant. This makes the current study useful as it explored the experiences of participants enrolled for formal qualification while participating in the CWP.

McCord (2003a, 2004, 2009) studied the Gundo Lashu for Limpopo and the Zibambebe programmes in South Africa. Mathende (2015) studied the CWP in Bramfischerville, Shumba

(2014) explored CWP as a social entrepreneurship strategy in Johannesburg, and Masondo (2018) studied CWP and livelihoods in Munsieville and Bekkersdal – all in Gauteng province. The common thread between these studies is that CWP was implemented in extreme poverty contexts. Most locations were in black townships or informal settlements with dominant second-economy characteristics. The study by Andersson and Alexander (2016) was also important as it provided an insider perspective of key dynamics in the transition from 2007 to 2016. While Andersson and Alexander (2016) explore the potential of CWP, they also provide a historical perspective, explaining how Philip conceptualized CWP during a ‘light-bulb moment’ (Shumba, 2014) during a presentation on Organisation Workshop by Gavin Andersson (a CWP insider) in 2008. Andersson and Alexander also explain that the CWP was initially called Right to Work (RtW), then Saturday Work Scheme (SWS); when Saturday was deemed to be inappropriate as it was the time for social activities such as washing, funerals and other cultural activities, the name Community Work Programme (CWP) was finally chosen.

Mathende (2015) studied CWP in an urban setting and looked at its impact in Bramfischerville in Johannesburg. He identified CWP as part of a palliative intervention strategy in the ailing labour market. His study was concerned with perceptions and experiences concerning the impact that CWP had on employment and poverty alleviation. Semi-structured interviews were held with CWP participants and key informants in the Bramfischerville community.

This study's methodology resonates with Mathende's (2015) study, which used semi-structured interviews, non-intrusive participant observation, and documentary review. As this study focuses on the interaction between the CWP, distance education and social protection through working and studying, the findings of Mathende's (2015) study were important for identifying themes for data analysis in this study. Mathende found that the CWP assisted with service delivery in under-serviced areas. The CWP boosted the esteem needs of the participants as well as fostered social cohesion in the communities. Mathende (2015) further found that the CWP fell short regarding the Decent Work Agenda (DWA) related to the Sustainable Development Goals and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) as poor wages characterised it, poor health and safety measures and poor working conditions which militated against the objectives of the CWP. Mathende's (2015) findings indicated the need for improvement and reform in working conditions for CWP towards the Decent Work Agenda.

Masondo's (2018) study was on the Munsieville and Bekkersdal CWP as part of the government as Employer of Last Resort (ELR). Masondo utilised a comparative case study approach. The case study occurred over a sustained period from 2010 to 2014 but was only written and completed in 2018. The data-gathering instruments included survey questionnaires, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and ethnographic non-participant observation, which was imbued in the extended case study method. At the core was finding whether the CWP had transformative potential beyond its ameliorative role as a poverty alleviation strategy. Masondo (2018) argues that the CWP possesses autonomous capabilities to respond to local challenges. This finding resonates with studies by Langa et al. (2016) at the Centre for Violence and Conflict Prevention (CVCP). It also resonates with findings by Bruce (2015), where the CWP was found to prevent levels of violence in homes while also being a potential source of conflict. Conflict occurred when, in the context of a patriarchal society, women became income earners, and their male partners and counterparts experienced resentment due to this impact on gender roles.

Masondo (2018) also found that livelihood promotion through ELR approaches tends to ignore cooperative development as a pathway for promoting livelihoods, wherein he presents evidence of three CWP-linked cooperatives in Munsieville. He argues that the operationalisation of the Organisational Workshop (OW) methodology brought superior results in the CWP site that implemented it over sites that did not. The OW methodology was cited as instrumental in Philip's conceptualisation of the CWP when the TIPS was grappling with how the SESP was to be implemented (Shumba, 2014). Shumba (2014) states that Philip had a 'light bulb moment' when she attended a presentation by Andersson about the Organisational Workshop methodology. While OW methodology was not used by the lead agent in the CWP programme under study in this research, it was key in the implementation of the CWP where it was used, and a discussion on effective CWP implementation would be incomplete without its mentioning.

The methodology used in Masondo's (2018) study informed and strengthened the theoretical grounding of the methodology in this study. Masondo borrowed extensively from Burawoy (2000) to justify utilising the Extended Case Study Method (ECM), which has characteristics of extended interaction between the researcher and the participants while emancipating them (Burawoy, 2009). Masondo alludes to ethnography (without using the term), where he left the comfort of the university in the initial period to stay among the study participants in the

communities of Munsieville and Bekkersdal CWP. As he participated in CWP monthly supervisor meetings and various ‘useful work’ activities, he risked being viewed as a ‘government inspector’ or a stranger from the ‘university’. Over time, this risk diminished, but this aspect resonates with the current study, as do the elements of ethnography which characterise the Extended Case Method.

A different take on the CWP was by Shumba (2014), who engaged in a critical reflection of the CWP as a scalable innovation demonstrating social entrepreneurship. Key to this study was still the realisation that the CWP was a response to the triple challenge of poverty, inequality and unemployment. Shumba identified social entrepreneurship as one of the strategies to eradicate these challenges. Shumba (2014) finally argues that the CWP is a social entrepreneurship innovation which can be implemented at a scale and in partnership with the state to address the massive structural unemployment characterising the South African economy. This scalable aspect influenced the conceptualisation of the current study as the GRTD could be rolled out in all local municipalities to alleviate poverty.

In terms of studies of CWP initiatives related to education, a study by the Centre for Democratising Information (CDI, 2013) examined education support from the CWP to public primary schools. CWP participants were found to contribute positively to the schools. They assisted with implementing the national school nutrition programme, establishing, and maintaining school gardens, and linking the school and the community outside the classroom. CWP participants also assisted with school administration, such as photocopying of materials, record keeping, maintaining attendance registers, attending to slow learners and assisting with discipline in the large classes in schools located in poor areas (CDI, 2013). They also helped with road maintenance and assisted learners at busy crossings. While the study did not focus on Grade R particularly, it gave an insight into the working of the CWP in the education sector, which assisted the understanding of this study, in which participants worked at rural schools.

The paucity of studies linking CWP and higher education strengthens the view that this study contributes to the discourse on CWP and livelihoods as governments grapple with graduation pathways for citizens participating in second economy strategy projects synonymous with the CWP, such as food for work, safety net and other public works programmes.

### **2.2.8 SUMMARY OF SOCIAL PROTECTION**

This section has discussed the theoretical basis of social protection, safety nets and social policy. The state attempts to cushion the marginalised, who tend to be neglected in a neoliberal context driven by the market forces of supply and demand. The key asset of youth and other household members who cannot benefit from old-age pensions or child support grants is their labour. The public works programmes that have been in use for a long time tend to utilise this labour asset. In the South African instance, the Expanded Public Works Programme moved beyond infrastructure-related public works to the social sector. As a result, education became part of the milieu of ‘useful work’ being done by participants in the CWP. In the CWP initiative under study in this research, the NGO responsible for implementation grappled with finding a means to graduate participants from the SESP; this took the form of enrolling participants for a formal qualification. The experience of these participants, as they navigated participating in the CWP and studying at a distance, is core to the thesis.

The next section explores distance education as a key aspect of the experience of the CWP participants enrolled for a formal qualification.

### **2.3 DISTANCE EDUCATION**

Most distance learning programmes at the various universities started as offshoots of education faculties offering teacher training to upgrade qualifications for students who were already teaching without disrupting their working and earning potential. One example was Zimbabwe Open University, where the distance education programme began as an offshoot of the University of Zimbabwe Faculty of Education before becoming an independent institution and diversifying to other faculties and disciplines. Similarly, the NWU Unit for Open Distance Learning (UODL) was a unit that grew out of the experience and infrastructure of the School of Continuing Teacher Education (SCTE) (Blignaut, 2011).

Except for the Zambia Open University (ZAOU), other teacher’s colleges utilised a dual-mode offering which resonated with the NWU set-up in this study. However, the GRTD as a whole was offered through distance education. A dual mode of study is when a qualification is offered both at a distance and in a conventional and residential mode (Brimoh, 2010; Aluko, 2007). It is noted that it was offered by the same lecturers who were teaching on the other dual medium programmes and based at the Potchefstroom campus (Redelinghuys, 2017). Chiyongo's (2010)

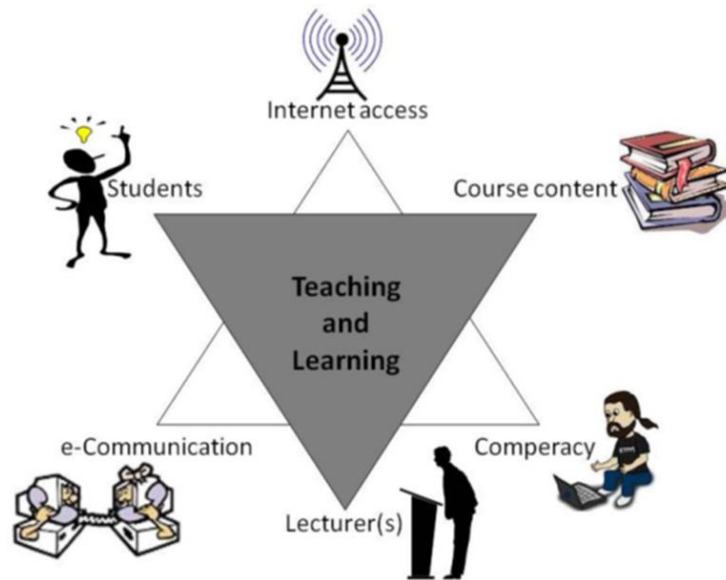
findings resonate with Mugabe's (2011) findings about the inadequacies of student support services, communication channels, training, and professional development. Additional problems related to the current study concern ICT integration in the delivery of distance education, assignments and examinations, records management, interactive instructional materials and staffing, and a lack of a national policy on distance education in Zambia. The policy question did not arise in the South African context as that challenge led to all distance education offerings being halted until the establishment of Unisa and the eventual relaxation for other institutions to move into the distance education space (CHE, 2016). In particular, there are guidelines for South African teacher education in the form of the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ). The policy-practice nexus in this study came into question, especially on the teaching practice modules referred to elsewhere as the RWIL modules.

This section explores teaching and teaching and learning using a distance model. The technologies that serve as the medium for teaching and learning and delivery modes are discussed. Teaching and learning models and approaches to assessment in distance education are explored. Support is especially important for a rural student studying via distance education. This is explored in detail, and the importance of student agency in distance education is considered using the Subotzky and Prinsloo (2011) model.

### **2.3.1 TEACHING AND LEARNING TECHNOLOGY AND DELIVERY MODES**

In acquiring a qualification, students doing distance education must engage with the teaching and learning material. Given the distance aspect of distance education, a medium is needed to link the teacher and the students – a technology for packaging the delivery of teaching and learning. Learning delivery in a distance education context can use an array of learning technologies, including mobile devices, tablets and interactive whiteboard (IWB) sessions (Redelinghuys, 2017). The technology aspects also require that the students have devices and basic digital literacy. The institution must understand each technology's pedagogical usefulness before deployment for effectiveness. Interactivity facilitates dialogue in distance education (Nom Ambe-Uva, 2006). Availing opportunities for interaction is the responsibility of the university offering the qualification.

The van de Venter and Blignaut (2011) model places course content, comperacy, lecturers and students as subordinate to the availability of internet access. Comperacy appears to have been an earlier term emerging out of computer literacy, later referred to as digital literacy.



**Figure 0.1 Teaching and learning with technology**

**(Source: van de Venter and Blignaut (2013, p.113))**

The Council for Higher Education (CHE) (2016) also argues for the need for training of the lecturers so that the technologies can be utilised more in student learning. From the experience of Unisa, Ferreira and Venter (2011) noted that the challenge in most African countries is that many students do not have access to electronic devices that could facilitate online communication and study, and those who have them do not know how to use them optimally. Similarly, Rakoma (2018) identified a lack of basic computer skills and inadequate usage of online learning systems such as e-tutoring by Unisa students as the challenges that undermine the university’s efforts to enhance students’ academic experience, learning and success.

### **2.3.1.1 EVOLUTION OF DELIVERY MODES**

According to some authors, the evolution of distance education has tended to align with the evolution of technology (Anderson & Drone, 2011; Hill, Song & West, 2009). Learning with

and through technology is crucial, given the prominent role that technology has tended to take in the development of distance education (Hill et al., 2009).

Redelinghuys (2017) describes the three stages of development open distance education (ODE) has gone through due to the evolution of technology. First, distance education was limited to a correspondence model where print material was posted to students. Later, audio-visual material was sent in video cassettes, compact discs or floppy discs (Hill et al., 2009); teaching and learning were also offered via radio and television. A classic example is the partnership in the United Kingdom between the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the Open University. The most recent phase of development – which is being taken up exponentially, accelerated more recently by the Covid-19 pandemic– is synchronous and asynchronous online learning over the internet (Hodges et al., 2020). Interaction with online learning content is often mediated via online learning management systems such as Moodle, Sakai, fundi or Blackboard, and social media platforms such as Facebook (Bester, 2014). A blended mode is often employed, using both online learning and contact sessions or tutorials at learning support centres (Redelinghuys 2017).

Kangai & Bukaliya (2010) explored the efficacy of the CD-ROM as a replacement for the traditional tutorial letter and print-based module at Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU). This movement to the CD-ROM was also a pedagogical response to the context of the economic meltdown and a breakdown of general services in Zimbabwe. The study participants had the same socioeconomic status as the CWP participants in this study. From a stratified sample of 25 participants from each of the four faculties at the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU), Kangai and Bukaliya (2010) found that 34% of the ZOU students were computer literate, while 5% had personal computers, 12% had computer access at home or work. Providing learning materials via CD ROM was thus found to be inappropriate as this required students to have a computer which was a luxury the students could not afford; subsequently, they spent resources (time and money at internet cafes) heavily trying to print materials from the CD ROM – ultimately converting the materials back to a print mode that they could access. In this context, 58% of those with access to a computer reported inconveniences to members of family or work colleagues when using computers for their studies; 72% experienced the high cost of printing modules at an internet café. It appeared that the CD ROM mode was eventually abandoned, and the posting of print modules was resumed (Mercy, 2014).

The study identified the need to survey and determine students' readiness for new technologies before implementation. The study recommended that universities provide appropriate technology and, where this is not possible, train students and provide equipment and software when introducing new technology. Access to academic and technical support was also recommended to ensure the effective use of new technology.

In this study, the Diploma in Grade R teaching that was the subject of study in this research was delivered via the correspondence route, with print media being the norm. Anderson and Drone (2011) argue that print has never lost its importance; new technologies have augmented rather than replaced each other in the distance education context.

### **2.3.1.2 DIGITAL DEVICES**

Cellular telephones can serve as a potent force in bridging the transactional distance. However, Makoe (2011) argues that using cell phones in student learning cannot be sustainable unless academics are trained to use them to support their pedagogical practice. Capacity building is therefore suggested to impart the critical skills for deployment to distance education. In the capacity-building exercise, it was important to view mobile learning technology not as an add-on but as an integral component of the curriculum. Further emphasis was placed on the fact that technologies on their own would not improve learning experiences but their utilisation by academics.

### **2.3.1.3 SOCIAL MEDIA**

Studies have shown the need to overcome loneliness in a distance education context. Distance learning can leverage various social media platforms to bridge the social gap. Maboe (2016) recommends considering social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn over and above using a learning management system (LMS) to increase accessibility to students from diverse backgrounds. In this way, social media is evolving as part of the solution to the transactional distance encountered in education (Moore, 2003), otherwise characterised by social isolation.

Some of the popular platforms in South Africa include Facebook and WhatsApp. Bester (2014) examined the use of Facebook – '*FaceFunda*' (a term coined by Bester) to support honours

degree students at the NWU Faculty of Education studying the research module. While the Bester (2014) study focused on the learning centre, Facebook as a learning platform also provided significant support for students. The study aimed to uncover how this social network service “could become an academic tool to support and enhance the affective learning experience of open distance teacher-students in the rural Eastern Cape”. While not in the distance learning context, Kopung (2016) explored the use of WhatsApp in learning mathematics for preservice teachers and found that peer collaboration was enhanced using the instant messaging platform.

Makoe and Shandu-Petla (2019) examined the value social media could add in facilitating interaction in distance education. While utilising the ubuntu lens was also important to the (South) African context and the study as it used cultural capital, the involvement of social media, especially WhatsApp, spoke to the building of a community of practice utilised in a rudimentary and vicarious way for the current study. Makoe and Shandu-Petla (2019) explored the value of mobile learning given the ubiquitous availability and flexibility of cell phones, which dovetails well with the student-centredness, openness and flexibility that underpin open distance learning. In the data collection phase, mobile learning was employed as the cellular phones also had WhatsApp technology, a form of instant messaging that was handy in determining vocabulary development for the study of language development. The findings resonated with Makoe (2011) pertaining to the need for a balance, or consonance, between technology and pedagogy (Anderson & Drone, 2011). The language application utilised – VocUp – also needed to be integrated into WhatsApp for best results (Makoe & Shandu-Petla, 2019), which led to a revised model of the Community of Inquiry framework. Makoe and Shandu-Petla (2019) came up with a revised version where ODeL was changed to MODeL, where the M recognises the importance of the mobile phone in distance learning. The flexibility and accessibility of cellular phones are also crucial as this current study also suggests the utilisation of appropriate technology relevant to rural-based students with their attendant challenges (rurality), including electricity and connectivity (Ebersohn & Ferreira, 2012; Mukeredzi, 2017).

#### **2.3.1.4 LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS**

As previously mentioned, teaching and learning via a distance education mode may take place over the internet using a learning management system (LMS). The most commonly used are Blackboard, Sakai, Moodle (Lieberman, 2018) and recently Microsoft (MS) Teams. In a study on online interactive tools in an open-distance learning context, Maboe (2017) found that despite 100% of participants in her study owning a cell phone and 84.9% owning a computer, only 3.8% participated in online learning. The learning was supposed to occur on the Sakai-based myUnisa learning management system. Inhibiting factors to full utilisation included lack of training by and for lecturers, digital illiteracy; connectivity challenges; data unavailability and unfamiliarity with the learning management systems on the part of the stakeholders (primarily students and lecturers). The LMS, therefore, needed to provide some social learning and interactive elements expected in web-based learning environments, while being cognizant of the students' culture, community, contexts and learning characteristics (Hill, Song & West, 2009).

#### **2.3.1.5 USING INTERACTIVE WHITEBOARD IN CONTACT SESSIONS**

North-West University utilises the interactive whiteboard (IWB) technology during contact sessions at the different learning support centres in South Africa, Swaziland and Namibia. The 2017 Grade R information calendar states that “all contact sessions will be done through the interactive whiteboards installed at Learner Support Centres” (NWU, 2017, p. 26). Learning centres are thus equipped with IWBs, so that distance learning students can interact with the content and the lecturer (Maboe, 2019). Redelinghuys (2017) explains that contact sessions are scheduled over weekends and afternoons to accommodate the typical distance-learning student who is a full-time employee of provincial departments of education in South Africa.

Redelinghuys (2012) notes that travel to the contact sessions is sometimes costly, and some students are far from the Learning support centres. As a compromise, attendance at the contact sessions is not compulsory, and students can also watch the contact sessions from any location on their own devices (Redelinghuys, 2017). CWP participants of the diploma in Grade R teaching had to experience the interactive whiteboard sessions at the learning support centres as part of their teaching and learning activities.

Van Niekerk (2015) studied a cohort of School Management Team (SMT) members enrolled at NWU on a bursary from the Department of Basic Education (DBE) to explore their perceptions of the IWB during contact sessions. The study found that at the start of the study, some of the younger students showed enthusiasm for using the IWB technology, while older students (ages 48 to 58) feared or disliked the technology. Over time, these older students showed more positive attitudes toward the technology, although a significant number still doubted the value of the technology.

The study by Van Niekerk (2015) also found evidence of the teaching presences in the Community of Inquiry framework, namely: social, cognitive and teaching presences. Social presence pertains to the level of connectedness between lecturers and students, which aids meaningful participation in the student's meaning-making processes. Cognitive presence pertains to critical thinking involving discourse and reflection, constructing meaning and generating new knowledge (Garrison, 2000, 2009). On the other hand, teaching presence is defined as "the design, facilitation and direction of cognitive and social processes to realize personally meaningful and educationally worthwhile learning outcomes" (Joo et al., 2011, p. 1655). Van Niekerk (2015) argues that teaching presence brings social and cognitive presences together.

From open-ended questionnaires answered by 45 students regarding their experience with IWB sessions for the Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE), using a community of inquiry model, all three teaching presences were evident in the session. Van Niekerk (2015) noted that the contact session utilising the IWB technology combined several elements: lecturers (presenters), the content and students prone to group dynamics. The finding resonates with Akyol and Garrison (2008), who allude to the importance of the interaction between purpose, participants, context and technology with the three presences. Social presence improved if the presenter managed a balance between the three presences. Van Niekerk (2015) further alleges that technical factors interfered with the smooth working of the Interactive Whiteboard partially because the NWU Unit for Open Distance Learning was in the process of upgrading the technical aspects. Presenters therefore needed and were given support throughout the sessions.

### **2.3.1.6 SUPPORT CENTRES**

Delivery of teaching and learning material sometimes takes place at learning centres that are available to support distance learning. Several researchers have written on the importance of learning support centres in a distance education context. For example, Rakoma (2018) studied the experiences of online learning support in an Open Distance and electronic Learning (ODeL) environment – particularly the utilisation by students in rural areas in Limpopo of the e-tutoring support available at a centre in Limpopo. It was found that students had a positive attitude towards the support centre, and the study concluded that effective online learning helps reduce transactional distance. Shikulo (2018) explored the support students received at the regional learning centres of the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) in Namibia. While technology resource constraints were identified, including the unavailability of centres over weekends, regional support centres were still useful in enhancing distance education learning delivery. Administrative and academic structures available at regional support centres at the Zimbabwe Open University were instrumental support structures for students coping with distance education (Mugabe, 2011). Baloyi (2014) examined support for students registered in the distance adult basic education programme at Unisa and found that student-student interaction and support in an e-learning environment led to throughput. Van de Walt (2017) notes that there were libraries at the learning centres for the NWU intended to support distance education students with textbooks and more. Learning centres were the spaces at which the IWB was installed for the NWU contact centres (NWU, 2017). While de Walt (2017) alludes to the presence of libraries, the learning centres could also be examination centres and spaces at which the students of the NWU submitted assignments in the assignment boxes.

### **2.3.2 TEACHING AND LEARNING MODELS FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION**

This section focuses on the pedagogical approaches universities have taken to deliver teaching and learning through a distance education mode. For most of the distance education programmes that were reviewed, the teaching was packaged in printed material, which included tutorial letters and assignments that students had to do to engage and interact with the content. Later developments saw the emergence of tutorials (and e-tutoring), where facilitators became part of the support afforded to distance education students. Tutorials appear to have dominated teaching in a distance education context in Africa. Muyinga (2012) reports that despite the availability of technologies at Makerere University in Uganda, distance education relied largely on print-based material accompanied by a tutor and four weeks of residential face-to-face

sessions. In contrast, several studies from Zimbabwe Open University (Bukaliya, 2013; Mafa et al., 2014; Mercy, 2014) confirmed that students had three two-hour contact sessions per module per semester.

### **2.3.2.1 TUTORIALS**

A face-to-face tutorial programme for the distance education student was described in the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) model (Mercy, 2014). The three tutorial sessions were distributed across the course, with the first session at the beginning of the semester when it was important for students to receive guidance on approaches to the course. The tutor gave an overview of the course, including how to tackle the course, assignments, and logistics of organising study groups and effective use of study material. The second session was held in the middle of the semester; students' queries, challenges and uncertainties were clarified at this session. During the course, the efforts of both tutor and student addressed any threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge (Timmermans & Meyer, 2019). The intention was to give enough feedback on performance in the first assignment to prepare for the second, while reinforcing areas of good performance. The third session was ideally positioned towards the end of the semester, addressing areas that may still need attention and clarification. The tutor would give feedback on assignments which is crucial in preparation for the end-of-semester examinations. In this study's context, this session corresponds with NWU's last contact session, in which examination letters are discussed, identifying areas important for examination purposes. Another form of tutoring took place online and was called e-tutoring.

E-Tutoring is a form of teaching that involves interaction by the distance education student with the study material, fellow students, and the tutor over the internet (Hanifa, 2014; Ntuli, 2016), either synchronously or asynchronously (Makwara, 2019). It could be practically impossible for a student to participate in the virtual platform without adequate digital literacy (Van de Venter & Blignaut, 2013). Rakoma (2018) focussed on the challenges and experiences of rural students at Unisa using the e-tutoring platform. While identifying internal and external factors that affected the students' utilisation of the myUnisa platform, Rakoma (2018) concluded that effective support was crucial to reducing the transactional distance for rural students engaged in online learning.

At Unisa, both face-to-face and e-tutoring sessions were offered. E-tutoring sessions were done online on the myUnisa learning management system, using tools such as discussion forums and announcements for teaching and learning. Joubert and Snyman (2018) allude to challenges with low participation and lack of commitment by students, lack of communication between the e-tutor and lecturer, limited access to technology, and administrative problems. Joubert and Snyman (2018) further allege that tutors felt isolated and felt they had inadequate training. In contrast, in the face-to-face programme, the tutor was physically present to students at the regional and learning centres. The tutor's presence suggested teaching presence, while the presence of the other students suggested social – and possibly cognitive – presence (Baloyi, 2014). Reference to the tutorial programmes is important as it shows the Grade R teaching diploma had the interactive whiteboard (IWB) where the lecturer and the student were to have synchronous interaction in a virtual platform, where the student was at the Learning Support Centre while the lecturer was to be at the main campus.

The table below summarises the approaches to support distance teaching and learning at different southern African universities, including NWU. Tutorials are generally available at all distance learning programmes, while NWU has live interactive whiteboard sessions. While some universities use block release sessions (Muyinda et al., 2012), NWU uses three contact sessions of 45 minutes per module per semester. Learning centres are available at most universities and sometimes double up as examination (assessment) centres. Most learning support centres have internet and library facilities (de Walt, 2016).

**Table 0.1 Summary of approaches to support distance teaching and learning at selected universities**

	<b>Makerere Uganda</b>	<b>ZOU Zimbabwe</b>	<b>NUST Namibia</b>	<b>NWU South Africa</b>	<b>Unisa South Africa</b>
<b>Tutors</b>	Lecturers responsible for the internal programme facilitate the residential tutorial weeks	Locally available at the regional centre	Locally available	Available through the interactive whiteboard sessions	e-tutors and face-to-face tutors
<b>Learning Centres</b>	None – use university campus	Regional centres	Regional centres	56 in South Africa, Namibia and Swaziland	Regional centres
<b>Internet</b>	Silent (available only on the main campus)	Available in the regional library	Silent	Available at learning centres	Available at regional centres
<b>Tutorials</b>	Face to face 4 weeks	Face-to-face 3 x 2 hour sessions	Face-to-face tutorials are organised locally, for two hours per course every week at the regional centres	Contact sessions: 3 sessions per module per semester (45 minutes each)	e-tutorials and face-to-face; 15 hours per semester per ‘at risk module’
<b>Continuous Assessment</b>	Students submit at the main campus during the block release sessions.	Two assignments per module, then final examinations.	Assignments are submitted at regional centres, after which they are couriered to	Assignments are submitted to the main campus via post or deposited into a NWU assignment box at the	Assignments are submitted to the head office or uploaded via myUnisa. Assignments are posted

		Assignments are submitted and marked by tutors from the regional centre.	the main campus for marking	learning centre, and the assignments office organised assessment (marking).	using business reply service envelopes or into an assignment box at UNISA regional centre
<b>Examinations</b>	Written at the main campus in two of the residential 4 weeks	Written at the regional centre managed venues	Written at the regional centre managed venues	Admission requires a Duly performed. At learning centres Same time as internal programmes	At the regional or learning centre managed venues
<b>Mode</b>	Dual Mode	Distance	Dual	Dual Mode	Distance
<b>Source</b>	Muyinga (2012) Mayanja et al (2019).	Maxwell et al. (2015) Mercy (2014)	Shikulo & Lekhetho (2020); Shikulo (2018)	Redelinghuys (2017)	Joubert and Snyman (2018) Researcher observations

Musingafi et al. (2015) categorise distance education challenges as individual, instructional and institutional. Individual challenges included a lack of sufficient time for study; limited access to ICT devices and proficiency in digital literacy; inadequate support from employers; financial constraints; and physical distance, especially during face-to-face and examination sessions. Instructional challenges related to inadequate (ineffective and delayed) feedback on student assignments and examination results, as well as lost scripts and unrecorded grades. Institutional aspects related to delayed delivery or lack of study materials; lack of student support services, especially in guidance and counselling; and inadequate administrative and academic support at regional centres.

Rakoma (2018) argued that studies have tended to focus on the urban or conventional student, where geographical challenges were not considered. Based on this premise, findings are often not disaggregated to focus on the mature, rural or non-conventional students whose challenges tended to be unique. For example, Redelinghuys (2017), who studied interactivity in NWU's Unit for Open and Distance Learning (UODL), took a uniform view of the distance education student. The mixed methodology included questionnaires and semi-structured interviews for participant students coming to the Potchefstroom (the main and urban) campus (Redelinghuys, 2017). Yet, the findings were generalised to all students. The lack of disaggregation fails to consider the circumstances of students studying at a distance. Potchefstroom was also the centre from which the interactive whiteboard sessions were broadcast, suggesting the possibility of students meeting with the lecturer, which was an impossibility for students at other learning centres; hence the potential lack of representativeness of the sample utilised in the Redelinghuys (2017) study.

### **2.3.2.2 WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING (WIL) AND THE COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAMME (CWP)**

As part of the suite of teaching and learning activities, the students enrolled for the diploma in Grade R teaching were also involved in work-integrated learning (WIL). This WIL also coincided with the useful work that CWP participation entailed. While the NWU admission required all Grade R diploma applicants to be already teaching, the CWP participants' admission was on the basis that they would work at schools for three years as teaching assistants while studying. Teaching practice was, therefore, an integral part of the diploma as stated in the policy document: minimum requirements for teacher education qualifications (MRTEQ,

2011) in the form of the RWIL modules, as alluded to earlier. The Grade R information booklet (2019, p.16) states:

Students should ensure they understand all the information provided in the respective WIL study guides (RWIL111/121; RWIL211/221; RWIL 311/321). The study guides will guide students along all the steps to be followed before and during the WIL to provide sufficient evidence of WIL to pass the module. Students must compile a WIL portfolio for each semester as evidence of their learning in practice.

Teaching practice provides the basis for learning from practice and in practice (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010). The assessment during teaching practice involved the assessment of the portfolio of evidence detailing what the students did during the period of practice, as discussed in the section on assessment.

Work Integrated Learning (WIL) is meant to provide learning from and in practice. The WIL modules bridge the student between the present academic endeavour and the professional future (NWU, 2015). Students are allowed to learn in the real world while developing professional skills. The teaching practice provides a three-way partnership between the student, the workplace (destination after qualification completion) and the university. It provides a tripartite scenario where each party assumes definite responsibilities, performs functions, and achieves benefits due to involvement (Martin & Hughes, 2009).

In this study, work-integrated learning brought teaching practice and the community work programme into sync, where both required that the participant be physically involved in the Grade R classroom. The policy on teacher education qualifications also mandated the WIL component. The assessment of WIL portfolios brought the concept of formative and continuous assessment to the fore.

### **2.3.3 DISTANCE EDUCATION AND ASSESSMENT**

Constructive alignment demands that learning assessment is thought through before, and teaching and learning activities are informed and influenced by assessment (Biggs & Tang, 2011). In any learning environment involving distance education, once learning outcomes and teaching outcomes are placed, it is assessment which is the capstone of these other two processes. Assessment holds up higher education standards (Bloxham & Orr, 2011; Orr, 2012). However, it is also the most powerful lever for teachers to influence student behaviour and response (Gibs, 2004).

In describing student experiences in higher education, research and experience point to the primacy of the assessment process. Cohen et al. (2010) describe assessment as the process of gathering, interpreting, recording, and using information about students' responses to educational tasks; teachers have to respond to, and use, the data acquired for assessment to make judgements, for planning, for selection, for decision making, and other matters. It comprises formal assessments (tests and examinations) and informal assessments, including ongoing observations, questioning, marking work and listening to students.

Assessment “shapes students' experience and influences their behaviour more than the teaching they receive” (Bloxham & Boyd, 2007, p. 3). Bloxham and Boyd (2007) further argue that tutors (and markers) implicitly know the importance of assessment. Murphy (2006) boldly claims that university assessment practices lag behind their school sector equivalent, as they rely on a range of tried but not always tested methods. Assessment is done ad hoc (Swann & Ecclestone, 1999), a situation aggravated by the ‘amateur’ status of academics regarding assessment (Ramsden, 2003). Price (1995) clearly states that the craft of assessment is learnt informally by faculty through being assessed themselves while studying. Price (1995) suggests that university lecturers do not get enough induction and scholarship regarding assessment. Despite this flaw, assessment is still cardinal in mediating the student experience. Grades emerge from assessment which eventually translate into a qualification.

Boud and Molloy (2013) posit that assessment matters most to students and should be utilised to foster a deep approach to learning. The verbs utilised in assessment determine whether there is parroting or regurgitation of facts or if the learning being tested is espoused by “Susan” or by “Robert” types of students (Biggs & Tang, 2015). Susan takes a deep approach to learning and is deeply motivated, while Robert takes a surface approach that satisfies the barest minimum of requirements. The challenge for the teachers is gently nudging Robert towards the Susan kind of student, which could be a challenge in a distance education environment.

Distance education students are normally given formative assessments through assignments and portfolios and summative assessments, which take the form of end-of-semester examinations (Mukeredzi, 2005). The assignment handling system can be centralised to the main campus (or head office) or decentralised to regional centres (Shikulo, 2018). If the system is centralised, it justifies the establishment of an assignments office. Mukeredzi noted that

students normally wrote two assignments for the Zimbabwe Open University while taking at least two to five courses (or modules) per semester. The coursework (formative assessment) could constitute between twenty and forty percent of the final mark, depending on the course. The Grade R information booklet (NWU, 2018) alludes to coursework as participation marks which constitute admission into the final examination. The participation mark should be at least forty percent and constitutes forty percent of the final mark, while the examination constitutes the remainder of sixty percent.

In calculating the module mark for all modules in the Diploma in Grade R Teaching, the participation mark carries a weight of 40%, and the examination mark a weight of 60% towards the final module

(NWU, 2018, p.12)

The assessments that came to be of interest to this study were the assessment of assignments, the RWIL portfolios, and the final examinations. The learning outcomes, in this context, are alluded to in the form of assessment feedback and the eventual diploma certificate the CWP participants received.

### **2.3.3.1 FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT: PORTFOLIOS OF EVIDENCE**

A portfolio is a “purposeful collection of a student’s efforts, progress or achievement in a given area or areas” (Birenbaum, 1996, p. 8). Lam (2018) explains that portfolios must include both guidelines for the selection of items and also involve the student in selecting which content should be included in the portfolio. The rubric upon which the portfolio will be assessed ought to be included ahead of portfolio preparation; the portfolio should also include evidence of self-reflection on the part of the student. Hall (1992) defines the professional development portfolio by lecturers and teachers as a collection of material made by the professional which not only records but also reflects on the events and processes deemed key in the professional’s career. Challis (cited in Falchikov, 2005) lists several advantages of using a portfolio in learning, some of which are the recognition and encouragement of autonomous and reflective learning, the portfolio is based on the learner’s real experience enabling the connection between theory and practice to be consolidated; and that it enables assessment within a framework of transparent and declared criteria and learning objectives. Portfolio-based learning also enables triangulation by accommodating evidence of learning from different sources and contexts. It is also a model for lifelong learning and continuing professional development (Falchikov, 2005).

These elements should be important since teaching practice entails the teaching portfolio of evidence prepared by the CWP participants in the diploma qualification. A few authors suggest that a portfolio is appropriate for professions, and teaching being a profession, the portfolio form of assessment became especially appropriate (Halshall, 1995; Lam, 2018).

Notwithstanding the benefits of portfolios, it should be noted that constructing portfolios has been time-consuming; gathering all the necessary artefacts and work samples can make the process rather cumbersome and overwhelming (Sithole, 2011). Furthermore, there appears to be an inadequate orientation for the students and the assessors (supervisors) who assess the students (Sithole, 2011). Conflicting instructions are sometimes given to the students by different assessors. Teacher trainees found support from their mentor-teachers and peers crucial in completing the portfolios (Kocoglu, 2008). The challenges identified can assist in understanding the experiences of the CWP participant as a student for the Grade R teaching diploma. The utilisation of the portfolio of evidence also plays into eliciting the institutional habitus, one of the theoretical framework's triad (field, habitus and capital).

Having presented the portfolio's advantages and potential challenges, Falchikov (2005) further cautions about the problematic nature of the portfolio assessment. Challis (1999) argued that their highly individual nature presents challenges and how one builds the portfolio. Fortunately, this does not apply to this GRTD as it is highly structured, and students are given a rigid structure to follow. Challis (1999) suggests the inclusion of self-assessment as part of the portfolio assessment process. David (2000) views the importance of clarity in assessment criteria as important in providing validity and internal consistency of assessment for inter-assessor reliability. Some of the guidelines for portfolio assessments included that it ought to have a criterion-referenced framework; should link to specific outcomes; the criteria ought to be explicit; evidence ought to be accompanied by an explanatory reflective statement, and the evidence ought to be authentic; appropriately demonstrate learning claimed as well as have recency that the assessor can also infer the currency. Birenbaum (1996) suggested a four-point rubric for assessing the portfolio. Since the CWP participants engaged in Work Integrated Learning, they experienced the rubric when portfolios were being assessed.

In a study at the University of Botswana concerning the innovative new professional development assessment of teaching practice using a portfolio, Sithole (2011) found that although portfolio development was cumbersome and time-consuming for student teachers, it

provided a useful and valuable learning experience. It also developed the student's "creativity, reflective practice and continuous professional growth" (Sithole, 2011, p. 523). Overall, the study found that students found portfolio assessment to be more authentic than the traditional approach to assessment of teaching.

Sithole (2011) also found that there were inconsistencies in the way supervisors assessed students' portfolios and thus recommended a thorough orientation for both the students and all classes of supervisors to clarify expectations for the "purpose of selection of artefacts, organisation, reflection, assessment and evaluation of portfolios" (Sithole, 2011, p. 524). The study by Sithole provides an empirical lens through which to gauge the experiences of the CWP participants with the modules that straddled the whole three-year period. In comparison, Sithole (2011) study focussed on students in a conventional offering, while the current study was for a distance education offering; the students from Botswana hail from similar circumstances in the SADC region. The students in the study also employed a similar attachment model of teaching practice during the three weeks (15 days) in which they engaged in RWIL module practicum in class (NWU, 2014).

### **2.3.3.2 ASSIGNMENT BOXES**

Distance education universities have tended to support students in submitting assignments and portfolios at the learning support centres closest to their homes. Unisa has provided business reply service envelopes and boxes at the learning centres where students can submit the assignment. Recognising the transactional distance and the need to bridge it, the Grade R information booklet provides information about the location of such boxes at the 78 education learning centres (NWU, 2019). The centres are scattered across southern Africa, with 18 in KwaZulu-Natal. Students can deposit their assignments in the assignment box, which is equivalent to submitting assignments at the NWU assignment office at the Potchefstroom campus. Experience with the assignment boxes is an important part of the CWP participant experiences as they studied via distance learning, and formative assessments needed to be submitted to get admission into the final examination.

### **2.3.3.3 SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT – EXAMINATION CENTRES**

Summative assessment, which exists in the form of end-of-semester examinations (Mukeredzi, 2005; Boyd, 2008) for Distance Education (DE) programmes took place at the main campus in Uganda (Muyinda, 2012, Mayanja et al., 2019) or at the designated learning centres (Redelinghuys, 2017). The location of the examination centre became important in the study as the assessment for learning and certification depended on the accessibility of the centres, which had the potential to increase or reduce the transactional distance for DE students. While attending contact sessions was optional (ibid), writing examinations was never optional; thus, this aspect formed an important aspect of the participants' experiences.

### **2.3.3.4 MARKING OF ASSESSMENTS**

Assessment for certification (Boud, 2008) involves marking, the outcomes of which translate into the certificate. Students get feedback through marks arrived at by markers who can be lecturers of the module, tutors in the module delivery or markers employed for the purpose. Marking, especially at universities, appears to be overlooked in research.

Smith and Coombe (2006, p. 45) comment that “[m]arkers are the gatekeepers of university quality”, with assessment providing the grounds upon which standards of academic performance are based (Price, 2005). Whether education is delivered through distance or conventional modes, students expect marks and feedback from the marker. Their experience with marking mediates their experience. This feedback eventually translates into the artefact of the Grade R teaching certificate diploma. The theoretical underpinnings of this activity are therefore important.

Several academic development authors have written on assessment in general, but there appears to be a gap in the study of the marking process (Yorke et al., 2000; Smith & Coombe, 2006; Bloxham & Boyd, 2008) as well as inadequate attention given to this by the university. This lack of attention can make staff – particularly part-time staff – feel unprepared for the role (Smith & Coombe, 2006). The part-time aspect is crucial as these markers are employed for the process and are not lecturers for the modules they are involved in marking. This lack of dialogue on such a crucial part of the learning process allows the assumptions of reliable standards to continue largely unchallenged (Bloxham & Boyd, 2008). This also may perpetuate the commonly held assumptions regarding marking by tutors, such as that it is onerous and

carries a low status, discouraging investment of time and energy in its improvement (Smith & Coombe, 2006).

### **2.3.3.5 FEEDBACK**

Boud and Molloy (2013) define feedback as a process where the learner makes sense of performance-relevant information to promote learning. The definition positions feedback as a process, not a once-off event involving transmission of information or input. The student or learner is viewed as an active participant in the process. Henderson, Ajjawi, Boud and Molloy (2019) believe that feedback is crucial for student learning because, in its absence, students cannot judge their future performance. They further argue that “[f]eedback is the lynchpin to learners’ effective decision making, and the basis of improved learning outcomes” (p. 15). Feedback can be delivered through written, audio or video modes or through rubrics.

Concerning the impact or effect of feedback, Henderson et al. (2019) suggest that the concept of feedback as ‘giving comments’ is a misconception as it views feedback as a one-way flow intended merely to justify the grade given, whilst it can hinder or enhance future performance. Mukeredzi (2005) argues that feedback on assignments is important as it constitutes a form of teaching; comments on marked assignments guide and motivate the learners. Students who receive meaningful comments have been found to perform better than those receiving one-word comments such as ‘excellent’ (Gronlund, 1995). Marked assignments with comments were perceived as more motivating than assignments with marks and no comments accompanying the grade (Mukeredzi, 2005).

Feedback does not have to be from the lecturer or university alone but can also stimulate, or be stimulated by, student agency. Therefore, institutions cannot provide information and ‘hope for the best’ but need to design feedback in anticipation of the impact on future outcomes and find ways to understand or measure its impact to optimise the outcome so that the learner benefits from the process. Student agency is needed for the learner to identify their goals and criteria and generate their evaluative information to inform their future constructions and actions (Henderson et al., 2019). Getting learner feedback regarding the assessment process completes the feedback loop.

### **2.3.3.6 MODERATION AND ACCESS TO RESULTS**

The English Oxford dictionary definition of moderation is “avoidance of extremes”; in the context of examination papers or assessment, it refers to the process of ensuring marks vary in a reliable way. Assessment processes are incomplete when moderation has not taken place. Moderation is defined as “a procedure where scorers or raters meet to achieve consensus on scores assigned to student work” (Roberts, Sloan & Wilson, 1996). This definition resonates with the arguments of other authors on assessment (Orr, 2011; Bloxham & Boyd, 2007; Henderson et al., 2019).

The researcher was drawn to this concept after having been involved in the moderation process for public examinations in earlier years (2006-2008) in the national public examinations. The need for throughput for universities necessitated the moderation of assessments for the CWP participants after getting a mark above the sub-minimum.

The NWU policy documents suggest that there is an internal and external moderator for the different modules that are assessed in different programmes (NWU, 2020). The moderation sometimes depends on whether the module falls at the start or conclusion of the programme.

Several studies indicate that receiving results is important to the student experience. For instance, Mugabe (2011), Chikuya (2009) and Bukaliya (2011, 2013). Since results are an indicator of student effort, their availability on time is more important in distance education. Results indicate whether the student is progressing to the next study period, repeating the failed modules, and/or has met the requirements for completing the qualification.

In this study, to achieve the outcomes of the Grade R diploma certificate through distance learning, teaching, and learning activities have to be embarked on while assessment caps the whole process. The teaching and learning activities must be delivered at the learning support centres, which are physical spaces using technology that has evolved over time. Tutorials and interactive whiteboard sessions are some of the ways in which the programmes were delivered in various learning contexts in Southern Africa, including in Zambia, Uganda, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Namibia as empirical cases reviewed. The assessments took place at the learning centres as well as examination centres. Formative assessments, which took the form of assignments and portfolios of evidence, had to be submitted at learning support centre-based

assignment boxes or posted to the distance learning head office, depending on how centralised the assignment marking process was. Summative assessments, which took the form of examinations, were written at the examination centres. Feedback on assignments was received specifically in the form of assignment marks and examination results.

### **2.3.4 STUDENT SUPPORT IN DISTANCE EDUCATION**

The study guide for the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) on the module of support in distance learning examines the kinds of support that students receive from numerous case studies (Ambe-Uva, 2006) from universities offering dual-mode (blended) teaching and learning or purely distance. The case studies included Zimbabwe Open University, Unisa in South Africa, the Open University in the UK, Winneba University in Ghana, and the University of Sudan.

A study by Mugabe (2011) interrogated support for distance education students studying through the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU). The study found that academic structures were important as coping mechanisms for students studying at a distance. The structures included the regional study centre staff and facilities, the study modules, orientation sessions, the library information communication technologies (ICTs), contact tutorials, projects, assignments and examinations. This finding resonates closely with this study, as NWU Learning Support Centres (LSC) were meant to provide most of the facilities identified by Mugabe (2011). Mugabe found challenges concerning orientation; communication; the use of modules, assignment and project supervision; missing results; and funding as factors delaying qualification completion; these factors are also echoed by Shikulo (2018), discussed next. These findings tend to resonate with how the CWPPS experienced studying the GRTD. Mugabe (2011) further identified coping mechanisms by the ZOU students in the distance education environment, such as participation in social contracts by including members of families, study groups, employers and private tutorial arrangements; buying their own books; dedicated study and past examination papers; paying fees by instalment; borrowing money and self-help income-generating projects.

Shikulo (2018), in an evaluation of the National University of Science and Technology (NUST), distance education students seeking student support services (SSS), found the challenges to be a shortage of technological tools; understaffed regional centres; lack of support

during lunch hours, public holidays, weekends and evenings; and a lack of collaboration between marker-tutors, lecturers and face-to-face tutors. Shikulo (2018) recommends improving SSS to stem dropout rates and increase throughput rates. The need for support resonates with Tinto's (2014) sentiment, suggesting that access without proper support structures is meaningless.

Shikulo and Leketho (2020) provide a raft of recommendations to improve the distance education student experience: Distance education students face stressful situations that warrant the need for counselling services. Shikulo recommended that the university (NUST) employ two counsellors at the main campus who would also take time to go to regional centres on a rotational basis and also have online counselling opportunities. Since NUST had tutor-markers and face-to-face tutors, Shikulo (2018) recommended that these categories of staff get trained in distance education pedagogy to improve success rates. The facilitators also need to be equipped with skills to navigate the different processes allocated to them at the regional centres. While the Community Work Programme participants in this study were admitted based on their matric certificate, but also being unemployed and eligible for the CWP, they qualify as mature and non-traditional students who would have also benefitted from the existence of such enrichment programmes identified in Shikulo (2018)'s study.

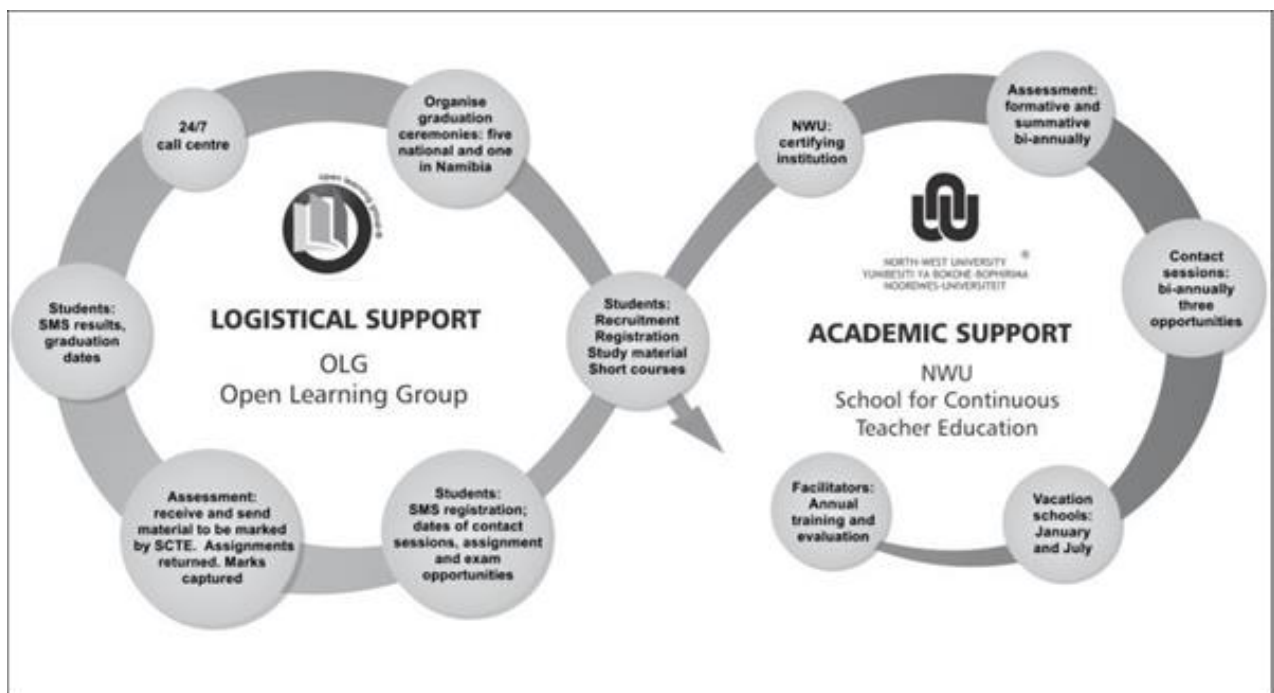
Baloyi (2012) studied the Unisa Open Distance and electronic Learning (ODEL) context, focusing on lecturers and students in the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) programme. The crucial finding of this study was the importance of support for the ABET programme to succeed. Factors that also emerged that impact the success of distance learning in this context included students' context; accessibility of learner support from the university; levels of computer literacy; student motivation; and time management. Baloyi (2012) concluded that most ABET students stayed in rural and remote areas with connectivity challenges rendering the utilisation of the myUnisa learning management system less optimal. Students and lecturers acknowledged that myUnisa was useful but viewed the contact classes as the most important learner support strategy. The tyranny of distance could be reduced when student support reached all students equitably. Baloyi's findings resonate with this study – especially regarding the remoteness of the students in the ABET module.

Mpofu (2017) argued that the lack of relational and academic support accounted for high attrition in distance education (DE), citing Heydenrych (2010), and Gatsha and Evans (2014).

Gil-Jaurena (2014) explains that student support had to appeal to the whole student, including the systemic, affective and cognitive domains, which would scaffold the DE student to success. Mpofu (2017) critiqued student support literature, further arguing that it was the institution's responsibility to stem attrition of the students, adding this emerged from a premise of an incomplete understanding of factors affecting attrition which he argues came from the students' claims about self-efficacy. This thesis surmises that there should be a rallying of both the institution and the student so that they gain autonomy envisaged by Moore (1993) in the transactional distance theory to enhance the student walk (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011) explained in 1.3.5. Mpofu (2017) utilised the quantitative descriptive methodology with students enrolled on a DE in-service qualification at the Solusi University in Zimbabwe, a dual-medium university similar to the NWU, with stratified sampling for 360 students. Data collection through Schwarzer and Jerusalem's (1995) generalised self-efficacy questionnaire, which employed a Likert scale with 16 items, led to data analysis which used exploratory factor analysis. The results showed that students needed coping mechanisms, proactivity, ingenuity and tenacity for persistence – which are all self-efficacious dispositions. This study is instrumental as it brings to the fore the importance of self-efficacy for the DE student, which, while not a new concept, strengthens the importance of Moore's (1993) Transactional Distance Theory element of student autonomy being key to success.

Zinyama and Ndudzo (2015) studied factors contributing to students' low retention in open-distance learning institutions. Areas that need attention include assignment administration; tutorial delivery; study material distribution; and examinations publication. Tutorial times needed to increase to 12 hours per module while considering the advantages of the block release offering. Challenges, including low salaries in the Zimbabwean case, contributed to dropout, while institutional factors such as tutoring, communication and library service also led to decreased dropout rates. A stop-order option was recommended to help students with a payment plan. CHE (2016) found that 35% of first-year students dropped out while only 15% of students enrolled completed in minimum time. Tinto (2014) noted that each student who left before completing their degree constituted a significant loss in potential tuition fees for the university and alumni contribution. Student dropout leads to wastage in investment and deadweight loss in public funds budgeted for the student across the years for the enrolled student.

On the whole, the studies in distance education included here focused on the primacy of support for the students in contexts with resource challenges. The characteristic student was a working adult; this was also true for the current study, with the CWPPS working as a CWP participant while studying the GRTD. Coping mechanisms for studying and navigating administrative structures pointed to the need for repositioning that learner support should have.



**Figure 0.2 The cycle of logistical and academic support**

(Source: van der Venter & van der Merwe, 2011, p. 203)

The model showed the logistical and academic support offered to students of the unit for open and distance learning at the NWU by the Open Learning Group (OLG).

### **2.3.5 DISTANCE EDUCATION STUDENT SUPPORT MODEL IN SOUTH AFRICA**

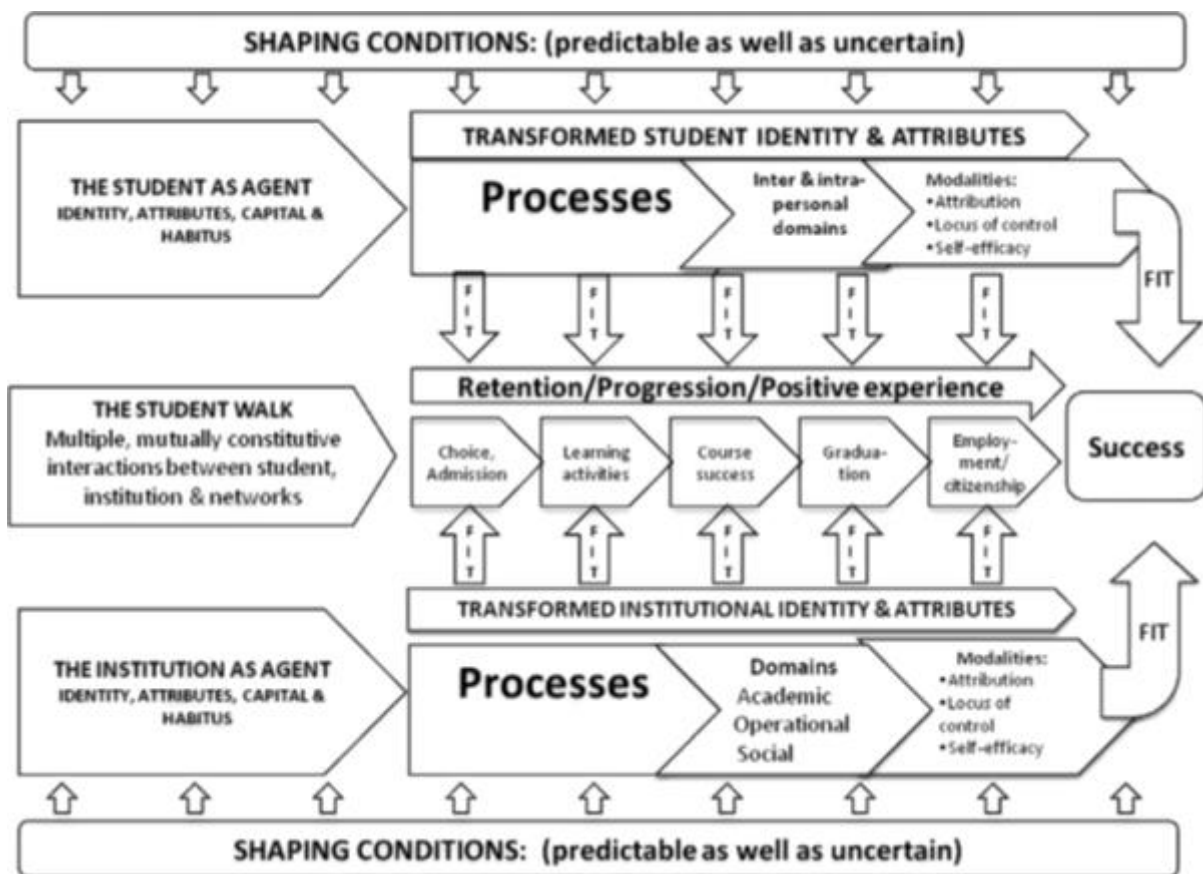
In a study of student support services for Unisa students in open distance learning in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), Mouton (2015) concluded that students were not well prepared and uncertain in distance learning. Therefore, student support services could help improve student throughput rates for the region (KZN), as it was the second after Gauteng in enrolment statistics. Mouton's study is included because it was conducted in the same geographical region as this study and alluded to the importance of support in Distance Education. Mouton's (2015) study is located

in public administration and links HE and public administration as much as this study links Social Protection and HE, so both are multidisciplinary. The study examined the learner support initiatives and student readiness for DE at Unisa.

Mouton and Subban (2015) found that there were more female students than male students at Unisa in KZN; most respondents (83%) fell in the 18-25 age group; 67% were unemployed, and 44% struggled to find accommodation while studying at Unisa. These factors became important for student retention and throughput. Since Unisa attracts students from rural areas, Mouton (2015) suggests that the regional centres should avail study spaces for these students. The services offered by tutor respondents included counselling, tutorial services, academic literacies and technology-enhanced learning (TEL).

Student respondents concurred that distance learning bridged the transactional distance in geography, time, social, economic and communication. They were uncertain about the 'e' in ODeL policy for UNISA. While well-constructed, the challenge came in implementing the Unisa policies due to resource constraints and insufficient staff training. Mouton's (2015) recommendation that staff need orientation regarding policies and online tutoring resonates with Shikulo (2020), who stresses the need for workshops that include the main campus lecturers and the region-based tutors. The researcher may add that the tutors' contracts at Unisa include this provision (for induction workshops), but they are not implemented at the regional centres. These findings by Mouton and Subban (2015) may be important for the broader understanding of ODL and the need for tutors at the NWU learning support centres.

Mouton (2015) presents Subotzky and Prinsloo's (2011) model to explain the primacy of student support as a predictor of success in an ODL context.



**Figure 0.3** Unisa’s socio-critical model for explaining, predicting, and enhancing student success.

(Source: Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011, p. 184).

Unisa’s model encompasses the dynamic, layered, and complex nature of success (Tinto, 1975) and the unique context of ODL in South Africa. The model is composed of three factors: namely, students as agents; the student’s walk; and the institution as an agent. The institutional and student agency factors feed into the all-important student walk to produce the desired outcome of student success.

### 2.3.6 STUDENT AS AGENT

Agency refers to the confidence to act. It is a function of the student as the main role player. Therefore, it emanates from intra and inter-personal domains, which find expression in the student’s locus of control and self-efficacy. These factors are explained in Moore’s (1993) transactional distance theory as student autonomy, which is necessary for independent study

inherent in the ODL. The autonomy and agency of the student mediate the student's experience on the journey they take in their student walk. Student agency is a function of the student's historical environmental, geographical, socio-economic and cultural experiences and circumstances (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011). This aspect is instructive in explaining the journey of the CWPPS towards acquiring the diploma in Grade R teaching. The students' journeys were very different, and the primacy of the student as an agent cannot be overemphasised in the context of the identified factors affecting their habitus.

The theory of the student walk (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011) is instructive as it dovetails well with the theoretical lens discussed in the next chapter about the field theory, which uses the field, the habitus and capitals as the main building blocks of the framework. The student walk brings the student habitus and the institutional habitus to the fore. When there is a collision between these two types of habitus, the casualties are generally students, who become dropouts (Tinto, 1975). This results in wasted effort from society's point of view, hence the need to stem this tide with strategies for easing students into the institutional culture and habitus. Students from the Community Work Programme are not typical students as they come from outside the middle-class culture valued in higher education (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1999); hence they need more support to avoid failure to adapt to the habitus of the university.

### **2.3.7 SUMMARY OF DISTANCE EDUCATION**

The distance education literature review adopted the constructive alignment model to explain the aspects pertaining to the student experience of studying for a formal qualification at a distance. With regard to teaching and learning activities, learning management systems, tutorials and contact sessions, learning support centres and social media were reviewed.

Concerning work-integrated learning associated with the diploma, participants were able to double down as both CWP participants placed at schools and as students on teaching practice. Work-integrated learning enabled the preparation of portfolios of evidence, the assessment of which fed into the completion of the diploma.

Concerning challenges in distance learning, Maboe (2016) argues that challenges in using online learning have been academic, institutional, and administrative. Maboe (2016)

recommends collective and collaborative efforts by stakeholders, including information technology specialists, university management, students, and public and private sector players.

## **2.4 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has reviewed the literature on social protection and public works and then on distance education literature, which was organised using constructive alignment as a device. The social protection literature explored why public works are attractive for governments to utilise as social protection measures. Workfare has emerged as a humane way of providing social protection, complementing the doling out of cash handouts to beneficiaries.

The Indian rural employment guarantee programme inspired the South African presidency to develop the Community Work Programme, which later saw participants enrolling in a formal distance education programme while participating in the second economy strategy project, the Community Work Programme. As the structure of the programme mediates students' experiences in the distance learning programme, the teaching and learning activities and assessment practices were reviewed, including the student walk model (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011). The student walk, which extends from admission to graduation, is crucial to the experience of studying at a distance, which applies to the CWP participants in this study. The student walk model was inspired by the need to examine the field of higher education in line with the culture and habitus which form the theoretical framework described in the next chapter. This is crucial to analysing this study's findings on students' experience of studying at a distance while in a social protection strategy project.

The following chapter explores the lenses through which the experiences of the CWP participants will be interpreted. The study utilises Pierre Bourdieu's field theory. The concepts of field, capital and habitus were explored. The capitals and habitus of the CWP participants were important in their experience of the Grade R teaching diploma. Margaret Archer's concepts around structure, culture and agency are also important in explaining the student experience.

## CHAPTER THREE: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### 3.0 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter provided the review of literature relating to the core concepts of Social Protection by public works, as represented by the Community Work Programme, and distance education through which the study participants studied for the Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot programme at the higher education institution, namely the North-West University. Chapter Two also captured the literature where Social Protection is facilitated through higher education. This chapter presents the theoretical and conceptual framework that was used to understand the case of the Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot programme. It describes the philosophical, sociological, and paradigmatic tools employed in the extension of knowledge frontiers about the novel concept of the Community Work Programme (CWP). Skaggs (2002) refers to the conceptual framework of a study as its archaeological foundation. As with all foundations, it needs to be sturdy, and, in this case, it needs to be clear from the outset. The conceptual framework of this study is informed by Pierre Bourdieu's (1985) Field Theory, which centres on the concepts of field, capital and habitus. Within Bourdieu's framework, Margaret Archer's (2005) concepts of structure, culture and agency, which ordinarily uses Roy Bhaskar's (1978) theory of critical realism as the under-labourer, are used to clarify the findings of the study.

Pierre Bourdieu's Field Theory is relevant to this study given that the CWP intersected with multiple fields - namely, the fields of social protection, unemployment, and public works, all intersecting with the field of distance education. Different forms of capital were necessary to realise the study goals, specifically social capital, cultural capital and economic capital. The proportionate weight of the capitals both mediated and were mediated by the habitus each participant brought to the institution. Participation in the study programme required students to use their agency to navigate the Community Work Programme structures and different distance education structures involved in the Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot programme while also acquiring the distance and higher education habitus. Furthermore, the theory might help identify participants' experiences of acquiring the higher education habitus.

This chapter presents the theoretical bricolage of the conceptual framework used for this study. Firstly, it presents the concepts of field, capital and habitus and discusses their key role in the

study. The chapter then discusses Roy Bhaskar's theory of Critical Realism, which undergirds Margaret Archer's concepts of structure, culture, and agency. The theory of Critical Realism also relates to the critical paradigm, which is the world view that informed the emancipatory and participatory methodology of the thesis.

The CWP brought together more than four government departments, all working towards eradicating poverty in the so-called second economy, found particularly in rural areas, through the Second Economy Strategy Project (SESP) of the Community Work Programme. It is important to illuminate the presence of multiple players to understand and appreciate the realities, experiences and practices of students registered for the Grade R Teaching Diploma. The researcher's axiological assumptions are also presented, given that this is a qualitative research study wherein the perspectives, data generation and interpretations cannot be called objective but are a function of the researcher and the researcher's predispositions, biases and habitus. The multi-perspectival approach (Martin, 2016) is cognisant of Roy Bhaskar's (1978) theory of Critical Realism and Pierre Bourdieu's (1985) Field Theory. Margaret Archer's concepts of structure culture and agency use the under-labourer of Social Realism, where reality also includes an actual truth and agency is underpinned by intrinsic as well as extrinsic factors that are enablers or inhibitors of action by the students pursuing the Grade R Teaching Diploma at NWU – while the CWP programme enabled their enrolment. (Other concepts, such as that the researcher employed auto-ethnographic methods in the longitudinal study from 2016 to 2020 are explained in Chapter Four, which presents the study's methodology).

To accurately understand and effectively explain the experiences of the CWP participant students, it was imperative to develop a set of theoretical and conceptual tools that would provide the lens through which to view the Grade R Teaching Diploma students' world. This lens made it possible to develop a comprehensive understanding of the different forces involved with mediating students' attainment of a formal qualification in the context of a social protection programme.

The theoretical and conceptual perspectives and the researcher's positionality were therefore instrumental in enabling the researcher to explain the various ways the students experienced the Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot programme. The main theoretical lens that was chosen is Pierre Bourdieu's Field Theory. Different fields were involved in the conceptualisation and implementation of the formal qualification. The Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot programme

involved many players (from different fields), and the students were answerable to many entities and played multiple roles. Therefore, the students were subject to the authority of the schools where they performed the CWP work. They were answerable to the CWP site managers and accountable to both NWU as students and DCOG as their bursary holder. Structures and agency became important, hence, the inclusion of Margaret Archer's (1985) concepts of structure, culture and agency (SCA) as part of the theoretical framework.

Historically, the ideology of apartheid constrained every area of life in South Africa, including the higher education landscape (Boughey, 2012). This has necessitated approaches that provide equity – rather than equality – in the current democratic era in South Africa. The CWP, as described in Chapter Two and Chapter Five, had its genesis in South Africa's quest to deliver social security.

The participants in the Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot project studied through the distance education mode and were placed at a rural primary school. The rural context is an important lens for understanding the phenomenon under study. In interpreting the findings, the researcher also drew some lines of flight from the literature reviewed on the CWP, distance education and support at the rural school site, particularly for the Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot context.

### **3.1 PIERRE BOURDIEU: FIELD, CAPITALS, AND HABITUS**

Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of fields, habitus and capital are useful for explaining group as well as individual interactions with a broader societal context (Ronnie, 2008) and provides tools for understanding "people's practices in the context in which they occur" (Wallace, 2014, p. 7). Contexts take various forms, including the discourse, institution, values, rules and societal regulations which produce and change behaviours and attitudes. Bourdieu (1985) calls these contexts 'cultural fields'. The resources at each individual's disposal are termed the 'capitals', whilst the individual behaviours and dispositions are the 'habitus'. This study utilises these three concepts to explain the interaction of various fields – given that the CWP cuts across multiple 'fields' which interact with each other. As the focus of this study, the CWP participant students' experiences, habitus and capital are central to understanding this phenomenon. Capitals also explain students' decisions to study and their experiences of the learning process. The following section describes these three concepts of field, capital, and habitus.

### 3.1.1 FIELD

Bourdieu's concept of 'field' refers to the context in which a phenomenon occurs. In this study, the CWP programme was the primary field as it interacted with higher education in the form of the NWU Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot programme, which included teaching practice in the Grade R classrooms of rural schools within the ambit of the Department of Basic Education. This discussion focuses on what constitutes a field or subfield and how these functions. Pertinent to the study is how the CWP participants studying at NWU experienced their learning as students while also participating in the CWP programme. Also, how they negotiated the rules and regulations imposed by the higher education institutions (institutional culture), as well as the school culture and CWP programme requirements, was key to the analysis in this study. Given the different fields and cultures involved in this study, there is a need to explain Bourdieu's view of the social world as fields of power (Ronnie, 2008). Bourdieu (1985) argues that the social world can be represented as a multidimensional space, an open set of fields that "are relatively autonomous and more or less strongly and directly subordinated in their functioning and their transformations, to the field of economic production" (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 736) and as a space that has several dimensions. Bourdieu (1985) distinguishes between a space and a field but states that a field is a particular space governed by a set of rules and beliefs. Therefore, the field is not a physical but a social construct. The social world is construed as comprising multiple fields with contrasting degrees of independence relative to one another. Bourdieu (1990) explains that each field has its forces and is set within a larger field with its forces and structures, and as it develops, it weaves a larger field. Therefore, despite items that can be included and excluded from some boundaries, fields are not clear-cut as the state of relations of force between players defines the structure of the field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 99). The fields, like reality, are thus relational and can only be identified in contrast to other fields. Harker et al. (1990) observe that a definition of social space cannot be imposed, but evidence at hand from empirical observations can assist in determining the space's shape and configuration.

Bourdieu (1998) describes a field as....

....a structured social space, a field of forces, a force field. It contains people who dominate and people who are dominated. Constant, permanent relationships of inequality operate inside this space, which becomes a space at the same time in which the various actors struggle for the transformation and the preservation of the field. All the individuals in this space universe bring to the competition all

the [relative] power at their disposal. It is this power that defines their position in the field, and as a result their strategies

(p. 40-41).

This quotation highlights the aspects of struggle. Players in the field strive to maintain the status quo while improving their relative position in the competition. In this study, the social protection protagonists developed the CWP so that participants could receive regular and predictable income monthly. Further, Lima facilitated CWP participants' enrolment for the Diploma in Grade R Teaching. When Lima's bid to continue as the CWP implementing agent failed, the learner support unit at Lima closed, and the participants were left without support. Agents are therefore focused on securing their positions in the field.

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are also actors in the field. Some are striving for the betterment of the rural populace, which is often excluded from resources and programmes. The meagre income provided to participants in the CWP was supposed to help them to meet basic needs but does not adequately address their rural poverty. The non-governmental organisations in the non-state sector of the Expanded Public Works are thus striving to identify strategies to enable participants trapped within their context's perpetual or structural poverty to graduate from the second economy to the mainstream economy as Grade R teachers.

As a key spatial metaphor, Bourdieu (1992) defines a *field* as....

....a network or configuration of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively obtained [...] by their present and potential situations [...] in the structure of the distribution of species of power [or capital] whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field.

(p. 97)

Swartz (1996) argues that fields are structured spaces around a specified capital type. Field refers to enclaves of production, distribution and exchange of goods and services, knowledge or status and the competitive positions held by actors in their struggle to accumulate and monopolise different kinds of capital (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Uhl, 2022). The spatial metaphor includes rank and hierarchy as well as exchange relations between buyers and sellers. Swartz (1996) further intimates that the field concept suggests a force field where the distribution of capital reflects a hierarchical set of power relations among the competing

individual groups and organisations. How the actors in the field relate is mediated by their relative position in the hierarchy. Before delving further into the context of this study, other aspects, such as the *structural properties of fields*, *stakes*, and *struggle*, require further elaboration with regard to fields.

### **3.1.1.1 STRUCTURAL PROPERTIES OF FIELDS**

Swartz (1996) explained that fields have essentially four structural properties. The first is that fields are arenas of struggle for control over valued resources or forms of capital. The centre of the struggle is around particular forms of capital, such as economic, cultural, scientific and/or religious capital. In the intellectual field, cultural capital is key, while economic capital is an important property in the business world. This study explores a mediation between intellectual capitals towards attaining economic capital. The CWP participant had to learn and thus struggle in the field of education to acquire the symbols of cultural capital (certificate) and obtain economic capital (employment income). The endeavour to acquire a certificate could be described as a struggle for the participant, who would travel long distances and not have the means given the poor conditions. As a result, strategies were devised to use the limited resources available to achieve the goal of intellectual capital in the form of the Diploma in Grade R Teaching.

The second property identified by Swartz (1996) is that fields are structured spaces of dominant and subordinate positions based on type and amount of capital. The fight in the field pits those occupying subordinate positions against those occupying superordinate positions. As each player positions, there is resistance from the underdog to the use of monopoly power over the definition and distribution of capital, and that is the opposition by the dominant to those who attempt to take away their advantages. Bourdieu sees this opposition as occurring between the established agent and a new arrival in the field. As Bourdieu (1992 as cited in Swartz, 2006) observes, in the higher education context, teachers (lecturers) and researchers are in constant competition where the institution gives the latter role prominence at the expense of the former. Yet both are necessary for the function of the university as they are ‘creators of knowledge’ (researchers) and invent new forms of knowledge. In contrast, ‘curators of knowledge’ (teachers) reproduce and transmit the legitimate bodies of knowledge. The two are dialectically related where one generates knowledge, the other is responsible for its transmission, and if the

new knowledge is not transmitted, it is not knowledge at all. In this study, the lecturers, as curators of knowledge, transmit knowledge, and the students receive the knowledge. In this case, the lecturer holds the dominant position while the student is in the subordinate position. Another dialectic existed between the CWPPS and the DCOG: the DCOG controlled the bursary and was thus dominant over the CWPPS, who were at risk of losing their bursary if they didn't satisfy the requirements of the DGOG and were thus the subordinates.

The third structural property of the field is that it imposes specific forms of struggle. Entry into one field implies tacit acceptance of the rules of the game, where specific forms of struggle are accepted whilst others are excluded. As the CWP participant accepted becoming a player in the field, they tacitly agreed to its terms, conditions, norms, and standards. For instance, when they agreed to be enrolled as NWU students, they accepted the struggle involved with attending contact sessions over weekends, submitting assignments and portfolios by a due date, and sitting for examinations in line with the timetable outlined in the handbook. Thus, both the dominant and subordinate players agree to, or share, a common acceptance that the attainment of capital is worth the struggle in the first instance (Swartz, 1992, p. 80). There was a tacit acceptance by all players that the Grade R Teaching Diploma was worth pursuing. This deep structure of fields, which represents a tacit fundamental agreement to the stakes of the struggle, is referred to by Bourdieu as *Doxa*. *Doxa* is “a set of fundamental beliefs which does not even need to be asserted in the form of an explicit, self-conscious dogma” (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 16). It refers to “the apparently natural beliefs or opinions which are intimately linked to field and habitus” (Grenfell, 2006, p. 114).

This idea aligns with Durkheim's (1982) 'collective consciousness', although *Doxa* is field-specific and not society-wide. Challengers and incumbents wish to preserve the field although they sharply disagree on controlling it. Bourdieu (1992) intimates that knowledge of the rules of the game is unequally shared among contestants. In this study, the NWU students needed to be aware of the rules governing registration, assignments, exam entry, and module clashes on the timetable and progression to 'play well' in pursuing a diploma. This emerged to be a fundamental position mediating the experience of the Grade R Teaching Diploma students. Rules were deferred to, where the student queried the fairness of, for example, the assessment process, and the university hid behind the assessment policy. Other cases emerged where the university used rules to prevent students from re-registering if they had not paid enough fees.

Rules were also invoked in cases involving academic dishonesty. The rules declared zero tolerance against academic dishonesty.

The fourth property is that fields are structured by their own internal mechanisms of development (Swartz, 1996). They are thus autonomous to the external environment to some degree and have relative autonomy, which refers to the field's ability to control recruitment, socialisation and careers of actors. Participants were admitted to the Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot programme only upon possession of the cultural capital of having completed Grade 12. Cultural fields also have some relative autonomy from political and economic fields (Swartz, 1996). In this study, this relative autonomy is present because the students are CWP participants in schools, so they comply with school regulations. At the same time, they are CWP participants and signed registers and attended CWP meetings whenever possible. While engaged in the CWP's useful work at the schools, they were also required to teach at a school to complete the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) module of the diploma programme. They were then assessed to determine whether they would be permitted to continue with the diploma programme. The government was also present in the field as a player, as DCOG (the custodian of CWP) funded the participants' studies. In this complex situation, relative autonomy is present, although there is an intersection of multiple fields. The CWP participants needed to navigate the fields while complying with the field's dictates to be admitted into the system.

Different logics specific to different fields came to the fore as the CWP pursued the Diploma in Grade R Teaching. One notable handicap was the CWP participants' inability to type assignments due to having no computers and lacking the skills and attitudes to support the use of technology. Ultimately, this translated into errors in assignments typed at the internet café, which led to low marks on the coursework in the diploma program, which could have led, in turn, to be refused admission into the final examination. This directs the researcher's attention to levels of analysis capable of revealing the integration of the logics of competing players in the field. The researcher looked for sources of conflict in different domains and attempted to relate these conflicts to the dimensions of class and power as well as appreciate the assumptions underlying the actions of the opposing players (Ronnie, 2008). Analysis of the field focuses on identifying principal poles of opposition, including their shared assumptions (Swartz, 1996). Finally, in the internal analysis of fields, external influences are retranslated into internal logics of fields. The subordinate CWP participant students struggled to obtain the diploma in order to

overcome chronic poverty. They were invested as it served their interests, which made the pursuit of cultural capital worthwhile.

Ronnie (2008) states that field is ‘dynamic’; it is “a critical mediation between the practices of those who partake of it and the surrounding social and economic conditions” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 105). Furthermore, a field has no parts but has its own logic, rules and regularities (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 104), which fall under the ‘doxa’ rules of the specific field. The Community Work Programme therefore had its own logics and regularities. In the Grade R Teaching Diploma programme, the CWP participants were required to submit a portfolio of evidence of their learning in practice at a school, each semester. Examination-based modules then required the CWPPS to present themselves at an examination centre and have a timetable and their identity card as evidence that the name on the timetable corresponded to the one on the national identity card.

### 3.1.1.2 STAKES

For a field to function, there are stakes which make an investment worthwhile. It is “the investment in the stakes that define participation in the game, and which, being common to all players, sets them against and in competition with each other” (Bourdieu, 2008, p. 183). Ronnie (2008) argues that there are general rules and regularities in the field– stakes and struggles over those stakes.

Bourdieu (1972) argues that players in the game ought to have tacitly recognised the rules of the game as well as believed in its significance and that the benefits promised by the field are desirable. This, he called the ‘illusio’ –the belief in the investment and its outcome. Bourdieu renamed it the ‘interest’ which individuals have that....

...is defined by their circumstances and which allows them to act in a particular way within the context in which they find themselves in order to define and improve their position. In a way, “*interest*” [emphasis added] is habitus incarnate, which itself is created by the field conditions through which individuals pass.

(Grenfell, 2014, p. 152)

Stakes make a field come alive, as players are gunning for the envisaged rewards (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). In this study, the CWP participants went to work on school days instead of the normal eight days a month for the CWP (Philip, 2013, 2016). The CWP participants

believed that being at school daily would give them a full-school experience, enhancing their employability. The participants, therefore, yearned more for the ‘envisaged rewards’ than the eight-day stipend from the CWP. They were enrolled in the diploma program, so upon completion of the modules, they would obtain a qualification. All fields are subject to the same forces as “each field calls forth and gives life to a specific form interest, a specific *Illusio*, a tacit recognition of the value of the stakes of the game and as practical mastery of its rules” (Wacquant & Bourdieu, 1992, p. 117). No one can benefit from the game without being invested in it. This is true for both the dominant and the dominated. They have to be part of the game. “*Illusio* is the fact of being taken in by the game, of believing the game is worth the candle, or more simply, playing is worth the effort” (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 76-77). In the same vein, for new entrants to the space field, the process is both hidden as well as explicit.

...[N]ew players have to pay entry fees which consists in recognition of the value of the game (selection and co-option always pay great attention to the indices of commitment to the game, investment in it) and in (practical) knowledge of the principle of the functioning of the game

(Bourdieu, 1993, p. 74).

The exposition is crucial since accounts from the CWP participant semi-structured interviews pointed to a gruelling vetting process that included taking a test after having attained the requisite minimum of a matriculation certificate with Grade 12 diploma endorsement. One index of commitment to the diploma was the learning centre's attendance register, which could be sent to the funder (DCOG), whilst success in a module indicated adherence to the rules of the game of the service provider, which showed on the CWPPS's academic record from NWU. The same process of entry into the field of higher education, and eventual production of indicators of success, meant the struggle continued in the field over the stakes or resources.

### **3.1.1.3 STRUGGLE**

As already mentioned, the field is a site of struggle. Actors are caught between the preservation and transformation of the field. Wacquant and Bourdieu (1992, p. 7) argues that a field is simultaneously a space of conflict and competition. The conflict can take different forms, such as those outside wishing to join the field, or conflict can rise between those in the field. In this study, it was illuminating to observe this in the analysis of the experiences of CWP-NWU students. The field is a dynamic rather than a stationary space. There are changing positions, which is a manifestation of the struggle, as there is a struggle over changing positions (Shusterman 1997, as cited in Ronnie, 2008). For those trying to enter the field, the struggle

will be “between the newcomer who tries to break through the entry barrier and the dominant agent whose mission is to defend the monopoly and keep out competition” (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 72). Thus, struggle in the field is ongoing, over what counts and who decides (Ronnie, 2008), with those entering wishing to transform it while those inside wishing to preserve it.

In education, Bourdieu (1998) identifies conflict in the field of institutionalised education. While studying within the French university education system, Bourdieu (1988), in *Homo Academicus*, explored how culture is a resource, a weapon and a prize – all at once – in the struggle over wider economic and political dominance. In this struggle, the elite provide both the competitors and the referees. In the university field, spoils from the struggle are manifest in the form of ‘conflict of faculties’, the struggles during which symbolic capital and status are accorded to disciplines, careers, and knowledge. There is an apparent conflict between the classes of students and staff.

The struggle is based on the investment view that the effort is worth the benefit, the *illusio*. NWU has 55 centres engaged in ongoing recruitment and was never short of students. When a participant in the first cohort of the CWP programme withdrew for some reason, they were replaced almost immediately, as the rules of the NWU allowed. The lead agent of the CWP programme, Lima, who facilitated enrolment and immediate replacement of dropouts, believed in the value of the qualification.

Within the field, “each field has its own system of valuation and practice” (Hovart, 2003, p. 8). As such, what is valued by a field is reflected by newcomers into the field. These should have certain indices which qualify them for entry into the programme. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p. 107) describe “newcomers to the field as people founded and legitimized to enter the field by their possessing a definite configuration of properties.” For the CWP participants to be admitted into the Diploma in Grade R Teaching pilot programme, they had to possess the Grade 12 certification with the diploma endorsement. The properties that enable functioning in the field are known as capital.

### **3.1.2 CAPITAL**

Following the discussion of *field*, *capital* is the second of the concepts that form the bedrock of the Bourdieusian framework. The ‘volume’ or ‘distribution’ of capital is crucial in the field.

Jackson (2009) argues that capital has two dimensions. The first has already been alluded to as the stakes over which the participants are in a constant struggle, while the second comprises the resources which the same participants in the field mobilise as they pursue their aims. Bourdieu (1986) defines capital as the various currencies of power within a given field. So, capital refers to the resources that players in the field possess, which gives them power. Individuals occupy various positions in the field according to the overall volume of capital they possess and the structure of their capital, which is the weight given to different types of capital – economic and cultural – relative to the total volume of their assets (Bourdieu, 1989).

A particular field-specific capital acts as a resource that can be used to wield power in the relevant field. Mohr (2000) states that a field includes a fundamental metric according to which any given individual, group, profession, or class fraction can be assessed vis-à-vis others according to their relative possession of the field-specific capital. This determines their likelihood of having power and success within that sphere.

Richardson (1986) argues that.....

....capital, which, in its objectified or embodied forms, takes time to accumulate and which has a potential capacity to produce profits and to reproduce itself in identical or expanded form, contains a tendency to persist in its being, is a force inserted in the objectivity of things so that everything is not equally possible or impossible.

(p. 15)

Richardson (ibid) argues that capital generates the force that makes things possible or impossible in the field. Capital embodied in the actors determines their position and concomitant strategy potency and eventual success. The power one exerts is, therefore, closely linked to the capital that one possesses. Having said that, capital is field-specific. It is also important to state that capital transforms from one form to another, which is useful in the field in question – although this comes at a cost. The cost of transformation is the exchange rate.

Capital takes different forms or ‘gripes’ (Bourdieu, 1986; Rafalow, 2018). Economic capital is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalised in the form of property rights or financial wealth. Cultural capital refers to the culturally validated consumption patterns, skills, attributes, tastes, and objects, and can also be institutionalised in the form of educational qualifications. Social capital refers to the networks of relationships

necessary for social advancements or social obligations or ‘connections’ which are convertible into economic capital and may be institutionalised in the form of a title, such as ‘professor’, in the higher education context.

### **3.1.2.1 CULTURAL CAPITAL**

Cultural capital refers to non-financial assets that enable social mobility beyond a person’s economic means (Mishra, 2012). Examples are education, intellect, style of speech, dress, and physical appearance. Cultural capital refers to the collection of symbolic elements – such as skills, tastes, posture, and clothing, acquired through being a member of a social class. Bourdieu (1986) later called the cultural capital *informational* capital, which can...

...exist in three forms: in the embodied state that is in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the objectified state; in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines and so forth.), [...]; and in the institutionalised state, a form of objectification which must be set apart because, as will be seen in the case of educational qualifications, it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee

(p. 17)

Bourdieu (1986) used the theoretical hypothesis of cultural capital to explain why learners from different socioeconomic backgrounds achieved differently at schools. Cultural Capital helps analytically understand “the specific profits that different children from different classes and class fractions can obtain in the academic market, to the distribution of cultural capital between classes and class fractions” (Richardson, 1986, p. 17). In this study, the concept of cultural capital provides a useful theoretical tool for analysing how the experiences of the CWP participants differ in the Diploma in Grade R Teaching pilot programme at NWU. The different forms of cultural capital warrant a closer look.

#### **3.1.2.1.1 EMBODIED CULTURAL CAPITAL**

The general characteristic of cultural capital is that it is embodied, intrinsically linked to the body, and inseparable from the holder. Bourdieu (1986) argues that,

[A]ccumulation of cultural capital in the embodied state, ie., in the form of what is called culture cultivation, [...], presupposes a process of embodiment and incorporation, which, insofar as it implies a labour of inculcation and assimilation, costs time—time which must be invested personally by the investor [...] (so that all effects of delegation are ruled out)

(p. 18).

Bourdieu (ibid) further argues that embodied cultural capital is...

...external wealth converted into an integral part of the person, into a habitus that cannot be transmitted instantaneously (unlike money, property rights or even titles of nobility) by gift or bequest, purchase or exchange.

(Bourdieu, 1986, p. 18)

This capital derives primarily from a family's social class through hereditary transmission, hence it is unequally distributed. The inequalities from cultural capital are “also reproduced in, and sanctioned by, the educational system” (Ronnie, 2008, p. 29). Embodied cultural capital is embodied in the family and acquired through early socialisation. The higher education context plays a part in reinforcing embodied cultural capital through its system and practices of reproduction. Embodied cultural capital is so linked to the person that it is inseparable, so it cannot be bought without buying the person. “It cannot be accumulated beyond the appropriating capacities of an individual agent; it declines and dies with its bearer (with his biological capacity, his memory, etc.)” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 18). It can also be acquired to varying extents depending on factors such as society and societal class, in the absence of inculcation, and therefore unconsciously, for example, one's accent or pronunciation may indicate where or how one grew up or was schooled.

Likewise, cultural capital was important when CWP participants had to listen to the different lecturers who had different ways of expressing themselves in English during contact sessions. Cultural capital was crucial during Work Integrated Learning (WIL) assessments, preparation of assignments and writing of examinations, since students expressed themselves according to their accumulated command of the language of learning and teaching. During WIL, the teaching and learning took place in the teacher and learners' cultural and language contexts.

### **3.1.2.1.2 OBJECTIFIED CULTURAL CAPITAL**

Objectified cultural capital exists in the form of material objects and media such as writings, paintings, monuments, instruments, automobiles, or collections of rare or expensive items, for example. Bourdieu (1986) explains that objectified cultural capital.....

...exists as symbolically and materially active, effective capital only in so far as it is appropriated by agents and implemented and invested as a weapon and a stake in the struggles which go on in the field of cultural production [...] and beyond them, in the field of social classes – struggles in which the agents wield strength and obtain profits proportionate to their mastery of objectified capital, and therefore to the extent of their embodied capital.

(P. 19)

CWP participants in the Grade R teaching programme strove to obtain a higher education diploma that would enable them to graduate from the second economy to the mainstream economy. To be employed, they would need this diploma symbolising the cultural capital valued in the education field. The diploma, a form of objectified cultural capital, was thus converted into economic capital, enabling participants to earn profits – in the Bourdieusian sense – in the form of monthly income.

### **3.1.2.1.3 INSTITUTIONALISED CULTURAL CAPITAL**

This form of capital includes credentials and qualifications such as degrees, diplomas or titles that symbolise cultural competence and authority. These qualifications confer “a conventional, constant legally guaranteed value... [and]... institutes cultural capital by collective magic [...] to impose recognition” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 20-21). This form of cultural capital makes it possible to compare qualification holders and even exchange them by substituting one for another in succession. Institutionalised Cultural Capital, according to Bourdieu (1986).

...confers on its holder a conventional, constant, legally guaranteed value with respect to culture while social alchemy produces a form of cultural capital which has a relative autonomy vis-à-vis its bearer and even vis-à-vis the cultural capital he effectively possesses at a given moment in time

(p. 20-21)

Institutionalised cultural capital can be accumulated when one acquires successive qualifications, for example, a bachelor’s degree, an honours degree, and then a master’s degree.

It can thus be said to be a form of objectified cultural capital independent of the bearer. The CWP participants pursued a diploma which represented institutionalised cultural capital. They could then build on this capital with another qualification and thus accumulate more institutionalised cultural capital.

### 3.1.2.2 SOCIAL CAPITAL

Social capital derives from social interactions, networks and relationships, including, in the educational field, alumni networks (Wallace, 2014). Bourdieu (1986) describes social capital as....

....the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to the possession of a durable or more or less institutionalised relationship of mutual acquaintance and recognition to membership in a group which provides each member with the backing of collectively owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to *credit* in the various senses of the word.

(p. 18)

Bourdieu (1986) further asserts that these relationships may exist through material and/or symbolic exchanges, which also maintain them (relationships). Bourdieu (ibid) further explains that relationships can also be socially instituted and guaranteed by the application of a common name, such as the name of a family, class, tribe, school or party, by another set of instituting acts designed to form and inform those engaging in these exchanges. The exchanges enact, maintain and reinforce the ties (Bourdieu, 1986).

The volume of social capital an actor possesses depends on the size of the networks and connections they can easily mobilise and the volume of capital (economic, cultural and symbolic) possessed in its own right by each of those to whom they are connected (Ronnie, 2008). Social capital focuses on reciprocity, where social relationships are used to secure benefits and profitable outcomes – social or economic (Bourdieu, 1986). There is a presupposition of increasing effort of sociability where the exchanges with recognition are endlessly affirmed and reaffirmed (Guercini & Ranfagni, 2020).

In the CWP Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot programme, social capital played a role in identifying households and individuals to benefit from the programme. Local communities were responsible for the identification of participants. From this pool of CWP participants came

the CWP participants who became students in the Grade R Teaching Diploma programme. Following their selection for the Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot, new relationships (also forms of social capital) developed that were exploited reciprocally for profit—successfully completing the required modules and completing the qualification within the minimum regulation time. The relationships and networks formed were likely to extend beyond the participants' course of study. For example, after participants had completed their Grade R Teaching Diploma, they continued to communicate with each other through the WhatsApp group that had been established during their studies as they explored options for furthering their studies or shared information regarding possible employment as Grade R teachers.

Portes (1998) posits that acquiring social capital requires deliberate investment of economic and cultural resources. Though Bourdieu (1986) insists that the outcomes of the possession of social or cultural capital are reducible to economic capital, the processes that bring about these alternative forms are not. They each possess their dynamics and are relative to economic exchange. Also, they are characterised by less transparency and more uncertainty (Anggaunitakiranantika, 2016). For example, transactions involving social capital tend to be characterised by unspecified obligations, uncertain time horizons, and the possible violation of reciprocity expectations (Morrow, 2001). But, by their very lack of clarity, these transactions can help disguise what otherwise would be plain market exchanges (Bourdieu, 1979; 1980). In this study, the CWPPS were expected to assist one another beyond the period they were enrolled in the Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot programme. Participants engaged with one another especially after processes relating to the higher education culture were completed, such as examinations.

### 3.1.3 HABITUS

In his work, *The Theory of Practice*, Bourdieu (1985) describes habitus as...

...a system of lasting transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and action, and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks.  
(p. 78)

Habitus is thus a generative process of habit and repetition, but not one that implies an automatic reflex. Instead, it is a condition of practice that shortcuts the numerous options available to the novice to a narrower range of reasonable contextual possibilities. Later, in his

work, *The Logic of Practice*, Bourdieu (1990) states that habitus is “embodied history, internalised as second nature and so forgotten to history – it is an active presence of the whole of which it is the product” (p. 56). Bourdieu’s arguments imply that habitus gives the social agent the ‘feel for the game’, which becomes part of the internalised system, wired in such a way that the agent's experiences guide all action. As the agent pursues certain choices, they will be lost to conscious effort, yet they will use the same rules, norms and values – *doxa* – to guide their action and practice.

Attitudes and inclinations inculcated through the rhythms and habits of everyday life are learnt through conscious and unconscious effort, experience, and practice. Bourdieu (1990) explains *habitus* as the engine for cultural action. It is the semi-conscious orientation that social agents have to the world. Agents internalise the structures of the field by dint of their habitus, which continually adapts to the changing conditions. Habitus, therefore, enables acquisition of a “faith in practice” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 52) which provides the "right of entry tacitly imposed by all fields” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 80) in a process of selection and exclusion that perpetuates the conditions of the field. In other words, through habitus, social agents internalise both formal and informal structures, and spoken and unspoken assumptions, which allows action at the level of ‘second nature’ – the unconscious or semi-conscious. This constitutes the prevailing *doxa*, the ‘silent experience of the world’, that which ‘goes without saying’ yet determines the limits of the doable and the thinkable (Grenfell, 2011). *Doxa* is defined as different from opinion, as actors may be oblivious to different opinions (Bourdieu, 1977; 1990b). *Doxa* allows social agents to react to external stimuli at the instinctual level. It is synonymous with unspoken assumptions but also with norms and ‘normative’ standards and values. *Doxa* is “the ‘silent experience of the world’, that which ‘goes without saying’” (Jackson, 2009, p. 109).

The importance of habitus in CWP participants’ experience in the Grade R Teaching Diploma programme cannot be over-emphasised. The CWP participants were admitted to the programme, and success in the diploma was contingent upon accessing the habitus of NWU. Their roles in teaching and learning and assessments would culminate in achieving a Grade R Teaching Diploma. In this study, the CWP participants experienced and practiced the regularities and patterns – the *doxa* – inherent in being higher education students.

### **3.1.3.1 LANGUAGE AND CULTURE**

As this study focuses on a formal university qualification, reference to habitus in terms of language and culture are key. Ritzer (2005) argues that Bourdieu saw deep conflicts over language, especially the languages of teaching and learning (interaction), submission of examination scripts, assessment, and ambition. Bourdieu (1992) argues that all utterances result from linguistic habitus intimately affected by power relations. The language in use is a signal of wealth with respect to which capitals have higher value than others. In this study, language was significant, given that the NWU previously used only Afrikaans as the language of teaching and learning. The examination papers that the CWP Grade R Teaching Diploma participants wrote came in both Afrikaans and English. In other words, the university habitus was maintained despite including other languages. The website indicated that one could choose between Afrikaans, English and seTswana (the dominant language in the geographical area where NWU is located).

### **3.2 CRITICAL REALISM**

Boughey (2017) argues that in recent years, many researchers (including Lockett, 2010; Vorster, 2010; Quinn & Boughey, 2008) have turned to Roy Bhaskar's (1978, 1979) theory of critical realism and Margaret Archer's (1995, 1996, 1998) theory of social realism as a lens through which to understand events and experiences occurring in the South African higher education landscape. The analysis of the structure through which the Community Work Programme (CWP), a Second Economy Strategy Project (SESP), brought together the Department of Cooperative Governance (DCOG), the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and North-West University (NWU), was conducted using this lens. The background of NWU as a product of the changing policies of the then Department of Education (DoE), which in 2000 transformed NWU into a university with a triad of campuses bringing together previously advantaged and disadvantaged institutions, also came to the fore. Elements of structure, culture and agency which seem to have mediated the experiences of the CWP participants enrolled for the Diploma in Grade R Teaching at NWU, were also examined. A clearer understanding of the model is crucial.

### 3.3 BHASKAR' S THEORY OF CRITICAL REALISM

Bhaskar (1978) argues that it is crucial to accept that there is a reality that is objective and external to human experience. He insists that the objective external reality should not be conflated with experience of this reality, as this would conflate *what is (the real)* with *what can be known through the senses*, which he terms “epistemic fallacy” (1978, p. 16). Bhaskar (1978), therefore, separates ontology (what is) from what can be known (epistemology) and posits a world consisting of three ontological strata, namely: the empirical, the actual and the real.

Bhaskar (1978), though highly critical of the positive tradition, was equally critical of the notion of rejection of science altogether. He argued that we could provide ‘good reasons’ for preferring some accounts of reality to others (Edkins & Vaughn-Williams, 2009). Bhaskar (1975) argues that reducing reality to what is perceived only is incorrect, as is reducing it to what can only be observed/observable (empirical reality).

Bhaskar (2013) argues that the social sciences need not replicate the natural science method to be considered scientific because the ontological objects of study – such as ideas, beliefs, social actors, meanings, reasons and social structures – are ontologically different from the kinds of objects in natural sciences. In this research, the study of CWP participants’ experiences suggests the existence of subjective reality, as these experiences can be understood only from the participants' point of view.

Edkins (2009) postulates that referencing an independent and qualified reality does not imply that the truth is easy to access. Sayer (2000) asserts that realism makes no claim to “privileged access to truth, foundationalism or naïve objectivism, as critics often assume” (p. 2). The scientific accounts are an attempt, through various social and politically engendered metaphors and analogies, to try and postulate what the (deep ontological) reality of the world consists of, in which particular events and regularities may come about (Edkins, 2009). Scientific knowledge is also a social product since it is socially and politically consequential and is historically reflective of the social and political prejudices of scientists (as sociologists of knowledge, feminists, and post-colonialists have argued) (Sabbagh-Khoury, 2022). The CWP participants were therefore experiencing the Grade R Teaching Diploma in the context of the rural primary schools where they participated in useful work.

Critical Realism as a conceptual lens implies acceptance of interpretation as fundamental to social science. The reasons and meanings held by the actors need to be understood so that one can understand why events happen in the social world (Edkins, 2009). Observation of behavioural patterns tells little about the causal factors or forces in reality. In this study, the CWP was conceived not just because people were observed to be poor, but because the poverty alleviation strategy of using public works projects provided only temporary financial relief, and participants completing the project exited back to poverty (McCord, 2009).

The double hermeneutic nature of social inquiry does not mean that there are no real social objects in the social world to be systematically and reflexively studied and that are fundamentally causal on other actions. Assuming that causalities are regular or work in linear patterns would be folly. However, it does not also mean the rules, discourses and reasons of the social world come from 'nowhere' unconditioned, unrestrained and without consequences. Bhaskar (2013) thus makes a strong argument for recognising the reality and causality of various unobservable objects, among them, and the most notable, the idea of social structures. Bhaskar (1979) further argues that while human agency always exists, it is constrained and enabled by the social structural causalities around it.

In the CWP programme, for someone to be registered as a beneficiary, their community had to agree that they were eligible. The 'community' was represented by those members of the geographical community who had attended the CWP meeting and had knowledge of the person or family nominated for the project. Furthermore, for CWP participants to join the Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot programme, other structural enablers had to be in place – for example, a Grade 12 certificate or equivalent. Bhaskar's critical realism model thus provides a clearer lens through which to understand the CWP programme – particularly in terms of structure and agency. For example, the manager of the Lima Learner Support Unit (LSU) used his social capital – his acquaintance with the Director of University Teaching at the DHET, who had been his lecturer at the University of KwaZulu-Natal – to enable a link between the CWP and NWU.

Bhaskar (1979) explains that not all interpretations are equally valid. We can have good ontological, evidential, or epistemological reasons to prioritise some interpretations over others. In the context of this study, the researcher was an individual trained in economics and education. The valid reasons for the CWP that were given prominence are economic and social rather than scientific. This explanation is foregrounded on epistemological reasons, which

Bhaskar (1975) argues, is valid. Bhaskar (1975), therefore, supports emancipatory aims in social science. He argues that scientific, explanatory, causal accounts can direct us in understanding what is oppressive or delimiting about the conditions, rules, discourses or social structures affecting people.

### **3.4 MARGARET ARCHER'S CONCEPTS OF STRUCTURE, CULTURE AND AGENCY**

Margaret Archer's theory of social realism builds on Bhaskar's theory of critical realism with its three levels of reality: real, actual and empirical. While Bhaskar puts forward the concepts of agency and structure, Archer identifies a third aspect: culture. Archer (1995; 1996) argues that understanding the social world is possible following a study of structure, culture and agency.

Structure is defined as relating to material interests in a physical or social sense (Archer, 2000; Malebo, 2017). Structure includes aspects such as social class, marriage, gender, race and education. In this thesis, structure relates to the Community Work Programme (CWP) with its institutional mechanisms, the meetings that were held, key policy documents (including the memorandum of understanding), different offices and departments at North-West University (such as the assignment office, the call centre, and the study material delivery system), assignment submission mechanisms, and other NWU policies and procedures. Structure is important in a social and physical sense. The CWP participants were recruited by the structures of the CWP, namely, the lead agent working with the local implementing agent. The changes that took place in the structure of the CWP (Andersson & Alexander, 2016) were quite important in the experiences of the CWP participants.

Culture can emerge out of a structure that could exert tendential powers, suggesting that structure can influence or shape culture (Malebo, 2017). Culture and structure can therefore inform social life (Boughey, 2017). Both structure and culture are mutually exclusive; that is, they are autonomous of each other, yet they exist in parallel. The concept of agency then pertains to individuals' psychological and socio-psychological makeup, including the capacity that people have to act voluntarily (Boughey, 2017) and their ability to effect change. Agency could also be referred to as human action (Malebo, 2017). Agency, in this thesis, can be noted in the influence of the lead agent (Lima) on the emergence of the Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot programme (a structure) from the CWP (a structure). Structure and culture can both

influence agency, while agency can also influence structure. CWP participants therefore had to learn the culture of the NWU as they experienced it as Grade R Teaching Diploma students.

Thus, rather than being mutually exclusive, there is an interplay between culture, structure and agency. Boughey (2017) notes that there is a tendency in sociology to conflate the ‘parts’ and the ‘people’. Archer (2005)) critiques the conflation of these and proposes analytical dualism: structure, culture and agency that can be analysed as separate domains of reality with distinct properties and powers. Boughey (2017) concurs that separate analysis is important but adds that the interplay between the ‘people’ and the ‘parts’ should be explored. In as much as the CWP participants can be analysed as people, and the CWP as structures, it is important in the study of experiences to explore participants’ actual and real experiences with the CWP and the NWU structures as they engaged with the Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot programme.

Archer (2000) argues that agency is exercised through an ‘internal conversation’ or ‘reflexivity’, which becomes important when humans engage in ‘projects’. A project is defined as “any course of action intentionally engaged upon by a human being” (Archer, 2007, p. 7). Projects are embarked upon to promote or protect what agents care for most. In this study, the CWP Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot programme was embarked upon as a project to advance what Lima, as a lead agent for the CWP, was most concerned about: rural development. Reflexivity became key in the internal dialogues of the CWP agents and the researcher (reported in Chapters Four and Five).

For this study, Bhaskar and Archer’s theoretical frameworks were brought together to identify the agents within their various structures and analyse the nature of their relationships in the context of the CWP Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot programme, which aimed to address the social justice needs of marginalised individuals trapped in the rural second economy.

Since the students' experiences with various stakeholders in the Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot programme are expressed relative to the student position, they are at the level of the real: constructed in terms of personal and social histories from the participants’ point of view. These are thus explained more fully using Bourdieu’s concepts of capitals, habitus, and the field. The events that took place and the reality of the CWP are then understood using Archer’s concepts of structure, culture, and agency.

The empirical evidence includes statements by the CWP participants in the pilot programme describing their difficulties, and those of their mentor, trying to access the English language used in the Work Integrated Learning manual. The fact that the mentor, who was meant to have been trained by NWU, but was not, compounded the challenge. The various events that took place daily at the rural primary schools and the homes of the CWP participant students during the diploma study formed part of the actual. Travelling to the learning centre to listen to sessions, hiking on the freeway (since it was too expensive to use formal public transport facilities), renting a room during examination time and entering the examination venue formed part of the events that influenced the experiences they had. The same can be said of the receipt of results and the receipt of study material from NWU, the receipt of bursary withdrawal letters from the DCOG and the receipt of the stipend at the end of the month or the travel and subsistence funds after a long period. These also formed the events that influenced the experiences of the Grade R Teaching Diploma students. These events and experiences came about as a result of the structures and mechanisms at the level of the real, coming together to exert tendential properties (Boughey, 2017). Following Archer (1995; 1996), the structures and mechanisms are located in the three domains of structure, culture and agency, which should be analysed separately.

### **3.5 CRITIQUE OF THE THEORIES AND THE NEED FOR THEIR COMPLEMENTARITY**

#### **3.5.1 CRITIQUE OF FIELD THEORY**

While the field theory offers a novel and complex conceptual framework to understand social phenomena and power dynamics, it is not without its criticisms. One critique of Bourdieu's theory is its inherent complexity, which makes it difficult to apply and understand for those not well-versed in sociological jargon. This complexity also makes it susceptible to being seen as an elitist theory, accessible only to academics and intellectuals. The language and conceptualization used by Bourdieu may exclude common people from participating in discussions about power and social structures, limiting its democratic potential.

Another critique levelled on Bourdieu's field theory is its limited attention to individual agency. While the theory recognizes the influence of social structures on individuals, it fails to adequately account for individual autonomy and individual actions that drive social change. This emphasis on external structures can result in an overly deterministic view of society,

reducing agency to a secondary factor. This critique warranted the inclusion of Margret Archers' Structure, Culture and Agency (SCA) as explained further down.

Economic capital holds a prominent place in Bourdieu's field theory, often overshadowing other forms of capital, such as social, cultural, and symbolic capitals. This narrow focus can undermine the importance and impact of these other types of capitals on social hierarchies and power structures. Additionally, it overlooks certain fields or contexts where economic capital might have limited relevance or different manifestations. The presence of other capitals that may have been important led the need to add Magret archer's theory.

### **3.5.2 CRITIQUE TO MARGRET ARCHER'S THEORY**

Margaret Archer's Structure, Culture, and Agency (SCA) theory has made significant contributions to the field of sociology, particularly in terms of addressing the relationship between individual agency and social structures. One critique of SCA theory is its potential for reductionism. Archer proposes a tripartite model, separating structure, culture, and agency as distinct entities. However, some critics argue that this division oversimplifies the complexity of social phenomena, as they are often interconnected and mutually constitutive. By separating them into distinct categories, the interplay between structure, culture, and agency may be overlooked, leading to a reductionist understanding of social dynamics.

SCA theory has been criticized for not adequately addressing power relations. While the theory acknowledges the influence of social structures, it fails to fully acknowledge how power shapes those structures and how social actors navigate and contest power dynamics. This oversight can limit the theory's ability to explain social inequalities and the reproduction of power within social systems. Archer's SCA theory has been accused of neglecting historical and contextual specificities. The theory focuses on the general relationship between agency and structure, often neglecting how these dynamics may vary across different historical periods, cultural contexts, or social settings. This limitation can hinder a comprehensive understanding of social phenomena, as the role of agency and structure may differ significantly in diverse contexts.

While culture is acknowledged as a component of SCA theory, some critics argue that it is not fully integrated into the framework. The theory tends to treat culture as a separate entity from social structures and agency, rather than recognizing its role in shaping both. This separation

hinders a more comprehensive understanding of how culture interacts with agency and structures to influence social outcomes. This inherent weakness is complemented by the Field theory that emphasizes that need the cultural capital, and the habitus particularly the higher education habitus, necessary in the acquisition of the qualification.

### **3.6 SUMMARY**

The concepts of field, capital and habitus put forward by Bourdieu in his Field Theory are useful for analysing the scenarios that CWP Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot programme participants experienced as mature students from a non-historical source, the second economy strategy project - CWP. It was concluded that fields possess structural properties. When the stakes are high, agents play in the field in line with their volume of capital so that they better their positions. The different capitals in question include social and cultural capital. Cultural capital consists of embodied, objectified, and institutionalised capitals. The habitus of the institution and that of the student are important in generating a useful 'student walk' (see Chapter Two). The students utilised their capitals to better their position in the field through their habitus while also gaining higher education habitus using the CWP structures and agents.

Within the fields, there are the levels of reality which are subjective at the levels of the actual, the real and the empirical. In this study, the theory of social realism served as an under-labourer, providing mechanisms to explain the structures, culture, and agency through which social actors get involved in their social worlds. Archer provides the lens through which the experiences of the Grade R Teachers Diploma pilot programme participants from the CWP from 2014 to 2020 were understood.

The next chapter concerns how the study unfolded in terms of the data collection processes and procedures. Since the study is located in the interpretive and critical paradigm, an extended case study method (Burawoy et al., 2007), which used ethnography to collect data, was adopted. Research in the critical paradigm does not just extract research data but works towards emancipating the oppressed. Therefore, from the day the researcher got ethical clearance, they became part of the study and sought ways to assist participants in their progress towards achieving a Grade R Teaching qualification.

## **4.0 CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This study aimed to understand how the CWP participants experienced participating in the Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot programme. The previous chapter focused on the theoretical and conceptual framework used in this study, which was grounded in Pierre Bourdieu's Field Theory and concepts of field, habitus, and capital, as well as Margaret Archer's concepts of structure, culture, and agency. This chapter describes the data collection process, what informed the choices taken and how these decisions affected the findings and their interpretation.

The chapter presents the research philosophy and design, which is the plan regarding "approaches that provide specific direction for procedures in a research study" (Creswell & Creswell, 2017, p. 47). Research design issues include strategies of inquiry, approaches, population, sampling techniques and sampling size. The methods used for collecting, analysing, and interpreting data are presented. Lastly, the limitations and ethical considerations of the study are discussed.

### **4.2 PHILOSOPHICAL RESEARCH WORLDVIEW**

Researchers have different philosophical assumptions which guide their ways of interacting with their surroundings, as well as their beliefs and understandings, which lead to variations in how studies are conducted. As a researcher's philosophical ideas influence how research is practised, they should be made explicit.

Drawing from Guba (1990, p. 17) "a worldview is a set of beliefs that guide action." A worldview is mediated by the researcher's inclination and previous inquiry experience and influences their choices of a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods approach. Creswell and Creswell (2017) and Creswell (2015) identified four world views: post-positivist, constructivist, transformative and pragmatist. While delving into each of these worldviews could be helpful, the researcher will focus on the transformative worldview, which resonates closely with the study's focus on social protection and higher education, where the experiences of the Grade R Teaching Diploma participants are key. A worldview is also called a 'paradigm'. The critical paradigm is also referred to as the transformative paradigm, which situates its

research in social justice issues and seeks to address the political, social, and economic issues which may bring about social oppression, conflict, struggle, and power structures at whatever levels these might occur (Kivunja, 2018). This study is firmly rooted in the critical paradigm as it sought to give a voice to disempowered and marginalised CWP participants who were empowered through their participation in the Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot programme.

#### **4.2.1 THE CRITICAL OR TRANSFORMATIVE WORLDVIEW**

The critical or transformative worldview arose as some researchers felt the constructivists did not go far enough in advocating an action agenda for the marginalised. Transformative researchers felt existing theories did not adequately address issues of discrimination, social justice, power, and oppression (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Critical theorists and participatory action researchers embrace this worldview. Creswell and Creswell (2017) and Cohen et al. (2018) concur that the critical paradigm is a post-positivist worldview whose core function is to emancipate participants and transform their lives. The critical paradigm addresses factors such as empowerment, inequality, oppression, domination, and suppression. In this study, the critical paradigm, informed by critical theory, focused on the critical theory tenets of social transformation, human emancipation, reflective practice, enlightenment, and social justice.

In collaborative research, participants may help design the questions, collect data, and analyse information while reaping the rewards of research. This study was conducted collaboratively—the researcher and researched co-constructed the knowledge. The researcher was involved in co-construction of knowledge with the Grade R Teaching Diploma participants across time from 2016 to 2019.

Mertens (2010) argues that the transformative research paradigm links political and social action to inequities based on gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, and other factors, which result in asymmetrical power relationships. This paradigm sees the lives of the oppressed as being constrained by the powerful, hence the need for strategies to challenge, resist and subvert the constraints. The study of the lives and experiences of traditionally marginalised groups is central to studies conducted from a transformative worldview (Creswell & Creswell, 2017, p. 45). In this study, the researcher intervened in the study in ways that assisted the transformation of the participants from CWP participants to Grade R Teaching Diploma holders (as explained in Chapter Five on researcher intervention).

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) argue that the critical paradigm is concerned with the analysis of power and ideology: it is consciousness-raising; emancipatory; participatory; transformative; politically oriented and activist. It can be qualitative or quantitative. In this study, the researcher intervened and acted as an enabler for participants to gain deeper insight into the Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot programme. At the same time, the CWP participants also gained the habitus of higher education. This is in line with the community-based research approaches advocated by Wood (2017):

In the social sciences and humanities, there is growing acceptance of the idea of working in partnership with communities, rather than doing research “on” them and reporting findings “about” the issues they face ... through taking action to attain change toward a more just society.

(p. 1)

The critical paradigm also enables the researcher to become part of the research, rather than being aloof, as argued by Wood (2017):

The role of the academic researcher working in collaboration with community partners then becomes that of facilitator, whose task is to raise the consciousness of the community about the possibility to take action to improve their lived realities; to use the privileged position of academia to access human, material, and knowledge resources to support learning and development of all collaborators; and to be a partner in the process of knowledge production, rather than the chief director of the engagement.

(p. 2)

In this study, the researcher used his knowledge as an academic to raise the awareness and consciousness of the CWP participants as they participated in the Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot programme. The critical paradigm, which aims to revise asymmetric power relationships, enabled constraints faced by mature students in rural areas to be alleviated, allowing them to enrol as students and eventually graduate from the second economy strategy (CWP) to the first economy as Grade R teachers.

While this study was grounded in the critical paradigm, it also drew from the interpretive paradigm, as discussed in the next section.

### **4.2.2 INTERPRETIVE PARADIGM**

Cohen et al. (2018) argue that an interpretive paradigm resonates in part with an interactionist, subjectivist, socially constructed ontology, and epistemology. It recognises agentic behaviours, multiple realities, and the importance of understanding a situation through the eyes of the participants. In this study, the phenomenon of the CWP participants' experiences in the Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot programme gave rise to multiple realities, subjective meanings and lived experiences from participants' points of view. Through the interpretive paradigm, the researcher was able to describe the lived experiences of CWP participants from their perspectives. In this study, the CWP participants made their reality by giving meaning to their different Grade R Teaching Diploma learning experiences. Hence, to know the lived worlds of the CWP participants, the researcher had to access the authentic words and worlds of the CWP participants. This was accomplished through interaction with them because the epistemological stance of interpretivism views reality as emanating from the minds of the CWP participants.

### **4.3 RESEARCH APPROACH**

Creswell and Creswell (2017, p. 38) explain research approaches as the “plans and the procedures for research that span the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation.” Three approaches that are not necessarily discrete, namely quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods, can be employed. A study can use one approach more heavily than another; quantitative and qualitative approaches describe the two extremes of a continuum (Creswell, 2015; Newman, Benz & Ridenour, 1998), while the mixed methods approach takes the middle approach. Creswell and Creswell (2017) note that qualitative research is useful “for exploring and understanding the meanings individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 39). Quantitative research, on the other hand, tests objective theories by examining relationships among variables that can be reduced to numbers. The qualitative approach uses emerging questions and procedures as data is collected in participant's settings, and data analysis is inductive, as it builds from particular to general themes and the researcher makes interpretations of the meaning of the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Creswell & Poth, (2016).

A qualitative approach was used in this study. A qualitative approach in research is a methodological approach that aims to understand and interpret social phenomena by examining

the subjective experiences, meanings, and interpretations of individuals. It focuses on capturing the richness and complexity of human behaviour, beliefs, values, and social interactions. Participants were engaged in their settings, and there was an explicit attempt to explore the meanings and understandings of the CWP participants and other stakeholders. The study explores the complexity of the CWP pilot project within the context of poverty alleviation, empowerment, and graduation from a second economy strategy to the first economy, having completed the Diploma in Grade R Teaching.

Underpinning a research approach are the research design and methods, which will be discussed next.

#### **4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The research design is sometimes referred to as the blueprint of the research as it details the plan employed in the research. This study utilised the extended case method (ECM) design, rooted in the critical paradigm. Firdaus and Shalihin (2021) explains that the ECM valorises intervention and reflexive sociology, and there is thus inter-subjectivity between the researcher and the researched (object of research). ECM uses a case study approach that contains an ethnography of the phenomenon studied through the participants' experiences in the study.

##### **4.4.1 ETHNOGRAPHY**

Ethnography is a design for inquiry derived from anthropology and sociology. The researcher studies the shared patterns of behaviours (Asenahabi, 2019), language, and actions of an intact cultural group in a natural setting over a prolonged period. It is thus a process where the researchers immerse themselves in the real-world context of the participants (Asenahabi, 2019). Ethnographers develop close connections with the subjects and situations they study to grasp what the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski called the “native’s point of view” (Halilovich, 2022, p. 24). By participating in people’s lives, researchers develop an understanding “from within,” describing situational members’ lived experiences in detail and in-depth, presenting the complexities of everyday life as lived in particular settings. The researcher may discover or obtain detailed information that enables them to describe the complexities and shared cultural nuances of the participants' social world and interpret the phenomenon under investigation (Jones & Smith, 2017).

Ethnography has the potential to explore the connection between social structures, processes, and practices, and how they shape social relations (Clegg & Bailey, 2008). Since ethnography entails prolonged fieldwork periods, it provides an avenue for the exploration of complex challenges through their manifestations in the everyday lives of groups and individuals on the ground (Taylor, 2019). In relation to institutions, ethnography contributes to how people make meaning, manage change, exert, or resist power.

In this study, the researcher was able to be with the CWP participants in their study contexts for five years, from 2016 to 2020. Face-to-face interviews followed by telephone calls facilitated initial entry into the lives of the CWP Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot participants. The researcher used the internet messaging system 'WhatsApp' to stay close to the participants' lived experiences throughout their studies. The researcher created a WhatsApp group chat and individual chats where the participants could confide in the researcher about their challenges. The researcher was also immersed in the physical environment of the CWP participants by visiting participants' homes, schools and CWP sub-sites during the research period.

Jones and Smith (2017) caution that ethnographic approaches to data collection can produce voluminous unstructured data from a range of sources: diary entries, fieldwork notes, memos, and interview transcripts. In this study, the researcher used interviews, document analysis, field notes, emails, and WhatsApp to avoid generating voluminous amounts of data and keep focused on the purpose of the study. The data were generated by documenting the experience of the participants. In this study, ethnography was used within an extended case study method which is expanded on in the next section.

#### **4.4.2 EXTENDED CASE METHOD (ECM)**

Burawoy (1998) explains that an extended case method "applies reflexive science to ethnography to extract the general from the unique, to move from the 'micro' to the 'macro', and to connect the present to the past in anticipation..." (p. 5). In this study, the researcher applied his knowledge as a university lecturer to empower and improve the CWP participants' learning experience in the Grade R Diploma pilot programme. Wadham and Warren (2014) explain that "the extended case method brings existing theory to bear on a particular ethnographic case, enabling complex macro-level questions to be examined through their everyday manifestations in micro-level social settings.", (p. 5). This suitably describes the

study of the CWP - a programme with an evolving institutional structure. The attempt to understand the structure had to occur through the lens of the individual participants as they experienced the evolution of the institutional structure. In other words, the macro level and complex questions regarding the interaction, the intersections, complementarities, and contradictions of the CWP and the broader macro factors are explained through the micro settings of the CWP participant.

The extended case method bridges interpretive and critical approaches (Wadham & Warren, 2014). The researcher could collect not only data but also have a role in facilitating the emancipation of the participants, as argued by Wood (2017, 2019), who states that is expected in community-based research. Unlike the grounded theory approach to case study methodology, the ECM utilises an existing theory to link the micro-level context to the macro-level context. Burawoy (1979) utilised Gramsci's theory of hegemony to explain how factory workers consented to apparent exploitation. Burawoy (1976, 1979) further used the extended case method to explain how he got involved as a negotiator in the Zambianisation of the copper mines and, through this role, was able to facilitate the emancipation of the Zambian workers. In this study, the researcher used Bourdieu's Field Theory to explore the interaction of the fields, capital, and habitus in the mediation of studies undertaken by the CWP participants.

In implementing the extended case method, the researcher relies on multiple data sources, such as participant observation, personal interviews, and archival research/document analysis, to demonstrate how people experience and shape their environments (Samuels, 2009). Potential anomalies between the espoused policy (what is expected in theory) and the practice (what happens on the ground) tend to occur, resulting in a need to reconsider the existing policy. Therefore, ECM is a useful way of exploring complex phenomena by looking at everyday experiences, as they may also lead to challenging respected academic theories.

In this study, the complexity of the Community Work Programme was explored using the extended case method to explore the experiences of the CWP participants. Participants were engaged in their natural environments and were never brought to a particular venue for an interview. On their first meeting, participants in Ezinqoleni Municipality met the researcher at their nearest municipal library, a facility they utilised for their studies. Subsequent meetings occurred at the participants' homes, at the CWP workgroup sites and, most often, at the rural

school sites. The participants were not required to leave their busy schedules to meet with the researcher.

The researcher obtained intimate information concerning the CWP participants (students) through the initial semi-structured interviews, which elicited challenges that demonstrated the struggles of a rural-based university student. Later, interactions entailed the researcher taking the role of interlocutor between the students' challenges and their university programme. The researcher did not only telephone the university, as the CWP participants did not have airtime but also helped them set up their student emails. He later wrote emails to the university on behalf of the students (having sought their consent) and allowed them to use the emails as a communication tool with their university.

While CWP participant students were registered directly with NWU at the time, the Diploma in Grade R Teaching was offered through a public-private partnership (van Deventer, 2013) with the open Learning Group (OLG). In 2017, the GRTD students moved from being assisted through the Open Learning Group, and the researcher guided the students through this transition to NWU. When the diploma period expired in 2017, the researcher had to negotiate an extension for the participants. The researcher used his agency on numerous other occasions over the five years of the extended case study to facilitate the participants' experience.

#### **4.4.3 REFLEXIVITY**

Reflexive science is “a model that embraces not detachment but engagement as the road to knowledge.” (Burawoy, 1998, p. 5). This is contrasted with positivist science, which requires the researcher to be distanced from the findings to ensure reliability, reactivity, replicability and representativeness (Burawoy, 1998). In contrast, active and creative engagement undergird reflexivity, where there is inter-subjectivity between researcher and informant; it even encourages interventions on the part of the researcher to elucidate the “secrets of the participant’s world” (Burawoy, 1998, p. 14). ECM also calls for the researcher to understand the local knowledge and social processes that comprise the informant’s world, as reflected in the case scenario. For example, in Burawoy’s (1976, 1979) own work on the decolonisation of the Zambian copper industry, he emphasises that he was an actively engaged participant, not a non-intervening observer, in the African company in which he worked.

#### 4.4.4 AXIOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS OF THE RESEARCHER

A researcher needs to examine their existing biases and assumptions. In this study, as a lecturer and a student of academic development, I was aware that ‘access with success’ was critically important for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. I was also a student from a deeply rural background. I boarded a bus ‘alone’ for the first time as a 17-year-old, studied using a paraffin lamp, and finally bought my first cellular phone six years after attaining my first degree. Coupled with this background, I believe that, as a Christian, it is part of my purpose in life to empower others to achieve their goals. These factors contributed to my desire to facilitate the emancipation of the CWP participants.

On the academic side, I work as a full-time permanent lecturer in the School of Education at the Durban University of Technology, a contact university. I have also studied through a distance education mode (at UNISA) in one faculty while also being engaged in teaching at UNISA (part-time) as both a face-to-face lecturer in the College of Engineering and Science and online as an e-tutor for the College of Economics and Management Sciences (CEMS). UNISA is a mega-distance education institution with students over 350 000 per annum (Makwara, 2019). This built into my habitus as I saw the challenges of data and connectivity related to access to online resources; while also relating to the benefits of student-to-student and student-lecturer relationships built in face-to-face interaction. I also noted the reluctance of lecturers to use online resources and the low level of online response in 2013. As an online tutor with the unfortunate experience of a low lecturer response rate, I sought to make a difference in my online facilitation culminating in receiving an award for best online facilitation in 2016 for the CEMS.

While I could thus relate to the challenges of distance education, I also understood how powerful the information technology system of universities could be as a source of evidence and a scaffold for success. At the university, I have also worked with students funded by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme, the Funza Lushaka bursary and the Education Training and Development Practices Sector Education Training Authority (ETDP SETA). I have also been involved with participatory rural appraisals conducted by Rural Unity for Development Organisation (RUDO), an NGO that also focused on empowering rural communities through skills training. This background and context constituted the capitals and habitus I brought to the study, which enabled me to facilitate the goals of the Grade R Teaching Diploma. The

diploma was facilitated as part of skills training by an NGO: Lima. Then, the NGO facilitated a bursary from the government department: the Department of Cooperative Governance (DCOG), as described in Chapter Five.

#### **4.4.5 RESEARCHER IN THE EXTENDED CASE METHOD**

In the extended case method, the researcher is a data collection instrument as much as they are the reporter of the findings. In this study, I recorded field notes and wrote reflections on different days' findings to minimise researcher bias. In the field notes, I bracketed expectations, presumptions and assumptions, opinions and reactions to add rigour to the research process (Morrow & Smith, 2000; Mathende, 2014).

In addition, qualitative researchers need to manage the threat of researcher bias as they seek to achieve credibility by engaging in reflexivity and building self-awareness regarding their influence on the research project (Drisko, 1997). I kept a journal where I reflected on the process and documented all that had happened after every interview, observation or learning centre visit. I struggled in the analysis as I became an object of the study (Levenson, 2018). I also engaged in dialogues with other doctoral studies peers while maintaining continuous consultation with my research supervisor, all of which promoted reflexivity.

#### **4.5 POPULATION**

A population is an entire group of objects, cases, events or people, or measurements that conform to a given set of characteristics (Kenton, 2020). In this research, the case study concerns the Grade R Teaching Diploma piloted by the Community Work Programme. The population for the phenomenon under study included CWP participants in the three provincial sites of Rustenburg in the North West (NW) province, the Bojanala District in the Free State (FS) and Ugu District in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). This included seventy-five students, with twenty-five at each of the three sites. The relative locations in the FS and NW provinces were more urban compared to those in KZN. The KZN participants were from deep rural and remote areas. This group of participants was selected for this study as they appeared to be facing extreme situations. This position is buoyed by Robinson (2002), who argues that unique and extreme cases provide a valuable “test bed”. It is a situation where ‘if it can work here, it will work anywhere’ (p. 182).

The extreme situation illustrates that there is no internet access in the areas where some of the participants lived. Thus, I could not use the geographical positioning system (GPS) but had to call the participants. Due to poor connectivity, I got lost on two of the trips in 2016 and 2017 and had to retrace my steps until the cellular phone connection was restored. I frequently arrived late – sometimes as many as two hours late – because of poor network connectivity and the absence of signs on the roads. Load shedding and power outages contributed to poor communication.

#### **4.6 SAMPLING TECHNIQUES**

Since the study utilised the qualitative approach within a transformative or critical paradigm, the appropriate sampling was non-probability sampling (Babbie, 2008). Purposive sampling (Maxwell, 2009) was used after snowball sampling was initially employed, as it was difficult to gain access to contact information for the participants.

##### **4.6.1 SNOWBALL TECHNIQUE**

Snowball sampling is a technique used by researchers to generate a pool of participants for research through referrals made by individuals who share a particular characteristic of research interest with the target population (Fry, 2018). Cohen et al. (2018) call it “chain-referral sampling” (p. 220). In other words, a snowball sampling accesses participants through other persons. In this study, the researcher employed the snowball sampling technique to recruit the site managers, who connected him to the CWP participant students. This was done because the researcher had no direct interaction with, or access to the participants. Furthermore, it was difficult for the researcher to access the CWP programmes without engaging the site managers. Snowball sampling did not yield enough participants for the study, however. Hence, the researcher used purposive and convenience sampling to identify more participants.

##### **4.6.2 PURPOSIVE SAMPLING**

In purposive sampling, participants are selected based on their knowledge, professional roles or anticipated richness of expertise or experience relevant to the research questions (Cohen et al., 2018; Yin, 2014). Purposive sampling is appropriate where the context of participants is

deliberately selected, and the selected participants are key informants. Cohen et al. (2018) argue that a case must be selected as fit for purpose. The research question was to explore the participants' experiences in the CWP GRTD pilot. Therefore, an extreme case was chosen where the participants experienced extreme poverty and faced extreme rurality without connectivity and transportation challenges. Furthermore, the culture was generally unsupportive of the higher education habitus, yet they were enrolled for a Diploma in Grade R Teaching through the CWP.

The researcher conveniently sampled stakeholders of the CWP, such as the site managers, while also accessing twenty-five of the CWP participants. Therefore, two of the four municipal site managers were conveniently sampled and interviewed. The site managers served as “gatekeepers into the sites” (Shumba, 2014, p. 55). The first site manager who appeared for an interview gave the researcher data on all participants at that site, including their contact details. The researcher called each participant and sought their consent to participate in the study. Twenty-five participants voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. The researcher also got full support from the site managers for the study.

### **4.6.3 CONVENIENCE SAMPLING**

Cohen et al. (2018) suggest that this type of sampling is sometimes called opportunity, accidental or haphazard sampling, as it involves selecting the closest or most easily accessible individuals to serve as research participants or using those who are easily available and willing. Convenience sampling was used to select the school principals and the mentors due to their presence at the schools where the participants were placed for work-integrated learning.

### **4.6.4 PARTICIPANT MAPPING**

Table 4.1 provides a summary of data for the participants. Participants from different fields came together for the Grade R Teaching Diploma to be realised. Participants were drawn from the Grade R Diploma student participants located in rural municipalities in the Ugu district; site managers for the rural local municipalities; and the Technical Support Manager (TSM) responsible for the Grade R Teaching Diploma from the Local Implementing Agent (LIA), the Dhladhla Foundation. From Lima, the Lead Agent (LA), four members from the Learner Support Unit were interviewed: the Manager, the Training Coordinator, and their successor

(the part-time learning facilitator), and one learning facilitator. These four participants are called 'learning facilitators' in this thesis, although their specific titles varied. From the rural schools, five mentors were interviewed during the school visits by the researcher, as the researcher observed the CWP participant in their school contexts. From NWU, email communication and physical interviews were utilised with staff supporting the CWP Grade R Diploma pilot programme.

At the rural schools, it was possible to observe the school context and also interview the mentors; while at the learning support centre, the researcher observed the learning and teaching at the centre while also interviewing the centre managers. At the participants' homes, the researcher observed the presence of physical capital necessary to enhance teaching and learning while getting marked assignments and portfolios or the Grade R prospectus. Table 4.1 summarises the participants' mapping, indicating the sample, sample size, dates for data gathering, and data gathering strategy.

Source	Number	Dates	Data gathering strategy
School-based mentors	5	2016, 2017, 2018	Interviews; observations
CWP site managers	2	2016, 2017	Interviews; observations
Lima learning facilitators	4	2016, 2017	Interviews and emails
Dhlahdla Foundation technical support manager (TSM)	1	2018	Interview
NWU Staff	4	2017-2018	Interviews and emails
Learning Support Centre	2	2017-2018	Interviews; observations
CWP participants	25	2016 -2019	Interviews and WhatsApp; observation
Participant homes	5	2017- 2019	Observation

**Table 4.1 Participant Mapping**

## 4.7 DATA COLLECTION

Given the use of the extended case method, which is grounded in ethnographic data collection methods, several methods of data collection were employed. In this study, interviews, document analysis, observations, email data and WhatsApp data were used. The initial method used was the individual interview. The Lima Learning Support Unit Manager and the training coordinator were interviewed before moving on to the CWP participants. Other supporting methods were observations of the different learning contexts and, later, WhatsApp communications with the CWP participants, both as a group and as individuals. Document analysis was also employed, where the documents included: policy documents; CWP reports from Lima; insider documents, including minutes of initial meetings, the memorandum of understanding and the bursary agreement.

### 4.7.1 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Creswell (2010) defines an interview as “a two-way conversation in which the interviewer asks the participant questions to collect and to learn about the ideas, beliefs, views, opinions and behaviours of the participants” (p. 87). In this study, an interview refers to the conversation where the researcher posed questions and listened to the participants' ideas, views and opinions;

while also noting non-verbal cues from the interaction. Interviews recognise the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production and emphasise the social nature of research data (Cohen et al., 2018). Interviews are important in understanding contemporary actions and outcomes. They also identify causal mechanisms that are not evident in other forms of data.

The use of interviews emanates from the qualitative researcher's attempt to find out how people were thinking, feeling, and doing, which can be found by asking them. By extension, therefore, words are of utmost importance. Since the research questions needed triangulation from the NGOs implementing the CWP, the CWP participants, and site managers, the interview emerged as one of the main data generation instruments utilised.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants associated with the various stakeholders: the CWP participants; school-based mentors; CWP site managers; Lima learning facilitators; the Dhladhla Foundation technical support manager (TSM); and NWU lecturers. The researcher made appointments with the participants before the interviews through cellular phone calls, WhatsApp messages, and SMSs. Generally, interviews happened during working hours, their free periods, or soon after they released the Grade R learners. Participants could indicate what approach they were comfortable with. Face-to-face interviews, for instance, occurred at the participant's home, at a venue convenient to the participant (e.g. the municipal library), at the CWP site office, and at the rural schools. This was for the convenience of the participant student. Participants were asked to describe important events in their lives and educational lives and how these impacted their experience obtaining the Grade R Diploma in the context of the CWP in the rural primary school setting.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted primarily in English, especially with the stakeholder representatives. To increase comfort and allow a smooth flow of ideas, the student participants could answer the interview questions in their vernacular language (IsiZulu). However, he would seek clarity on unclear terms or expressions. The interviews ranged from forty-five minutes to two hours depending on how well the respondent could articulate the questions being asked.

Two interviews were held with each CWP participant to enable the researcher to generate in-depth data. The process allowed the interviewer to modify the original questions before the

second interview. The researcher would transcribe the audio recordings from the first interview and then bring the transcriptions to the second interview to facilitate member checking.

#### **4.7.2 OBSERVATIONS**

The researcher also collected data through field observations, where he shadowed five participants in their contexts, including at their homes and the CWP site of the rural primary schools. In non-participant observation, the researcher looks on without playing an active part (Urquhart, 2015). The researcher seeks to observe participants in their corporeal reality in terms of concrete existence in space and time (Burawoy, 1991). To better understand a typical day in the participant's life, the researcher arranged to arrive at the school, work site, or home of the identified participant to spend an extended amount of time – such as a whole school day. The researcher recorded his observations and reflections in a diary.

The researcher also spent extended hours in the CWP local municipal site offices observing the different clerical work by the site office, especially towards the end of the month. These instances allowed the researcher to observe a typical day in the life of a CWP participant student. Observations at participants' homes occurred after the initial interviews to triangulate the information supplied during the initial interviews about the participant's background and socioeconomic status. While seemingly intrusive, the home visits occurred later in the case study once the participants had established a relaxed relationship with the researcher and felt comfortable telling him about their lives and experiences studying for the diploma (GRTD).

##### **4.7.2.1 OBSERVATION OF LEARNING CONTEXTS**

The observation of learning contexts was important as it enhanced the ethnographic aspect of the extended case method and enhanced the researcher's familiarity and acceptance as an insider. The invitation to participants' homes, schools and CWP sites provided deeper insights into the learning context and experiences of the CWP participants. The sustained presence of the researcher in the CWP participants' study contexts, including municipal libraries and the examination centres, led to the participants believing they could get assistance from the researcher, which led to the participants gaining agency and acquiring the higher education habitus. The researcher's presence also increased the social capital of the CWP participants.

Physical visits and observations of different contexts took place in 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 at the different learning sites. Particular contexts included the home (Mahai, 2014), the learning support centres (Shikulo & Lekhetho, 2020), the rural primary schools, and the CWP sites. The different CWP participants visited, and the times they were observed or interviewed are shown in the table below. The researcher also visited the Learning Support Centre (LSC) twice in 2016, twice during the CWP participant students' examination sessions; in 2017, he observed the interactive whiteboard sessions for four days. Table 4.2 presents the learning contexts visited.

**Table 4.2 Learning contexts visited**

Learning Context	Participants Visited	Date
Homes	P1, P5, P2 P6, P7, P14, P22, P8	2016, 2017, 2018
Community Library	P11, P12, P14, P15	2016
CWP site	P22, P7, P3, P9, P16, P17, P18, P19	2016, 2017, 2018
Learning Support Centres	P7, P10, P3, P1, P4, P22, P23, P24, P25	2016, 2017, 2018
Schools	P14, P3, P4, P7, P9, P13, P18	2016, 2017

## **4.8 DIGITAL COMMUNICATION**

Data collection was obtained via digital communication through email and WhatsApp.

### **4.8.1 EMAIL COMMUNICATION**

The researcher collected data through email communications with NWU. The initial email to NWU sought interview appointments with the Grade R management. Later, email communication concerned students with one outstanding module. Several emails were about the assessment of assignments and the realisation of the rule on two examination opportunities. The researcher also communicated with one assignments officer, the bursaries office, the registration office, and the Work Integrated Learning office. The researcher emailed the DCOG office responsible for the Grade R bursary. He also sought to bring the suspended students back to studying. He also wrote to the Dean's office seeking clarity on funding issues. Emails were also useful in communicating with module lecturers for the new isiZulu language module in 2017. After telephone calls, the DHL would require an email to enable the re-routing of the CWP participant study material. At the same time, the Open Learning Group also demanded

an email address to which to forward the students' timetables. The assignments and registration officers also preferred emails to forward student examination timetables. Email communication proved useful as it left a permanent record of what was communicated, unlike WhatsApp, where some records were deleted over time, as the extended case method works overtime.

Email communication with Lima Learning Support Unit Manager indicated the inability of the Department of Cooperative Governance (DCOG) to pay for the CWP participants' tuition fees in 2014 at the start of the project. At the end of the project, the researcher also had email communication with the Deputy Minister's personal assistant with regard to arrangements for graduation.

#### **4.8.2 WHATSAPP DATA**

According to Dahdal (2020), WhatsApp is a social media application used for one-to-one and/or group communication across different locations. In this study, the researcher employed WhatsApp as one of the data collection instruments because he had to communicate with the participants about their lived experiences as they occurred. Concomitantly, given the distance of about 200 km between the CWP participant students and the researcher, a rich, physical ethnographic level of interaction was not feasible for extended periods. The researcher was still employed full-time, and there were not enough resources to facilitate the researcher's continued stay in the CWP students' area. Protracted interaction with the CWP participants through telephone calls when one site manager availed the telephone numbers during the 2016 interview led to the conclusion that the researcher could also collect data on the student journey through the WhatsApp communication medium. WhatsApp was thus the communication platform that the researcher used with the participants as the source of data (Goncalves & Cornelius Smith, 2018). It enabled data gathering across time. This is an internet-based data collection strategy described as ethnography or online ethnography (Kozinets, 2014). The CWP participants were connected using WhatsApp and could use symbols, emoticons, and acronyms like CWP. In networked communities, people post messages, others reply, and while there could be digressions, they form a coherent, traceable, asynchronous conversational 'thread' over time. Email groups could also create some form of ethnographic space. Kozinets (2002) suggests that researchers use ethnography for communities that discuss the material related to their research questions and offer more social interactions.

WhatsApp thus served as a platform for participants to document their journey as it occurred. WhatsApp enabled the capturing and immediate addressing of challenges such as addresses to which assignments were to be sent and when the service providers changed, joys when some received their results, as well as sharing of online study materials and receiving financial support. This is in line with Cummings, Mason, Shelton, and Baur (2017), who argue that WhatsApp groups facilitate and initiate that participatory group interaction that makes active learning possible and accessible for students.

In this case, the researcher was able to track the conversations and relate them to the bigger picture elements regarding the CWP, rural schools, and the graduation from CWP to mainstream employment. While one participant could not afford a smartphone to use WhatsApp and another cited religious reasons for leaving WhatsApp, the remaining 13 used WhatsApp. However, some functionalities were not yet present in 2016. By 2017, all 25 had WhatsApp, although some did not have enough airtime or data to participate. Having recognised the opportunity offered by ethnography, the researcher negotiated with the participants through individual WhatsApp communications to create a WhatsApp group. The interviews showed that participants recognised they could acquire social capital through friendship, contacts and associates from social media, including WhatsApp. As members of one WhatsApp group, CWP participants ended up chatting one-on-one. WhatsApp thus emerged as a collaborative and peer learning pedagogical and social instrument (Thabakadimene, 2019).

#### **4.9 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS**

Document analysis refers to “any systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents; for ‘finding, selecting, appraising (making sense of), and synthesising data contained in documents – both printed and electronic” (Bowen, 2009, p. 28). Documents can be accessed from various sources (Bryman, 2016). Mackieson, Shlonsky and Connolly (2019) assert that analysis of existing documents is beneficial because it facilitates historical research, which informs understanding of past influences on present legislation, policies, programmes, and service systems. This section discusses the different documents analysed and the nature of the data collected. Three types of documents were analysed: the Grade R Teaching Diploma (GRTD) prospectus, GRTD (Grade R) Work Integrated Learning (RWIL) administration document, and project administration documents.

#### **4.9.1 GRTD PROSPECTUS AND RWIL ADMINISTRATION DOCUMENT**

This study's documents of interest included the Grade R prospectuses, which changed over time, and the Grade R Work Integrated Learning (RWIL) administration document. The divergence between policy and practice sparked interest: the prospectus indicated that the RWIL administration document was available online but was not. The researcher had to follow this up by writing to the NWU Grade RWIL leadership. Having received the document, he then shared it with the CWP participants.

Another point of analysis of the RWIL document was its evolutionary nature. The rubric to be utilised for assessment of the RWIL portfolio changed over time, and areas of emphasis were also changing; hence, the marker would insert a new rubric ignoring the one already inserted by the CWP participant as it was too old. There was also an analysis of whether the Grade R teaching prospectus aligned with the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ) policy document. The CWP Grade R teaching document met the policy requirements, and the RWIL third-year, first semester was complemented with a visit by an NWU-based assessor. The prospectus provided information regarding advancement to the Bachelor of Education degree, which would be useful to the participants post-qualification for the diploma. It also spelt out the institutional policy on aspects such as eligibility for the Dean's concessionary examination, which became an intervention point for the researcher to ensure that the CWP participants benefited from the concession.

#### **4.9.2 PROJECT MANAGEMENT DOCUMENTS**

While project management documents were not accessible initially, especially from the initial Diploma in Grade R Teaching meetings and the memorandum of understanding (MoU), CWP reports that were availed to the researcher provided deep insights into the operation of the CWP, especially concerning the conceptualisation of the CWP and some of the key agents that became involved in the Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot. Documents were obtained from the stakeholders, and others were generated from the researcher's personal communication with the CWP participants and the NWU. The documents include policies obtained from stakeholder websites, such as the CWP implementation manual and annual reports from DCOG. The integrated development plans (IDPs) of the Ugu District Municipality and some of the four rural local municipalities provided deep insights into the general socioeconomic conditions and

community profiles of the CWP participants. The researcher also visited the publicly available government site for CoGTA, where he got speeches from the then deputy minister responsible for CWP. The researcher had to search on the NWU website to access student documentation from 2017 to 2020.

### **4.9.3 INSIDER DOCUMENTS**

As the researcher became more intimately involved in the extended case method, he was granted access to documents by the Lima LSU facilitator containing information on CWP participants with suspended studies, minutes of initial meetings, and CWP Grade R intervention plans which took place before the suspension of studies. These were important in mediating the CWP participant experience with the diploma experience. They showed their thinking during the conceptualisation of the programme and significant events during the programme. For example, the MoU delimited each partner's role, while the suspension list showed which students had dropped out of the programme and the reasons for the suspension of the studies.

### **4.9.4 ONLINE STUDY AID DOCUMENTS**

The Grade R Diploma is a print-based programme where study material is sent to the student via post or couriered to an address of the student captured on the student information technology system. The diploma has an online presence, but a student can still succeed without being online. The researcher accidentally discovered the open learning group (OLG) website in September 2016. The site contained important documents such as examination letters, past examination question papers, and PowerPoint slides. In 2017, the online Grade R Teaching Diploma study material was moved to the NWU Unit for Distance Learning (UODL) when the logistical partnership with the OLG ended.

The Grade R prospectus referred to uploading interactive whiteboard sessions (IWBS) a few days after the live sessions. The completed and uploaded post-interactive whiteboard sessions were viewed or downloaded using the Panopto software. While the researcher could not download them in 2017, in 2018, the past IWBS became more accessible and could be downloaded and shared. The download process was bulky and data-heavy, however.

The researcher noted that among the physical study material the CWP participants received was a Universal Serial Bus (USB). The USB contained past interactive whiteboard sessions for the students. However, none of the CWP participants could play the content contained in the USB as they had no computers. A suggestion was made to provide the documents through a channel that could play on the CWP participants' phones. The researcher emailed an academic development representative a suggestion to use the Micro Secure Digital (Micro SD) card instead of the USB for multimedia access by the students. While the Grade R Diploma leader forwarded the email to the unit for student academic development, the suggestion never got implemented. The Grade R Diploma students continued to receive the unhelpful Universal Serial Bus (USB), which relied on access to a computer to access the study material.

In summary, the document analysis included the Grade R prospectus, the RWIL administration manual, the CWP Grade R Diploma documents and other assessment documentation from the participants. The Grade R Diploma pilot programme (insider) documents came from Lima and the assessment documents (such as marked assignments and RWIL portfolios) from the CWP participants students. Marked assignments and portfolios of the students were real data sources regarding the participants' assessment experience. The researcher was able to elicit the nature of feedback the participants received from the university in context. Policy documents were also analysed, such as Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ) and the NWU Grade R Diploma Information Booklet and RWIL administration. As the researcher's knowledge grew, academic records from the NWU websites were also utilised. The academic records were especially useful as they assisted in determining whether a student was eligible for one module outstanding and the Dean's concessionary examination.

#### **4.10 DATA ANALYSIS**

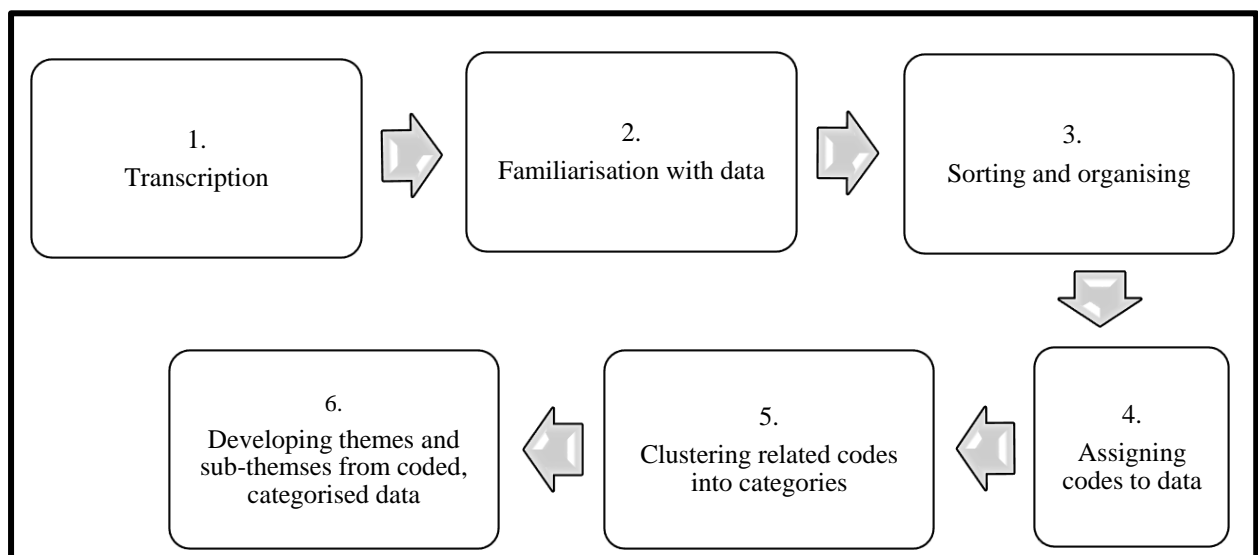
In the extended case method (ECM), data analysis occurs concurrently with data collection as the researcher reflects on their findings (Maxwell, 2009; Cohen et al., 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The interviews and observations are progressively focused as decisions about emerging conclusions are made (Maxwell, 2009).

In line with this, the researcher analysed the data as they were collected in this study. Data collected using various data collection methods were analysed using a six-step process, namely: transcription; familiarisation; sorting and analysing of data; assigning codes to data; and

clustering related codes into categories and arranging categories into themes and sub-themes. The emergent themes are presented as results and research findings in Chapter Five and subsequent chapters.

#### 4.10.1 THE SIX-STEP PROCESS OF DATA ANALYSIS

A six-step process adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006) was used to analyse data as they were collected. After every interview session, I wrote down my reflections from the interview. I also went through the different WhatsApp posts as they were posted on the platform. The posts were important in strengthening the themes identified, as well as the interview quotes were important in strengthening the finding of themes. Figure 4.1 captures this six-step data analysis process.



**Figure 4.1 Six-step data analysis process**

*(Adapted from Braun & Clarke, 2006)*

A discussion of the six-step data analysis process follows.

##### 4.10.1.1 STEP ONE: TRANSCRIPTIONS

According to Hornby (2010), to transcribe is to “record thoughts, speech or data in a written form” (p. 1587). As a way of immersing myself more deeply and personally in the data, I transcribed the interviews. This is supported by Skukauskaitė (2014), who argues that when researchers pass off the transcription of audio recordings as a “chore to be done by others, they

miss out on the kinds of understandings that develop as tapes [audio files] are transcribed, and as well, they lose control over some of the transcription decisions made” (p. 770). So, I transcribed the interviews myself, which helped ensure the participants’ privacy.

I transcribed the interviews immediately after they were done. I transcribed the audio recording verbatim, including sounds such as ‘umm’, ‘ohh’ and ‘yah’ and listened to silences and other cues that I remembered from the interviews. It took three to five-hours to transcribe a 45- to 90-minute interview. Azeredo et al. (2017) state that transcribing requires significant time and can be boring and physically exhausting. The transcriptions were then printed for member checking. A folder was created on the computer where all the transcribed documents were saved and emailed to the supervisor. This was done to ensure that the study had typed scripts safe and secure in case of unforeseen circumstances. This idea correlates with Hanior, Achor and Gire (2018), who state that electronic gadgets make information record-keeping easier to enhance efficiency and later retrieval.

#### **4.10.1.2 STEP TWO: FAMILIARISATION WITH DATA**

Erlingsson and Brysiewicz (2017) view familiarisation with the data as an important step in the data analysis process, where researchers read and re-read the transcribed interviews while keeping the purpose of the study in focus. Familiarising oneself with the data involves listening carefully and looking for patterns and meaning in each interview transcript while making notes for data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012; Terry et al., 2017; Makwara, 2022). I read the transcribed interviews several times and listened to the audio-recorded tapes repeatedly to understand what participants said, determine emerging categories and themes, and record them. Open-coding enables the researcher to compare/contrast the categories and themes and to repeat the process with each transcript. I also engaged in bracketing and reducing my biases by keeping an open mind and focusing on the research's purpose to enter the participants' unique world (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018).

The various other data sources were coded according to various themes as they emerged from the WhatsApp posts, documents shared by the participants (such as marked assignments) and online academic records of the CWP participant students.

#### **4.10.1.3 STEP THREE: SORTING AND ORGANISING DATA**

In the next stage, the data was sorted and organised according to the research questions to ensure adequate data addressed each research question. For this step, the researcher pooled the data from all participants and data sources. Erlingsson and Brysiewicz (2017) indicate that when sorting and organising data, answers to questions of social and theoretical significance is obtained. Thus, keeping the research purpose and questions clearly in focus helped divide the text into meaningful units.

Organising and sorting data under each research question enabled the researcher to see similar patterns and themes at a glance (Cohen et al., 2018). It also helped to manage the data and enabled it to be accessed quickly during the subsequent data analysis processes. Keeping data in small units saved time as it was unnecessary to return to the raw data as I could go straight to the organised data for the specific theme and research question.

#### **4.10.1.4 STEP FOUR: ASSIGNING CODES TO DATA**

Data from the interviews were coded after transcription. A code is defined as “a textual description of the semantic boundaries of a theme or component of a theme” (Guest, Namey & Mitchell, 2013, p. 50) or a label that is attached to a phrase or a short sentence of the data being analysed (Blair, Imai & Zhou, 2015). Coding has the advantage of breaking the data and rearranging it into categories that facilitate comparison among and between categories. Coding is also known as indexing.

Firstly, I marked different keywords and phrases with highlighters according to the research questions. Secondly, I assigned names (codes) next to the data using participants’ real words. Thirdly, I wrote the codes in a column adjacent to the sorted and organised data. I then went through the codes and clustered similar codes to formulate main topics, different topics, and outliers. Farooq (2018) purports that during the coding process, the researcher may experience gradually becoming immersed in the world of the texts (interview transcripts) as they move from the parts (codes and themes) to the whole (interview transcript) and back again. In this study, I went back to the transcripts, the WhatsApp data, the findings, the field notes and the observations, while comparing them with the sorted and organised data to check whether all

the codes were captured. The highlighting of codes and the initial names/pseudonyms assigned helped me to quickly extract appropriate quotes during the write-up process. I then sent all the identified codes to my supervisor to assist with the identification of any discrepancies, errors, or omissions to enhance dependability.

#### **4.10.1.5      STEP FIVE: CLUSTERING RELATED CODES INTO CATEGORIES**

The coded data were revised and cross-checked before clustering assigned codes into categories. I looked at text data and segmented the sentences into categories, then labelled each category with a term or phrase that emerged from the participants' actual words. I thus re-examined every single transcription to answer the question, 'what is this about?' (Creswell, 2008). Alase (2017) asserts that this stage is described as the category phase, which allows the researcher to narrow down to a few words the participants' responses. I used this idea, which helped me to capture the central meaning of the participants 'lived experiences' in one or two words. This open coding helped reduce the bulky data to smaller pieces of purposeful data and look for the underlying meanings.

#### **4.10.1.6      STEP SIX: ARRANGING CATEGORIES INTO THEMES AND SUB-THEMES**

In the sixth stage, the researcher utilised the data analysis to review, refine and cluster related categories into themes. Mukeredzi (2017) argues for the need to examine and check for relationships between codes and categories while clustering them into themes that should represent the entire data. This process assisted me in formulating names and clear definitions of each theme. I further clustered various themes under one major theme and thus created sub-themes. One of the benefits of using open-coding data analysis is its flexibility. I identified themes, revised and modified them in various ways, and the data delivered rich and detailed results (Braun & Clarke, 2012). I thus managed to elicit the experiences of the CWP participants and identify themes in these participant experiences (related to their socioeconomic status and the associated emotions they experienced during the studying process). The interpretation of the themes in terms of the macro, meso, and micro-environments, and the

influences of the different fields, habitus and capital are addressed in the synthesis in Chapter Eight.

#### **4.10.2 ACCESS TO THE PARTICIPANTS**

Accessing participants proved to be a challenge as I was an outsider. All protocols had to be observed before I could interview participants. In his study, Mathende (2015) found that while he had unlimited access to CWP participants as a social worker in the area, he still had to make appointments for interviews.

In this study, I was a complete outsider, as a Zimbabwean who is not a first language speaker of isiZulu, and also as a lecturer in the School of Education, but for only the Further Education and Training (FET) phase, where there was limited overlap with the participants' study experience. However, my knowledge as a lecturer proved useful in assisting the students in acquiring the higher education habitus.

I only entered the field once all conditions, including ethical clearance from the university and gatekeepers, as well as letters from the CWP, were satisfied. Access to participants was facilitated by the fact that several of my students at the Durban University of Technology School of Education did their work integrated learning (WIL) at schools close to their homes in Ugu District, the same district where the study (CWP) participants lived and worked. I thus requested to be deployed to assess DUT students for WIL in the Ugu district during 2016, 2017 and 2018. For the DUT, it was a requirement to make a minimum of two visits per student per WIL period. During these DUT WIL student visits, I was able to visit the CWP participants and gather data, including visiting their homes (as shown in Table 4.1).

While I had informal access to the head of the Learner Support Unit at Lima and had express access to information and key informants, due to internal dynamics, the initial training coordinator of the LSU left and was replaced by a part-time LSU facilitator by the time ethical clearance was obtained for this study. The new LSU training facilitator was not forthcoming with information to facilitate the study and supplied only a list of the schools where the CWP participants were based, with no contact details. As a result, I was required to use Google Earth to locate the schools. The week after ethical clearance was obtained, I went to four schools and found none of the participants. The principal, who should be the custodian of student records, was absent on the date in two of the four instances. These were cold visits as I hadn't obtained

the telephone numbers of the schools. At this point, I almost despaired. The closest I got to identifying a participant for the study was a student sponsored by the EPWP who, through snowball sampling, referred me to another two students sponsored by the Education and Training Development Programme (ETDP) Sector Education Training Authority (SETA). These two students then referred me to another candidate located very far away. When I explained that I was looking for CWP participants, they took me to Participant 7 (P7). Participant 7 became a key informant whose contacts enabled access to the stakeholders, as shown in Table 4.1.

The next section discusses the ways that rigour was enhanced in this study.

#### **4.11 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY**

Lietz and Zayas (2010) suggest that qualitative studies should not focus on validity and reliability but should achieve ‘trustworthiness’. Qualitative studies do not look at internal and external validity because they have no hypothesis but only focus on whether the study is trustworthy. This study addressed trustworthiness through four aspects that work together: credibility, transferability, auditability, and confirmability (Lietz & Zayas, 2010).

##### **4.11.1 CREDIBILITY**

Credibility refers to the degree to which a study’s findings represent the meanings of the research participants (Lietz & Zayas, 2010). Drisko (1997) suggests that qualitative “interpretations must be authentic and accurate to the descriptions of the primary participants” (p. 191). The researcher maintained an open mind to reduce the risk of bias and avoid influencing the direction of the conversation during interviews, ensuring that the discussion remained on topic.

On a similar note, it was important for the researcher to obtain confirmation from participants about the accuracy of transcriptions through member checking. Member checking involves one or more study participants checking the account's accuracy (Creswell, 2012). In this study, individual face-to-face interviews were audio-recorded. This is in line with Bertram and Christiansen (2014), who argue that “using an audio-recording device to record interviews verbatim means that the transcripts are more accurate than if the researcher simply jots down notes during the interview.” (p. 189). Credibility was thus also enhanced through the use of the audio recorder, which captured accurate raw data.

Qualitative researchers may seek to enhance credibility by trying to make their data-gathering efforts less conspicuous and intrusive without deceiving the respondents. The audio recorder should not attract participants' attention to such an extent that they end up making statements only to impress the researcher. However, the audio recorders were placed on top of the table because the participants requested that the recorder be on the table so that their voices could be captured accurately.

In addition, qualitative researchers manage the threat of researcher bias as they seek to achieve credibility by engaging in reflexivity and building self-awareness regarding their influence on the research project (Drisko, 1997). In this study, I kept a journal where I reflected on the process and documented what had happened after every interview, observation, or learning centre visit. I also engaged in dialogues with my peers in the doctoral programme while maintaining continuous consultations with my supervisor, which promoted reflexivity.

#### **4.11.2 TRANSFERABILITY**

Transferability refers to the degree to which the findings are applicable or useful to theory, practice and future research (Lietz & Zayas, 2010). Sandelowski (1986) refers to transferability as 'fittingness', suggesting that it has to do with the degree to which findings fit situations outside the study. For findings to achieve transferability, Devers (1999) suggests that "...context must be similar. Therefore, it is the role of the researcher to identify key aspects of the context from which the findings emerge and the extent to which they may be applicable to other contexts" (p. 1165).

Transferability in this study was left to the reader, bearing in mind that this would be based on the understanding that findings were limited only to specific similar groups, contexts, communities and/or circumstances. The thick descriptions of research sites and the findings enhanced the transferability of this study. Tracy (2010) explains that the purpose of thick description in achieving transferability involves providing enough detail to the readers and requires the researcher to be accountable for the complex specificity and circumstantiality of their data. Hence, the researcher used thick descriptions to discuss research contexts and present the study's data and findings.

### **4.11.3 AUDITABILITY**

Lietz and Zayas (2010) identify the third criterion for ensuring trustworthiness as auditability. Auditability is the degree to which research procedures are documented, allowing someone outside the project to follow and critique the research process (Padgett, 2008). Some strategies to increase auditability include keeping an audit trail and engaging in peer debriefing. An audit trail is a written account of the research process that includes reporting what occurred throughout the research project and a demonstration of reflexivity (Lietz & Zayas, 2010), referred to above. In this study, I checked, reflected, and added to my brief notes while everything was still fresh in my mind. Pandey and Patnaik (2014) argue that it is important to keep an audit trail to show a transparent description of the research steps taken from the beginning of a research study to the development and reporting of findings. In this study, keeping an audit trail also assisted me in rectifying mistakes and improving interviewing processes and time management skills throughout data generation and thesis development. I consulted with my supervisor frequently and sent the supervisor all interview transcripts, as previously mentioned, to get feedback, which assisted in keeping the research focused.

### **4.11.4 CONFIRMABILITY**

Confirmability is defined as a method that guarantees the researcher's neutrality during the study (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). In the same vein, Heery et al. (2019) state that verbatim quotes enhance the confirmability of the findings, whereas Roman et al. (2020) suggest that "each of the main themes [be] defined and illustrated with representative quotes from the participants" (p. 405). In this study, I demonstrated that the findings and data were clearly from participants by using direct quotations of what the participants said and posting them on WhatsApp and discussing them in the thesis in the presentation of findings. Furthermore, I derived themes and sub-themes from the key findings of the data generated.

Research shows that confirmability is influenced by reducing – or at least explaining – a researcher's influence on the results by applying and meeting standards of rigour such as triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing (Johnson, Adkins & Chauvin, 2020). In this study, triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing were all incorporated to enhance confirmability.

This section has discussed trustworthiness as a way of enhancing rigour. The following section focuses on ethical issues that were considered throughout the study.

## **4.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

### **4.12.1 UNIVERSITY ETHICS APPROVAL AND GATEKEEPERS' LETTERS**

Cohen et al. (2018) argue that it is the researcher's responsibility to protect the rights of vulnerable participants. Vulnerability in this study refers to the potential conditions of research participants in which the participants – by virtue of some physical, medical, psychological, cognitive, legal, socioeconomic, or age-related status – are prone to lack of full understanding, exploitation, manipulation, or some other possible harm in the research process. Participants in this study came from low socioeconomic backgrounds (second economy) and were, therefore, vulnerable.

Recognising that these participants were vulnerable, being poor and staying in marginally rural areas, steps were taken to protect them from the risks associated with participation, including requesting individual consent, the explanation before proceeding and explaining that there is no expectation of payment and they can withdraw at any time. The researcher only contacted the CWP GRTD participants after obtaining ethical clearance from UKZN (Appendix 1).

Therefore, the researcher only contacted the participants who had fulfilled the ethical clearance requirements. Appendix 1 provides the ethical clearance from the UKZN College of Human Sciences, while Appendix 2 provides the permission letter from the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), which is the ultimate custodian of the CWP programme. As most of the participants had been placed at rural schools, I also attached the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education permission letter. The participants had to agree to be interviewed for each interview and sign a consent letter. They retained a copy of the consent letter.

### **4.12.2 LETTER OF CONSENT**

In line with the autonomy principle, the researcher obtained individual consent (Appendix 4) from all the participants prior to the interview process. The consent process involved explaining the purpose of the study, the risks and benefits of participation, and introducing the researcher's

credentials before the participant committed to being part of the study. This process was expedited by the consent letter, which was explained and given to the study participant. The letter indicated that the participant had the option not to consent to participation and was at liberty to stop participating at any point in the ethnographic study. The researcher also explained to the CWP participant students their right to review the transcripts of the interviews. To alleviate any fears and address concerns that could arise, the supervisor and the researcher's contact details were stated on the consent letters, as suggested by Strydom et al. (2005). The consent letters were signed before the start of the individual interviews. The process thus gave the participants confidence that they would be respected during the research.

Another consent letter addressed the recording of conversations. Of notable attention is that in 2016, Participant 1, while consenting to be interviewed, refused to be recorded. She argued that she was experiencing extreme financial difficulties at the time and felt concerned that this information might not be kept confidential if her responses were recorded. Her criticism of the CWP could result in her losing her placement and, thus, her monthly income. The researcher did not record the interview and instead made notes immediately afterwards. On another occasion, the participant came to know the researcher better, and he was accepted as an insider (Cohen et al., 2018). The participant later decided to consent to a more nuanced recording of their life history in May 2017.

#### **4.12.3 PARTICIPANT CONFIDENTIALITY**

Participant confidentiality was upheld in the research. Descombe (2002); Terre-Blanche, Durrheim & Painter (2007) hold that participants need to be assured that the data they provide will be treated with confidence, and thus data must be recorded and stored in such a way that it cannot be traced to the informant. Furthermore, Henning (2005) advises that participants need information concerning what will be treated as confidential and what will be treated as public. For this reason, pseudonyms and numbers (e.g. P1, P2) have been used for participants in this thesis. Keeping the material confidential also implied that only the supervisor and the researcher saw the research material – particularly interviews and their transcripts. The data generated in the form of transcripts and recordings will be kept in a vault in the supervisor's office and destroyed five years after the researcher graduates. This way, confidentiality, and the participants' right to privacy are upheld.

In addition, interview questions that may have triggered anxiety or guilt in the participants were avoided as they could have constituted some invasion of privacy (Cohen et al., 2018; Woods, 2006; Henning, 2005). The interviews were also carried out on a one-on-one basis to ensure privacy between participants.

#### **4.12.4 JUSTICE AND INTEGRITY**

Watts (2008) alludes to the principle of justice, which highlights the importance of integrity in research as underpinning all research-related activities, especially data collection and analysis. Integrity involves the researcher not harming the participants but gaining informed consent and representing the participants' views as accurately as possible. In this study, the CWP participants were invited to review their interview transcripts after the researcher had completed transcriptions; this process is known as member checking (Creswell, 2007).

#### **4.13 SUMMARY**

This chapter has presented the critical worldview and interpretive research paradigm underpinning the study and explained the choice of a qualitative research approach and ethnographic extended case study research design, with reflexivity, which framed and guided the study. It also outlined the sampling process and the sample for the study. Data were generated using interviews and observations, including from rural school sites, CWP sub-sites and CWP participant homes, and collected from documents including from websites and email communications. The challenges experienced during the research were also highlighted as limitations of the study, followed by the steps of data analysis and the limitations of the study. The last section discussed how rigour was enhanced through aspects of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, auditability, and confirmability. Ethical issues considered throughout the research were also discussed.

The next chapter focuses on the case study. It explores the institutional and geographical context of the study, presents a profile of the participants, and discusses key aspects of the diploma programme that impacted participants.

## **5.0 CHAPTER FIVE: THE GRADE R DIPLOMA CASE STUDY CONTEXT**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter explored the extended case study methodology rooted in the emancipatory transformative paradigm, also known as the critical paradigm. This chapter explains the background, institutional and geographical context of the Grade R Teaching Diploma Pilot.

The foundation phase of primary schooling, in the form of the reception year, has been neglected as school readiness and only became the responsibility of the Department of Education after 2001. Learners would start Grade One without having had any school readiness preparation, save attending crèches or early childhood centres. Crèches were typically staffed by untrained teachers, especially in rural areas. The situation was, however, a little better in the urban areas.

The challenge of early childhood development (ECD) was so massive that then Minister in the Presidency, Trevor Manuel, called it ‘Wicked Problem Number 5’ (Republic of South Africa, 2013). A wicked problem is a social or cultural challenge difficult or impossible to solve because of its complexity and interconnectedness (Weber & Rittel, 1973). A solution cannot be found using conventional means or from efforts by one department. It requires a multi-pronged approach from as many departments as possible. The Graduate School of Business at Harvard argues that wicked problems are so perplexing, so colossal, so intertwined in value conflicts and so mind-boggling that they are downright wicked.” In other words, the problem is systemic (Harvard Business Review, 2013).

If the first economy, as defined in Chapter One and Chapter Two, experiences the effects of the systemic problem of ECD education, the effects are expected to be worse for the second economy, which includes the rural areas of South Africa. The Community Work Programme (CWP), a second economy strategy project (SESP) for the marginalised areas and deep rural areas, is a part of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) based in the non-state sector (Wong, 2017) where the state implements public works in partnership with Non-Governmental

Organisations (NGOs). One of the CWP programmes is to place unemployed individuals at primary schools in their geographical areas where they assist as unqualified Grade R teachers.

Lima Rural Development Programme (Lima), one of the three NGOs contracted as a lead agent to implement the CWP's programmes nationally, saw an opportunity to address both the problem of untrained rural Grade R teachers and provide a pathway for CWP participants to employment in the mainstream economy by creating an opportunity for them to gain a Grade R Teaching Diploma. The Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot programme was thus conceptualised and implemented by Lima at CWP sites in the local municipalities of the rural Ugu District.

Several partners were engaged to address the wicked problem of unqualified Grade R teachers at rural schools. Lima partnered with North-West University and the Department of Cooperative Governance (DCOG) to offer CWP participants the opportunity to train as Grade R teachers. This partnership was formalised with a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). In 2013, Lima recruited CWP participants into the NWU Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot programme with the assistance of the CWP's local implementing agent, the Aids Foundation South Africa (AFSA). In 2014, the CWP appointed the Dhladhla Foundation to take over the roles of both the lead agent (Lima) and the local implementing agent (AFSA). This decreased support for the CWP participants enrolled for the Grade R Teaching Diploma. As a researcher coming from a transformative paradigm centred in critical theory, and also as an academic with experience in teacher training and also in distance education, I stepped in to facilitate participants' access to information and to the agents and structures involved with the project, with the aim to develop their institutional habitus and empower them to use their agency to negotiate their development during the pilot project and going forward into the future.

## **5.2 INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT OF THE STUDY**

This section describes the roles of the CWP, Lima and North-West University in establishing the Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot programme.

### **5.2.1 COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAMME**

Chapter Two explained that the CWP was conceived as a second economy strategy project (SESP) (Philip, 2013) to assist the most marginalised within the South African population. Wong (2017) also explained that the CWP was a subsection of the Non-State Sector of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) sponsored by the Department of Cooperative Governance but implemented through non-governmental organisations – NGOs (hence non-state sector). The CWP, in this thesis, was implemented in rural local municipalities. Participants were to work part-time at the rate of two days per week, for up to eight days and 100 days a year. The CWP participants could engage in different types of useful work, including working in schools as teacher assistants, reprographic assistants and sports coaches or offering homework assistance to learners staying with semi-literate parents and grandparents. Participation in the CWP also required the participant to live near the CWP site to minimise transport costs.

In the Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot project, CWP participants were enrolled in training as Grade R teachers to graduate and become full-time teachers in the mainstream economy after their time as participants in the CWP. This formed a part of a second economy strategy project (SESP). Since one of the admission requirements for the NWU Grade R Teaching Diploma was that the prospective student had to be practising as a Grade R teacher (NWU, 2013), the CWP Grade R Teaching Diploma participants then had to be implementing useful work in rural schools as Grade R teacher assistants to fulfil this requirement. The decision for the CWP participant to be in a rural school would not only fulfil this requirement but also assist the participants in fulfilling the mandatory requirement of the Grade R Work Integrated Learning module (RWIL), which was implemented over six semesters for all three years of the programme. Lima saw this complementarity and proposed that all CWP participants enrolled for the Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot programme should be placed at schools. In other words, CWP participant students were transferred from working at the CWP sub-site to working in schools so that they gained experience as Grade R teachers and also could fulfil the requirements of the RWIL module in the diploma programme.

The non-state sector of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) was to be implemented by NGOs (Wong, 2017). Andersson and Alexander (2016) contend that “although it is funded and administered by the government, the CWP is implemented by not-for-profit organisations (NPOs)” (p. 158)

During the upscaling period that led to the development of the CWP diploma pilot, the CWP had a three-tier structure: lead agents at national level, provincial implementing agents, and local implementing agents (Alexander & Andersson, 2016). Andersson, a leader at a lead agency which was intimately involved with the CWP implementation at the Teba Development (TD), expressed the rationale behind the lead agency tier, in which Lima played a part:

The idea was to award contracts to three Lead Agents (LAs), each responsible for a cluster of three provinces, who would appoint several Provincial Implementing Agents (PIAs) in each province. PIAs would not pay participants; this function would fall to the LAs. The PIAs, in turn, would appoint Local Implementing Agents (LIAs) at each site and mentor them so that they performed well. Procurement would be the responsibility of PIAs, following procedures laid down by DCoG and supervised by the LAs.

(Alexander & Andersson, 2016, p.167)

The government thus appointed three NGOs, including Lima, as lead agents (LA) for implementing the CWP during the upscaling phase (2012-2014). The LA provided technical assistance and project management to the LIAs. Lima, having been involved in rural development, had seen the need for qualified teachers in the foundation phase at rural schools. In its technical assistance to the provinces where it was the lead agent, Lima enrolled CWP participants for the Grade R Teaching Diploma in the Free State, North-West and KwaZulu-Natal provinces.

In an interview in 2016, Lima’s Learner Support Unit (LSU) manager explained:

Lima got a three-year contract to be a Lead Agent (LA) for the implementation of the CWP in three provinces in 2011: namely KZN, Free State and North West. Lima did a lot of work in terms of project management and promotion of the CWP as a lead agent. In 2013, when it became apparent that there was no guarantee that Lima can continue as a LA of the CWP, we did not want our good work to come to nought. We then looked for funding from other donors – especially the DG Murray Trust – and set up the Learner Support Unit that was responsible for the training of the CWP participants and other literacy initiatives. I, [through the training Coordinator in the LSU] facilitated the recruitment and enrolment of the CWP participants at the NWU Institute for Open Distance

Learning (IODL) in the Faculty of Education. I also approached the DCOG (national) for funding.

(Interview with LSU Manager, 2016)

This extract explains the presence of the DG Murray Trust, whose funds became useful in the recruitment and enrolment of CWP participants for the Grade R Teaching Diploma. It also explains the presence of Lima as an LA in three provinces. The DCOG provided the bursaries, and funds became available in 2015 for those enrolled in July 2014. The LSU manager explained the arrangements:

As I stated in the email, last year [2014], the money could not be disbursed, but the good news is that they [DCOG] have transferred the 2 million to the NWU this year in February [2015]. As such, I became more involved in executive management side of things. I am no longer hands-on. There is a member of our team responsible for this, [the Training Coordinator]. I will introduce her to you then you will work closely with her.

(Interview with LSU Manager, 2016)

The interview with the LSU manager explains the presence of several fields in the CWP Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot. There was the higher education field, represented by the acting director for university teacher education and the NWU UODL, and the social protection field at the CWP, from which the students emerged. DCOG provided funding for tuition fees through the agency and the personal emergent powers and properties (Archer, 2005) of the key agent (the LSU manager) to enable the learning of the CWP participant students at NWU.

### **5.2.2 LIMA RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (LIMA)**

The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), under which the CWP belonged (see Chapter Two), was tasked with providing training to its participants. As a lead agent for the CWP, Lima was tasked with developing interventions that would enhance the life chances of CWP participants by improving their employability through training. The Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot programme was an intervention developed by Lima to improve the teacher assistant programme in the education support cluster of CWP's useful work (DCOG, 2011; Philip, 2013) so that CWP participants working as unqualified teacher assistants could graduate to the mainstream economy as qualified Grade R teachers.

A more detailed understanding of Lima's work and the agents working for Lima was instrumental in implementing the Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot programme and is useful in understanding the intersection between the Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot and the other fields involved.

Lima Rural Development Foundation is a South African non-governmental organisation (NGO) and Non-Profit Organisation (NPO). It was established in 1989, with its headquarters in Pietermaritzburg, in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. Lima has been at the forefront of rural development and prioritised the strategic importance of education in realising the Millennium Development Goals to eradicate poverty in rural areas. Lima is involved in a broad range of development initiatives throughout South Africa. It has a footprint through projects implemented in KZN, Eastern Cape, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, North West and Free State. Its focus is on providing integrated rural development services to many urban and rural communities through establishing appropriate institutions, local economic development and training to empower rural people, with a special bias towards females, in order to overcome poverty. Lima's activities were described on its website as follows:

Lima actively implements projects in agriculture, food security, social development, education, engineering and housing, environment, land reform, community-based training and public health [...] Lima also acts as a comprehensive rural development resource, providing administrative, project management and participatory research services (consultancy basis).

(Lima, n.d)

Lima's mission is to promote dignified, sustainable, and transformative community growth across South Africa by supporting simultaneous development goals of people and livelihoods in resource-scarce contexts, particularly rural areas (Lima, n.d.). Lima also believes in inclusive development initiatives that have the potential to grow human capacity to see the transformation of the marginalised, moving from the margin to the mainstream economy (ibid). A pillar of Lima's vision pertinent to this study is fostering a collaborative platform through building multi-stakeholder partnerships with disadvantaged communities for the long-term empowerment of rural people (ibid). To fulfil this, Lima is involved with a range of livelihood-enhancing activities in rural areas involving agriculture, food security, social development, engineering, environmental land reform, and other aspects.

Lima had worked with the CWP since it was first piloted in 2008 (Andersson & Alexander, 2016). When it was scaled up in 2011, Lima, was one of the three lead agents (along with Teba Development and Seriti Institute) contracted to lead the CWP nationally (ibid). The CWP Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot programme was conceptualised as a way to fulfil the goal of partnerships for empowerment. The idea originated during a conversation between the Lima Learning Support Unit (LSU) manager, with the then acting director of university teacher education at the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). The director advised the manager to wait for the implementation of a university diploma in Grade R teaching at North-West University that was to take place in 2013. The diploma is pegged on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) at level 6. Further engagement and follow-up on the conversation between the manager and the director led to the conceptualisation of the pilot project.

The CWP Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot programme was included in the Learner Support Unit (LSU) activities, which will be discussed next.

### **5.2.2.1 LEARNING SUPPORT UNIT**

In response to the growing need for learner support, including for learning programmes than the Grade R diploma, Lima established a Learner Support Unit (LSU) in 2012. The LSU focused on facilitating the partnership between the many implementing partners. The LSU has provided in-service training and institutional support for CWP participants in the education sector. It also delivered services to the early childhood and primary school sector. Hence, it is a noteworthy observation that one sector/partner could not really eradicate the many faces of poverty: it is a wicked problem (Weber & Rittel, 1973) requiring a multi-stakeholder approach.

One of the LSU outputs was to ensure that partnerships or stakeholder meetings with local municipalities, sector department representatives, ward committees, youth forums, Community Development Workers (CDWs), Community Care Givers (CCGs) and other relevant community structures were formed and facilitated. The other output was providing technical support to the CWP implementing agents (IAs) and DGMT grantees for projects on the ground wherein the facilitation had to be in line with the project goals and strategy, as well as supporting the selection of the participants for the projects. The third and most important output

was stakeholder liaison at local and district levels (Lima n.d). The LSU terms of reference document speak about the linkages with CWP implementing agents on-site, local municipalities, various government departments, and local governance structures, such as the CWP local reference committees (LRCs), local teams and Operation Sukuma Sakhe (OSS) structures. The stakeholder liaison function also entailed representation of the LSU on district task teams and Operation Sukuma Sakhe (OSS) structures (ibid).

Representing stakeholders at the local level, including the local reference committees (Lima n.d), was important because it meant Lima would have a voice at the local level while looking out for its Community Works Programme Participant Students (CWPPS) who required placement at schools. The LSU representation at the LRCs and its role in partnership facilitation meant that Lima would be on the ground and therefore able to influence decisions with other significant local leaders, ensuring the placement of the CWPPS in schools.

In terms of the impact of the LSU, Lima's website stated that:

The Learning Support Unit's key benefit to the CWP, government and other stakeholders is more effectively leveraged for implementation of resources that were expended. The unit's evidence-based research findings also support opportunities to take educational support concepts to scale. More specifically, the unit has increased and enhanced delivery of services to early childhood development and public primary school sectors; has provided structured in-service training and institutional support for CWP participants in the education sector; and has secured support from SETAs, the National Skills Fund and the National Development Agency for long-term funding of CWP training requirements

(Lima n.d.)

Two key agents were important in conceptualising and implementing the Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot. The key agent in the conceptualisation of the CWP Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot was the LSU manager, while the training coordinator was instrumental in the implementation.

#### **5.2.2.2 LEARNER SUPPORT UNIT MANAGER**

The manager of the LSU had a passion for education. He had worked at UKZN on a project regarding the state of education in KwaZulu-Natal (Hugo et al., 2010) and was involved in the project's data-gathering stages. He had also done his master's degree at UKZN in peace

education. Thus, the manager had amassed some human and social capital in networks that included lecturers in the UKZN School of Education. One of these lecturers from UKZN had been appointed to the newly formed Department of Higher Education (DHET) in 2009 as the acting director responsible for teacher education. The LSU manager identified an opportunity for the CWP (for which Lima was the lead agent) to facilitate pathways for CWP participants to graduate from the social safety net provided by the CWP to mainstream employment. The concept of the Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot originated during a conversation between him and the then acting director.

### **5.2.2.3 LEARNER SUPPORT UNIT TRAINING COORDINATOR**

When the CWP Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot was launched in 2014, the LSU Training Coordinator was the communication bridge between North-West University and the CWP participants. She was on the ground during the recruitment process and was instrumental in facilitating their registration for all three years in the School for Continuing Teacher Education (SCTE) (later renamed the Unit for Open Distance Learning (UODL)). She was thus the face of NWU in the eyes of the CWP participants. During the interviews conducted between 2014 and 2016, participants commended her.

The Training Coordinator had a background in teaching; she possessed a bachelor's degree as a history teacher with a background in the South African liberation struggle. She had a passion for community and youth development initiatives. She was committed to training as a source of livelihood and believed in education as a form of empowerment.

Her background in education was useful as she provided the link between NWU and the students residing in rural and remote areas. During her interview, she demonstrated a deep knowledge of the rules of engagement for both schools, the Department of Education (DoE) and the rules of the NWU. She understood the admission requirements as well as the existence of examination opportunities. She was also on the ground, liaising with the local implementing agent (AFSA) in 2013 during the recruitment of the CWP participants. She explained that the recruitment into the grade R diploma programme involved writing literacy and numeracy (entrance) tests. The tests involved the participants being invited to hotels and writing the tests in conference rooms. The process appears to have not been budgeted for. It was then paid from funding by another NGO, DG Murray. The government did not support the recruitment

process. It only paid tuition fees as part of the memorandum of understanding (see 5.4.1). The discovery by DG Murray that its funding was being used for other purposes led to the DG Murray stopping the funding and ending the contract for the Learner Support Unit Training Coordinator.

The LSU Training Coordinator thus had social capital and institutional memory, having been involved in the Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot programme from the start. She had sat with the Grade R leadership at NWU in the planning stages. She had been at the launch of the Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot at Marburg in 2015 and recruited 75 participants for the pilot. She was involved in replacing the participants who had dropped out for various reasons before the start of the programme, including that it did not commence immediately after recruitment. She was, therefore, the conduit through which information flowed from the Department of Cooperative Governance (DCOG), which offered the bursary that paid the participants' tuition fees to NWU.

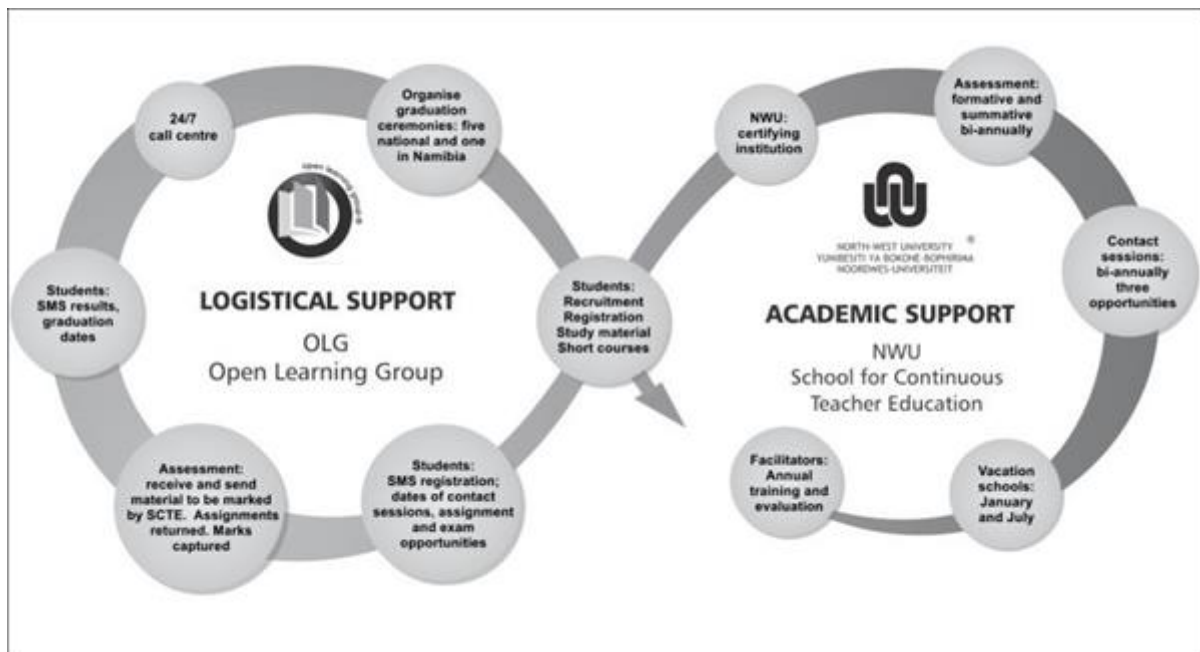
In 2014, Lima was not re-appointed by the CWP as lead agent and was replaced by the Dhladhla Foundation. Lima had established the LSU with funding from DG Murray (another NGO), and funding from DG Murray had also been instrumental in establishing the Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot programme. However, DG Murray was unwilling to support a government programme directly (the Grade R pilot). So with the departure of Lima from the CWP, DG Murray decided to terminate its funding to the LSU. The Training Coordinator's position was thus terminated. She was replaced by a part-time training facilitator who worked two days a week. This abrupt change impacted the delivery of the Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot programme for the participants in a negative way, as the support they had received from the Training Coordinator fell away. In an interview, the part-time facilitator indicated that she lacked historical knowledge of the programme, and her limited contract hampered the realisation of the Grade R Teaching Diploma outcomes. The CWP participants, too, spoke of the gap in the support that developed, that they received. As the researcher, I felt compelled to intervene in a multitude of ways to facilitate the participants' successful completion of the diploma programme.

The LSU was eventually closed in June 2017. In hindsight, if the LSU had continued, the CWP participant student would have likely had a much better experience, especially with their placement in the rural primary schools.

### 5.2.3 NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY AND THE OPEN LEARNING GROUP

North-West University offered the Grade R Teaching Diploma programme through the Unit for Open and Distance Learning (UODL) (formerly the School for Continuous Teacher Education (SCTE)). In the memorandum of understanding (see 5.4.1), the NWU was to deliver the Grade R diploma. The NWU supplied the study material to the students in June 2014 despite the DCOG being unable to pay the tuition fees. The NWU went with other members of the memorandum of understanding (MoU) to provide academic support to the students in Port Shepstone. In the MoU, the NWU was responsible for delivery of the diploma, which they did with the assistance of their logistical partner up to September 2017; the OLG, discussed next.

The NWU had a partnership agreement with the Open Learning Group, which provided logistical support through a call centre and handled other administrative tasks, including recruitment, registration, assessment, results and graduation. The OLG was responsible for the administrative aspects of the Grade R diploma pilot, while NWU was responsible for the academic side of student support. This relationship is illustrated in Figure 5.1 below from the study by (van de Venter & van der Merwe, 2011).



**Figure 5.1 The cycle of logistical and academic support for distance learning at NWU**

(Source: van der Venter & van der Merwe, 2011, p. 203)

Figure 5.1 shows that the NWU was supported by the OLG in delivering the distance education diploma. Interviews with the Training Coordinator and the NWU Grade R leadership showed that the Grade R diploma students were recruited directly by the NWU. However, the students later received logistical support from the OLG. The researcher got introduced to the OLG when looking for student timetables in 2016 for them to sit for the examinations. The OLG send messages (SMS) regarding registration dates, contact sessions, assignments and examination opportunities. The OLG also received assessments and sent them to the UODL for marking while communicating the assessment outcomes. Also, the call centre was always available. The OLG was also involved in graduation logistics. In other words, they were very important in the student walk. In September 2016, the relationship with the OLG was terminated.

#### **5.2.4 DHLADHLA FOUNDATION**

Lima provided technical assistance as a lead agent of the CWP from 2011 to 2013. When the upscaling phase terminated in 2014, Lima was not re-appointed in a different capacity. Dhladhla Foundation became the main deliverer (implementing agent) of the CWP, including in the Ugu district, where it replaced Lima, the lead agent and the Aids Foundation South Africa, the then Local Implementing Agent. When the Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot programme was formally launched in 2015, Dhladhla Foundation was the main organisation to monitor and ensure compliance with the terms and conditions of the Grade R Teaching Diploma. Interviews elicited that the Technical support manager was responsible for the disbursement of the transport support of R71 per day as outlined by the MoU. The technical support manager also monitored compliance through attendance of the contact sessions by students. In 2016 and 2017, the disbursement of transport support was done in a single payment of R1000, which was offered to the CWP participants at their corresponding CWP sites in the local municipalities. The DCOG also sent the information regarding the first graduation to be held at the NWU Potchefstroom Campus through the Dhladhla Foundation. The Dhladhla Foundation thus became responsible for ensuring that the CWP students performed useful work at the rural school site to fulfil the NWU requirement of the Grade R diploma students. The foundation also ensured the capturing of information so that the CWP participants received the stipend from the CWP at the end of every month.

### **5.2.5 DEPARTMENT OF COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE (DCOG)**

The CWP was a government-sponsored programme managed by the Department of Cooperative Governance (DCOG). The DCOG was the funder who paid the CWP participant students the monthly stipend. After being approached by the LSU manager to sponsor the Grade R diploma programme, a subsection of the DCOG, namely the CWP partnerships office, availed the bursary to the students enrolled on the diploma from the NWU. The DCOG was the executive owner of the bursary agreement and its terms and conditions. In the MoU, the DCOG was to fund the students' tuition fees at the NWU.

The DCOG was also to initiate the suspension of Grade R Diploma participants who had not made satisfactory academic progress by February 2017. The DCOG also authored the letter promoting all the enrolled students to the CWP supervisor level in August 2016. The same department later sponsored the travel by aeroplane from the Ugu District to Potchefstroom while also hosting the students who graduated in minimum time in April 2017. The DCOG also negotiated with the NWU that the students who had not completed the qualification could do so after the expiry of the Diploma in Grade R Teaching pilot programme in December 2017.

### **5.3 GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT OF THE STUDY**

The CWP Grade R Teaching Diploma was piloted with CWP participants in the rural local municipalities of Ugu District. The province of KwaZulu Natal is divided into ten district municipalities and one metropolitan municipality, the Greater eThekweni Municipality (GEM). Ugu is one of the ten district municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. In 2013, the Ugu district had six local municipalities: two were coastal, with an urban character, while four were in the hinterland and were largely rural and governed by traditional councils. The CWP had been implemented in the four rural municipalities: Vulamehlo, Umzumbe, Umziwabantu and Ezinqoleni. The Grade R Diploma contact centre (NWU Learning Support Centre – Marburg High School), however, was located in Hibiscus Local Municipality, one of the coastal, urban municipalities.

The CWP Grade R Diploma students, who are the primary participants in this study, came from the four rural local municipalities. The contact sessions, where students attended the interactive whiteboard (IWB) sessions, which constituted the main learning activity for the Grade R

Teaching Diploma pilot programme, were held at Marburg High School, in Marburg, two kilometres from the city centre of Port Shepstone, in the then Hibiscus Local Municipality, an urban municipality which also housed the seat of the Ugu District Municipality. The end-of-semester examinations (summative assessment) were also held at the learning centre at Marburg High School. CWP participants from the widespread local municipalities had to travel to Marburg High School for contact sessions. Regarding the institutional arrangements, the Learning Support Centre of the CWP Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot was in the urban municipality, and students travelled on the dates given in the Grade R calendar to attend contact sessions and examinations.

### 5.3.1 UGU DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY

Participants in the study came from the four rural areas of the Ugu District Municipality, as outlined in Table 5.1

**Table 5.1 Number of participants and areas they came from**

<b>Areas</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>
Ezinqoleni Local Municipality	10
Vulamehlo Local Municipality	6
Umzumbe Local Municipality	6
Umziwabantu Local Municipality	2

Macro-political factors led to the change in the district's land area in August 2016 and the reconfiguration of the local municipalities from six to four. Two of the four local rural municipalities were disestablished: Vulamehlo and Ezinqoleni. This affected some of the participants adversely. The disestablishment led to one participant in Vulamehlo changing the CWP site from Vulamehlo to the Greater EThekweni (metropolitan) Municipality. The new (metropolitan) municipality had no institutional memory of the existence of the Grade R Teaching Diploma, resulting in a negative experience of the CWP Grade R Teaching Diploma (see Chapter Seven). Figure 5.2 below shows the municipalities before and after the municipal demarcation board decisions.

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**UGU DISTRICT BEFORE 2016****UGU DISTRICT AFTER 2016**

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**Figure 5.2 Ugu District Municipality before and after August 2016**

(Source: <https://www.ugu.gov.za>)

In August 2016, the Municipal Demarcation Board reconfigured the Ugu District map, reducing the number of local municipalities from six to four. Vulamehlo was disestablished, with its land area being divided into the EThekweni Metropolitan and Umdoni municipalities. The (urban) Hibiscus Municipality and the (rural) Ezingoleni Municipality were merged and renamed Ray Nkonyeni Municipality. While the change did not affect the CWP Grade R diploma arrangements during the first few years of the project, when the minimum period to complete the Grade R qualification elapsed, the change in the municipal demarcations affected the Vulamehlo CWP participants adversely in 2019 (see Chapter Seven).

Despite this change in municipal demarcations, the services of the CWP continued as previously received until 2017, when the Grade R diploma was expected to be completed (three years from July 2014 to 2017). The CWP participants whose homes had fallen within Vulamehlo Municipality received their services at the CWP office based at Dududu, where the Vulamehlo Municipal offices had been. In contrast, those who Ezingoleni Municipality served received their services at the Ezingoleni site office. However, the CWP office names had changed to the new and urban municipal names, namely Umdoni and Ray Nkonyeni.

The researcher observed that while the Eziqoleni and Vulamehlo CWP's used shipping containers located outside of the municipal offices for their premises in 2016, post the rural municipalities being disestablished, they (CWP site offices) have since been given office space inside the former municipal offices. One participant (P1), whose area was transferred into the Greater EThekweni Municipality, experienced some difficulties as a result of the reconfiguration of the municipalities, as the new municipality had no knowledge of the Grade R diploma pilot. The new site manager instructed her to leave her placement at a rural primary school and return to the CWP subsite, where other CWP participants were based. For P1, who had spent five years (2014-2019) as a CWP teacher assistant at the school, returning to the subsite was a traumatic experience, discussed in Chapter Seven.

### **5.3.2 LOCAL MUNICIPAL (CWP) SITE OFFICES**

The four rural municipalities in Ugu District Municipality that participated in the CWP programme hosted CWP offices at their municipal office premises. The local site offices provided site management and reported to the local implementing agent, the NGO responsible for the site. The local municipal sites had site managers whose agency was key in the experience of the CWP participant of the Grade R diploma. Interviews with the technical support manager (TSM) at Dhladhla Foundation revealed that the implementing agent availed internet facilities at the local site offices and printing and photocopying facilities to be availed to the CWP Grade R diploma participants. Only one participant, P5, confirmed having utilised the CWP site office for printing and researching study information for the Grade R diploma. This is further discussed in Chapter Six on experiences of support from the CWP for the Grade R diploma pilot.

Depending on accessibility, the Grade R diploma pilot participants would report directly to the site office. They initially (until August 2016) signed the registers of attendance at their sub-site offices and submitted these to their supervisors, who would, in turn submit the registers for payment to the site office. When participants were promoted to supervisor positions, they could sign their own registers at school and submit them directly to the site office for payment. The site office also served as the place at which the Dhladhla Technical Support Manager (TSM) went to pay travel and subsistence stipends for the students in 2016 and 2017, as contrasted to 2015 when they paid R71 per day at the Learning support centre, after attendance for contact

session or examinations. Data was also captured at the site office for payment of the CWP monthly stipend.

## **5.4 CONCEPTUALISATION AND LAUNCH OF THE GRADE R DIPLOMA PILOT**

### **5.4.1 MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU)**

In the same vein, the LSU manager approached the CWP partnerships office in the Department of Cooperative Governance and came up with the Memorandum of Understanding, discussed next, specifying the terms and conditions of funding the Grade R diploma pilot.

In seeking funding for the students enrolled for the Grade R diploma pilot, the Learner Support Unit Manager (see 5.2.2.2) (key agent) negotiated with government officials at the Department of Cooperative Governance' CWP partnerships office. Documentary evidence in meeting minutes reveals that a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the NWU, Lima and DCOG. The NWU was represented at the implementation level by the then leader of the NWU Grade R diploma programme. Still, the Dean of the Education Sciences Faculty and the head of the then School of Continuing Teacher Education (SCTE), now the Unit for Open Distance Learning (UODL), were also present. The LSU manager represented Lima, but the Training Coordinator was also in the meeting. The MoU was important as it demarcated the parties to the agreement and their roles.

The parties to the MoU had different roles. Lima's roles were partnership management, recruitment of students, and ensuring that none of the students dropped out. The CWP partnership office of the Department of Cooperative Governance (DCOG) was responsible for paying the tuition fees as a bursary for the CWP diploma students at the NWU. The NWU was to deliver the Grade R diploma to students. In addition, Lima assisted in drafting the legal document stating the terms and conditions of the bursary agreement between the Department of Cooperative Governance (DCOG) and the student.

An important clause in the bursary agreement document stated that once a student demonstrated unsatisfactory academic progress, they were suspended until they reached a certain threshold, after which the bursary would resume paying their tuition fees. The CWP participants signed the bursary document before they began studying for the Grade R diploma. In line with the idea of ensuring no dropouts, Lima, the NWU, and the CWP partnerships office, provided some

academic development to the students. They took trips in late 2015 and August 2016 to motivate and encourage the students to adhere to the terms and conditions of the bursary. They even extracted an important clause about satisfactory academic progress from the bursary document. The clause came into effect in February 2017 with the suspension of 8 of the 25 Grade R diploma pilot participants.

#### **5.4.2 IDENTIFICATION OF CWP PARTICIPANTS FOR THE GRADE R DIPLOMA PILOT**

Interviews and minutes of initial meetings revealed the challenge of getting enough qualified students from the CWP, which led to the advertisement at local municipal site offices for students with Grade 12 qualifications or equivalent who were unemployed and resident in the rural municipalities. This is captured in one source document by Lima as follows:

When the recruitment process unfolded ultimately, PIAs collected all matric certificates from their CWP participants, including those who didn't have the diploma endorsement. This was a result of unforeseen difficulties in the process of an evenhanded collection of the required certificates only. These matric certificates, together with the various codes of qualifications listed above, were sent to Lima Education Sector personnel for final evaluation and selection of participants that meet the requirements and qualify to be shortlisted.

(Lima, 2014, Grade R Pilot minutes)

The CWP participant students came from the four rural municipalities of Ugu District Municipality: Eziqoleni Local Municipality (10), Vulamehlo Local Municipality (6), Umzumbe Local Municipality (7) and Umziwabantu Local Municipality (2). Eziqoleni Municipality had gender parity and the highest number of male participants. This number was followed by the Umzumbe Municipality at seven participants with one male participant, while Vulamehlo and Umziwabantu had only female participants. The table also shows the gender of the site managers and change-over time.

**Table 5.2 Distribution of participants and site management****(Source: Document analysis)**

<b>Local Municipality</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Site manager changes over time (2014 – 2019)</b>
Vulamehlo	0	6	<b>6</b>	Male replaced by female
Umzumbe	1	6	<b>7</b>	Female replaced by female
Ezinqoleni	5	5	<b>10</b>	Male replaced by female
Umziwabantu	0	2	<b>2</b>	Male (never changed)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>25</b>	

### 5.4.3 GENDER OF PARTICIPANTS

As shown in Table 5.2, of the 25 participants, only six were male. It also emerged from interviews that most male participants from the Ezinqoleni Municipality had joined the CWP because they had heard there might be opportunities to study. Three of the six male participants were at supervisor level, while the other three from Ezinqoleni were not. The non-supervisor male participants explained that they had joined so that they could become students on the programme. The training coordinator indicated that “to get enough qualified people on the programme, we just had to advertise for people with matric from the local areas through the implementing agents.” (Interview with Training Coordinator, 2016).

Interviews with CWP participants revealed that for someone to become a CWP supervisor, they had to demonstrate some competencies by passing literacy and numeracy tests. Being at the supervisor level also required one to have a pass on the Grade 12 certificate. Some female participants who became part of the pilot were at the supervisor level. A supervisor earned about R2000, while other participants received a stipend of R550.

While the CWP Grade R diploma students had to start off at the rural primary schools as teacher assistants, the participants' entry into the school was different. In September 2016, a letter from the DCOG mandated that all participants be at school and earn a stipend equivalent to the supervisor, who worked a full month of twenty days. The participants who were not at

supervisor level had to endure being at school daily with no commensurate income but more experience with the Grade R classes.

#### 5.4.4 AGE OF PARTICIPANTS

The gender, age and previous qualifications of the participants were potentially significant as enabling or constraining factors in their participation in the Grade R teaching diploma. The age distribution of the participants is given in Table 5.3 below.

**Table 5.3 Age Distribution from 2014**

Age	No of participants
20-30	12
30-40	11
40 and above	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>25</b>

The age distribution indicated that these were mature students, with the youngest being 23-years old. A typical student who attends university immediately after Grade 12 would enrol at the age of 18 and be in possession of a tertiary qualification by about the age of 23. The students in this Grade R Teaching Diploma may have faced many challenges, especially since they had stayed in their local communities post-matric completion without being gainfully engaged. Furthermore, the majority of participants had children. Of the 25, only 3; (P4, P11, P12) did not yet have children in May 2016. One participant (P9) was married, another one (P2) was widowed, and the rest were single (parents). The distribution of marital status can be viewed as a closer reflection of the South African social fabric, wherein most female parents are single parents.

#### 5.4.5 EXISTING QUALIFICATIONS OF PARTICIPANTS

The Grade 12 certificate was important because it was the main pre-requisite for admission into the pilot programme. It also had the highest predictive validity of the probability of success in the diploma qualification. From the document analysis, the qualifications distribution showed twelve participants at diploma level, eleven having received a bachelor's endorsement in Grade 12, while two had already attempted tertiary education at a technical and vocational college at NQF level 4 or 5. Table 5.5 shows the qualification distribution.

**Table 5.4 Qualification distribution**

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>No of participants</b>
Diploma	12
Bachelors	11
N4-N5	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>25</b>

Observing the outcomes of the pilot with consideration for age and geographical distribution, a few points bear noting. One of the mature participants did not do well and was subsequently suspended from studies; the other student over 40 years of age was among the seven students who completed the qualification in record time. Geographically, Vulamehlo Municipality had the most successful students even though it was the furthest from the learning centre. Participant number two is described in the findings as having been in the most remote area yet prevailed against all the odds. Despite not being among the best four, she also completed and graduated one year after the first cohort. This brings to the fore that the performance in the Grade R Teaching Diploma was mediated by the individual agency of the students.

#### **5.4.6 DELAYS IN 2014 AND LAUNCH IN 2015**

Triangulating information from the student academic records with the interviews of the LSU Training Officer and interviews of the leader for the Grade R diploma at NWU in 2016, it was found that NWU began to deliver study material to the students after they enrolled in June 2014. However, COGTA did not pay the tuition for the students in 2014. Since they had received tuition material, students submitted assignments to the NWU. A few proceeded to write the examinations in November 2014. From July to December 2014, the Grade R diploma students attended whiteboard sessions at the nearest learning centre. This changed to Marburg High School after the launch of the programme.

The CWP Grade R teaching diploma programme was officially launched in 2015 when all the parties to the Memorandum of Understanding were present at Marburg High School. The model of teaching and learning was the contact sessions. The CWP participants got the orientation, and some interactive whiteboard sessions took place from the NWU Learning Support Centre at Marburg High School. The students shared in interviews that they had two - days of orientation and slept in hotels in Margate. NWU staff from Potchefstroom had flown

to Margate airport. Participants fondly remembered their stay at the hotels during the CWP Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot programme launch in March 2015. In other words, participants received orientation and saw their teachers in person and not on a screen. Most participants mentioned Ms Golding (pseudonym) as they all remembered her by her first name, “Sue”.

Orientation towards the study of the Diploma in Grade R Teaching was important. The CWP participants received the study material from Lima. They commenced studying without proper direction being given to them, including expectations, since this special group of CWP participant students were people who had left high school some years earlier.

The launch of the Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot brought together all the fields under one roof: the CWP represented by the Dhladhla foundation, the implementing Agent (which displaced Lima with the new CWP structure removing the Lead Agent.). Already the dynamics were taking place as the Lead Agency role assumed by Lima was getting displaced by the Implementing Agent. The IA responsible for finding the students (during recruitment) was the Aids Foundation South Africa, AFSA. Dhladhla Foundation replaced both Lima and AFSA.

Following the launch, the CWPPS were supposed to attend interactive whiteboard sessions at Marburg High School and receive the transport stipend that Lima negotiated. The Dhladhla Foundation technical support manager was responsible for disbursing the R71 per day so that the students who attended the contact sessions would get supported. The arrangement worked out only in 2015 after the launch. The transport stipend was later disbursed in one single amount of R1000 at the CWP site office in the month of August for the 2016 and 2017 academic years. The question of how the students would have survived from January to August of the academic year would arise, resulting in some CWP participants dropping out for semester one in 2016 due to the absence of transport support (see Chapter Seven).

## **5.5 TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT ASPECTS**

The teaching, learning and assessment programme for the Diploma in Grade R Teaching is outlined in the NWU prospectus, including the Grade R Calendar and information booklet (NWU 2016). The outline given here is intended to lend insight into teaching, learning and assessment delivery in the programme.

The North-West University prospectus locates the Diploma in Grade R Teaching in the School of Psycho-Social Education. It is offered via distance education, and all assessment aspects take place from the Potchefstroom campus. The prospectus has been updated yearly since the launch of the Diploma in Grade R Teaching programme in July 2013, in line with the changes that may have occurred in the Unit for Open and Distance Learning (UODL) and the broader university or higher education context.

The prospectus or calendar serves as the ‘operation manual’ for the execution of the Diploma in Grade R Teaching. It addresses the rules that govern the programme, literature pertinent to open distance learning, admission requirements, examination opportunities, admission to examinations, unsatisfactory academic performance, termination of studies, warnings against plagiarism, and academic matters – which include a dedicated section for Work Integrated Learning (WIL), study duration and articulation rules for the programme as well as suggestions for structuring the curriculum; teaching and learning arrangements – which include assessments and examinations, as well as administrative aspects, and language and study material delivery.

### **5.5.1 CONTACT SESSIONS**

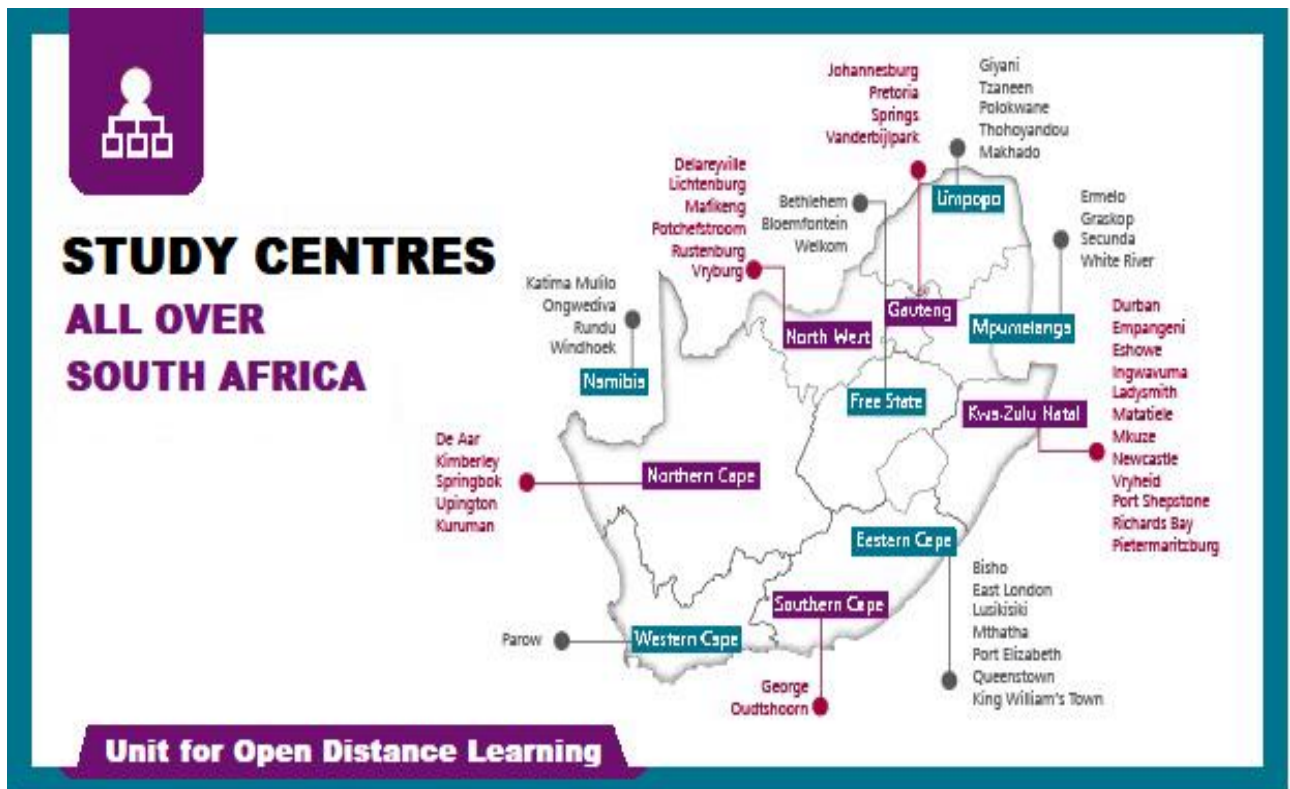
The CWPPS received services such as contact sessions and wrote examinations at Marburg High School. The contact sessions were not compulsory but highly recommended. In 2015, attendance was rewarded with R71 per day; this was replaced in 2016 and 2017 with a once-off amount of R1000 paid in August. The contact sessions were interactive whiteboard sessions (Redelinghuys, 2019).

The NWU 2014 Yearbook confirms the explanation above:

Open Distance Learning refers to a mode of delivery and a teaching and learning approach focused on increased access to education and training whereby possible obstacles in terms of time, place and learning tempo are removed. Students are able to study at their own pace, in a time suitable for them and at a venue they can fairly easily access. The ODL instructional model makes provision for facilitation sessions and vacation schools by means of interactive smart/whiteboards. On-going support for students in the open distance learning system is always available, whether electronically, telephonically or through personal contact. (NWU, 2014, p.15)

## 5.5.2 LEARNING SUPPORT CENTRE

The information booklet also contains the physical addresses of all the learning support centres that all the Grade R Teaching Diploma students could attend. Figure 5.4 below shows the map of geographical locations of the different study centres across South Africa. The CWPPS attended these centres from 2014 to 2019.

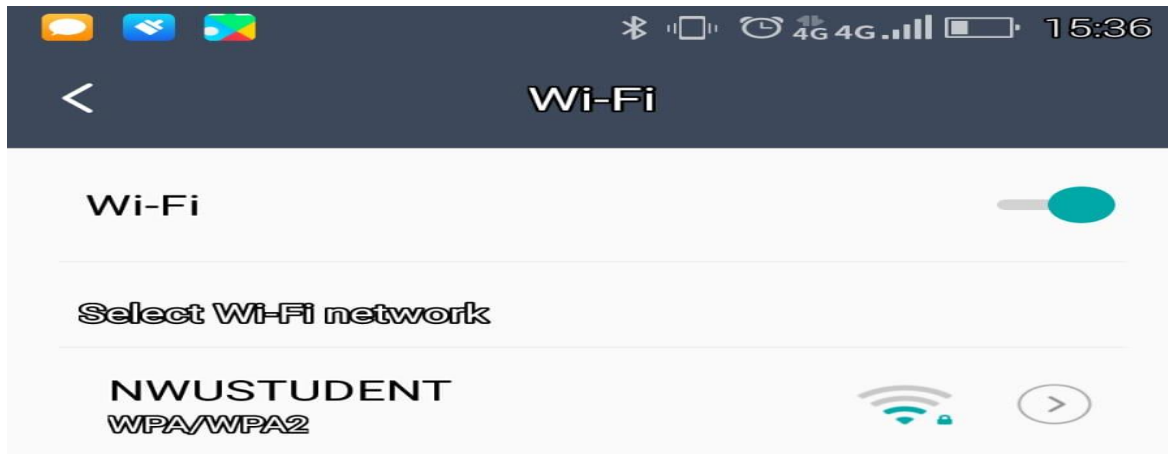


**Figure 5.3 Map of NWU Open Distance Learning study centres across South Africa**

(Source: NWU, 2018)

The learning centre of most interest to this study was Marburg High School in Port Shepstone, located close to the National Road (N2). It is two kilometres from the city centre of Port Shepstone, the seat of the Ugu District. It is therefore quite accessible in that it is within walking distance from the Port Shepstone city centre as well as from Marburg, the town after which the school is named. Examinations were conducted each semester at the school hall. In other words, Marburg High School doubled as the learning support Centre (LSC) and the examination centre for the CWP Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot students.

North-West University has not built its own study centres but uses existing facilities, such as churches, high schools, and other rented facilities. The facilities are generally appropriate for interactive whiteboard sessions (WBS). NWU entered into agreements with the institutions and invested heavily in state-of-the-art infrastructure, including smartboards, overhead projectors and Wi-Fi, as shown by the screenshot of NWU Wi-Fi availability at a learning centre.



**Figure 5.4 Screenshot of the NWU Wi-Fi availability at a learning centre**

The study centre, therefore, has a separate primary function. It hosts the university's contact sessions

### **5.5.3 INTERACTIVE WHITEBOARD SESSIONS**

The Grade R information booklet informed the student that contact sessions were available at the support centres during the Interactive Whiteboard Sessions (IWB). Based in Potchefstroom, the lecturer responsible for the module broadcast the lecture live to all the learning centres. The timetable was given in the Grade R information booklet, which identified the different times the modules were available. Students were encouraged to be available on time to avoid missing part of the session or distracting others with their late arrival. There was also a learning centre facilitator at each centre to assist students, especially towards the end of the session, when students were allowed to ask questions to foster interactivity. A student could also send questions during the IWB via short message service (SMS) to be addressed by the lecturers after the session.

There were three 45-minute sessions per module per semester. During the sessions, the students were taught via a live broadcast. All 66 learning centres connected at the same time. This severely constrained the interactivity. The students normally attend the interactive WBS connected to the laptop, connected to a smartboard where the projection is on a bigger screen. The lecturer was also supposed to leave time for questions to enhance the interaction. Students could ask questions through the application but still be heard by everyone tuned in on the live session. The allotted time proved too short for students to ask questions, however. One lecturer tried to restrict the lecture to forty minutes to allow for questions. The Grade R information booklet advised that students come to the sessions with pre-prepared questions.

Except for indigenous language modules, most sessions are delivered by lecturers who are white and have English or Afrikaans as their mother tongue. It takes time for a student who has never been taught by a white teacher to get used to the new speech pattern. This was a constraining factor in access to knowledge, and therefore the knowledge is constrained. Over time, comprehension improved as the CWP participant became accustomed to their lecturers' manner of speaking. There was no way possible that the students could determine the pace at which the content was being delivered, given that they could not ask the lecturer to repeat themselves. When one CWP participant student observed that they would follow the study guide, they stopped attending the IWBS and reviewed the material at home.

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## **5.6 THE RESEARCHER AS AN AGENT IN THE STUDY**

This study focuses on the lived experiences of the CWP participants who enrolled in the Grade R Diploma programme. As a researcher, I attempted to facilitate empowerment of the participants by mediating their acquisition of the higher education habitus and eventual acquisition of the Diploma in Grade R Teaching. The critical paradigm assumes a transactional epistemology, in which the researcher interacts and jointly constructs knowledge with the participants. The CWP participants and I co-constructed knowledge as they engaged in the Grade R Teaching Diploma programme. The CWP participants experienced learning that caused them to be transformed from their previous status and change their future options (Hidalgo, Koebernik & Williams, 2018). This implies that they may have been able to validate what and how they understood and developed their attitudes, beliefs, and values towards learning.

The CWP participant students (CWPPS) were mostly young women with low socioeconomic status (SES). This is apparent given the definition of CWP as a second economy strategy for the most marginalised communities. The researcher, it can be argued, made an effort to give this group of people a voice, through speaking on their behalf, firstly to the Open Learning Group (OLG) that provided logistical support to the pilot project in 2016, then to North-West University (NWU) during the period from 2017 to 2020. The CWPPS reaped the benefits of this as it yielded the knowledge needed to navigate the higher education landscape.

I sought out information from the internet to share with the participants. This included past examination papers, chapter summaries in the form of PowerPoint presentations and past interactive whiteboard (IWB) sessions, and the all-important examination letters for the current examination period. These resources were generally difficult for most of the CWPPS to obtain, as their level of digital literacy was low. However, the Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot was intended to be exclusively paper-based as a distance programme. For this reason, these critical resources had to be sourced online.

Due to the asymmetric power relationships between NWU and the CWPPS, as the researcher, I intervened to bridge the gap, firstly in vicarious ways in 2016 and then in a generative way in 2017, when the CWPPS were invited to join a community of practice on WhatsApp. Participants also had unfettered access to me, as the researcher, via individual WhatsApp

communication, which allowed them to ask for support or information. I could then relay their message to NWU through telephone calls or emails. I could also communicate the challenges directly to the NWU Grade R programme leadership, who was in a position to address the students' concerns.

All these processes occurred while observing the Protection of Private Information (POPI) Act. With the participant's written consent, I could log into the students' profile and share information with both the student and the university where appropriate.

Having identified these salient aspects of the research methodology, it can be argued that the research was in the transformative paradigm because, as the researcher, I continued to assist all participants until they had completed the requirements for the Grade R Teaching Diploma. In other words, they were transformed from non-diploma holders to diploma holders.

My engagement with the participants identified a massive gap in the support provided to the participants that had resulted when the LSU training coordinator departed in 2015. The great need of the participants for support encouraged the utilisation of the case study methodology and the extended case study methodology. I sought to understand the participants' world in their contexts and slowly gained their trust so they would be confident to ask me for any needed information.

My intervention to assist CWP participants started when, in 2016, some of the participants needed a timetable. This resulted in me looking for past examination questions, summaries and examination letters, and I also visited their homes to observe their world first-hand in some form of ethnography. I assisted the CWPPS with assignment submission, communicating with the OLG in 2016-2017 for the timetable and the NWU from September 2017 to January 2020. I sometimes bought airtime for the participants to facilitate conference calls between the CWP participant students and the university. I learnt the habitus of the university and shared my knowledge with the participants. It was a rewarding experience to facilitate the travel by aeroplane for the first time for the seven CWPPS to Potchefstroom in April 2018. I also intervened to facilitate the re-enrolment of P2 on the same terms as the bursary students in 2018. However, they were unsuccessful in 2019 and had to pay to complete the remaining modules. I intervened again in 2018 to add two students to the tally of students graduating in record time. I was acknowledged at the graduation of the three most marginalised participants

(P1, P2 and P15) in Durban in April 2019. Then, for those students who graduated but found no certificate in their envelope, I intervened once again, engaging with the graduation office.

In 2020, I facilitated the sitting for the Dean's concessionary examination for P18 and P19, who were not on the initial register of students eligible for the third examination. I had to arrange with NWU and the invigilator to allow the CWP participants to sit in the examination venue, and for NWU to mark the students' scripts not on the original register.

I thus used my agency as a researcher, and as an academic, throughout the study to facilitate the transformative journey of the students, which is consistent with the transformative paradigm and critical theory.

## **5.7 SUMMARY**

This chapter sought to put the Grade R Diploma pilot programme into perspective as it explained the sample that was chosen as well as brought the context of the Grade R sector alive. It started with explaining Lima as an NGO in the non-state sector, the Expanded Public Works programme. Lima is an NGO steeped in rural development. Lima offered technical assistance as a lead agent to aid the local implementing agents, providing partnership management of the Grade R Diploma pilot programme, which was funded by the DCOG but delivered by NWU.

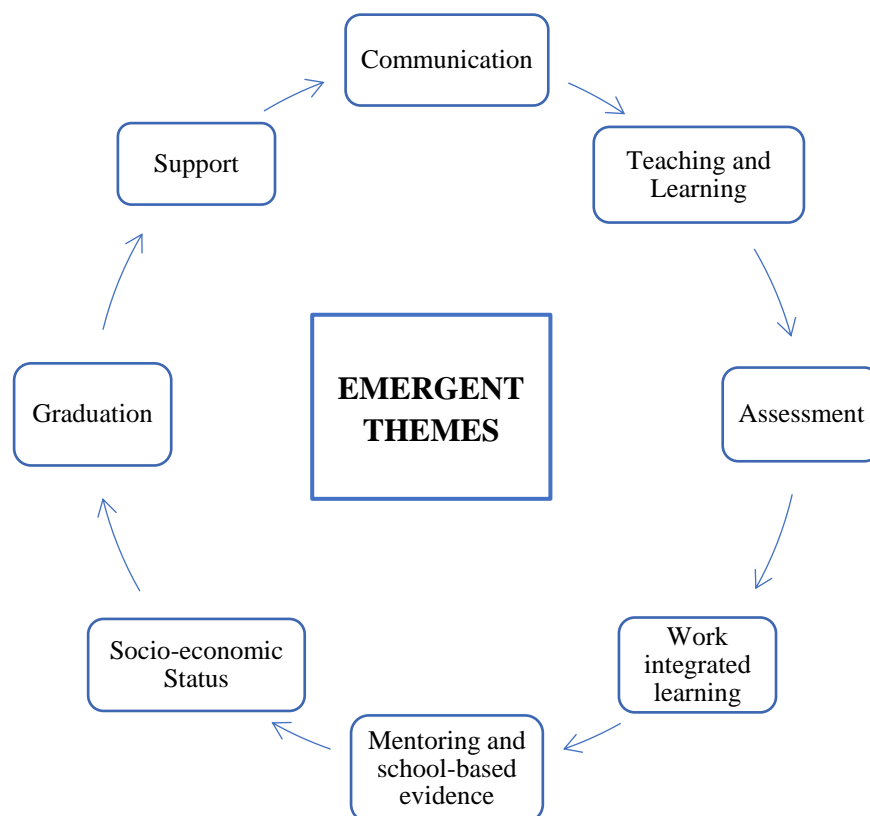
The geographical location of the pilot was the rural municipalities of the Ugu District Municipality. The CWP participants constituted six male participants, with 19 female participants, who were mostly mature students above the age of 23. Teaching, learning and assessment were mostly done through the interactive whiteboard sessions at the Marburg learning centre, which required all the participants to travel as they stayed in rural local municipalities away from Port Shepstone. While the LSU manager and the LSU training coordinator, as key agents, facilitated a smooth experience, broader issues arose, such as the removal of the lead agency and, therefore, the removal of the layer of assistance the CWP participants had received. As the research process grew, I intervened in ways not fully intended by the extended case methodology. I was morally committed to helping ensure the participants' success in the CWP Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot programme.

The next chapter provides evidence of the experiences of the participants as they studied for the Grade R diploma. It details salient findings such as challenges in communication, teaching, learning and assessment aspects, and, again, intervention by the researcher.

## CHAPTER SIX: FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on the experiences of the Community Work Programme (CWP) participants during their participation in the Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot programme. In doing so, the study also sought to transform the participating students' lives by empowering them to succeed in the diploma programme and graduate to the first economy. Chapter Five presented the context, institutions, structures, and agents involved in the Diploma in Grade R Teaching pilot programme. This chapter discusses the themes that emerged from the data: communication, teacher-learner interaction, assessment, work-integrated learning, mentoring and school-based evidence, partnership management, graduation, and support. These themes are represented in Figure 6.1 below.



**Figure 0.1 Themes that emerged from the data**

## 6.2 COMMUNICATION

According to Cleary (2021), communication is the process of creating meaning between two or more people through the expression and interpretation of messages. If the meaning intended by the sender is not understood by the recipient of the message, then the process has not been successful. Elements of the communication process include the sender, the person who initiates the communication by having an idea, a thought or information to communicate to the audience. Feedback as an element of communication is the audience's response to the message. It is essential to have effective communication because it provides for a two-way flow of messages. The communication environment refers to the physical and social situation in which the communication takes place. The physical environment, as an element of communication, is the location and the social environment in which communication takes place.

Whenever there are many stakeholders, a properly constituted communication unit is necessary to coordinate activities. Some scholars argue that challenges with regard to communication can hinder students from completing their studies through the distance mode in the required time (Shikulo & Lekhetho, 2020; Chikuya, 2008; Mugabe, 2011). The CWP, by its nature, involved many stakeholders: the partnership formed for the Grade R Teaching Diploma project, which was formalised with a memorandum of understanding, added the Department of Cooperative Governance (DCOG), NWU and the Open Learning Group to the number of stakeholders needing to communicate effectively with each other. The CWP participants enrolled in the Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot programme needed to communicate with many different stakeholder structures.

This section focuses on the communication between the CWP participant students and the CWP, Lima and the structures at North-West University (NWU). Key NWU structures and agents included the leadership and lecturers within the Grade R diploma programme, the assignment office, the registration office, the results office, the counselling office, the call centre and the graduation office. Communication related to admissions, study material delivery, dates for contact sessions, results of assignments and examinations, graduation and the DCOG bursary contract and its suspension. Structures and agents external to the pilot programme, including the Open Learning Group (OLG), the post office, DHL and RAM, were also crucial to the communication of study material and, therefore, important in explaining the experience of the CWP participants in the Grade R diploma pilot programme.

Students faced numerous difficulties communicating with the complex network of structures and agents involved in the Grade R diploma pilot. At first, the Lima Training Coordinator from the Learning Support Unit assisted them until her position was terminated by Lima. Participants then had to communicate directly with the OLG, but then NWU terminated the role of the OLG, and students had to communicate directly with the NWU. Despite the fact that the Grade R diploma pilot was designed to be entirely print-based, with the exception of whiteboard sessions at the learning support centres, many of these structures expected students to be able to communicate via the website or email, which was not always possible for them. To obtain printed study materials, students also had to communicate with the courier services, namely RAM and the post office. This section covers the students' experiences over the life-cycle of their enrolment at the institution, from admission to graduation, with emphasis on communication.

### **6.2.1 DIGITAL LITERACY AND COMMUNICATION**

Digital literacy is an umbrella term referring to the integrated sub-literacies of skill, knowledge, ethics, and active outputs in the digital network environment. These sub-literacies include information literacy, computer literacy, media literacy and digital literacy. Information literacy has to do with finding and locating sources, evaluating their credibility, analysing and synthesising the information, and using it ethically and legally. Computer literacy refers to being able to use computers and application software for practical purposes. Media literacy is a series of communication competencies, including the ability to access, analyse, evaluate, and communicate information in a variety of forms, including printed and non-printed messages (Covello & Lei, 2010). Communication literacy entails being able to communicate effectively as individuals or groups working collaboratively, using publishing technologies, the internet, and other electronic tools. Visual literacy is the ability to read, interpret and understand information presented in pictorial or graphic images; and the ability to turn information of all types into pictures, graphics or forms that help communicate the information (ibid).

Digital literacy was crucial in the facilitation of communication in the Grade R diploma project. However, most of the participants were not computer illiterate and did not have email addresses at the start of the programme. The researcher created email addresses for P1, P2, P12, P13 and

P18 and facilitated the active utilisation of emails for P22, P6, P14 and P25. This is in line with the ethnographic approach, where the researcher is also part of the study.

The participants also lacked knowledge of email etiquette. For instance, the Grade R Information Booklet 2017 indicates that students should provide their student number in the subject line of an email. However, participants did not follow these instructions correctly. They were expected to communicate in English, but their English skills were inadequate, resulting in their communications being unclear. For example, P10 wrote, “Why I didn’t get the results?” This failed to indicate the module the student was referring to. This is in line with Bourdieu (1992), who speaks to the principle of getting an inadequate or partial representation of information. However, the researcher helped and trained the participants to draft emails and, in some cases, communicated with their lecturers and the OLG on their behalf. By 2017, the participants were able to communicate directly with the OLG for their study material and assessment aspects.

In general, there was an emphasis on the Protection of Private Information Act (POPIA). Therefore, each time the researcher sought to obtain the timetable from the OLG in 2016, he was advised that the students should call the OLG office on their own, yet they did not have airtime to be able to do this. Later, after 2018, the researcher would request the student to supply their identity number or their student number and pin in order for him to access their results or academic record from the NWU Information technology system. The POPIA was always important and required that the student calls the graduation office to get their Grade R certificate when they could not obtain it on graduation day.

### **6.2.2 COMMUNICATION WITH LIMA TRAINING COORDINATOR**

Lima, the lead agent for the CWP in the target geographical area, communicated with the participants about the availability of an opportunity to learn. They worked with the local implementing agent, the Aids Foundation South Africa (AFSA), to identify prospective participants for the diploma project. The process was facilitated by the Training Coordinator of the Learner Support Unit (LSU). This communication culminated in 25 participants in the Ugu District Municipality, from across the rural local municipalities, joining the programme. as discussed in Chapter Five.

The Training Coordinator was the main communication link with all the partners in the Grade R diploma pilot who had signed the memorandum of understanding, especially during the initial period. She would relay information from the LSU Manager to the participants and relayed information from the CWPPS to the NWU. She would liaise with the CWP site managers regarding the study welfare of the participants. She was the equivalent of the Chief Operating Officer (CEO) for the project, the one who could easily make or break the process; therefore, she availed her cellular phone number to all of them. The participants could contact her through WhatsApp or the Short Message Service (SMS). They could also send her a 'please call' message so that she would carry the costs of the communication. She also involved those CWPPS who were able in a community of practice via a WhatsApp group to encourage student interaction. In the WhatsApp group, participants discussed the assignments as well as welfare issues which she would address as and when the need arose. Students shared the joys of passing assignments and examinations, as well as frustrations with the delays in assessment finalisation.

The Lima Training Coordinator was a key player in the communications as she addressed the queries of the students. One participant said:

With [the Training Coordinator], you would tell her your challenge, then she would tell you, "I have no answer," but the following day, she would return with a solution. We felt looked after. Now we are on our own. A new person, [part-time facilitator] is available but never came to meet with us

(2016 interview with P7).

This suggests that the Lima Training Coordinator communicated effectively with the participants. Meles, Peles and Polese (2010) argue that there is a need for open systems with flexible boundaries that allow for communication to flow easily as exchanged information impacts students' work and performance. Producing solutions for participants symbolises effective communication and cooperation.

Furthermore, the Training Coordinator created WhatsApp groups with the participants, a platform which enabled sharing of experiences between the learners in different geographical spaces. From the group chats, she gained a clear idea about what was needed and where she could assist the students. This was over and above her being available for private chats, and short message services (SMS), including please call me messages and phone calls.

The Training Coordinator communicated with NWU and the bursar (DCOG) about the progress of the CWPPS, challenges with registration, the transactional distance of the participants and the welfare of the participants. She thus became the face of Lima and NWU, that the CWP participants knew. They relied heavily on her.

When she left employment at Lima in 2015, her post was filled by a part-time learning facilitator who did not have the personal emergent powers and properties of the Training Coordinator due to a lack of institutional memory as well as the part-time nature of her post. Her contract required her to work fixed hours on certain days of the week. She did not sustain communication via WhatsApp as she found it to be time-consuming. This had negative consequences on communication with the participants.

### **6.2.3 COMMUNICATION WITH THE OPEN LEARNING GROUP (OLG)**

#### **Role of the OLG**

The OLG was NWU's logistical partner for delivering teacher education qualifications by distance (van de Venter, 2013). Communication with the OLG was thus crucial as it was the logistical partner in the Grade R diploma programme (until NWU terminated OLG's role later in 2017). The Grade R leadership explained in an interview that the OLG acted as a resource centre from which the students could get supplementary materials online. However, the OLG contact details were given in the Grade R Information Booklet, leading the students to believe that this was whom they should contact. The relationship between NWU and OLG was terminated in September 2017, in the middle of the second semester. This was communicated via the NWU website, which was ordinarily inaccessible to the CWPPS (their distance programme was completely print-based). P5 subsequently posted her last portfolio to the old address provided on the Grade R calendar, unaware that she was now expected to send it directly to NWU.

#### **Communication with the OLG**

Initially, students communicated with OLG for assignment submission and to get exam results. They also received and sent study material to the OLG address, after which they would be shipped to the Potchefstroom campus. Assignment and examination results were also released

using the same approach. P7 reported trying to call the OLG in Johannesburg and being put on hold for a long time. She explained:

I called the OLG upon realising I was registered for Setswana. I called the OLG many times, and each time was told to hold on. The airtime would finish, and then I had to start the call afresh. I later would be transferred to the NWU and got assisted.

(Interview with P7, 2016)

### **CWP participants' access to the 'my OLG' platform**

The CWP participants did not have a profile on the OLG learning management system known as 'MyOLG', although they had a student number from the OLG. One officer instructed the researcher to "Get the timetable at MyOLG". After checking, the MyOLG space for CWP participants, the researcher noted that it was not populated. It emerged that these CWP participants were referred to as "flexi" by the OLG, meaning they had no profile online because their qualification was print-based.

### **Communicating with the OLG to get examination timetables**

In 2016, the examination timetable stopped arriving in the post with assessment feedback. There was thus a need to communicate with the OLG to obtain the timetables. One could contact the OLG through a chat page called 'OLARK'. It was helpful because the people manning the chat were extremely helpful and answered chat prompts promptly, and looked for information to assist. For them to send the timetables, they needed an email address. Most of the participants did not have email addresses. At other times, they said that information was available on the learning management system: 'My OLG'. However, when the researcher tried to access resources for the students on myOLG, he found that the resources were not there. He discovered that the CWP participant students were considered by the OLG to be 'flexi' students who relied on correspondence using printed material. Thus, while the printed resources were no longer being posted to the students, they also were not being loaded onto 'MyOLG' for the students.

The researcher found that the students had two student numbers: one for use at the OLG and the other for use with the NWU. When using online platforms, the two numbers and their corresponding pins could easily be confused. This resulted in delays in getting assistance from the OLG and NWU call centres.

### **Obtaining the examination scope**

Initially, the examination scope was provided to students by post. Later, it was communicated in the final whiteboard session of a module assessed by summative assessment. The CWPPS needed to write down the scope as it was explained by the lecturer. If students needed to check the scope, it was also available on the OLG website. As the participants couldn't access the website directly, the researcher did this on their behalf and sent the examination letter to P1, P2, P3 and P15 by WhatsApp and email.

### **Examination timetable**

Access to the timetable was an enabler for entry into the examination venue. While the timetable was mailed through the post in 2014 to the participants, the system became slower and inefficient with postal strikes that occurred in 2016 and also the departure of the Training Coordinator. The participants sought the researcher's assistance to get the timetable. The OLG indicated they could only provide the timetable by email. Since most CWP participants did not have email yet in 2016, the OLG would use the researcher's email, after which the researcher converted the PDF to a Word document that the CWPPS could open on WhatsApp, as it wasn't possible to open a PDF on their cellular phones. Communication regarding the timetable was thus burdensome for the researcher.

## **6.2.4 COMMUNICATION WITH NWU**

In the memorandum of understanding, NWU was identified as the institution that would deliver the Grade R Teaching Diploma course. Communication from NWU was mainly in the form of the Grade R calendar and Grade R Information Booklet, which the participants received with their study material at the start of every academic period. The calendar provided information on the various aspects of the student walk, such as the contact session dates and venues, assignments, portfolios and examination dates.

### **6.2.4.1 COMMUNICATION WITH THE NWU ASSIGNMENT OFFICE**

Mukeredzi (2005) alludes to the establishment of a centralised assignment office for a centralised open university. This resonates with the scenario at NWU where, after the termination of the OLG's relationship with the NWU, officers were transferred to the

assignments office at the NWU to administer all submissions from students in the different faculties.

The researcher was referred to the assignment office at NWU when he contacted the registration office in September 2017 to check the registration of P9 in one module, which was missing from the examination timetable she had received. The assignments officer discovered that the student was not registered for the module; hence her assignment had not been sent out for marking. This clarified that registration did not occur automatically and accurately (a problem that was encountered again in 2018). Further investigation revealed that P9 had been registered later; therefore, the assignment script should have been sent for marking. The officer undertook to send the assignment for marking, and P9 would be allowed to write the examination for the module. To be allowed to enter the examination venue, she needed a timetable reflecting the module. The officer undertook to email the timetable as a PDF to the researcher, who would forward it to the student on WhatsApp. This started a long-term engagement with the assignment, which proved helpful to the students over the course of their studies.

P1 was able to make a resubmission of her assignment for the RIRS311 module because the researcher had alerted the assignment officer that the module was the one outstanding module for P1 to complete her studies. P24 was also able to resubmit the assignment and eventually passed the module.

Through the relationship with the assignments' office, it was also possible to reposition CWP participants' cases for the office's attention. P2 had obtained 46% in the outstanding module, and by communicating this to the assignment officer, the Grade R leadership agreed to reconsider whether there was cause to reassess some of the scripts and submissions. This did not always happen: when P15 obtained 43% in the last outstanding module, she had to repeat the module, with the result that she graduated in 2019 instead of 2018. In some instances, it was beneficial to remind the assignments office about issues that needed following up. This was sometimes the case in the new year, where an examination script would have been kept at the office because the name of the student would not have appeared on the register, yet they would have written the examination. The scripts for P9 in 2017 and P1 in 2018 were sent for marking in January of the following year due to the student not having appeared on the examinations register.

### **6.2.5 COMMUNICATION WITH THE GRADE R TEACHING DIPLOMA MANAGEMENT / LEADERSHIP**

Towards the end of the Grade R diploma pilot in 2017, a new set of rules were put in place that required the hands-on intervention of the leadership of the NWU programme. After the suspension of eight CWP participant students, the researcher started actively engaging with the leadership. The accounts below express the different communications that took place over time from 2017 to 2020. Initially, the researcher sought the leadership's agreement for participants to get their timetables, then the issue of examination clashes and later, the implementation of the last module outstanding and the Dean's concessionary examination. In all these cases, the communication took place via email. The Grade R leadership responded to emails on time.

### **6.2.6 COMMUNICATION ABOUT THE SUSPENSION OF STUDENTS**

Communication from NWU regarding the suspension of 8 of the 25 participants in KZN was problematic. The suspension occurred after the publishing of the second semester 2016 results by the NWU. The suspension of studies was done on the initiative of the bursar (DCOG). The DCOG halted the transfer of tuition fees to students who had been suspended. As this occurred between the bursar, the CWPPS and NWU, the researcher was unaware that this had happened. Lima was only informed after the students had already been suspended. One participant, P25, wrote a WhatsApp to the researcher explaining that they had been suspended. P25 later called the OLG but was referred to the NWU. An officer told her that she could not continue to the third year but that second-year was "paid in full", meaning that she could continue retaking the modules she had failed in November 2016. P25, therefore, did all the assignments as required. She posted the assignments on time as she usually did, but there were acute delays in the release of her assignment marks and she had to call NWU again. This was after April 2017, and she was advised that she had not been registered in 2017 as her registration was suspended. (In Chapter Five, it was explained that the students were registered for all six semesters).

As the message regarding suspension was not clear, P1, P11, P12 and P23 requested an examination timetable from the researcher. With the benefit of hindsight from the 2016 experience with OLG, the researcher utilised OLARK, an instant messaging app that was employed by OLG. He was only able to get P1's timetable while the other students were no

longer registered on the NWU system due to the apparent suspension. The OLG appeared to be unaware that some of the CWP Grade R participants had been suspended. Most of the CWP participant students who had been suspended had proceeded to do their assignments. They only discovered that they had been suspended when they could not access their examination timetables. Poor communication from NWU resulted in the students having used resources inefficiently as they were no longer NWU students. Communication with the NWU from the Grade R Information Booklet also included the dates for interactive whiteboard sessions (Redelinghuys, 2017).

### **6.2.7 ACCESSING COUNSELLING SERVICES**

For counselling services, the telephone number was given in the Grade R Information Booklet, along with an explanation of the importance of the service. As time progressed, the range of services increased to include financial counselling, legal advice, interpersonal interactions, trauma counselling, HIV counselling, and personal trauma. The services were provided by psychologists, legal advisers, and financial advisers. Communication about these services was not clear as the information was buried in the Grade R Information Booklet. None of the CWP participants referred to having used the services, although the services were available and toll-free when the researcher tested them.

### **6.2.8 COMMUNICATION WITH THE CWP SITE**

Further complications regarding the communication about the suspension of studies were caused by the delivery of third-year study material, which was later recalled from the suspended CWP participant students. The delivery of study material would suggest that a student was registered for the course, but this was not the case. The recall was not uniform as it rested on the agency of the CWP site manager of the municipality in which the CWPPS were based. For P17, the date she was going to receive the study material in Harding (the nearest town) coincided with a call from the technical support manager from the Dhladhla Foundation who was to collect the study material and return it to the NWU, so the study material never reached her home.

P12 decried having used their own funds to collect study material at Ezinqoleni while being asked to return the study material to the CWP site office when it emerged that he was suspended. He vowed:

[T]he study material is in that house [pointing to his homestead]. I will never return it unless a police van came here. I cannot go and deposit the material to Ezinqoleni [with the site management] because no one paid for my fare when I went to collect the study material there [at Ezinqoleni].

(P12, 2017 Interview)

The noise in communication emerges from the scenario where before suspension, NWU would communicate directly with the student regarding the study material. However, once they were suspended, there was some disjuncture as the study material was then supposed to be returned to the CWP site office while originally it had been sent by NWU to the student via DHL and RAM (courier companies).

Another suspended participant, P11, also did not return their third-year study material to the NWU. He sought to transfer his credits to Unisa to continue studying outside of the Grade R Diploma. P25 shared that they had been asked to deposit the third-year study material with the site manager, and she had complied. She also shared that upon enquiry on the implications of suspension, she was advised that the second year had been 'paid in full'. Hence, she proceeded to do the second-year assignments.

P24, another suspended participant, returned the 2017 third-year study material to the site manager. She later paid the required fees on her own. Instead of providing P24 with the second-year modules study materials she needed to repeat the year, the NWU sent the same third-year study materials again, which she had returned. She thus sought the researcher's intervention to get the correct study material. This reflects the difficulties in communication that arose around obtaining the study material.

### **6.2.9 COMMUNICATION WITH POSTAL AND DELIVERY SERVICES - DHL**

Communication regarding the delivery or collection of study materials and assignments was done with DHL or RAM. The Grade R calendar indicated that study materials would be delivered to the student at the physical address indicated on the NWU information technology

system (ITS). DHL delivered study material to the NWU students staying in urban centres (towns). For outlying areas, DHL outsourced the service to RAM.

As a standard operating procedure, on the date of delivery, RAM would call the participant and identify a meeting point in the nearest town or business service centre. P1 had to travel to Galleria Mall, while P2, P3, P4, P5 and P6 needed to travel to Dududu. Several cases emerged where the participant student had to return home without the study material (this is discussed further in Section 6.4.2). The standard operating procedures dictated that the driver's contact details could not be availed to the CWPPS. A student could only contact the DHL office. This procedure meant outside working hours; it was not possible to communicate as the office used landlines. In one peculiar instance, RAM was to deliver the graduation certificate to P2. The driver was unwilling to deliver on the agreed date, and P2 reported this to the RAM manager, who insisted that the driver deliver the certificate to the agreed place so that she (P2) did not have to return a second time to Dududu. What was fortunate was that the manager and the driver had both called using cell phones. For P18, the delivery driver kept missing her, as the procedure was that they communicated with the office. Eventually, the researcher intervened to reroute the delivery to the rural school where P18 participated as a CWP teacher assistant. In other words, delivery was not fixed to the nearest business centre, but the address the student gave on the NWU ITS.

Communication between the DHL delivery van and the student was especially important in mediating the completion of the Grade R Diploma. The date that study materials were received would impact whether students were able to submit their assignments and portfolios on time, as they had to return them by post as well.

#### **6.2.10 COMMUNICATION WITH POSTAL SERVICES**

Communication between NWU and the CWP participants, who were located in rural and remote areas, was often done using the postal service. The post office went on strike during some periods resulting in late and non-delivery of assignments or portfolios. Interviews with P2 showed some portfolios submitted in September 2018 being assessed and marks appearing in the following semester.

Receiving a parcel of the study material from the post office was contingent on possessing the slip from the post office. There was no SMS the student received on their phone to confirm the arrival of the parcel at the local post office in some instances. One CWP participant indicated they had made several trips to the local post office as they believed their study material had been delivered. For P22, the researcher (having called the NWU despatch section) called the post office, armed with the delivery number from the post office. While the delivery number was significant, P22 had gone to the post office several times but did not get the parcel. On this date, the post office's electronic system was down, but the delivery parcel was also present, so the post office manager checked the parcel, and the researcher advised P22 to go and collect their study material.

There was no decoding of messages between NWU, the post office and the student. It took some intervention for the student to receive the parcel. P22 had little time to prepare and submit the assignments and portfolios and was prone to failure though this was due to an insufficient flow of information between the parties. Assessment of assignment and portfolio submissions could be extended by a semester due to challenges in the communication channel, given instances where the post office delivered after the due date.

### **6.3 TEACHING AND LEARNING AT LEARNING SUPPORT CENTRE**

In a distance education context, the basic challenge is transactional distance (Moore, 2003; 2018). In the Grade R diploma pilot, teaching and learning occurred primarily at the learning support centre during contact sessions using the interactive whiteboards. Given that some of the participants lived in deep rural areas, they experienced the challenges of high transport costs and having to wake up in the early hours of the morning to prepare for their journey to the centre. One participant commented: "I had to wake up at 3 o'clock in the morning so that I can catch the bus, which is cheaper. Otherwise, I had to pay more money for transport when I do 'hiking'." The Technical Support Manager indicated that participants were offered no support for travel costs in 2014 but that a travel stipend was offered through the Dhladhla Foundation from 2015.

The 2014 Grade R teaching calendar stated that students were free to attend at the nearest contact centre. Chapter Five explains the postponement of studies to January 2014 due to non-payment of fees by the bursar, although study material was delivered by the NWU. Participants

indicated that they attended the contact sessions at centres nearest to them in 2014. For example, P1 commented that: “I first attended [the contact sessions] at the Overport, but I had to change to Marburg High School in 2015 after the official launch of the CWP Grade R Diploma.” It also emerged that due to practical and logistical convenience to the Dhladhla Foundation (the implementing agent in 2015), based in Port Shepstone, all participants needed to attend contact sessions at one place, Marburg High School. The monitoring of and evaluation of compliance with contact session attendance would also be expedited. The thesis established that the contact session registers were scanned and emailed to the NWU, and therefore, the implementing agent could show compliance when all students attended the Port Shepstone learning support centre (Marburg High School).

Interactive whiteboard sessions were found to enhance interaction, but to a limited degree. CWP participant students were able to regularly meet and get to build relationships with each other when they met during the (contact) sessions. Some students indicated that they were being handicapped by the language difference with lecturers presenting during the interactive whiteboard session. This study found that there was limited digital literacy among the facilitators (learning centre managers) who should be available to help with the technology causing further limitations in the usefulness of contact sessions given the high transport costs to the centres. For instance, the researcher connected the learning centre manager to the NWU Student Wi-Fi to their (facilitator’s) cellular phone and laptop. The facilitators used the cable connection only. When some CWP participants gained more confidence in their own studying abilities (self-efficacy), they stopped attending the interactive whiteboard sessions. P2 explained that she stopped attending the contact sessions when the transport support stipend was no longer available in 2016. She resumed studying in the second semester of 2016 after the transport stipend was available as a single payment in August 2016, as described in Chapter Five.

### **6.3.1 TEACHER – LEARNER INTERACTION VIA WHITE BOARD SESSIONS**

Interactive whiteboards comprise a computer linked to a data projector and a large touch-sensitive (smartboard) displaying the projected image, which allows direct input via finger or stylus so that objects can be easily moved around the board or transformed by teachers or students. They offer the significant advantage of one being able to annotate directly onto a projected display and to save the annotations for re-use or printing. The software can also instantly convert handwriting to more legible typed text, and it allows users to hide and later

reveal objects. Like a computer data projector, it can be used with remote input and peripheral devices, including a visualiser (Thomas & Schmid, 2010; Shen & Chuang, 2010).

Given the preceding description, interactive whiteboards should ideally facilitate two-way communication between the teacher and the students (Thomas & Schmid, 2010). In practice, however, the whiteboard sessions in the Grade R diploma pilot were restricted mostly to one-way communication. The researcher observed this when he attended the contact sessions. The lecturers delivered their classes by speaking to their slides with summaries. A session was forty-five minutes long. Most lecturers taught for forty minutes and then paused for questions only in the last five minutes. All learning support centres were connected in one session. During the sessions, I observed that after a forty-minute lecture, it would have taken courage for a student to ask a question. A further observation was that, in most instances, there were no questions asked. While most sessions were live, a few instances occurred where pre-recorded sessions were broadcast, allowing no possibility for interaction, hence one-way communication.

The CWP participant students found the whiteboard sessions difficult and provided limited interaction. P8 explained that despite being told there would be interaction, there were no instances in her recollection that they could ask any questions, as one laptop was being shared between the students, making it difficult for anyone to have individual access to the computer to be able to 'raise their hand' in the session.

During the five visits to the learning centre in 2017, the researcher observed that one learning centre facilitator was responsible for all (more than five) interactive whiteboard sessions running at the centre. One facilitator could not be in all the sessions simultaneously to enable students to ask questions. As a result, there were no chances for the CWP participants to participate in the whiteboard session, as most didn't know how to use the gadgets. The facilitators themselves also struggled with the new technologies that were brought to the centres, including the availability of Wi-Fi. They were unable to pass on to the students skills they did not have.

P2 struggled with communication during the sessions. She had not interacted with English and Afrikaans first language speakers before and found the intonation and accents difficult to understand. She complained that they 'spoke through the nose'.

P5 prepared ahead of the contact sessions and found that the sessions simply repeated what she had read. She decided not to attend further sessions and go to the learning centre only for examinations. She argued....

....I stopped attending the contact sessions because they were just repeating the content I would have read from the study material. I found that boring and not helping me. I also could download the examination material from the OLG website. Due to the cost of travelling from Dududu to Port Shepstone, I now only attend for exams.

(P5 Interview 2016)

P7 intimated that she attended the contact sessions because they provided her with an opportunity to submit assignments to the assignment box, overcoming the need to go to the post office or use a courier facility to get assignments to the NWU. P14 and P20, however, identified the contact sessions as helpful since they got guidance in understanding the content and utilised the material learnt in their classroom sessions.

P1 was attracted to attending the sessions as they were funded by an amount of R71 per session in 2015. She explained that she 'hiked' on the National Road N2 from Scottburgh to Port Shepstone, and this minimised the fare, although it exposed her to risks associated with getting transport on the way. When the funding to travel to contact sessions became payable as a single payment of R1000 (See Chapter 5) in August 2016 and 2017, most CWP participants simply travelled to write the examinations while studying at home.

Interaction of the student with the lecturer was ideally supposed to take place during the marking of assignments through the feedback, but students reported receiving or collecting (from the post office) returned assignments after sitting for examinations. One instance of lecturer-student interaction was in 2017, when students were left with one module to graduate. In this instance, the lecturer wrote an email to the students, which had a deadline for re-submission of the portfolio that the students had failed. Another instance was when the students were writing one language module for the first time and hence needed the past exam questions as the researcher could not avail them from earlier examination sessions. In other words, the CWP participant student met the Grade R diploma programme leader during the launch and during the graduation, for the seven participants successful in minimum time (see Chapter

Eight). In the intervening period, they saw their lecturers during the contact sessions in 2015 only, and a few met the isiZulu language lecturer who was their mentor in RWIL321. The lecturer-student interaction was minimal, yet it was so important for the student experience.

### **6.3.2 STUDENT-STUDENT INTERACTION**

While the CWP participant students had met each other once during the recruitment process, they lived in different municipalities, and thus face-to-face interaction was very limited during the Grade R diploma pilot. They also met on the date of the Grade R launch at Marburg High. The transport stipend enabled the participants to attend the whiteboard sessions at the support centres, which facilitated student-student interaction to some extent and the formation of a community of practice.

P7 reported forming a WhatsApp group with other students, but she eventually discontinued the group as she felt she was the only one actively supplying answers. P7 reported having formed a group with like-minded CWPPS P20 and P21, who were in the same municipality as P7, while P4 and P5 were in a different municipality. The group of six students defied the odds by sitting for examinations in October 2014 when others did not. All of the members of this (community of practice) group completed the program on time except for P4, who explained:

I did not graduate with others because no one communicated with me that there was one outstanding module, which I could resubmit until after the time they were capturing final marks.

(Interview P4).

P4 graduated in the subsequent semester of the same year, 2018.

The students who did not make it in minimum regulation time, who still had to pass some modules after December 2017) came to know each other more personally. They were to meet or travel to the examination centre. P2 explained:

I am going to P1's home during the examination time so that we study together and also to be close to the exam centre. During one of the nights, we had the challenge of load shedding, and therefore we did not make it the following day.

(Interview P2, 2018).

Three of the CWP participants rented a room together in Port Shepstone so that they would be close to the learning centre in 2016. They were also able to study together and encourage one another in the crucial examinations period. The researcher can argue that the student-student interaction in this instance was very helpful in encouraging success as two of these three students who rented in Marburg were not among the suspended students.

Student-student interaction thus served as a key support structure for students during their studying. Even after the students had completed their studies, they continued to support and assist each other, sharing job postings with each other on the WhatsApp group. The WhatsApp group emerged as another platform that also facilitated student-student interaction, as shared in Chapter Eight, when they were able to vent their frustrations and support one another, sharing examination letters and past exam papers from the researcher.

### **6.3.3 ACCESSIBILITY AND DELIVERY OF STUDY MATERIALS**

The materials provided by NWU to students for their studies included study guides, tutorial letters, textbooks, the NWU calendar (the Grade R prospectus for the year, compact discs (CDs) and Universal Serial busses (USB). Tutorial letters contained the assignments and their due dates, while CDs and USBs contained audio-visual material for use in class and other support material for different modules. The calendar contained the contact session dates and venues as well as tentative examination dates. At the start of the programme, i.e., in June 2014, participants received the RWIL (Grade R Work Integrated Learning) booklet, which contained the scaffolds for all the RWIL modules from RWIL111 through to RWIL321. (This is further explained under RWIL.)

CWP participants received most of the study material by post or via courier in print form as their programme was designed to be delivered primarily in a print-based distance mode. Later in the programme, additional support was made available online. The thesis established that other support material has always been available online, firstly through the Open Learning Group (OLG) website and later on the NWU distance learning website, despite the programme being print-based.

### 6.3.3.1 DELIVERY OF STUDY MATERIAL BY POST

The study materials were packaged by NWU and delivered by DHL in the urban areas, while RAM, a subcontractor, delivered to the CWP participants as they were in outlying areas- rural municipalities. The study material was also delivered to students at the postal or physical address provided by the student to the NWU information technology system (ITS). Given how remote the location of many of the CWP participants' homes was, most CWP participants were forced to travel to meet the delivery van in the nearest town. It was also often difficult to coordinate with the delivery van for a successful meeting. P18 explained:

I travelled to Ezingoleni town to receive my study material, but I returned without them because I missed the van as I could not communicate directly with the van driver. I travelled many times to the business centre until they stopped calling me. It took [the researcher] to re-route the study material from Port Elizabeth to my school. I never had to travel in that instance, as RAM arrived with the parcel

(P18 interview in 2018)

Her challenge was that she had to go to town and return home by bus, which left at certain times, and it was getting late, while they could not communicate directly with the delivery van driver.

While in the initial stages of the pilot (2014-2017), the study material was delivered in one shipment to all Ezingoleni-based CWP participants, by 2019, there were only two out of the original nine students who were still to complete their Grade R diploma studies. This affected P18, who explained:

In 2019, I was the only one who was left with the research module RIRS311 in the municipality. It was difficult for me to get the study material. While earlier, the van could leave the study material with my classmates who stayed closer to eZinqoleni, this was no longer possible. The study material later came to my school after [the researcher] intervention.

(Interview P18)

The researcher had to trace the study material from the NWU study material office to DHL in Potchefstroom to DHL headquarters in Johannesburg to despatch in Port Elizabeth. The researcher had to change the delivery address to P18's school address. The study material was

only then delivered to the school instead of the nearest town. This could have been avoided by providing the school address when they initially registered at the NWU.

For P22, who used the post office, the study materials did not arrive on time in many instances. Once, the researcher had to intervene and get the delivery note from the NWU despatch office for the parcel number to identify the material at the post office. Another instance that illustrates delivery challenges was when P7 received the incorrect language study material. P7 highlighted:

I was given the study material, which was written in Setswana instead of IsiXhosa [which is closer to IsiZulu]. This problem took a lot of time to be corrected, and I used a lot of money trying to contact the OLG and travel to Hibberdene to receive my new material from RAM. I made three unsuccessful trips since I needed to return home on time before the last bus. It was very expensive for me.

(P7 interview 2016)

To get the correct study material, P7 made three trips to Hibberdene, the nearest town, but missed the delivery van each time. P7 would be called by RAM and would go to town to meet them, but the van would not have arrived by 3 pm when the last taxi left for the hinterland of Mthwalume Municipality, where the CWP participant stayed. She thus had to return home each time before the delivery van arrived.

Study material availability, accessibility and delivery challenges were also amplified when the CWP participants' bursary was suspended after they had already received the third-year study materials and were then expected to travel to the CWP site office at their own expense to return the materials. P12 refused to return the study materials arguing that they needed to bring the police to get the study material as he was not supported with transport costs to go to town to collect it.

The experience of the CWP participants with the delivery of physical study materials was thus unpleasant, given the challenges they faced in their rural context. When there was a mistake on the part of the university side, they faced a double challenge, as they needed additional resources to call NWU and to travel again to meet the delivery van in town. When the bursary

was suspended for some of the students, they incurred additional expenses as they had to travel again to return the third-year study material at the CWP site office.

The participants might not have experienced these challenges if they had lived in urban areas where delivery could have been made to a physical address. They did have the option of having their materials delivered to the school where they did their CWP service.

### **6.3.3.2 INACCESSIBILITY OF MATERIALS PROVIDED ON ELECTRONIC STORAGE DEVICES**

In addition to the print-based study materials, some modules supplied audio-visual materials on an electronic storage device which was posted with the print-based materials. P23 mentioned: “I always received my CDs with audio material as well as DVDs from RAM”. In 2016, participants also reported receiving the Universal Serial Bus (USBs), which contained further material to assist interaction with content in a distance education context. P1 noted that they could not use these electronic storage devices, however, because they did not have computers:

I received the USB with other study material in 2016 but failed to play it. I have neither a computer nor a TV which can accept USBs. So, it has been wasted. It is in the house.

(P1 interview, 2018)

Some enterprising students reported going to the municipal library, but the computers had the USB function blocked by the library to prevent the spread of viruses. The inclusion of USBs for the CWP participants was akin to providing square pegs for round holes since they had no gadgets to play the USB on.

### **6.3.3.3 STUDY MATERIAL AVAILABLE ONLINE**

While the Grade R Diploma programme was designed as a paper-based course. Further support for those who could access it was also available online. There was, therefore, minimal expectation to use the internet, although the Grade R Information Booklet provided websites to which the CWP participant students were supposed to log in, especially for results. As I

became more acquainted with the programme, I discovered that there was useful study material available online in the form of tutorial letters, which required one to have a Gmail account so that the material could be downloaded onto Google Drive. There were also module summaries in the form of slides, past examination papers and the important examination letter. The researcher shared these from the OLG with some of the participants in 2016 and 2017 and assisted everyone (all participants in the Grade R diploma) on the WhatsApp group. After NWU terminated its partnership with the OLG, additional study material had to be downloaded directly from the NWU Distance Learning website.

#### **6.3.3.4 RECORDED INTERACTIVE WHITEBOARD SESSIONS**

The information booklet indicated that recordings of the interactive whiteboard (contact) sessions would be made available online. In 2017, the recorded sessions were unavailable on the OLG site. The Learning Centre managers did not appear to know anything about them. In 2018, they became available, and the researcher was able to download them and share them with P1, P2 and P18. For students to view the sessions, however, they needed to have Panopto (an application software) downloaded on their cellular phones or computers. The download (of Panopto) involved further digital literacy. The alternative was to watch the sessions online, yet the CWP participant students also could not afford the data required to view the whole 45-minute session online. While it was possible to download the sessions, this also required data and the Panopto software.

Two participants reported being able to access the recorded sessions. The lecturer shared a user-friendly version via Google Drive to assist a student who had become suicidal due to the stress they experienced during the protracted process of accessing the research (RIRS311) module. P20 viewed the sessions on her cellular phone.

#### **6.4 ASSESSMENT**

Assessment is a way of evaluating whether the learning outcomes have been achieved in a module or learning activity (Boud & Falchikov, 2005). The participants' experiences with assessment are significant because a diploma is awarded when the assessment of learning has been put together in an academic record. The participants' experiences with formative assessment were primarily through assignments and portfolios, while their experience with

summative assessments related to final examinations. Assignments needed to be submitted to the assignment's office at Potchefstroom through the post office, by courier or by depositing the assignment into the assignment box positioned at the learning centre.

From 2014 to 2018, participants gained entry to examinations on the grounds that they were registered. If a student had registered for a module, the examination for the module would be indicated on the timetable. After sitting for the examination, the script would be assessed. In 2018, however, the rules changed, and students had to achieve at least 40% of the formative assessment to be allowed to sit for the examination. If they obtained a mark of less than 40% on the assignment, their examination script would not be sent for marking despite having sat for the examination. This was illustrated in the case of P1, who, in October 2018, only had one outstanding examination module. The researcher had to intervene and alert the assignment officer that P1 had not attained 40% in the assignment, while also facilitating the submission of the assignment via email. P1 was then admitted to the examination on the strength of having submitted the assignment and getting 45%. However, the assignment officer forgot to upload the updated mark on the NWU system, resulting in the examination script not being sent out for marking. The researcher had to intervene and follow up for the marking of the final examination script to take place in January 2019. Success in formative assessments was a predictor of success in the summative assessment. Understanding the change in the NWU rules was important to success in the student walk (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011).

#### **6.4.1 FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT - ASSIGNMENTS**

Continuous assessment, in the form of assignments, was a feature of all modules assessed by both formative and summative assessments. Assignments represented the key component of the formative assessment aspect of teaching and learning in the Grade R teaching diploma programme. Assignments were one way of establishing whether the student had interacted sufficiently with the study material and met the learning outcomes of a module. The Grade R calendar indicated that most modules required the student to complete at least one assignment as the formative assessment component.

##### **Costs incurred for assignments**

The CWPPS reported that there were significant costs associated with completing an assignment. During the initial interviews, they complained that assignments needed to be typed,

which required them to leave the rural areas and go to the nearest township so they could get the assignments typed at the internet café. The cost per page in 2016 was a minimum of R10 per page. After the typing, the student needed to proofread the assignment before it could be printed. The proofreading added time and cost to the process because just getting the assignment printed could compromise the quality of the submitted assignment. During peak periods when the internet cafés were busy, the quality of the typing would sometimes get compromised. P1 summed up the cost structure:

I had to go and research the topic on the internet in the library, and printing could need a minimum of R30. In the library, I can only get a maximum of two hours. I then prepare the assignment and write the assignment in handwriting. I then travel by taxi to town and need at least R40 to get my assignment typed. I then need time to proofread the assignment as the typist can make mistakes.

The cost of assignment preparation was exorbitant for a CWP participant who received R600 per month. R40 per assignment was a significant figure, given that one had to add the costs of transport to the internet café. There were about four assignments per semester, which cumulatively could add up to R160 for the typing alone. If one added the printing in the library and transport, the total cost could exceed R200, which could constitute over a third of the monthly CWP stipend.

One finding that emerged was that P6 lost his relationship with his fiancée because he spent a lot of time with another classmate who had a laptop in order to prepare his assignment. This caused a lot of strain on their relationship, and they eventually broke off their engagement. For P5, living close to the CWP offices made it possible to do research using the CWP internet and print the assignments at the CWP offices.

After preparation, assignments had to be sent to the Potchefstroom campus. P1 sent her assignments via the postal system, while P7 deposited his in the assignment box at the learning centre in Marburg. P5 couriered it to the Open Learning Group. The results of assignments were initially sent via the postal system, along with an examination letter or scope of the examination; later, these were sent via short message service (SMS) to the cell phones of the participant. In 2015, the examination letter was made available on the Open Learning Group website, but it was later changed to the NWU distance learning website after the termination of the agreement with the OLG.

#### **6.4.1.1 PORTFOLIO ASSIGNMENTS**

Portfolios were particularly important for the Work Integrated Learning (RWIL) modules. The CWP participants were given a guideline document – the RWIL booklet – at registration in 2014. It became apparent that the student was expected to use the same guideline documents for the six semesters (three years). NWU indicated that the guideline document (RWIL Guide) was available online in the Grade R calendar. The researcher was unable to find it on the website, however, and when he enquired, the document was emailed to him.

The RWIL portfolio required a record of different activities as well as reflection on the activities for all 15 days when the CWPPS was at the Grade R classroom in fulfilment of the requirements of the RWIL module portfolio. Depending on the student's agency, each day required a minimum of four pages due to the availability of scaffolds. In 2014, the CWPPS had to photocopy the one page available as their portfolio needed to be at least 60 pages long for the student to have fulfilled the requirements. This meant a minimum of R60 for one component of the portfolio. However, as a portfolio includes several sources of evidence, this was not the extent of the requirements.

The portfolio also required photographs to corroborate the student's interaction with learners at school. The photos needed to be processed at the photo-shop, which cost a minimum of R10 per photo; as a minimum of four photos was required for the portfolio, this required an additional R40. The students' original work also had to be included in the portfolio. For the third year first semester RWIL311 portfolio, submission of the teaching practice (RWIL) alone resulted in the result code being incomplete. To have fulfilled the requirement, an NWU assessor was supposed to assess the student in the classroom.

Further, the Grade R Information Booklet advised that the student keeps a copy of each submitted assignment or portfolio. They needed a copy to be clear for some participants when they failed to receive feedback from NWU. However, photocopying the whole portfolio to retain a copy was very costly as the portfolio had a minimum of 80 pages – which would cost R80. This was a significant cost against the background of the participants earning an amount

of R500 per month in 2014 as a CWP participant. Thus, participants did not make copies of their submitted assignments.

#### **6.4.1.2 SUBMISSION OF ASSIGNMENTS**

The submission of the assignment had several channels, which improved over time.

##### **Assignment box**

The most significant channel was the assignment box at the learning support centre. CWPPS could submit the assignments by depositing the assignments into the boxes. During the launch of the Grade R Teaching Diploma at Marburg High School, participants were made aware of the assignment box. In 2014 and 2015, when attendance to the contact sessions was mandatory, especially with the incentive of the travel stipend, participants prepared assignments at home and then took them to the assignment box each time they attended the contact session. P7 alluded to having utilised the assignment box more generatively by ensuring that she was ready for submission on the dates for the contact sessions.

##### **Postal service**

The other way of assignment submission was by sending the assignments through the post office. P1, P2 and P6 posted their assignments using the post office when they could no longer attend the contact sessions. P5 sent the assignments via courier to the address given in the Grade R Information Booklet. Interviews revealed that some students did not have assignments or continuous assessments marks included in their final marks for their modules in 2014, as the assignments got lost during the post office strikes or were submitted after due dates. As communication was still a problem, some modules were passed only with the summative assessment components, which constituted 60% of the full mark.

The sending of assignments through the normal post office services could take more days, which meant that the students needed to complete their assignments well before the due date to accommodate the delays. In addition, sometimes, the Post Office was on strike. When the submissions were made towards the closing dates, the assignments arrived at the appointed address after the due date and were not assessed for the current but for the subsequent semester.

Participants had different experiences with sending their assignments by post. One reported: “I had to send my assignment via the post office. I was scared that it might get lost. Fortunately, it arrived and was marked by the lecturer.” P2 said: “All went well.” However, P1 commented: “My assignment got lost, and I didn’t have a backup copy. It frustrated me a lot.” Eposi (2021, p. 316) comments that “post office consumers are not happy with changes that were made by management that affect customers in receiving postal services, ...limited staff to deliver services on times to consumers and complaints of missing mails and parcels from customers, poor quality service....” The frustration of losing assignments due to a lack of good post office services caused stress and anxiety in students.

#### **6.4.1.3 INSTANCES OF PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING ON ASSIGNMENTS**

Some instances of cheating and plagiarism occurred in the course of the Grade R diploma pilot. Participants P18 and P19 both received a mark of zero for one assignment. When P18 enquired about the reason via email, the university called P18 to explain that the submission had been similar to that of P19. While P18 and P19 admitted they had worked together on the assignment (which was positive in terms of student-to-student interaction), their work was not distinct enough. The Grade R calendar states that NWU has a zero-tolerance policy with regard to dishonesty and plagiarism, and there had been heightened vigilance in this regard.

In another example, P23 received four different marks for the same formative assessment assignment: 55%, 45%, 38% and 2%. P23 wrote the assignment and typed it in 2017. She submitted it via the post office twice, but it was late, and it was assessed in May 2018. She had submitted the same assignment via the assignment box at Marburg, but she had posted the assignment in March 2018 before depositing it in the assignment box. In other words, she had four submissions of one typed assignment, while the assignment box submission brought the possibility of having some academic dishonesty. She wrote to the lecturer but received no reply. The examination script could not be marked because one of the marks on the formative assessment was so low, 2%. It emerged that the same assignment had been submitted by a different student. Both students were given 2% for the assessment. However, the researcher argued that the assignment was P23’s work as she had submitted the same assignment twice: once through the post (which arrived late and was assessed for the subsequent examination

period) and once via the assignment box at the Learning Centre. As the other student stayed close to the Learning Centre, they could have gained access to the assignment box. The lecturer then agreed to give P23 a passing mark (55%) on the continuous assessment, and she did not have to resubmit the assignment.

#### **6.4.1.4 FEEDBACK ON ASSIGNMENTS**

Feedback can be defined as “a term commonly used to describe the range of processes in higher education whereby a student or group of students receives information about how well they understand concepts and are progressing with their studies” (Webb & Willis, 2019). P1 raised the issue of feedback on assignments arriving (at the post office) after they had written the examinations, making it impossible to use assignment feedback to help with examination preparation. Previously (in 2014), the assignment feedback was returned with the examination letter (also known as the examination scope) and timetable. But since 2016, they had received timetables on their phones in the form of multimedia services (MMS).

The feedback on assignments the CWP participants received was in the form of assignment marks which came on the cell phone, which enabled the participant student to determine eligibility to sit for the examination but added no significant value towards examinations preparation. P8 said: “Yep, we received assignment results via the short message service on our cell phones.” This finding is supported by Kuimova et al. (2018), who argue that information and communication exchange occurs over a wireless network and can be accessed from anywhere in the world. This implies that mobile phones minimised the length of time between the submission of the assignment and the receipt of the result while also removing the travelling costs. The feedback received by the CWP participants had no bearing on improving how well the student understood concepts, as suggested by Webb and Willis (2019).

Practice with preparing assignments resulted in the improvement of the participants’ literacies. Assignments submitted in 2015 showed an inability to photocopy pages properly. However, by 2017, the photocopies were done properly, demonstrating the improvement in the literacies of becoming a qualified Grade R teacher.

#### **6.4.2 SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT - EXAMINATIONS**

Entry to an examination required a timetable. The grade R diploma examinations in 2017 were affected by some changes which were university-wide. When examinations were scheduled to take place in November, they were moved back to October, catching some CWP participants off-guard.

Entry into examinations required an artefact (Bourdieu, 1999) called a timetable. Access to the timetable changed. In 2014, participants got their timetable from NWU when they received feedback for the assignments submitted on time. However, the timetable could not be accessed by some CWPPS, and they asked the researcher to assist them. In April 2017, the timetable was sent to the CWPPS in the form of a multi-media message which could play on the participants' phones. They, therefore, sought to get the printable document for presentation at the examination entrance door. Showing the message on the phone worked for some participants, although this was risky as the phone could get lost as participants were not allowed to enter the examination with the phone. They sought the researcher's assistance and obtained a PDF format document that they printed for presentation.

While participants received the examination study areas (scope) from the third and last contact session, they later received the examination letter (scope) in their emails or on WhatsApp from the researcher. The examination letter was crucial for success in the examination. Given the challenges associated with attendance of the contact sessions, including communication barriers, having a document for reference was helpful. It appeared that the CWP participants, with more agency, might have accessed the scope online but had not shared these with the other participants, perhaps because of the distance between them and the limitation of vehicles to do so. They needed printing or photocopying which was a costly process given their resource constraints.

During the examination period, participants had to make arrangements regarding accommodation; otherwise, they faced constraints with examinations entry. P7 forgot her identity document at home, which resulted in her forfeiting writing one examination. P1, P2 and P3 rented one room in Marburg township so that they could study together and be close to the examination site and never be late. This idea arose as P2 had missed some examinations in 2015 and had relocated to a cousin's place during the examination period so that she could be

early for examinations. P2 had to stay with P1 when she changed her examination site in 2018 when it was no longer mandatory to use the Marburg High School Examinations Centre.

#### **6.4.2.1 CHALLENGES WITH ACCESS TO THE EXAMINATION CENTRE**

For the CWP participants, the Learning Support Centre at Marburg High School also served as the examination centre when (before the 2015 official launch) some participants (for example, P1 and P2) had utilised the Durban Teachers Centre in Overport as the space to attend contact sessions, while, the Durban Examination Centre is at a different location from the Learning Support Centre. This background is important because the Marburg Learning Centre was costly to reach for participants in Vulamehlo Municipality, especially P1 and P2. For example, P2 said:

This [travelling to Marburg High] is expensive for me because I need to board at least three taxis to arrive at the centre. If I was to go to Durban, I would just need one taxi, and it is cheap. Even with the transport stipend, I am not able to meet all my transport costs if I want to attend all contact sessions. I rather reserve the stipend for examinations, which are more important.

Access to the learning centre was constrained by high transport costs. As a result, participants in Umziwabantu, Eziqoleni, Mthwalume and most of those in Vulamehlo studied and completed their studies while attending some contact sessions at Marburg High School because they had no money (especially after 2015 – see chapter 5 on transport support). Heaney (1998) posits that the shortage of money is the most significant barrier to rural students' success.

To be accepted to write at an examination centre, one needs to have registered to write at the centre. NWU had an examination office that processed such requests. The Grade R Information Booklet (NWU, 2018) explained that there was a deadline after which the examination centre could not be changed. However, if one made a request, it was generally granted. The request could be made using email or SMS indicating the student number and the examination centre of interest. P1 and P2 (from Vulamehlo) changed from Marburg High School to the Durban Examination Centre, which was closer, for their last two examination sessions.

#### **6.4.2.2 REQUIREMENTS FOR ADMISSION INTO THE EXAMINATION**

Examinations are one particularly important exercise for an academic endeavour. The CWP participants in the Grade R Diploma programme, therefore, needed to sit for examinations. The culture of academic institutions dictates that students follow appropriate behaviour and deportment during festivals and rituals or rites of passage (Bourdieu, 1990). Being punctual, having a national identity document and bringing a timetable or evidence of invitation indicating the subject, were key admission requirements to enter the exam room. Interviews elicited this finding regarding examination entry.

#### **6.4.2.3 RURALITY AND ADMISSION INTO EXAMINATIONS**

The effects of rurality came to the fore when it was time to write the examinations. P7 reported the challenge of arriving without an identity document on the day she was writing. She, therefore, could not be admitted to the examination venue. She had left her document in the pockets of the clothes she had worn on the previous day. This single error led to her having to sit for the examinations the following semester. This is contrasted with the situation of conventional students who are studying on campus, who are sometimes admitted because their lecturers can vouch that they are bona fide students, or they can go to a student administration office and print a temporary student identity card which has their details on it.

The other instance was when they could not write the examination because they arrived late at the examination venue. In 2020, P19 had to call the researcher in order to be admitted by the invigilator. P19 had struggled to get the timetable from the NWU as she was not reachable because there was no connectivity in the area. P18 had to get hold of her mother to relay the message. This is supported by Dube (2020), who argues that there is poor or unavailability of network connectivity in some rural contexts.

P18 did not receive the SMS confirming that she was eligible for admission to the concessionary examination, although the researcher had received this information. When the researcher sought the Dean's intervention, the CWPPS was granted permission to sit for the examination.

These three instances demonstrate how the sanctity of the examinations is always preserved as a rite of passage (Bourdieu, 1990). In order to be admitted to the examination, the student needed to produce their identity document, which in this instance was the national identity document, while conventional students could have been admitted using their student cards, which is one artefact the CWPPS never enjoyed. P13 highlighted:

“To get into the exam venue, they needed my national identity book together with my personal timetable, while in residential universities, they only require students to show them the student card. I had left my ID in the jacket I had worn the previous day. I, therefore, could not be admitted and had to carry/redo the music module”.

(Interview, 2016)

This account also brings to the fore the need to be punctual on the examination date. Being late was not tolerated as the rules stated the amount of time after which the gates would be closed, and no one would be allowed to enter the venue.

## **6.5 WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING AND COMPLEMENTARITY WITH THE CWP**

Work-integrated learning involves learning in and from practice for the Grade R teaching diploma. This involved being teacher assistants at rural schools. Chapter Five explains that being an underqualified Grade R teacher at a school with an Education Management Information System (EMIS) number was an admission requirement for the Grade R teaching diploma pilot. Lima proposed that the CWP participants be stationed at the rural primary schools as teacher assistants while fulfilling their CWP participation at the same school. The students could then easily fulfil the requirement of Grade R Work Integrated Learning (RWIL). The RWIL module was an anchor module around which the CWP and the GRTD (Grade R Teaching Diploma) revolved. The RWIL module allowed the CWPPS to be in the schools while doing useful CWP work.

The diploma had six RWIL modules, with the first needing to be completed towards the end of the first semester. Participants' failure of the RWIL 111 module in the document review indicated they had not prepared adequately for the module. Experienced teachers were to mentor the participants for the RWIL modules.

### **6.5.1 WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK**

The Diploma in Grade R Work Integrated Learning (RWIL) modules were assessed through portfolios. RWIL was enacted in the 15 days that the participants were supposed to be at school, and then they would write the portfolio. Lam (2018) defines a portfolio as “a collection of purposeful and meaningful artefacts which characterises a person’s efforts, professional growth and achievements” (p. 1). The nature and contents of the portfolio are detailed in the RWIL booklet, which (it emerged) was supplied as part of the first-year first-semester study material but contained the scaffolds for the complete set of the six RWIL modules. The CWP participant students were given an RWIL booklet in the first year of the diploma and continued to use the same content over time. However, it was found that the assessment rubric changed over time, but the students were not given the updated rubric.

For example, in 2017, it was found that the marking rubric for RWIL221 in the 2014 RWIL booklet had become obsolete as the university had updated it. This was detected when P15 failed the R221 portfolio. P15 was quite unhappy about getting a mark of less than 40%. When she shared the marked portfolio with the researcher, it was observed that the marker had used a new and different rubric to the one P15 had used for the accompanying portfolio. It became clear that there were changes in the areas of emphasis from 2014 to 2017. From 2014 to 2019, the CWP participants used the same (2014) rubric, which had evolved over time. Further analysis of P15’s portfolio showed the presence of negative marking. In 2017, P15 shared the failure mark on the portfolio, but the portfolio was 40 %; due to missing mentor documents, she missed a further ten marks, so the final mark was 30%. In 2018, the negative marking was discontinued, and the module leader even called students and gave them email addresses to submit missing documents.

P9 experienced the same treatment of negative marking if there was a missing document for two of her RWIL modules in 2017. One mark was 59%, but it had been reduced to 49% resulting in a fail. P1 also reported a low mark of 48%. Later, these two marks were moderated and rounded off to the nearest 10, with the result that the two participants passed, although this (moderation mark) was not communicated via SMSs. Thus, P1 and P9 had to resubmit the portfolios, which would then not be marked despite the effort. This brings to the fore issues around moderation. While moderation benefitted the CWP participants, there was no further communication to the student via SMS or email to alert them of the change in marks, which is

a sign of wasted effort, particularly given the constrained resources that went into portfolio construction. The final mark was 50% mark obtained despite the improvement which came with the resubmission.

The negative marking appeared to have affected students who could not interpret the contents of the scaffolds (documents) provided in portfolio production. For instance, P15 had included the mentor document, but it was not completed by the mentor. It was in the portfolio, yet it was blank; hence, the lecturer equated that to missing documents. WhatsApp chats later indicated that working with the mentors could be a challenge, to the extent that some CWP participants had employed phronesis (Breier, 2008). P7 shared: “I fill in the form then take it to the mentor for signature; otherwise, they have no time for us. They [mentors] also do not get further remuneration for assisting us.”

These practices of negative marking and subsequent moderation were the rules of the game. For the lecturers, these practices were second nature, their habitus (Bourdieu, 1986), as they applied them consistently in 2017, although there appeared to have been a shift from 2018 regarding the attitude in WIL portfolio assessment, as explained below.

## **6.6 RWIL PORTFOLIO COMMUNICATION AND PEER SUPPORT**

Some lecturers and markers became very helpful towards the end of the Grade R Diploma pilot. They would call the student and implore them to submit the missing pieces of the portfolio of evidence for the RWIL modules. P6 shared a story where she was called to submit the mentor documents, which were missing. She was at the hospital with her child, who was unwell. She employed social capital in the form of a colleague at school, who went to her house, took the forms, filled them in, got them stamped by the principal then emailed the forms to the given address. This emerged in an interview with P6, who had missed some examinations as the child was terribly ill, but she had also attended some examinations while her mother was at the hospital with the child. Family and peer support became key to the success of CWPPS in rural areas.

The instance where P6 was requested to submit mentor forms by email is key as it signalled a shift towards access with success for the CWP participants. The researcher also engaged in an intervention, explained in Chapter Seven, wherein a student had received an ‘incomplete’ comment because the university-based lecturer had not visited the schools for P2 and P6. The

university (RWIL office) allowed the researcher to email the assessments to the office, and the assessments were updated so that the module could be completed. The utilisation of email was also an easing of assessment procedures away from insistence on posted hard copies (the Grade R Diploma was a print-based programme).

## **6.7 MENTORING AND SCHOOL-BASED EVIDENCE**

Once the CWPPS were at school, they were expected to be allocated a mentor who would guide and mentor them in the process of teaching and learning. CWPPS were supposed to work under the supervision of a more mature teacher to assist their development of the envisaged competencies as effective teachers. Mentors were meant to ensure the growth and development of wisdom and loyalty by mentees (Clawson, 1980), which resonates with Chakanyuka (2002), who viewed mentoring as the deliberate pairing of a novice with a skilled and experienced person to enhance the acquisition of specific competences. CWPPS had different experiences as far as mentoring was concerned, as detailed below.

P7 was both a CWP supervisor and a mentee at the school. She effectively supervised her CWP work groups at the school but also worked under a mentor at the school. Work at a CWP site could involve the cleaning of public spaces, buildings, and the community hall on the school premises. As a CWP participant student, she also needed to be at school to comply with the directive from the DCOG. During general school time, P7 could work as a teacher assistant in any of the foundation phase classrooms from Grade R to Grade 3. During the fulfilment of the RWIL requirements, P7 would stay in the Grade R classroom, where she could observe her mentor as well as be observed by the mentor. She was also required to fill in the appropriate assessment forms for NWU.

At the school, P7 reported also negotiating access to the rural primary school for a fellow CWPPS, P22. As a CWPPS, P22 was at the level of a participant and worked eight days a month in 2014 and 2015. Once all student teachers were moved to the supervisor rate, P22 was required to be at the school for all school days. She was with the Grade R class during the time she spent on her RWIL fulfilment.

P1 reported being mentored by teachers who had challenges in assisting her in producing the portfolio. She explained that they found filling in the mentor forms an arduous process (this

resonates with the experience of P15 discussed in Section 6.6, where the mentor forms were submitted unfilled). Consequently, she did not do well in the RWIL modules, and by 2016, when she had completed four semesters, she had passed only one module, RWIL111. She effectively passed RWIL121 in her second-to-last semester in 2018. She faced many mentoring challenges, including the death of two of her mentors during the period from 2014 to 2018. Her CWP site manager ensured that as soon as she started studying, she moved from the sub-site to the school. Her mentorship was also affected by other broader macro factors. When the municipal demarcation changed, the new municipality struggled to understand why a CWP participant could be at a school and instructed P1 to return to the sub-site, as explained in Chapter Seven.

P8 faced a challenge as there was no school within walking distance of her home. She thus had to take transport to the nearest school, which added to her costs. As the CWP is a local programme, work placements are given within walking distance of participants' homes, and transport costs are thus not planned for. At the school, P8 experienced the challenge that the school appointed another student studying for the Grade R teaching diploma at NWU as her mentor, rather than an experienced and qualified teacher. NWU rejected the mentoring of a student by a student teacher, and she consequently failed all her RWIL modules. During interviews, she indicated her confusion about how to navigate the mentoring conundrum. While she passed all her other theory modules, she was left with three portfolios and completed the WIL321 in the second semester of 2019.

The NWU guidelines on teaching experience are clear on who is qualified to mentor a student teacher. In addition to qualification and experience, the teacher is supposed to undergo training by NWU as well the Education Development and Training Practices (EDTP) training – a SETA-sponsored training. However, effective implementation of this idea depends on the agency of school leadership. Thus, different CWPPS had different experiences with being mentored at school. Tangible evidence of effective mentorship was produced when a CWPPS successfully passed their RWIL module. Where the mentor struggled with their role, especially the filling in of the PR02 forms, the student could suffer, as non-compliance with the filling in of appropriate forms drew a penalty of a 10-mark reduction on the RWIL portfolio. Most unsuccessful submissions were reported to have been caused by the submission of mentor assessment forms that had not been completed or had not been completed correctly. The

principal was supposed to identify an appropriate mentor; the students did not always understand the qualifications that the school mentor was supposed to have.

## **6.8 LOW SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS**

The students' socioeconomic status was crucial in mediating the experience of studying for the Grade R Diploma. Participants were underprivileged students with low socioeconomic status and home environments not conducive to studying. Most CWP participants were single parents, while one was married, another was widowed, and two had fiancées. They all stayed in rural areas and participated in the CWP in rural primary schools. Low socioeconomic status may have motivated the participants to work diligently to achieve the Grade R diploma despite their circumstances.

### **6.8.1 LIMITED ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION**

Only seven of the 25 participants had studied further, to some extent, after Grade 12. Four (P4, P5, P9, P10 and P20) had attended Technical and Vocational Colleges, and two (P2 and P7) had completed the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) certificate at Unisa. The rest were first-generation university students (FGUS). They experienced a significant articulation gap – which Kloot (2011, p. 88) defines as “the disjuncture between the demands of higher education programmes and the preparedness of school leavers for academic study”. This gap was more pronounced because of the years that had passed between completing Grade 12 and enrolling for the Grade R diploma programme in 2014.

### **6.8.2 MEAGRE STUDY RESOURCES**

The CWP participants were chosen for the Grade R diploma because the CWP was a strategy for the most marginalised, with low socioeconomic status (TIPS, 2009; Philip, 2013). The development of their agency was hamstrung by rurality and the resources available to them due to their socioeconomic status. During home visits for ethnographic data collection for the research, the researcher observed several indicators that they were underprivileged, including inadequate housing and a shortage of electricity. While some participants shared illegal connections for electricity, one indicated that they used a paraffin lamp or went to study at neighbours' homes using electric lighting. Nkambule et al. (2011) argue that not much has

changed in the rural education environment, as the rate of educational progress in these areas is limited. The participants were provisioned other social wage benefits such as reconstruction and development (RDP) houses. The CWP stipend (or wage rate) of R70 per day in 2016 for eight days a month came to a total of R560 per month. This averaged less than R2 per day across the month, which is far lower than the US\$1 per day poverty line defined by the United Nations (Kachere, 2017). For some households, the CWP monthly stipend was the only amount brought home by the breadwinners. The level of income also emphasizes the low socioeconomic status.

### **6.8.3 FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS**

In this study, most of the CWPPS were the breadwinners in their female-headed households. Seven out of 25 tried petty trading as a source of livelihood; it was so petty that the margins were also exceptionally low. For instance, P1 commented:

I sell airtime, cigarettes, and some chips, but I am still living in a dilapidated mud house. Some people study my movements, then break into my house and help themselves to any food that I may have left, and others take the cigarettes and chips.

(P1, Interview 2017)

The attempt at other livelihood strategies made her house vulnerable to the young boys who would go to her house on the pretext of going to buy the provisions. The location of P1's house was on a riverbank, where it was isolated and hidden from other houses. P1 also said:

I bought two second-hand cell phones in 2016, but they had battery problems, and I could not take the best pictures for the RWIL portfolio, which makes my work unattractive, and I get low marks from the submissions.

(P1, Interview 2016)

Another participant (P2), whose house was in a valley below a plateau, had extremely poor cellular phone reception. She explained:

I am a widow with two children. We are staying in a place where there is no electricity most of the time, and the connections to electricity are illegal. I have to place the cell phone in a certain corner for it to get reception.

(P2, Interview 2016)

While she appreciated the chance to learn and become empowered, her dire situation made studying an additional burden. In her house, there was no electricity, and it seemed like the environment was not conducive to studying. This is supported by Masinire (2015), who argues that a lack of basic social services, such as the provision of water, adequate infrastructure, electricity, clinics and roads, impacts the development and provision of quality education in rural areas.

#### **6.8.4 RURAL TOPOGRAPHY, POOR ACCESSIBILITY WITH POOR CONNECTIVITY**

Inadequate connectivity and remoteness also characterised most CWP participants' rural settings. When trying to reach P2's home for an interview, the researcher called P2 for directions, and when the call could not connect, he took a wrong turn and got lost until she was reachable again.

P2 had to stop studying when the transport support stopped being available in 2016 because she stayed far from the learning centre. A round trip fare cost R200; she had to leave the house as early as 04h00 to catch the only taxi, then board another three taxis to reach the learning or examination centre on time. Her husband had been the breadwinner for their family, which included two children, and also for his parents and siblings. Since his death, she had tried to continue to support the extended family with the grant she received for the two children, with the result that she was in chronic poverty (McCord, 2009). Stretching her resources so thin negatively affected her agency regarding her studies. P1 faced a similar challenge.

It was, therefore, reasonable for P1 and P2 to send the training coordinator a free 'please call me' when they needed to discuss a problem so that she could phone them back. Owing to the CWP participants' socioeconomic status, they did not have smartphones and were thus unable to use WhatsApp.

#### **6.8.5 SINGLE PARENTS**

The findings indicated that 18 of the 25 participants had young children. This implies that they had to take care of their children while studying and during examination times or find assistance with childcare. For example, P21 mentioned:

My sister is the one who looks after my child when I go to collect my studying material or I have to attend contact sessions at Marburg.

(P21, Interview 2016)

Such social capital assisted the CWPPS in being able to study. P2 was another participant with two young children who would need to get through the day without their mother, who would return by nightfall. She would then need to have prepared for the children fresh food on this day they did not have their mother with them. P1 indicated being very worried about her young children, so she had never accepted the suggestion to leave her children for a better-paying domestic worker's job close to the learning centre. Here multiple identities as mothers and as students worked together against the realisation of higher education.

For P2, sometimes the children would go to her in-laws, as she was a widow (in fact, the interview with P2 took place in the mud hut at her in-laws, whose place was more accessible and had more connectivity owing to the height of the plateau). Since P7 was still not yet married but had a fiancé, she left her two children in the custody of her many siblings, while P3 also left her child with the many other members of the extended family she stayed with.

## **6.9 GRADE R DIPLOMA AND SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS**

In some instances, participation in the Grade R diploma pilot resulted in an improvement in socioeconomic status, as 13 of the 25 CWP participants who had not been supervisors before joining the CWP ended up earning at that level. Transferring from the CWP site in the bush to the school as a teacher assistant meant a change from being exposed to the vagaries of nature to working in the shade of the classroom. Socially, becoming a grade R teacher signalled a change from being part of the 'orange brigade' to the prospect of joining what was considered a noble profession.

Agency improved with these resources as participants were able to buy smartphones, which enabled them to start learning how to use WhatsApp and email (although these incurred extra data costs). Participants were also able to purchase clothes and improve their image as trainee Grade R teachers. P1 explained:

When the stipend changed from R570 to R2000, I was able to buy enough groceries per month for my household, while also buying better clothing so that I looked better at school.

(P1, Interview 2017)

Most CWP participants' socioeconomic status also improved when they received the Grade R teacher's diploma certificate as they got hired as teachers and left the CWP programme. The positive change in social status that accompanied participants joining the Grade R diploma project negatively impacted their social networks in some cases, however. There were fights and breakups as a result of new behaviours and dynamics associated with the pilot. They needed laptops for assignments which their spouses could not provide. In one instance, the CWP participant got involved in a physical fight. One relationship ended as the boyfriend could not accept the amount of time their partner was spending with the male study companion. With the benefit of hindsight, the female CWP participant (P6) rued the fact that she felt entitled to being assisted and being in the library and that she was ready to give up on the relationship.

Participation in the Grade R Diploma pilot thus led to an improvement in the economic status of some participants, while also introducing social challenges in some cases. This resonates with findings by Bruce (2015), who found that female spouses getting CWP stipend income emboldened them, and some became disrespectful towards their male partners resulting in domestic violence. Masondo (2018) found that the CWP income improved the participants' welfare.

## **6.10 SUPPORT**

Support was crucial in making the student walk (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011) a successful experience from admission through to graduation. Support was also important in the period after graduation from the diploma programme to enable graduation from the CWP to the mainstream economy. Sources of support can be the family, the employer and the academic institution at which one is registered. For the CWP participants, academic support for studying came from the Lima training coordinator, NWU and the researcher. Support was also availed during the graduation of the first cohort by the CWP and NWU, while further support, including from fellow CWP participants, was provided during the process of placement as Grade R teachers, helping them to graduate from the second economy strategy project (SESP) – that is, the CWP – to the mainstream economy as Grade R teachers.

### **6.10.1 STUDENT ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT**

The study involved a partnership between the CWP, NWU and LIMA. Lima was responsible for partnership management, where students recruited from the CWP got a bursary from DCOG to study for the Grade R Teaching Diploma. Students' experience of "hand-holding" support to navigate complex partnerships between themselves, CWP, and NWU started at a level where there was a partnership manager available to take an interest in their struggles and act on issues as they emerged for students. The need for partnership management support continued, but the support was reduced when funding was cut, and Lima stopped supporting the students. The researcher offered voluntary support to the students. This support led to the realisation of the Grade R diploma outcomes.

### **6.10.2 INITIAL PHASE**

At the inception of the Grade R Diploma pilot, Lima was tasked with ensuring that no student was left behind. The then Learner Support Unit Training Coordinator, who was coordinating the recruitment process and establishing positive relationships with the CWPPS, not only infused a sense of hope and possibility in them but also held their students' hand through the initial stages. The students felt that their role was to learn, and the training coordinator would take care of the rest. For instance, P7 intimated:

"With sis D [pseudonym], she would tell you I have no answers, but she would call you with a solution to any of the challenges: be it registration, study material, or examination timetable or venue."

(P7, Interview 2016)

Noteworthy is the breadth of the challenges the training coordinator had to contend with. CWPPS felt secure interacting with the training coordinator; she was the face of Lima, the CWP and NWU that they knew. This security may have been so paternalistic that the students developed their agency slowly, however. They had everything on one portal. Where they may have developed institutional knowledge had they used the NWU portal for processes such as registration, the training coordinator intervened and registered once for the three years. Only 4 of 25 of the CWPPS indicated they used their agency, including looking for additional resources at the OLG website when the diploma was largely print-based.

### **6.10.3 ACADEMIC SUPPORT FROM THE LEARNER SUPPORT UNIT TRAINING COORDINATOR**

From 2013-2015, academic support was provided by the Learner Support Unit Training Coordinator. CWPPS reported that it helped to relieve their stress and frustration, and provided a sense of security to have a go-to person. The Training Coordinator was instrumental in partnership management, recruiting the students, socialising them into the higher education habitus, and bringing awareness to the students that they needed to meet Lima and NWU halfway. The Training Coordinator also helped to develop their agency while assisting where she could. This understanding is based on the WhatsApp messages sent by Training Coordinator to the CWPPS, encouraging them not to just wait for Lima but to take the initiative as well as to work hard to achieve good results. In 2015, WhatsApp communication was possible with the CWPPS, who were supervisors and could afford smartphones. The other participants contacted the Training Coordinator by sending 'please call me' messages. The WhatsApp groups began to be used by all the participants in 2017 after they were all granted supervisor status (and the corresponding higher stipend) in September 2016. Participants also used the short message service (SMS) to contact the researcher.

Because of the articulation gap that prospective students would face entering higher education, the Training Coordinator included numeracy and literacy tests in the recruitment phase to gauge the suitability of the candidates. After 2017, the researcher assisted the participants with registration. The ten participants who failed to graduate in the required minimum time did not have tuition fees to continue studying. The researcher liaised with the funder (DCOG). He advised the participants when the funder agreed to allow the participants to complete their qualification without further payments. The researcher was also able to advise the CWP participants once they were registered for the outstanding modules and also assist them in confirming the accuracy of their registration. The researcher continued to make available the online study material and timetables for examinations, including examination letters. Examination results were posted on time, and the researcher examined and availed the results to the participants. The results determine the next steps for the participants; for example, if they needed to resubmit assignments or rewrite the examination.

#### **6.10.4 SUPPORT FROM THE LIMA TRAINING COORDINATOR**

It was understandable that a paternalistic relationship developed between the training coordinator and the participants, given the exemplified resource constraints. Learner agency was severely constrained by resources and the remoteness caused by rurality, leaving a small window to manoeuvre. The CWP participant students who demonstrated agential properties were all at the level of CWP supervisor at the time they enrolled for the Grade R diploma, so they earned relatively well prior to the blanket status improvement to CWP supervisor of student participants after September 2016.

#### **6.10.5 ACADEMIC SUPPORT PROVIDED BY THE DHLADHLA FOUNDATION**

In 2015, the Dhladhla Foundation took over the role of Implementing Agent for the Ugu district after Lima's role as the lead agent had been terminated (Anderson & Alexander, 2016) (see Chapter Five). CWPPS received support from the bursar (that is, DCOG) in the form of a transport stipend of R1000 per CWP participant, which was to be disbursed in an incentivised manner. This was confirmed by P4 during the interview: “In 2015, I received the transport stipend of R71 per day so that I can attend the contact classes or go to write the examinations.” The CWPPS thus received additional support via the Dhladhla Technical Support Manager to ease the transactional (physical) distance (Moore, 1996; 2018). The Dhladhla Foundation was to then disburse the transport stipend in one tranche in August 2016 and in another in August 2017. The 2015 disbursement of R71 per day was opportune as it incentivised the attendance (see 6.3) of the interactive whiteboard sessions, which increased student-teacher interaction, student-student interaction, and mediation of the diploma in Grade R programme content. Jones & Dexter (2014) argue that informal groups develop stronger voices to represent students' perspectives and help them learn to exercise leadership among their peers, using their first-hand experience and, thus, creating new opportunities for learning through collaborative work. Collaboration was enhanced after face-to-face interaction during the interactive whiteboard sessions.

#### **6.10.6 SECOND PHASE - TRAINING FACILITATOR**

After the departure of the Learner Support Unit Training Coordinator in 2016, Lima appointed a part-time facilitator who worked fixed hours on selected days of the week. Since Lima no longer had the role of providing technical support to the local implementation agents (the Lead agent role was removed), which had allowed it to travel to the different rural

municipalities and meet the participants in the process. The new part-time facilitator, while knowledgeable of the higher education landscape, had no prior relationship with the participants and did not possess the institutional memory the Training Coordinator had. In addition, her part-time hours did not enable her to support the participants to the level provided by her predecessor.

The training facilitator was available to travel to the CWPPS when opportunities arose, however, such as in 2015, when NWU and the bursar met with the participants to explain the bursary terms and conditions. Some of the participants did not attend such student-at-risk coordination meetings, however. The interviews revealed that some of the participants knew the training facilitator only by name. They complained that they had never met her and that she was not as accessible as her predecessor. The second phase of partnership facilitation and participant support was characterised by poor communication, which lacked the camaraderie that had been established during the recruitment phase when the CWPPS had been hosted at the best hotels on the South Coast (as gleaned from the interviews).

Put differently, the second phase had minimal resources but was also useful. In the exit interview, the part-time training facilitator explained that she was able to stay (stop) the decision to suspend studies for students who had not passed enough modules to proceed to the second year in 2016 owing to her emergent powers and properties as a practitioner in higher education academic development. It was deferred to February 2017. She argued that:

“as much as the CWP Partnerships office [DCOG] was the funder, they did not fully understand what higher education stood for. I had to stop them from suspending the poorly performing student in 2016 when they were already deciding to suspend them. When they suspended them in February 2017, they no longer involved us [Lima]. It was DCOG’s decision.”

Her stance resonates with Tinto’s (2014) argument that access to higher education without support is meaningless. She (the part-time facilitator), therefore, provided support which was invisible to the CWP participants as she was constrained by the nature of her contract.

The CWP partnerships office had not been persuaded by the part-time training facilitator to provide more support in the form of motivation. In fact, the Lima part-time facilitator, the Grade R diploma programme leadership from the NWU, and the CWP Partnerships office, travelled and offered some motivation to the CWP participants at Marburg high school in August 2016. After the workshop and awareness of what is possible, more CWP participants

started working hard, and one may argue that more may have been suspended than what later happened. The training facilitator, having the benefit of speaking the same language (IsiZulu) as the CWPPS, and having the same kind of background and grounding, the CWP participants students were spared another year in 2016, and some participants managed to work hard and evade the suspension. In the interim period between September 2015 to May 2016, the training facilitator was the only person facilitating support to the participants.

### **6.10.7 THIRD PHASE – RESEARCHER SUPPORT**

The third and last phase of support for the participants took place from the second semester of 2016 to January 2020. In this phase, the researcher was autoethnographically studying the intricacies of the GRTD pilot. The participants may have been sceptical of the researcher initially. However, he explained that in action research, he would learn together with them. After meeting them and seeking their consent, he met them at the examination centre and travelled home with them. He invited them to stay in contact with him. With the researcher's contact details, participants could have sent the please call me messages or a short message regarding their challenges. He created a community of practice, in the form of a WhatsApp group, in April 2017. It was in this phase that the participants received from the researcher some online resources discovered to be on the OLG website.

In line with the extended case method located in the critical paradigm, the researcher reflexively intervened in enhancing throughput for the diploma in the Grade R pilot. For instance, the study had a substantial number of cases where the CWPPS may have been delayed in graduating. The Grade R information booklet (2017) alludes to the existence of the Dean's concessionary examination. This becomes available once a student is left with one module outstanding to graduate. The participants could become eligible for support so that they graduate. This could take the form of resubmission for reassessment or restarting the failed assignment or portfolio so that they could be re-assessed. Several cases emerged that are detailed below. From 2018 to 2019, there was concessionary remarking of assessments for three participants and subsequent addition to graduation lists. Dean's concessionary examination found full expression on the 15<sup>th</sup> of January 2020 when P18 and P19 were able to sit for the research module examination at the learning support centre and not at the main campus. The researcher acted as a communication link between P18 and P19, the NWU Grade

R teaching leadership and the learning support centre, which saw the two participants write the outstanding examination in RIRS311 and graduate in 2020.

### **6.11 LAST MODULE OUTSTANDING**

The researcher communicated with the GRTD management in 2018, initially expressing students' sentiments about the delay in the release of the RLSI371 portfolio resubmission results. P7 had requested that the researcher download and share the scaffolding document for her to resubmit the portfolio. The document, which came as an email attachment, was too big, and she could not download it. Her rural space had connectivity challenges. The researcher assisted by downloading and sending it to her via WhatsApp. The researcher then noted that the reason P7 was resubmitting was that it would have been the only module outstanding, and therefore the university was given a concession. When the module lecturer did not release the results for the resubmission, the researcher contacted the leader who had authored the email to P7. From then on, the researcher communicated with the leader while also assisting P9 and P13 (the only male CWPPS to complete in time) to graduate in time.

For P9, access to the academic record helped to alert the researcher that while RLSI371 was the only module outstanding, there were three other modules re-registered, which she had already passed. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of January 2018, P9 had to resubmit the marked script for RLSI371 for reassessment. On the same date, through communication with the Grade R leadership, P13 was also able to resubmit their portfolio for RLSI371. The participants submitted their assignments to the researcher on WhatsApp as photos or as documents; the researcher would then convert them to PDF and send them to the GRTD leadership for moderation. In this way, the two P9 and P13 were able to graduate in the allotted time. The researcher also alerted the management of the last module outstanding for P1, P2 and P8 in 2018. The leadership was able to explore the regulations and finally allowed the participants to graduate.

The 'last module outstanding' is one of the rules of the game and an important part of higher education *doxa*. However, the enactment of the rule was not apparent to the students, as illustrated above. To use this rule requires someone who is on the lookout for the student and can alert the management, the way the researcher acted based on his extended case methodology, as the rule won't be invoked automatically.

## **6.12 COMPLETION OF WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING MODULE**

For the modules on Grade R Work Integrated Learning (RWIL), particularly the second last module (RWIL311) to be completed, an NWU-appointed supervisor or lecturer needed to have assessed the CWP student classes in practice. In 2018, the researcher noted that the module result code “incomplete” was given for P6 and P2. Upon further investigation, it became clear the reason was the lack of fulfilment of this condition, as a mark had not been submitted by the NWU assessor. The researcher wrote to the Grade R programme leadership, who referred the researcher to the WIL Office. The WIL office explained that an appointed mentor from NWU who was based at the school could assist. Photos of the assessed forms from P2 and P6 schools were sent to the researcher by WhatsApp. The researcher forwarded the forms, and eventually, P2 and P6 were assessed, and they passed the module. Communication was, therefore, key in reducing the amount of time it took CWP participants to complete the diploma.

## **6.13 SUPPORT FOR GRADUATION**

The crowning event, after a three-year struggle to obtain the symbolic capital in the form of a diploma, is graduation day. The day is significant as students also are capped by the university chancellery, whom the students may never have come across for the whole study period. In the Rhodes University graduation booklet, Boughey (2019) explains the significance of graduation as the capping moment cherished by all involved – including those who supported the student during their studies.

The seven participants who graduated in minimum time got their congratulatory messages informing them that they were graduating at the venue of their choice in April 2018. However, the DCOG, who had funded the participants’ studies, was not informed by the university that these students were ready to graduate. The researcher alerted the government department of the success of the participants. The researcher also sent an email to the department, asking if any support could be given to the participants to be able to attend their graduation. The DCOG responded by communicating with the participants directly and inviting them to travel by air to Potchefstroom, the NWU administration hub. Flying by air was an exciting experience for the participants.

The participants thus attended the first graduation with support from the department of cooperative governance (DCOG), the CWP and the researcher. The department sponsored the participants' travel to not only the graduation ceremony but also their attire and the post-graduation dinner. As the communication between the department (DCOG) and the CWP participants has waned and the future of the CWP Grade R pilot was tenuous, the researcher had to intervene to assist the graduands in confirming the dates and times of the graduation events.

There were gaps in communication because not all CWP site managers got the information on time that their participants were to travel to King Shaka International Airport to fly to Gauteng. The WhatsApp group provided a useful tool for communication as P5 shared the news, albeit quite late. The researcher had to verify the authenticity of this information with the Dhladhla Foundation Technical Support Manager, after which he called the graduands who were not active on WhatsApp. The MTN service provider also became a tool as the researcher had to do a conference call and managed to get P14 to authenticate the claims that they had indeed been invited and needed to be at the CWP site offices in order to catch a shuttle service to the airport. The arrangements were confirmed at 21h00 that the shuttle was to leave at 09h00 on the following day. The news came as a shock to P14, who had planned to travel to graduation with her mother and fiancée. Travelling with close relatives (Boughey, 2019; Mogae, 2022) to graduation is standard practice for most graduates, but these CWP participants were denied the opportunity.

The transported participant was added to the graduates' list extremely late in March, and therefore her certificate was unavailable. She reported: "I did not receive my certificate on the graduation day; the graduation office posted it to me later." The researcher had to convince the NWU graduation office to courier the certificate to the student at the university's cost.

Among the graduates, there was a first-generation university student who was not aware of other costs that could arise during graduation, like stage photographs. The researcher assisted in this case, which is in line with the principles outlined in the Extended Case Method (Burawoy, 2005), which speaks about the researcher being part of the study. For P2, it was a second graduation, having graduated from Unisa with an ABET certificate. P6 arrived in a car hired by her husband – ready for the ceremony, including taking photos on the marquee outside the graduation venue. The researcher transported P1 and P2 to the taxi rank to travel back home.

P2 had already secured a post as a Grade R teacher and had to request a postponement of the start date so she (P2) could attend graduation.

#### **6.14 SECURING EMPLOYMENT AFTER GRADUATION**

After their graduation, most of the participants required support to get employment. Having spent most of their time as teacher assistants for the Department of Basic Education (DBE), it was a reasonable expectation that the graduates of the Grade R diploma programme would be placed at DBE schools, but there was no formal support for student placement after graduation. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) discussed in Chapter 5 sought to engage the Department of Basic Education (DBE) as a partner, but this did not occur. The DBE never attended any of the initial meetings to launch the pilot.

The first set of seven graduates, as diploma holders, held the reasonable assumption that they could get placements as Grade R teachers but thus had to look for placements on their own. During the period of being at school doing useful work and being placed in the foundation phase (and Grade R), participants had learnt of the existence of Grade R leadership at the KZN DBE. They needed advice relating to the steps required for registration on the database. They needed the addresses of the Grade R education offices in Port Shepstone, as well as the contact details of the leadership of the office. The contact details are publicly available but on the KZN DoE (Department of Education) database. The leadership whom the CWPPS contacted were quite responsive and even allowed the CWPPS to communicate with them via WhatsApp, which was not only economical but also convenient for the CWPPS. The leadership sent the addresses of schools to the CWPPS, and they then contacted the schools directly and informed the leadership of the outcome.

##### **6.14.1 REQUIREMENTS FOR EMPLOYMENT**

It emerged that a diploma holder needed to submit a certified copy of the Diploma in Grade R certificate, their South African identity document, and an application form with contact details to be added to the database for Grade R teachers at the Grade R office in Port Shepstone. Once vacancies arose, candidates would be called to check their availability and then be placed in the schools as Grade R teachers.

In addition, the newly qualified Grade R teachers were required to register with the South African Council of Education (SACE). According to regulations stipulated by the South African Council of Educators (SACE), all teachers must be registered before they can be employed at a South African school (SACE, 2005). Hence, the graduates needed to submit their certificate, ID and matriculation (Grade 12) certificate to the SACE office in Durban (eThekweni).

From 1 April 2019, a new requirement came into effect that also had to obtain a police clearance certificate. The participants struggled with getting police clearance owing to the lack of information at police stations in outlying areas (as all CWP sites were in rural local municipalities). The CWP participants had to make more than one trip to obtain the certificate due to inaccurate or inadequate documentation. The police clearance certificate was released after the checking and clearing of applicants' fingerprints on the national database.

#### **6.14.2 SUPPORT FROM FELLOW GRADUATES AND RESEARCHER AFTER GRADUATION**

Support while looking for employment mainly came from fellow graduates and the researcher. The WhatsApp group proved useful as it allowed participants a platform on which to share new vacancies with each other. Participants could also visit schools with vacancies and be interviewed, and then the Port Shepstone office would confirm and process the employment papers. P2 reported: "I went for an interview at a certain school which was looking for a qualified teacher, but the confirmation of employment was delayed as my certificate was not available on the graduation date." Her employment was only confirmed upon receipt of the certificate in May 2019, a month after attending the graduation ceremony. The researcher had to email and call the graduation office for the document to eventually be printed and sent to her. This was in line with the ethnographic rule that the researcher needs to immerse themselves in the study (Bourdieu, 1991).

P5 shared an advert which led to employment for P14, while P13 was called for an interview. P14 had named the researcher as their referee; therefore, the school called the researcher as a referee. P14 was invited for the interview and got placed in the school. P13, the only male participant in the study, had a name that is more common among women than men. He was invited for an interview but then told by the school that they had expected a woman, so they

could not hire him. Despite this apparent bias towards female applicants for employment in Grade R, in 2020, he was hired by a different school for the same grade. School details were shared on the WhatsApp group, and participants applied to the schools that were close to where they were staying, resulting in P14, P1 and P7 being hired.

Connections through social media by the CWP participants thus played a role in securing employment post-graduation. Using Bourdieu's terminology, social capital emerged as important. As the number of contacts increased by forming a community of practice during the study, capital was thus utilised for changing and improving the position of the CWP participants in the field of education. Securing employment, therefore, had prerequisites in terms of registration on the KZN DBE database in Port Shepstone and SACE registration. The job search process was also aided by knowledge of the Port Shepstone Office and access to the officials' contact details. Social media such as WhatsApp, and the researcher's intervention, assisted the transition and graduation from the social protection and second economy strategy of the CWP to mainstream employment as a Grade R teacher. In 2020, of the 17 students who completed the Grade R qualification, only three participants were yet to get employed. P8 was still to obtain their qualification from the NWU, while only P18 and P21 were still to get employment. The rest had become Grade R teachers in the Ugu Education District.

## **6.15 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has presented the findings of the study regarding the participants' experiences around student support, teaching and learning and assessment during their studies. Communication from and with the different institutions – particularly the CWP represented by the Lima (Learner Support Unit) Training Coordinator in the initial stages, then with the Open Learning Group (OLG), the logistical support partner of the Unit of Open and Distance Learning (UODL), and the NWU call centrum – played a key role in the negative and positive experiences of the CWP participants. DHL and its subcontractor, RAM, as well as the post office, also were key in the communication in terms of the delivery of study material from the university to the participants, and the delivery of assignments from the participants to the university. The NWU learning centre at Marburg High School also played a crucial role since the assignment box for teaching and learning was stationed at the study centre. The OLG was especially important as the logistical partner that assisted with study material distribution as well as timetable and the assignment receiving, processing and results dispatching in the initial

period up to the end of its involvement in September 2017. Teaching and learning, assessment, work-integrated learning, mentoring and school-based evidence, socioeconomic status, graduation, and support were other emergent themes from the study regarding the experience of studying in a formal programme for students from lower socioeconomic status. The participants' social capital proved useful in facilitating their graduation from the social protection strategy to mainstream employment as Grade R teachers.

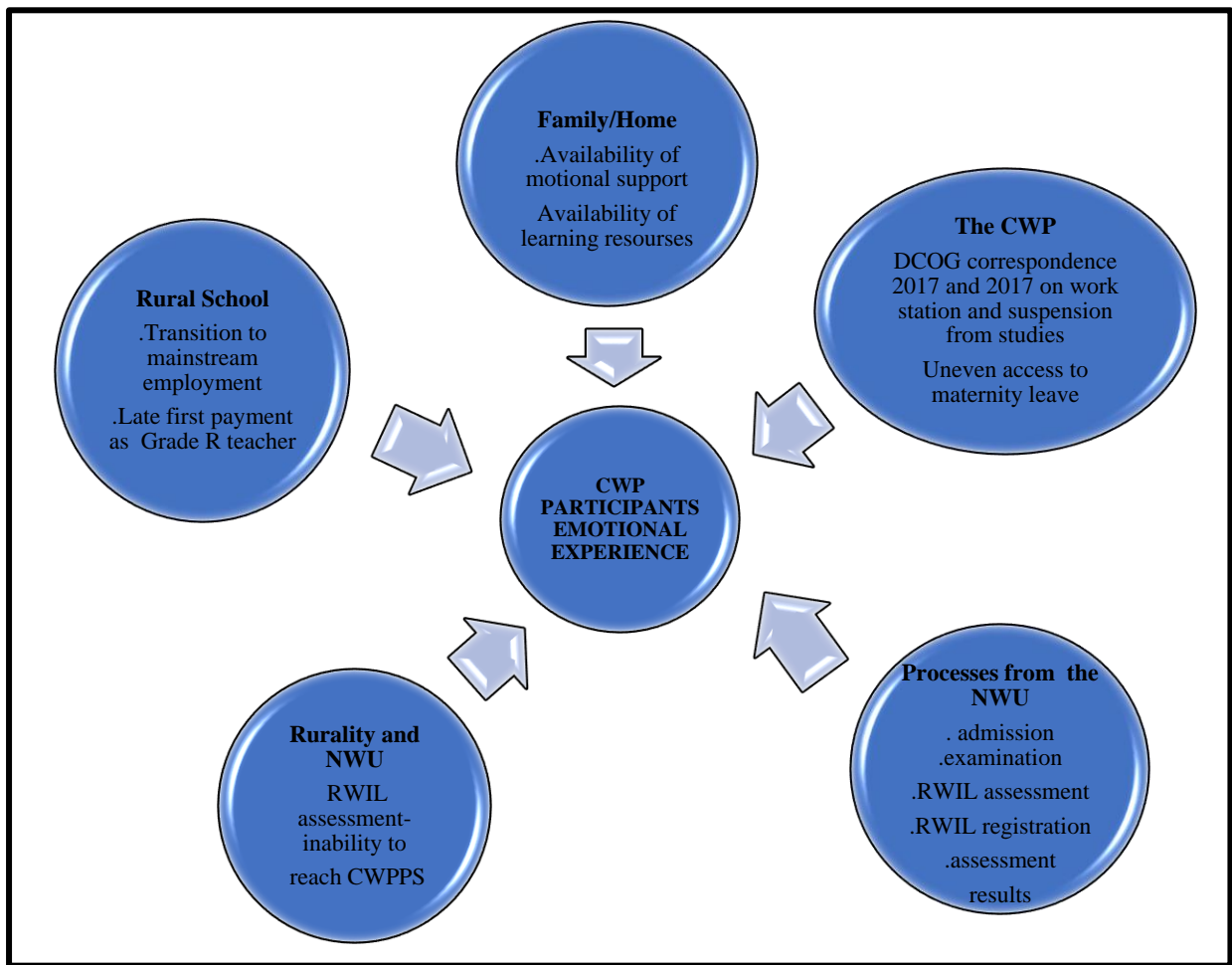
The next chapter presents the findings around the emotional experience of participants.

## **7 CHAPTER SEVEN: EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE OF PARTICIPANTS IN THE GRADE R DIPLOMA PILOT**

### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter dealt with the experiences of the CWP participants during their enrolment in the Grade R diploma pilot. This chapter explores the emotions that participants experienced during the process of acquiring the formal Grade R Teaching diploma qualification. Participants' emotions emerged as a key theme in the data across the different stages of the student lifecycle – from admission to graduation from the diploma, and to graduation from the second economy strategy project (CWP) to the mainstream economy.

Emotions arise in response to circumstances and events and are both complex and subjective experiences. Individuals may experience and express their emotions differently as they interact with different agents, structures and cultural features. In this research, emotions were found to be significant in the data in relation to structures such as the family and the home; the CWP – as the mediator of the Grade R diploma pilot; NWU - during delivery of the diploma programme; and the rural school – as the site where participants worked as unqualified teacher assistants and later as qualified Grade R teachers. Interactions with individual agents within these structures were often emotive. The participants' emotional experiences also emerged as a theme in the data around key events in the course of the participants' student walk (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011), which constituted admission, registration, assessment, in some cases– suspension, graduation and progression to the mainstream economy. The challenges and obstacles encountered in this journey are often related to constraints such as lack of access to the internet, a low level of digital literacy, language barriers and poor communication between the structures offering the programme. These challenges provoked strong emotional experiences for the participants that were significant in the data. Figure 7.1 below presents a graphical representation of the structures and processes evoking emotional experiences for participants.



**Figure 7.1 Structures and processes evoking emotional experiences for participants**

Figure 7.1 shows how the discussion follows from emotions related to the family and home environment, then the emotions related to the CWP structure as it related to the Grade R diploma. The stipend increased from R600 for CWP participants who had joined the CWP as participants as they got the promotion to become supervisors. The DCOG wrote a letter which changed not only the site of CWP participation but also the income. The DCOG also wrote the letter which signalled the suspension of studies in February 2017. Other emotions were evoked by the NWU processes as they unfolded, while the element of rurality caused the inaccessibility of participants for the NRY RWIL assessors. In the end, the transition from CWP participants to teachers was also emotional positively because the income had finally increased significantly, but some participants took too long to get the remuneration from the department of education.

## 7.2 PARTICIPANTS' EMOTIONS RELATED TO THE HOME ENVIRONMENT

Studying in a distance education context entailed studying at home, sometimes in inhospitable conditions. Participants referred to the unavailability of enough emotional support at home with ramifications on student study progress. For example, P14 revealed that there were more than ten people in the household - where she was the second last of five sisters, each with an average of two children. She reported feeling unsupported:

We are more than ten at home. My three sisters have two children each, while the fourth has four children as she was married but has since returned home. My sisters just look at me. Two of us are in the CWP. They just say, 'we shall see'. The home conditions are not conducive to studying: there are no tables, and I sometimes have to go to the local community library to study.

(P14, 2016 Interview)

Despite the inhospitable home environment, P14 worked at the rural primary school as a teacher assistant and was able to utilise the school furniture for her studies during the day. She completed her diploma within the minimum required time and graduated at the Potchefstroom campus in 2018.

The home environment was also not conducive to studying in the cases of four other CWP participants. For instance, in 2016, P1 would not allow the researcher to come to her home because of the living conditions. The researcher later observed rubble from a mud hut, but the participant explained that improvements had taken place:

I would never have allowed you to come if the house was still this [pointing to the rubble], which I will hire an earth mover to provide a better place for me by clearing the rubble. It is better now as I have this [just completed receiving a house from the Reconstruction and Development programme -RDP] house.

(P1, August 2017 Interview).

This expresses feelings of being ashamed of one's disadvantaged background (Liao & Wong, 2019). On the other hand, P2 allowed the researcher to visit her home, although she indicated that her living conditions were difficult. She said "Ngiyalima enhlizweni ngemuva lami" (meaning: my heart is greatly troubled when I look back at my history). The researcher was invited to sit on a bench made from a mound of mud in a thatched house. There was no flat surface on which the computer could be placed to capture a recording of the discussion. As a result, the quality of the recording was poor. The phone battery had died as a result of phone

calls to find the location. There was a great distance between P2's home and the examination centre, which added to the challenges she faced. To mitigate the distance and lack of an environment conducive to study at home, P2, together with P1 and P3, rented a room in Marburg in November 2016, near the examination centre (see 6.3.2). The separation from their families caused negative emotions, but they were determined to succeed. They expressed hope that renting the room would help them to succeed.

P3 indicated that her acceptance into the Grade R diploma pilot elicited resentment from her neighbours:

It is not easy, because our neighbours think that I am already working, so they are no longer willing to communicate with me and even my family like before. They say we are now better than them. They no longer even talk to us.

(P3, Interview 2016)

## **7.3 PARTICIPANTS' EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES WITH THE CWP**

### **7.3.1 ACCEPTANCE INTO THE PROGRAMME**

Feelings of hope and enthusiasm were evident in the 2016 interviews. Participants were excited to become university students and to be offered the chance to study through a bursary from the CWP, which meant no incurring of tuition costs for their families.

CWP participant students also felt proud that they had been accepted after a gruelling process of selection. P4 commented: "Many were called, but only a chosen few were successful. I am very proud that I was among the chosen ones" P4 expressed gratitude to Lima that she was given the opportunity to become a qualified teacher, and to the CWP for giving her the opportunity to learn at school and while gaining experience as a Grade R teacher. She (P4) commented:

After enrolling for the diploma, my site manager made me to choose between working at the CWP sub-site or at school. I chose being at school so that I gain experience. I am grateful that I assist the learners to hold the writing tool for the first time.

(P4, May 2016 Interview)

### 7.3.2 INCREASE OF STIPENDS FOR PARTICIPANTS IN THE DIPLOMA PILOT

The paucity of the earnings of participants at the lowest level of the CWP hierarchy, which was in line with the CWP prescripts and the ministerial determination at the time, did not take into consideration that these participants were now working every day like a full-time teacher. This caused these participants to feel some frustration. P3 explained:

It feels very discouraging that I work for 20 days like a teacher while claiming for eight days a month for the CWP, while other fellow CWP participant students [who were supervisors before enrolling for the diploma] claim for all 20 days.  
(P3, May 2016 Interview)

It should be kept in mind that the Grade R diploma pilot was carried out in three provinces: Free State, North West and KwaZulu-Natal. The exit interview with the Lima training facilitator in June 2017 highlighted that the implementing agent in the Free State and the North West Provinces, the Seriti Institute, had seen to it that all CWP participants enrolled in the Grade R diploma project were upgraded from ordinary CWP participant status to supervisor level as soon as their enrolment at NWU was confirmed.

Following the students-at-risk meeting involving officials from the NWU, DCOG and the CWPPS in August 2016, the bursar (DCOG) wrote a letter promoting all CWP participant students to the level of supervisor, which increased their stipends from R600 to R2000. In addition, they were instructed to leave the CWP sub-sites and work at the schools for teaching practice (WIL) as Teacher Assistants. This transition evoked positive emotional reactions since the jump in income opened an avalanche of possibilities. P15 intimated she was now able to pay for groceries and afford decent clothes as a ‘teacher’ at the school. She was able to send her child to the urban school where the education was better, and she could now pay for transport. She was also able to comfortably pay for the funeral policy ‘masingwabisane- let us bury our dead together’. DCOG sent the letter of promotion to the participants through the CWP structures, i.e. from the CWP implementing agent (Dhlahla Foundation) to the site managers.

The researcher observed a negative response to the promotion of all participants in the pilot from a participant who had already been a supervisor (also called ‘coordinator’), as earning a higher stipend than the participants had made her feel superior. P4 explained that:

I was a coordinator before the CWP participation as a student. I, therefore, earned as a coordinator. A coordinator is one who monitors and supervises the participants. The others were participants, and they also earn as they had earned previously at the end of the month. There is nothing they can do about that.

[P4, May 2016].

With all participants in the pilot now earning at the same level as a supervisor, the status once enjoyed by those participants who were supervisors was lost – levelling the status between them and the others.

The increased income also meant the former participants were able to purchase formal clothing suitable for their roles as teachers. It also meant the ‘participants’ felt valued as they participated as equals with their former leaders (supervisors) at CWP sub-sites.

### **7.3.3 CHANGE OF STATUS OF PARTICIPANTS**

As a result of the revision of the status of participants to supervisor level, in one municipality, the former participants started effectively supervising themselves and submitting their registers to the site managers. The researcher observed this in 2017 when P15 asked for a car ride from the rural school site via home to the CWP site office so that she could submit her register. Furthermore, other CWPPS, such as P19 and P18, confirmed the same way of operating. For instance, P19 said: “I keep my register and submit it to the site manager at the end of the month.” The move brought not only a sense of recognition but also confidence that studying can change a person’s life, livelihood and earnings.

### **7.3.4 PLACEMENT AT SCHOOLS**

The feelings of pride and contentment were palpable when participants were at the schools, and they felt a sense of equality with the other educators despite having little income. Others felt like they were in control of their working conditions (as CWP participants) since they negotiated the terms with principals so that they could be at school and also relax for one week a month (before the change from DCOG, P12 shared that they worked for three of the 4-week month).

Others were unhappy that they were working at school just like the qualified teachers, but they were earning much less than the qualified teachers and even less than their counterparts who

were supervisors before enrolment in the Grade R pilot. Some experienced feeling left out because they were earning less than their diploma in Grade R counterparts. The following quotes express the deep and sometimes subtle emotions shared during interviews:

I am very proud to become a teacher at school. The principal emphasises task on time and time on task. I now have learnt the skills and behaviours such as punctuality and being able to identify learners with learning difficulties.

(P4, Interview May 2016)

I can now use the ideas pertaining to captivating learners' attention since children in Grade R have short attention spans. When it is storytime, we must sit down, and there is a mat for that purpose.

(P5, Interview July 2016)

I negotiated with my principal that I come to school for three weeks, then I relax for one last week since I do not get compensated, and he agreed. I am the technology teacher for Grade Seven!

(P12, Interview July 2016)

During paydays, I feel very lonely and poor since other teachers can bring to school special food from KFC, while I struggle with the basic necessities at home, and I earn very little – about R600.

(P1, Interview May 2017)

The quotes serve to express the emotions that the CWP participants experienced when they had to be at school for teaching experience. While some showed appreciation of professional growth, others expressed feeling sad about their low socioeconomic status and position in the CWP. The emotions expressed were, therefore, a function of the CWP participant's positioning in the CWP and how they related to their school environment.

### **7.3.5 EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE OF A PARTICIPANT WHO COULD NOT ARRANGE A SCHOOL PLACEMENT**

The 2016 DCOG letter caused negative emotions for P9 as she sought to comply with the instructions to move from the sub-site to a school. P9 had performed CWP participation at a sub-site as a supervisor and only went to the rural school to fulfil work-integrated learning requirements as stipulated in the policy document Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ, 2011). MRTEQ states that Diploma in Grade R students were required to be at school for three consecutive weeks. P9 was a CWP supervisor at the subsite, which was isolated compared to others. In telephone interviews and via WhatsApp, P9

expressed dismay to the researcher that when she went to the principal of the nearest school to arrange for her placement, the principal imposed additional requirements. In addition to the DCOG letter, the principal also required a letter clarifying how long she would be at school and whether she would be insured in the case of accidents at school. He was unwilling to accept her placement at the school for a prolonged period. P9 was distraught because she was unable to get the additional letter from the CWP. While she sought to comply with the rules of the game (Bourdieu, 1999), the principal also provided a new set of rules which clashed, leaving the CWP participant distraught as she got caught in between.

The reaction of this principal can be explained in terms of the cultural capital of the Department of Education coupled with the habitus of the principal. The principal had been in the education system for some time. The interview with this principal suggested that he had attempted to study for a PhD at UKZN but had later abandoned it. The PhD studies (by the principal) had seen him travelling to the Edgewood campus for cohort sessions, and he was aware of current educational legislation. Later, the principal left the rural school to work for a school safety non-governmental organisation. He was, therefore, an astute man who adhered to the principles and rules of the department.

P9 became dejected as her efforts to get the letter explaining her presence and the duties she was to perform from the CWP failed. She continued to work at the secluded sub-site while waiting for the letter from the CWP. The CWP site manager was unable to write the letter, however. The site manager depended on the Dhladhla Foundation, which also depended on the DCOG. The DCOG was far removed from the daily operations and could also not fund the replacement of the supervisor with new personnel. After all, Lima, the Partnership manager who had had a global understanding, was being side-lined in the conversations. In line with available power relations, the CWP site manager could not replace P9 as the sub-site supervisor to release her to schools where she could focus on becoming a teacher. The Dhladhla Foundation argued that Lima was responsible for the Grade R diploma pilot. The student (P9) was left in emotional turmoil as she could not fulfil the requests from the many masters at once!

P9 thus ended up employing practical wisdom – or *phronesis* (Breier, 2008) – where she worked with what was at hand. P9 employed her social capital to cope with the situation: she appointed a trustworthy team member to supervise in her absence and also sent her sisters-in-law to deliver and collect the registers from the CWP site whenever she was performing and

fulfilling the requirements of the Grade R teaching diploma module of Work Integrated Learning (RWIL). The principal had requested additional information to allow P9 to be at school for days outside those stipulated in the NWU Grade R diploma prospectus.

### **7.3.6 EMOTIONS RELATED TO NWU RWIL ASSESSOR VISIT**

In late November 2017, despite the fact that rural primary schools had already finished final examinations, NWU informed the student participants that it was sending an assessor to assess the students at the schools. The WIL assessor was the isiZulu (RFAL211) lecturer who also spoke the language of the KwaZulu Natal province (see 6.3.1). P9, with challenges of being at school narrated above (see 7.3.1), requested the school allow her to be present when the NWU assessor came. She passed her RWIL311. This was a stressful experience due to the fact that learners were effectively no longer at school, and the participant's relationship with the principal was strained.

Other CWP participants who were visited in November 2017 included P14 and P13, who went on to graduate in minimum regulation time. They complained about the timing, but the visit worked in their favour. One does not graduate if they have not received an NWU-appointed assessor, especially for the R311 isiZulu language, although the absence of learners towards the end of the year stressed them. P14 reported taking Grade One learners to fill up her Grade R class during the assessment day. Being members of the WhatsApp group assisted as the participant students were able to track the movement and also get a sneak peek into how others felt after the assessment.

### **7.3.7 MIXED EMOTIONS EXPERIENCED BY A DEEP RURAL PARTICIPANT**

Another roller coaster of emotions was experienced by P2. P2 stayed in deep rural KwaZulu-Natal and was a widow with two children. The interview at her home with the researcher and the observations were that P2 had had a difficult time after the loss of her husband. Her children travelled far to school, and the CWP sub-site was quite far from both their home and the school. Having been a participant at the lowest level in the CWP hierarchy, P2 needed time to pursue other livelihood strategies in addition to her participation in the CWP, which earned her only R600 a month in 2016. She, therefore, had not been placed at the primary school to work but worked at the sub-site, where there was flexibility to work four days in two weeks.

When the DCOG letter came in August 2016, elevating P2 from a participant to becoming a supervisor and increasing her earnings, she was excited. She started travelling to school (with her children) to work as a teacher assistant.

The CWP participants felt a sense of neglect from site managers as it appears they made a minimum effort to monitor and evaluate the CWP participants' situations. The neglect is exemplified when the site managers changed, leading to a loss of institutional memory; hence P2 felt she was forgotten. She said:

I told Thuli [the site manager- pseudonym] my situation, but it seems they never got it as the new site manager appears not to understand what I am going through. I stated my circumstances in the War room [the space in which community leaders met in the war against poverty]. Since the support of the transport stipend is no longer forthcoming, the travelling to Port Shepstone [to attend whiteboard sessions] as well as to write the examinations] became something beyond my means and capacity. I, well, receive the child support grant, but this studying is now beyond my capacity, especially with no support to travel. I, therefore, postponed my studies last semester. I will see this semester

(P2, July 2016)

As soon as she completed the Grade R diploma in 2019 and graduated, she got employed as a qualified Grade R teacher. She said, “My God has wiped away my tears. I got a post as a teacher and will start at the new school immediately after the graduation date” (April 2019).

P2 experienced difficult emotions when the NWU lecturer was denied access to the school to assess her (as explained in Chapter Six). She sent a WhatsApp message to the researcher expressing feelings of desperation and detailing the challenges of digital literacy her mentor was facing. She shared that she was afraid she would not be able to meet the NWU deadline for submission of the marks of the WIL321 assessment. Her mentor, who was supposed to evaluate her lessons in lieu of the NWU assessor, was having difficulties downloading the forms sent to him. She reached out to the researcher as a last resort, even though she knew he was very far away.

### **7.3.7.1 SUPPORT PROVIDED TO PARTICIPANTS**

The Lima Training Coordinator, having been instrumental during the recruitment, and enrolment of the students provided immense support to the CWP participants. She gave some students' academic development, bridging the huge articulation gap (Malatji & Singh, 2018)

caused by years of not studying after matric and the paucity of study resources. Students reported the undying spirit of the Training Coordinator, liaising with the NWU, and the Bursar, DCOG, during the initial stages (see Chapter Five and section 6.2.2). CWP participants felt supported and well looked after by the training coordinator (see initial phase – 6.8.2). They had a very positive experience as they could utilise ‘please call me’ messages to communicate with the Training Coordinator. The participants felt she was the NWU and the CWP they knew, which led them to put in as much effort as they could. The positive emotion got destroyed when Lima hired a part-time facilitator whose contract did not allow them to be as sensitive as the Training Coordinator.

When DG Murray Trust terminated its funding for Lima’s Learner Support Unit, the position of training coordinator was terminated with it. As the Training Coordinator had been a significant support to the participants, her departure led to feelings of despondency on the part of the participants. The part-time staff person who was appointed to take over the support of the participants did not fill this role to the extent that the training coordinator had, due in part to more limited personal agency and to the part-time terms of her contract, which limited her availability. One participant (P7) described their disappointment when the new support person did not offer the same level of support that the training coordinator had:

The new person to look after us has never seen us, nor has she made calls to us. When we tried to include her in our WhatsApp group, she exited. We, therefore, do not have her contact details. For a few who tried to reach out, there was no response. So, we felt like we are now on our own when compared to the time with Sis D. She would never rest until she resolves our problems. We now feel neglected but will soldier on, nonetheless (Participant 7).

The arrival of the researcher gave the participants hope that they would get supported. The researcher attempted to fill the gap left by the training coordinator as much as possible. (This was discussed in more detail in section 6.8.5). One participant (P2) posted the following message to the researcher on WhatsApp: “Waba usizo khakhulu. Ngifisa ungisize futhi in my third year”. [You assisted us greatly. I hope you will continue to help us next year.] (P2, November 2016).

### **7.3.8 EMOTIONS RELATED TO STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES AT NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY**

Participants were found to experience a range of emotions in the events and interactions with structures related to NWU, the university responsible for the delivery of the Grade R diploma programme. The admission process, registration process, assessment process, and results process all triggered emotions, with negative experiences triggering stronger emotions than positive ones. The thesis noted a venting of frustration and disbelief when a certain seeming injustice occurred. Assessment processes and procedures where the rules (doxa) had to be followed led to stress. The technology employed in the delivery of processes also affected the depth of emotion.

#### **7.3.8.1 ADMISSION**

Admission into the Grade R diploma programme was facilitated by the CWP. Participants indicated that they felt highly valued as they were taken through the admission processes and procedures as they were put up at luxury hotels. Admission to the Grade R diploma pilot required them to write the admission entrance tests in numeracy and literacy. The training coordinator explained this:

They had been out of school for some time. It was, therefore, necessary to ensure that there is the testing of the knowledge before they got admitted. This was over and above them having the diploma endorsement in the Matric certificate.

[Lima Training Coordinator interview, 2016].

Many CWP participants expressed pride at being admitted to North-West University. Liao and Wong (2019) reported rural Chinese students similarly felt pride when they were admitted into an elite urban university.

#### **7.3.8.2 REGISTRATION**

Feelings of happiness were expressed by the participants when they were registered in 2014. The participants were given memorabilia (bags) that had the CWP and the NWU logos, which P7 still utilised in 2017. Registration gave them a sense of pride that they had become NWU students – especially at the launch in 2015 that occurred at Marburg high school.

The registration process proved difficult each year, however, as modules – particularly language modules –were registered incorrectly. In the 2016 interviews, P7 expressed frustration as she had been registered for Setswana when she had requested IsiXhosa. She described the difficulties she experienced trying to correct the university’s error:

You had to be asked to hold on for hours on end, yet I had not enough airtime. I had to hold on for a very long time. Then the delivery was another nightmare. The RAM would call me in the morning and promise to be at the nearest town by 10:00. Yet I had to leave town at 3pm as there wouldn’t be any transport to my rural home beyond that time. This occurred for three days, and I did not have the kind of money to fund such, but because I needed the qualification, I had no choice.

(P7 Interview, 2016)

Overall, the registration process was a source of anxiety because incorrect registration affected the examinations one could sit for. The training provided to participants regarding the registration process was less than satisfactory. As explained earlier, there was automatic re-registration from 2014 to 2017. In 2018, the students first relied on the researcher to confirm their registration since their funding period had expired. They had to ensure that all their modules were registered and also register omitted modules. In other words, as the rules of the game changed, the participants felt like “fish out of water” (Bourdieu, 1990). They lost “the feel of the game”. They had relied on automatic re-registration, yet they needed to pay and register in order to remain as players in the field. The higher education field had its own practices, and the participants, as new entrants to the field, needed to gain the habitus needed to operate in the field.

#### **7.4 ASSESSMENT AND RESULTS**

As detailed in Chapter Six, the completion of assessment requirements was important. Biggs and Tang’s (2011) constructive alignment model explains that assessment needs to align with activities that are informed by the learning outcomes. Fulfilling the continuous assessment process, which was mostly constituted by assignments, was an emotional experience as the process required financial resources which were not always available to the CWPPS.

After obtaining a minimum of 40% on assignments, the student could sit for examinations. Examinations constituted the most important section of the assessment process because they

constituted the bigger proportion (60%) of the final result. Feedback from assignments was not immediately available to the students except the mark values. The post office mail arrived after examinations, and this constituted a gap for the students. This troubled them because, in 2014, they were able to receive the examination letter and the assignment feedback before sitting for the final examination.

In August 2016, the NWU, Lima, and DCOG had a meeting with the participants about the terms and conditions of their bursaries. They emphasised that if a student failed the examinations, the DCOG would suspend their studies until the student met the terms and conditions of satisfactory academic progress. This resulted in the 2016 end-of-year exams being the most stressful exam period that the participants had faced.

The emotions related to the examination period were heightened by the rurality the CWPPS faced. During examinations, there was no chance that students could stay comfortably in their homes as they were far from examination centres. In the 2016 interview, P15 explained that during the meeting with NWU, the DCOG and Lima in 2016, they had been encouraged to work hard so that they could pass. This advice prompted proactive positioning of being closer to the centre while leaving significant others at home, which was emotional.

P1 and P2 expressed the concerns they felt about leaving their children to stay close to the examination centre. Documentary evidence showed timetables with as many as 20 dates on which the CWPPS needed to sit for the examinations. P2 shared: “I get very worried about leaving my children behind, and I had to go and stay at a relative’s home in November 2016.” (P2, 2016, Interview)

While P1 argued:

I am ready to go to Port Shepstone, but it’s so painful to leave my relatives [my sister and my daughter] alone. I have never done this for such a long period, but it must be done!

(P1, November 2016, WhatsApp conversation)

P3 confirmed:

We have to leave the comfort of our homes to be in and around Port Shepstone so as to be close to the examination venue but also to help each other study for the modules we had not done well in.

(P3, Interview November 2016)

In 2018, P2 expressed gratitude that she was able to write the examinations at a centre that she could reach from home with just one taxi, and this allowed her to stay at home with her children:

I am grateful that I now travel to the exam centre in Durban, which needs one taxi. It will be better than the previous and dangerous hiking I have endured, travelling to Marburg. I am so relieved. Thank you for suggesting the change to Durban. I no longer have to leave my children alone anymore.

(P2, Telephone Conversation 2018)

## **7.5 SUSPENSION FROM STUDIES AND RETURN FROM SCHOOL TO CWP SUB-SITE**

With the threat of suspension hanging over them, examinations were a stressful time for the participants as they needed to pass, or they would lose their right to study. Over the course of the study, eight of the twenty-five participants were suspended at some point. The suspension of studies due to unsatisfactory academic progress brought anxiety and a sense of hopelessness to the participants. A few attempted some fightback strategies, while others gave in submissively to the bursary precepts and left their studies. The fightback strategy was seen in the participants refusing to return third-year study material (see 6.2.4.5), while others simply returned the study material and left the rural schools as sites of CWP participation.

Returning to the CWP sub-sites caused emotional suffering to the participants as they had felt a sense of achievement when they had left the sub-site to go to the rural primary school for their teaching practice. P12 felt humiliated to return to the sub-site and once again don the orange overalls of a CWP participant. He chose to leave the CWP to study at a technical vocational college. For P23 and P3, exiting the Grade R diploma programme and returning to the sub-site also meant the loss of the supervisor income they had gained access to through the pilot. Those who had been supervisors before entering the pilot retained their status when they returned to the sub-site after being suspended.

## 7.6 MODULE RESULT CODE AND COMMENTS

The communication of the final results had challenges, which caused the CWPPS to become emotional. Difficulty accessing results caused participants significant distress. Module result codes and comments on the academic record evoked emotional reactions as some comments were unfamiliar, and their meaning was not obvious. While using everyday terms, the implications of the result codes would become clear after some time. Moderation of assessments assisted in clarifying the comments and result codes, while researcher intervention assisted in highlighting possible graduands with one module outstanding, leading to changes from a failed result code to a pass, where possible. Participants grappled with comments such as: *'module incomplete'*, *'fail'* for a composite mark above 50 per cent (examination sub-minimum); *'Did not Write'* when they wrote examinations; and *'Supp Granted'* yet they were getting suspended at the instigation of the funder.

### 7.6.1 “MODULE INCOMPLETE”

Instances occurred in 2018 where the CWPPS Work Integrated Learning (RWIL) module results were posted, indicating the status “incomplete” immediately after the release of the academic record in August 2019. The RWIL321 module required that the NWU-based assessor visits the student and assesses the student in the field in partial fulfilment of the requirements to pass the module. P2 and P6 were given incomplete result codes because they had not been visited by the NWU assessor. The rural location of the school may have discouraged the NWU assessor from travelling to the hinterland where the Global Positioning System (GPS) would not work, and the traveller would rely on calling the student for directions, yet the connectivity was also intermittent and inconsistent.

The researcher intervened by calling the NWU WIL office and ensuring that the results of the assessments by an appropriately qualified mentor (substituting the NWU-based assessor) were sent to the NWU by email, and the comment was changed to a pass. The same module incomplete result code was also given for P15, P18 and P19, although they had been visited by the NWU assessor. The researcher had to intervene by emailing the duplicate copies of the NWU assessor documents that CWP participants took photos of and shared on WhatsApp. During this intervening period, before the students' academic records were revised to indicate a pass, the participants suffered from anxiety.

The researcher’s intervention in 2018 for P15, P18 and P19 was motivated by institutional memory. In November 2017, P4’s RWIL311 results were not updated on time (despite having one module outstanding). She failed to graduate within the minimum allowed time because the module was still indicated as “incomplete”. The marks from the NWU-appointed WIL assessor had not been captured. Hence, NWU could not categorise her as a student with one module outstanding, eligible for the Dean’s concessionary examination. The later change in the result code to a distinction did not appear to be considered, as P4 was required to repeat the module, as illustrated in the academic record in Figure 7.2 below.

2017	8	REDL 3 21 EDUCATION LAW	Core module	62	Passed
	8	REMS 3 11 EDUCATION MANAGEMENT AND SYSTEMS	Core module	56	Passed
	8	RFPAZ 2 21 ISIZULU FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE	Core module	80	Distinction
	8	RIRS 3 11 INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH SKILLS	Core module	66	Passed
	16	RLSE 2 21 EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL BARRIERS	Core module	50	Passed
	16	RLSI 3 71 POLICY PERSPECTIVE ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATIO	Core module	34	Failed
	16	RLSP 3 71 LIFE SKILLS: PHYSICAL EDUCATION	Core module	60	Passed
	8	RWIL 2 21 WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING IN GRADE R TEAC	Core module	55	Passed
	8	RWIL 3 11 WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING IN GRADE R TEAC	Core module	87	Distinction
	8	RWIL 3 21 WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING IN GRADE R TEAC	Core module	80	Distinction
2018	16	RLSE 2 21 EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL BARRIERS	Core module		
	16	RLSI 3 71 POLICY PERSPECTIVE ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATIO	Core module		

P4	8	RWIL 3 21 WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING IN GRADE R TEAC	Core module		
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**Figure 7.2 P4’s academic record**

Information technology system mistakes also caused anxiety and stress among the CWP participants. Figure 7.2 shows that P4 had been reregistered on the ITS in 2018 for two modules – RWIL321 and RLSE221 - that she had passed in the previous semester in November 2017. The implication is that revising an erroneous ‘incomplete’ to a pass ‘distinction for RWIL321 was done too late, and there was no concomitant update, which led to the university reregistering the student for the module, causing them significant stress and delaying their graduation.

### **7.6.2 “FAIL” DESPITE A MARK BEING ABOVE 50%**

Some students also received a “fail” code despite their final mark being above 50%, especially when they had not achieved 0% in the examination. P1 was given a “fail” for two modules in July 2018, where the overall marks were 54% and 51%, while the examination marks were 37% and 39%, respectively. After the examination board meeting, NWU decided to award a pass mark for both modules. However, this was not communicated to P1. P1 thus went through the process of submitting the assessment requirements for having duly performed, only to find that the modules did not appear on the examination timetable. This caused significant anxiety. The researcher enquired with the assignment’s office, and it was clarified that P1 had passed and only the research module RIRS311 was outstanding.

Another instance was when P1 received 30% for continuous assessment, which was below the requirement of 40% to be eligible to sit for the examination. It was the only outstanding module for P1, and not sitting for the exam would make her eligible for the Dean’s concessionary examination, which could only be written at the main campus at Potchefstroom. P1 became dejected at the prospect of travelling to Potchefstroom. That would involve significant costs for the low socioeconomic status student. Thoughts and efforts went to the re-submission of the RIRS311 module assignments with P1 utilising the application meant for the conversion of photographs to PDF. P1 felt relieved that she had resubmitted. The researcher emailed the document from P1's WhatsApp document to the NWU. This (emailing) was against the practice of the Grade R Diploma, being paper-based. P1 obtained 45% in the emailed submission, making her eligible to sit for the RIRS311 examination. The invigilator at the closer examination centre in Durban allowed her to sit for the examination as she was in possession of the examination timetable from the NWU. Upon reaching the NWU assignments office, however, the script was not sent for marking because the 45% mark had not been updated on the ITS system. The ITS was still indicating that P1 had not been eligible to sit for the examination. P1 alerted the researcher about the problem.

Using hindsight from the 2017 ordeal involving P9 and the non-marking of an examination script, the researcher obtained assurance that the script would be sent for marking in January, which happened. The assignments officer intimated that the student received 30% in the final examination, which would ordinarily be irretrievable as the examination subminimum was a 40%. The result from the script marking came after 15 January 2019, the date on which she would have needed to write the concessionary examination. P1 felt overjoyed when she

received the SMS saying that she could graduate in February 2019. The assignments officer later explained the moderation process, which saw P1 being allowed to graduate. She had a pass mark from the examination in July 2017.

P2 received a final mark of 48% on her academic record in November 2018 for the final module required for her qualification. NWU later granted a remark, and she obtained an aggregate mark of 60%, but this only happened in March 2019. P2 called the researcher to deliver the news that she was graduating. She was proud of herself for succeeding. It was too late for her certificate to be printed, so she did not receive the certificate during her April 2019 graduation, a scenario which was discovered and rectified. While she was exhilarated to walk on the red carpet and be hooded, she was exasperated that she could not go with her certificate, which determined the starting date as a Grade R teacher. The researcher had to write and make calls to the NWU Graduations office until they delivered the certificate (at the cost of the NWU) to P2, as shared in section 6.2.5.

### **7.6.3 “DID NOT WRITE”**

In 2019, P19 did not submit the September assignments assuming she was eligible for the second examination opportunity. Unfortunately, she was not, and NWU picked that up and then asked her to resubmit the assignment as she only had one module outstanding. She submitted the assignment and then proceeded to sit for the examination, yet the examination results came back stating “*did not write*”. She sent a WhatsApp message to the researcher about this since she had sat for the examination. She stayed in frequent communication with the researcher until 14 January 2020, when she finally received an SMS confirming eligibility for the concessionary examination the next day at Marburg High School. However, when she arrived for the examination, she was extremely distressed to find out that her name was not on the list and there was no examination paper for her. She had to call the researcher to help her get permission to enter the examination venue. The researcher communicated (used his agency) with the Dean of the NWU Education Sciences and another professor in the School of Psycho-Social studies, where the Grade R qualifications are housed, at the EASA 2020 conference, and the student eventually got to sit for the concessionary exam. The invigilator printed an additional paper for her. It was an emotionally difficult time for her. However, she passed the examination, enabling her to graduate in 2020.

## **7.7 EMOTIONS RELATED TO THE TRANSITION FROM CWP TO MAINSTREAM EMPLOYMENT AS A GRADE R TEACHER**

A discussion of the emotional experience of participants in the Grade R diploma pilot would be incomplete without mentioning participants' experiences after graduation, as they transitioned from being CWP participants to being newly qualified Grade R teachers to being employed as Grade R teachers.

The transition was smooth for some and difficult for others. The KZN Department of Education had no clear process for transitioning CWP workers into Grade R posts. Despite the fact that both were government programmes, they did not speak to one another. Participants' emotional experience was also influenced by whether the CWP programme would continue to support the participant until they had transitioned to the mainstream economy.

For P5, the transition was a positive experience. She had strong personal emergent powers and properties (Archer, 2005) and exercised her agency. She was offered a teaching post in September 2017. She shared the following on WhatsApp:

Our leaders are the best!! I told them that I got employment as a grade R teacher, and they said I must not worry as I can still continue on the CWP until the new fiscal year when the Grade R diploma is completed! I am so excited. Aren't they the best?

(P5, September 2017).

P14 also had a positive experience. Immediately after writing the examinations in November 2017, she went on maternity leave. She shared with the researcher (whom she had requested to become her referee on her curriculum vitae) that she was on maternity leave until June 2019, when she got called for an interview:

I went on maternity leave immediately after the November 2017 exams. However, the CWP stipend stopped one month after I got confirmed as a Grade R teacher in June 2019. Only after that was when the site manager advised me to resign.

(P14, August 2019)

The researcher observed that P16 experienced negative emotions during the transition stage from the CWP to becoming a Grade R teacher. She complained that she felt like her mentor took advantage of her; while also experiencing being overlooked when a post became available at the school after she had already graduated:

Since I came to the school, my mentor is always out of the class, and I am now her slave... [T]he school had a vacancy, but they did not even invite me for the interviews when I also applied.

(P16, Interview 2018)

P16 became pregnant in 2019 and was unable to continue working in the advanced stages of the pregnancy. Unlike P14's site manager, who placed P14 on maternity leave, P16's site manager indicated that there was no provision in the CWP prescripts for maternity leave. In other words, as the CWP is an emergent programme, there are silences in the policy documents whose interpretation depends on the agency of the site manager. P16, therefore, stayed without a stipend (as she was effectively unemployed) for four months. She was placed as a Grade R teacher in July 2020. She experienced distress at the seeming insensitivity of the CWP with regard to situations such as the need for maternity leave for participants. She was, however, not bitter that P14 had received maternity leave. She wrote "inhlanhla azifani" [people have different luck in life]." (P16, WhatsApp 2020).

A complex situation emerged for P1 after the completion of her studies. She continued at the rural school where she was a teacher assistant while studying, and later got promoted to the CWP supervisor level while searching for employment as a Grade R teacher. As a result of broader macro-level geopolitical forces, her ward was reassigned to a different municipality. Vulamehlo Local Municipality was disestablished in August 2016, although the full effects of the move came to a head in 2019. The new site manager did not have enough background of her presence in the school. The site manager sought to have a CWP participant working at a CWP site and not at school. The site manager questioned why P1 would get remuneration during the holiday when she had not worked (as a CWP participant). The site manager got P1 to return to the CWP site permanently. P1 felt that she had been downgraded as when she returned to the sub-site, she had to wear the orange overalls again after she had been dressing like other teachers from 2014 to 2019. P1 reluctantly complied with the site manager's directive, and fortunately, in September 2019, she was appointed to a Grade R teaching post and left her position at the CWP sub-site. She experienced relief and happiness when she started to receive a teacher's salary.

For P7, the transition to becoming a Grade R teacher was also stressful as she had to endure five months without a salary. Other participants, like P1 and P2, had the advantage of getting teaching positions at local schools, which obfuscated their CWP participation. After obtaining

her Grade R diploma in 2017, P7 stopped school participation and focused only on the CWP (Remember, the school was also the CWP sub-site, see section 6.6). P7 also left to become a teacher assistant, particularly out of frustration at being overlooked three times for a Grade R teaching post arose at the school where she had worked as a foundation phase teacher assistant as well as CWP supervisor from 2014 to 2017. P7 compared herself in a negative light with other CWP participants. She then got a post far away from her home, so she had to relocate to the vicinity of the school, while P1 and P2 were able to commute to school as they had before as participant students. In other words, immediately after assuming duty at the rural school far from her locality, the gap she left (having been a supervisor) became apparent, and therefore the stipend stopped. Her absence was felt because she had also been also the ward coordinator who also reported monthly activities to the CWP offices. She, therefore, had to be replaced. She reported going without a salary for five months as the KZN Department of Education took its time to put her on the payroll. The transition from being a CWP participant to being employed as a Grade R teacher was thus more difficult for P7 compared to the other CWPPS.

## **7.8 SUMMARY**

The purpose of focusing on the theme of participants' emotions in the findings was to illustrate how they experienced their learning even though they did not have enough support. Participants experienced emotions in connection with events, activities and practices related to NWU and the Grade R diploma pilot. The CWP and DCOG (as the bursar) were instrumental in evoking negative as well as positive emotions for the CWPPS. They expressed the strongest emotions around receiving their results for their courses, particularly when they were unable to understand the comments indicating the outcome of the course. The CWP regularities, the logics, and how they interacted with the rural schools also elicited some positive as well as negative emotional reactions. Results and registration procedures evoked stronger emotions after 2017 as the NWU processes evolved and became more stringent. While in 2014, registration for the module could lead to one writing an examination while passing the examination could lead to a pass result, the emphasis on continuous assessment marks became stronger after 2018 when a minimum of 40 % was required to sit for the examinations, and also a sub-minimum of 40% was required in the exam to get a final pass mark.

The next chapter provides a synthesis of the study, where the theoretical framework provided by Field Theory and the concepts of field, capital, and habitus come to the fore in bringing

together the social protection strategy implemented by the CWP, through a formal qualification in higher education, for the participants. A macro, meso and micro-analysis was also performed of the forces that brought the Grade R Diploma pilot to bear. The structure, culture and agency aspects are also alluded to as the researcher, guided by the prescripts of the extended case method, intervened to ensure the realisation of the goals of the Grade R diploma pilot.

# **CHAPTER EIGHT: SYNTHESIS OF THE STUDY-THE HARMONISATION OF CONFLICT IN SOCIAL PROTECTION THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION**

## **8.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter focused on the emotional experiences of CWP participants during their enrolment in the Grade R diploma pilot as a key theme in the findings.

This chapter presents the synthesis of the study, combining Field Theory with micro, meso and macro-levels of analysis. The chapter commences with a discussion of the macro-level forces followed by a discussion on meso-level institutions and then the micro-level forces operating at the level of the individual participant. The fourth and final discussion highlights the need for a coordinating mechanism for a government programme which ensures a better student walk and graduation of the CWP participant from the second economy to the first and mainstream economy having acquired a formal qualification.

This thesis argues that there is a constant and continuous struggle for power and positions in different fields over time. The researcher identified specific instances as they occurred across the period from 2014 to 2020, as contexts changed. These instances took place in the theatre of the fields – structural spaces that have relative autonomy and are affected by forces from outside (heteronomy). While explaining how an occurrence demonstrated the domination of one logic (from one field) over the other, some clashes ended up in compromises (of domination by one field by another). Emergent also is how financial capital tends to dominate other forms of capital, such as social and cultural (symbolic) capital. The CWP participant student's social and cultural capital tended to be undervalued, while the higher education habitus needed to be acquired for proper positioning and success in the field. The players in the field ought to have observed the rules of the game so that they could not feel 'like a fish out of water'. Habitus became the currency through which the social agents bought their entry to play in the field, observing the rules of the game (doxa), changing positions, and employing different forms and types of capitals, as they saw fit, in different sites of the struggle. The different positions and dispositions that the social agents brought to the field mediated the level of ease or difficulty of the struggle.

At the micro-level, the participants were located in the field of rurality, where they were among the most marginalised members of the rural community in terms of poverty and being unemployed. While they possessed the institutionalised capital of the Grade 12 certificate, they needed to acquire new kinds of capital relevant to studying by distance mode at a university. The CWP participant students' social and cultural capitals proved to be irrelevant in most cases in the dominant field of higher education. Negotiating the distance education field proved challenging for participants who had been out of school for more than three years.

The table below summarises some of the different fields that played a role in the Grade R Diploma pilot. It indicates key forces as well as the agents and structures that were crucial to the realisation of the Grade R Teaching Diploma. For instance, the triple challenge of poverty, unemployment and inequality which has expression in the Vision 2030, which is the National Development Plan for South Africa, drew from the millennium development goals of the United Nations. The march towards the realisation of goals such as no poverty, quality education and the need for employability saw the emergence of the Community Work Programme, which was an attempt to provide a safety net for the (rural) poorest of the poor. Yet the conceptualisation of the Grade R Teaching Diploma took the coming together of several government departments, including the Department of Cooperative Governance, funding the tuition fees of the programme while the Department of Higher Education, through the entity of the North West University, delivered the diploma while the CWP which was conceptualised by the Presidency, was the source of the student participants. Rural schools operating under the Department of Education and from where they come, provided spaces in which the CWP participants could function as CWP participants while also growing their employability. This exposition shows the involvement of the macro-forces that later led to social protection through the attainment of formal qualifications.

The meso-level forces involved different organisations such as Lima, the CWP, the NWU and the rural schools, which together enhanced the experience of the individual student participant as they interacted in a seemingly contradictory manner but eventually delivered the Grade R Teaching Diploma. Agents located in the meso-level organisations, such as Lima, included the Learner Support Unit manager and LSU training coordinator, who were instrumental in conceptualising and implementing the different structural processes, for example: the Memorandum of Understanding, the DCOG Bursary agreement, and the Learner Support Unit. The NWU agents in the Diploma in Grade R Teaching programme then assisted with the rules

and the general Grade R booklet or calendar. Table 8.1 below provides information on the macro, meso and micro-level forces interacting with agents and structures.

**Table 0.1 Macro, meso and micro-level forces interacting with agents and structures**

<b>LEVEL</b>	<b>DRIVER/FORCE</b>	<b>ENTITY</b>	<b>AGENT/STRUCTURE</b>
<b>MACRO LEVEL FORCES</b>  (societal forces interacting with each other) – national forces.	Sustainable Development Goals:	National Development Plan	STATE
	• No Poverty	CWP	Presidency, DCOG
	• Quality Education	Department Of Higher Education	NWU
	• Employability	KZN Department of Education	Rural School
	Fourth Industrial revolution	NWU	Grade R Curriculum
<b>MESO LEVEL FORCES</b>	<b>ORGANISATION</b>	<b>AGENT</b>	<b>STRUCTURE</b>
	DCOG-CWP	CWP Partnerships Manager	Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
			DCOG Bursary Agreement
	CWP	LSU Manager	Learner Support Unit
		CWP - Site Manager	DCOG Bursary Agreement
	Lima	LSU Training Coordinator	Memorandum Of Understanding
	Northwest University	Unit For Open Distance Learning Manager	Diploma in Grade R Teaching Programme
		Diploma in Grade R Teaching Programme Leader	Memorandum Of Understanding Annual Grade R Information Booklet

			-Rules -Timetables -Learning Support Centres Examination Centres
	Rural Schools	School Management (Principals)	RWIL INFORMATION LETTER (meso level power document how institutions interact with each other)
		Mentorship	Mentor Assessment Templates
<b>MICRO LEVEL FORCES</b>	Grade R Diploma Participant - student (CWPPS)	Individual Participant	- DCOG Bursary Agreement
			Grade R Information Booklet
			Timetable - Examination timetable - Contact Session timetable
			Assessments Assessment Results
		Site Manager	CWP agreement form
			Graduation

## 8.2 MACRO-LEVEL FORCES

### 8.2.1 MACRO-LEVEL FORCES AND THE GRADE R PILOT

The International Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), such as no poverty, no hunger, quality (early childhood) education, gender equality and decent and sustainable jobs, are part of the supra-national forces that influenced the conceptualisation of the Grade R diploma pilot as a strategy to graduate CWP participants to the mainstream economy. The goals influenced the various fields and players operating in the pilot.

The broader forces need the meso-level institutions to implement at the individual level. For example, among the goals of the state are the equitable distribution of income and full employment. The National Development Plan in South Africa also identifies the need for “high-quality early childhood education, with access rates above 90% “(National Planning Commission, 2012, p. 17) while arguing for the need to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by developing an inclusive economy for all, as the overarching goal.

The broader goals of the state are enacted through different state departments and institutions. It is the Department of Higher Education and Training, within the developmental state, that becomes responsible for quality training and development of human capital. Having noted the spatial inequalities brought about by the policy of apartheid, rural development is a priority. When a gap was identified in the quality of Grade R teachers in rural areas, NWU, a player in the higher education field, developed a curriculum to address this national need which culminated in the Diploma in Grade R Teaching qualification. In other words, while universities are autonomous spaces, the programmes and curricula they develop tend to be sensitive to the needs and context of the state. This thesis, therefore, argues that the Grade R Teaching Diploma was developed to address the need for quality early childhood development, while the Grade R Diploma pilot was designed to contribute to the realisation of the sustainable development goals of no poverty, quality education, decent work, and gender equality in the lives of the individuals who participated in, and completed the programme.

### **8.2.2 MACRO FORCES AND THE GRADE R TEACHING CURRICULUM**

The content and delivery of the different modules comprising the Diploma in Grade R Teaching curriculum are impacted by global and local contextual factors. For example, the provision of the programme by distance education emerges from the fact that the students in the programme were already working as unqualified and underqualified Grade R teachers at schools. Expecting students to leave their jobs to study full-time at the university would have left the Grade R cohort at the mercy of inexperienced and even more unqualified temporary teachers. Offering the diploma at a distance allowed the underqualified teachers to continue working while being provided with professional development on the job, hence improving curriculum relevance and employability.

The global movement towards employability (Walker & Fongwa, 2017) should also have influenced the offering of distance education, where the Grade R teaching practitioners would be learning from practice and in practice. In order to bridge the gap between theory and practice, the Grade R Work Integrated Learning (RWIL) modules span the whole six semesters with a portfolio submission every semester.

Another macroeconomic force is the Fourth Industrial Revolution, expressed by the need for computer and digital literacy. Most of the CWP participants were computer illiterate. The Grade R diploma showed curriculum responsiveness as it included a portfolio-assessed module on computer literacy (RCAL111). Participants needed to perform practical sessions at designated computer laboratories to be deemed competent and pass the module.

The other module demonstrating curriculum responsiveness on the Grade R diploma curriculum, which shows subordination to broader macro forces, was the Academic Literacy module. The module recognises the pertinent but emergent need for the Grade R teacher to become a citizen of the academic enterprise by being academically literate. This will enable them to participate by writing in an appropriate manner. While it could be debated that a student can become literate after submitting one assignment and writing an examination, this thesis argues that the mere presence of a module with this declared purpose is positive and has the potential to become generative. The module presence also shows the sensitivity of higher education to broader emergent approaches to studying.

### **8.2.3 MACRO FORCES AND THE INDIVIDUAL**

At the national level, in 2013, the Community Work Programme (CWP) Unit was managed by a core team from the NGO responsible for the conceptualisation of the CWP, namely Trade and Industrial Policy Studies (TIPS), together with a key agent possessing extensive experience on how the CWP could work. The core team was made up of a few experienced individuals (Andersson & Alexander, 2016). When the scale forces (the CWP was being upscaled to have a national footprint) were brought to bear, there was a reconfiguration where the core team, with its institutional memory, was disregarded. An entire inter-ministerial task team became responsible for the day-to-day running of the CWP (ibid). Where decisions for the CWP unit had been made by the team, they were now made by new individuals without the habitus of what the CWP meant. This had ramifications for the operations and the evolution of the operational structure. Where the CWP had lead agents, provincial implementing agents, and

local implementing agents, the entire structure with three layers was amalgamated into one implementing agent.

#### **8.2.4 MACRO FORCES AND THE CWP STRUCTURE**

The new CWP structure (without the lead agent and local implementing agent) reduced costs as project management commissions (DCOG, 2016), the other implementing agent levels (lead and local) were removed, and therefore the action decreased government expenditure. For Lima, the lead agent responsible for conceptualising the Grade R diploma, a further factor was that the implementing agents needed to qualify for Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE). The lead agents who had led the scale-up of the CWP and implementation of the Grade R diploma pilot were removed from the CWP structure. The three lead agents were responsible for the programme in all nine provinces – with each agent responsible for three. Andersson and Alexander (2016) explain that Lima was left as an implementing agent in only three local (municipal) sites in the Free State province from 2014 onwards during the implementation of the CWP. None of these three sites participated in the Grade R Teaching Diploma pilot programme. As a result, Lima’s Learner Support Unit (discussed in Chapter Five) was closed. Here, broader change in the CWP structure had consequences of closing structures built during an earlier era.

The movements and changes at the state level, therefore, had far-reaching effects on the ground, with the CWPPS being the most adversely affected. Where the CWP participants had relied on the training coordinator, who would frequent the local municipal sites as part of the lead agent delegation, this removal denied the CWP participants access to a key support structure in their participation in the Grade R diploma project – the LSU training coordinator. Notable also is that the training coordinator then later left the employ of Lima. While other factors, such as the fungibility that donor funding may have contributed, the CWPPS felt a loss of direction resulting from the changes in the CWP structure, including the positions of the agents in the field.

These structural changes with the CWP had consequences for the Grade R diploma pilot. The structural support provided by Lima’s LSU training coordinator, who had been instrumental in building the regularities and habitus necessary for participants’ epistemic access to the programme, was lost. The support provided by the new part-time facilitator was inadequate in

this context, as some of the participants were suspended from the programme. Macro forces thus had a damaging effect on the experiences of the individual CWP participants at the micro-level.

### **8.3 MESO-LEVEL FORCES**

This section includes the most detailed discussion in this chapter, as it brings to the fore the meso-level institutions: Lima, NWU, the CWP and the rural schools. The concepts of field, capital and habitus provided by the Field Theory are used for analysis in the discussion. The logics and practices guiding the meso-level institutions (fields) were not always found to be in harmony during the study. Conflict arose when the fields met, resulting in one institutional logic subordinating itself to the other. In terms of the interplay of capitals, financial capital ultimately dominated the other types of capital, such as symbolic and cultural capital.

#### **8.3.1 NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY AS AN AUTONOMOUS FIELD**

The university was established by a statute and is governed by administrative structures, rules and regulations. Faculties are divided into departments and units whose operations are governed by faculty or department rules. Having established that, universities are also a microcosm of the higher education field, which in itself, subordinates to the state which has goals such as equitable distribution of income, which, in South Africa, are enshrined in the National Development Plan (NPC, 2011), also known as Vision 2030. The plan identifies the triple challenge of poverty, unemployment and inequality. Among the challenges further identified are rural poverty and the lack of qualified teachers in the Early Childhood Development phase of education to which Grade R belongs. The shortage of qualified teachers is more acute in rural schools (Mulkeen, 2008).

Having positioned the university and the National Departments of Cooperative Governance (DCOG) rules of engagement in the broader political milieu, the programmes that universities offer to the population need to be aligned with the broader goal of the state. In view of this, NWU applied to the Council for Higher Education (CHE) to offer a new qualification, namely the Diploma in Grade R Teaching. This was approved, and the first intake of students was in the second semester of 2013. In other words, universities take on their existential mandate from broader macroeconomic imperatives.

At the same time, Lima, an NGO steeped in rural development, was looking for pathways to enable participants in the Community Works Programme (CWP), a second economy strategy project (SESP), to graduate out of the programme to the first (mainstream) economy. Lima identified the Grade R Diploma as an appropriate pathway which would also meet the need for qualified Grade R teachers at rural schools. Lima approached NWU with a view to facilitate the enrolment of eligible CWP participants for the qualification. When the then director of teaching and teacher education at NWU met with Lima (Chapter Five), there was some congruence of ideas, where the CWP participants in rural areas were now to train and become qualified Grade R teachers.

Lima also facilitated access to a bursary from the government (DCOG) to pay the tuition fees for the CWP participant students enrolled at NWU. Thus, a number of seemingly disparate fields were harmonised initially by Lima, the lead agent. The state thus provided financial capital to enable the CWP participants to get intellectual capital which would enable improvement in the welfare of the participants, putting a dent in rural poverty, unemployment and inequality.

This thesis has established that NWU did not change any of the admission requirements; students were admitted after meeting all the processes and procedures, including completing application forms. Lima, however, introduced an entrance test for literacy and numeracy, however, to improve the quality of the admitted students. Lima thus went out of the way to raise the bar for admission into the Grade R teaching diploma. The university's rules of the game were therefore observed, but with an addition which enhanced the quality of admitted students.

### **8.3.2 COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAMME REGULARITIES AND LOGICS SUBORDINATING TO UNIVERSITY RULES (2013-2014)**

This study established that, in general, the CWP was able to accommodate the rules, practices, norms and values imposed by the higher education field. Document analysis and interview analysis established those subjecting applicants to numeracy and literacy tests led to fewer CWP participants being admitted to the programme, hence the need to attract other local youth from the local municipalities. In other words, an inadequate number of prospective entrants to the Grade R diploma from among the CWP participants were recruited into the programme.

Lima, through the Aids Foundation South Africa, sent out a call to the local communities inviting youth in possession of a matriculation certificate with a diploma endorsement to apply. Once the youth from the local municipalities applied and met the Diploma in grade R admission requirements, they were admitted and also joined the Community Works Programme.

Of worth noting here is the rule that the CWP is a local programme. The CWP participants had to be residing in the local community in order to participate in useful work that would benefit the local community. For the participants who were admitted to CWP through this route (to become NWU students), most had the status of participant until the DCOG approved all students to be given the stipend for the supervisor role in September 2016 (see Chapter Seven). Where CWP was unwilling to compromise was on the requirement that candidates should be local to the community and unemployed. This was complemented by NWU's rule that they must possess the Grade 12 qualification, requiring the CWP to look beyond their pool of CWP participants, but still locally.

Later, the CWP had to compromise with the requirement of the Department of Basic Education that student teachers get work experience at a school on a daily basis. The CWP did this by promoting the participant (who, as a CWP employee, had worked only eight days a month) to the position of a supervisor, required to work 20 days each month (see Chapter Seven). In other words, where the CWP clashed with the Department of Basic Education, the CWP subordinated itself so as to enable its participants to fulfil the requirements of the other field so they could graduate.

### **8.3.3 NWU VERSUS REGULARITIES OF CWP AND RURAL SCHOOLS**

NWU required that each candidate already be a Grade R practitioner either at an ECD centre or at a school (see Section 5.2.1). This requirement prompted the CWP to modify its classification of 'useful work' for the CWP participant students. Where they had performed useful work at sub-sites, they were moved to rural schools, where they could work as teacher assistants. Being at school on a full-time basis, however, created another conundrum. CWP participants were supposed to work for only eight days a month up to 100 days a year, yet getting extensive experience in the Grade R diploma programme, required that they learn in and from practice while being at school full-time (see Section 7.3.4). This clash of regularities resulted in a range of outcomes. Some CWPPS negotiated additional days at school but not every day. Whether the CWPPS were transferred immediately from sub-sites to schools also

depended on the agency of the CWP site manager (see Chapter Seven). Ultimately, some participants – especially those who were supervisors – ended up working full-time at the schools, while the others worked at the schools only when they were fulfilling the requirements of the RWIL (Work Integrated Learning for Grade R) modules. Some also worked full-time at school for the sake of experience but were only paid for eight days per month, which caused emotional (Chapter Seven) and financial stress for the participants. Schools were not necessarily close to the CWPPS' homes, where they could easily walk. Going to school daily required some to join lift clubs to the rural schools, adding to the financial strain on the CWPPS, who earned very little per month (about R500 in 2015). This dissonance between the CWP regularities, the NWU requirements and the school rules was resolved in September 2016 when the DCOG issued a letter to clarify that all CWPPS were to be at schools and were upgraded so as to receive the stipend of the CWP supervisor, to reflect that they were at schools five days a week.

#### **8.3.4 FINANCIAL CAPITAL VERSUS NWU PROGRESS IN THE GRADE R TEACHING DIPLOMA (2014)**

The hegemony of financial capital over all other forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986) was demonstrated when the state, through the DCOG, did not pay the fees of the students in their year of admission (second semester 2014). This failure to pay the tuition fees led to the participants (at the micro-level) depending on the agency of the municipal site managers (meso-level). Site managers advised the CWPPS to sit or not sit for the 2014 second-semester examinations. Most CWP participants had to start afresh in January 2015, despite having participation marks from the previous semester. Having to start again had long-term implications on the student lifecycle and life chances outside the Grade R diploma pilot, which is explained below. The failure of DCOG to pay the fees to NWU led some site managers to advise the CWP participants against sitting for examinations. The CWPPS, whose agency overcame the meso-level force (site manager advice not to write), proceeded to sit for the examinations. Examinations, thus, became a site of the struggle as early as the first semester after admission and continued to be so throughout the student lifecycle. Financial capital was utilised to mediate the positioning in the higher education field; that is, whether the player – having satisfied other conditionalities (rules of the game, such as completing assignments) – could or could not sit for the examinations. In 2014, financial capital proved to be more important than cultural capital in terms of rituals such as examination writing. After tuition fees

were paid by DCOG and the diploma programme was launched, an understanding of the higher education habitus emerged as a crucial component in the Grade R Diploma.

### **8.3.5 NWU, THE CWP AND LONG-TERM FUNDING POSSIBILITIES**

Enrolment at NWU had implications for other funding possibilities, such as National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). The starting (enrolment) date for students at NWU (a meso-level force) was July 2014. The NWU rules stated that the qualification had to be completed in five years. Rules for another source of funding which the CWPPS were eligible for, required completion of their qualification at N+2 ('N' representing the minimum regulation time) plus two years. A loss of a semester (July to December 2014) would ordinarily increase the possibility of being disqualified for such alternative funding from NSFAS on the grounds of the time from the initial date of registration. A few students among those whose studies were suspended suffered this fate, where they no longer qualified to receive NSFAS funds despite being eligible for NSFAS funding. The effect of the government not releasing the 2014 tuition fee funds to the NWU for CWPPS on time (in 2014) essentially blocked and terminated some life chances for the student participants.

In other words, the macro force of the state's inability to play by the rules of the game and pay the tuition fees on time in 2015 affected the meso-level operations, where NWU could not release the 2014 results to the students (at the micro-level). Students (at the micro-level) bore the brunt of the state's bungling of the initial payments as they were denied other life chances, such as the NSFAS funding, despite these being also provided by the same state, but with their own rules of the game. Funding, therefore, also emerged as a site of the struggle for the acquisition of the institutionalised capital (Bourdieu, 1986) of the Diploma in Grade R Teaching qualification.

### **8.3.6 IMPLICATIONS OF NON-PAYMENT OF THE INITIAL SEMESTER FEES (2014)**

The second implication of non-payment of fees by the DCOG in July 2014 was that the results of the students who used their agency and went ahead and wrote the examinations were withheld. The rules of the field of higher education (NWU) stated that results were released to students who had paid their tuition fees. As the results were withheld for the CWP participant

students, there was, therefore, no indication of their success or failure in the first examination. The participants, as they were still new to the university system, had to redo their assignments after the Grade R Teaching Diploma programme was launched at Marburg High School in February 2015. The feedback the students got on their assignments was the term ‘*SLAG*’; this meant they had already passed the module, but the meaning of this term was not clear to the students who read it. The comment also had some symbolic violence because it was in a language of power (Afrikaans). In as much as one might understand the deep history of NWU, as a former Christian National Education institution serving the Afrikaans-speaking community, this was not appropriate for the isiZulu-speaking students who were enrolled at the institution. Put differently, the macro-force of the racial structures and the apartheid state ideology mediated the symbolic violence imposed on the CWP participant students. The students had to quickly learn the university habitus, including the language of power and the practices thereof. Although the language of teaching and learning was officially English, the lecturers could not see anything wrong with using Afrikaans. The language barrier was thus an issue between the lecturers and the students; the lecturers already had the ‘feel for the game’, while the students were ‘fish out of water’ (Bourdieu, 1989), thus amplifying the power differential.

From a financial capital perspective, following the proper launch of the Grade R Diploma in 2015, the CWPPS were supported by the Dhladhla Foundation for R71 per trip to Marburg High School (the learning support centre). Students proceeded to contact sessions (as the feedback for the 2014 examinations had not yet arrived), while others also proceeded to write the examinations in 2015 for the modules they had enrolled for, despite having passed them in 2014. Participants, therefore, suffered loss as they repeated modules they had already passed or omitted to do modules they had failed, as they did not know whether they had passed or failed. Participants who repeated the modules, now with incentives to attend contact sessions with the interactive whiteboard as a medium of teaching, should have been assisted to gain epistemological access as the students were now afforded more opportunities to interact with the content by the 2015 interactive whiteboard sessions. The 2015 contact sessions were now monitored at the Port Shepstone learning centre compared to 2014, where each CWP participant studied but was not monitored.

### **8.3.7 IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPER LAUNCH OF THE GRADE R TEACHING DIPLOMA PILOT (2015)**

While Lima had brought together the relevant parties with the memorandum of understanding (MoU) in 2014, as the DCOG did not pay the tuition fees for the CWPPS in 2014, the programme could not be launched that year. The meetings (including the meeting for the MoU) took place at a strategic level where the managers and representatives of the organisations were present. The meso-level forces were thus in action. Other than Lima, the other organisations (NWU, DCOG and the Dhladhla Foundation) had not yet met the CWP participant students as a group in one space. The decision to launch the Diploma in Grade R Teaching pilot at the Marburg Learning Support Centre (LSC) for the Ugu district in 2015 was, therefore, important, especially given the 2014 false start and the consequences thereof.

The proper launch of the Grade R teaching qualification for CWP participants at Marburg, which drew attendees from the NWU, the DCOG, Dhladhla Foundation and Lima (the partnership manager), served two important purposes. The first was to indicate and confirm that the financial capital was now properly arranged for tuition to be paid to NWU and to confirm that the new CWP implementing agent (Dhladhla Foundation) was going to be on board and carry the Lima torch in realising the goals of the CWP Grade R diploma. Lima had been replaced by the Dhladhla Foundation, and the institutional capital for Lima was waning, as Dhladhla Foundation had taken over the CWP. The second purpose was to cement the operational procedure of making Marburg High School the exclusive Learning Support Centre (LSC) for the CWP Diploma in Grade R Teaching in KwaZulu-Natal. This cementing was necessary so that the CWPPS who may have gone to other LSCs, such as Durban Teachers Centre in Durban (nearest and accessible to their rural homes), were to change to Marburg High School in Port Shepstone, the site of the CWP diploma in Grade R pilot launch. In other words, access to the LSC became another 'site of the struggle' for the Grade R pilot.

While the cementing of Marburg as the exclusive learning support centre (LSC) position was a sign of the autonomy of the CWP over NWU, it was also a sign of submission of NWU to heteronomy. The rules in the NWU Grade R prospectus alluded to the need for the students to attend the contact sessions at the nearest LSC. However, the CWPPS now had to attend at the centre convenient to the implementing agent, the Dhladhla Foundation. This prevented the participants from looking anywhere else than the LSC based in Port Shepstone. The students viewed the need to use the Marburg High School centre as compulsory. It got built into the

psyche of the CWPPS that contact sessions for all the CWP participants were exclusively at the Marburg High School LSC. Using Marburg High School as the LSC and examination centre became part of the CWPPS' habitus until the funding period was over and until the researcher, as an agent, enlightened the participants of other possible and cheaper alternatives in 2018, after the end of the minimum regulation time for the Grade R diploma pilot in 2017.

### **8.3.8 IMPLICATIONS OF INSTITUTIONAL HABITUS**

Different institutions which were party to the CWP Grade R diploma brought their influence to bear on how the CWP participants experienced acquiring the qualification. North-West University changed its admission procedures from one registration across a qualification period in 2014 to annual registration in 2018. NWU's release of assessment outcomes was contingent upon the payment of tuition fees. Non-governmental organisations' funding rules insist on funds being spent only on budgeted expenditure items, and this had implications for the Lima Learning Support Unit and the training coordinator.

### **8.3.9 IMPLICATIONS OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS (NGO) FUNDING ETHOS**

In 2013, Lima was the Lead Agent responsible for technical assistance to the implementing agents. Lima, as an NGO, had extensive experience in education and in rural development. As a consequence of this habitus, Lima developed the Learner Support Unit to support learning programmes such as TREEE (for early childhood development learning programmes) and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges such as Msunduzi TVET colleges in Pietermaritzburg (where Lima's headquarters are located). The learning programmes were funded by DG Murray, another NGO. They supported Nalibali and Pilot programmes. Due to proximity, and probably Lima not having proposed a project management budget funded by the DCOG, funding from DG Murray was utilised for the recruitment of the CWP participants for the Diploma in Grade R Teaching students. The CWPPS reported that they were hosted at luxury hotels, such as Margate Hotel, during their recruitment processes, where they wrote the entrance tests in literacy and numeracy (as reported by the training coordinator). However, when DG Murray discovered that a significant amount of funds had been spent supporting a government-sponsored programme, they stopped funding Lima. This

partially explains the exit of the training coordinator who was dedicated to the Grade R diploma and her replacement by a part-time training facilitator.

This case indicates some form of autonomy and heteronomy where Lima, as an NGO, relied on funding to see their projects to the end. It appeared they had no autonomy over the utilisation of funds given to them. The funding had to be used for a particular budgeted purpose, hence the withdrawal of funding to the Grade R diploma and the departure of the dedicated and passionate agent for the Grade R diploma despite the programme being in the nascent stages in 2015. The departure of the key agent caused difficulties for the CWPPS in their student walk, as detailed next.

### **8.3.10 DEPARTURE OF THE LIMA LEARNER SUPPORT UNIT TRAINING COORDINATOR (2015)**

The training coordinator was synonymous with the CWP Grade R diploma. She was the North West University that the participants knew. She was, therefore, an institution in the eyes of the CWP participants. The culture of paternalism she had inculcated in the student participants had become part of the students' habitus. The students became used to taking their problems to the training coordinator to solve. She addressed all the students' queries, from financing to academic development, in liaison with the project officer from the NWU. Her departure from the Lima LSU (and the CWP Grade R pilot project) saw Lima leaving the gap only partially filled due to the reduced capital and influence of the CWP, as Lima employed a part-time learning facilitator thereafter. Institutional memory was lost when the training facilitator left, along with all her personal emergent powers and properties (Archer, 2005). The researcher attempted to fill the gap created by the departure of the training coordinator, in the process, continuing the culture of paternalism the participants were used to, to some extent, by liaising with NWU on their behalf.

The departure of the training coordinator as a key agent marked the decline of the influence of Lima in the participant students' lives. After Lima's Learner Support Unit eventually closed in June 2017, there was little further support from Lima. The part-time LSU facilitator was no longer as involved. The meso-level support thus waned with the loss of the training coordinator, who had a passion for the programme and held the institutional memory and a rapport with the CWP participants that dated back to the days of recruitment – unlike her successor. The

researcher was able to provide meso-level support as they had the necessary higher education habitus to be able to understand and negotiate university procedures on behalf of the students.

### **8.3.11 CHANGE IN THE GEOPOLITICAL LANDSCAPE AND MUNICIPAL DEMARCATION**

During the period of this study, the Ugu District Municipality changed from having six local municipalities (where two were urban while four were rural) to four. The CWPPS came from rural municipalities (see Chapter Five). The municipal demarcation board determined that the municipalities be merged and the boundaries of the Ugu district revised. Vulamehlo and Eziqoleni Municipalities were disestablished. The Hibiscus and Eziqoleni Municipalities were merged into the Ray Nkonyeni Municipality, while a significant proportion of the Vulamehlo municipality went under the Greater eThekweni (Durban) Municipality (GEM), with the other part being merged with Umdoni Local Municipality. Ugu district was left with four local municipalities: Ray Nkonyeni, Umziwabantu, Umthwalume and Umdoni.

The programme that prevailed in the GEM was the expanded public works programme (EPWP). The CWP was a new concept. Without the history and experience of the CWP, some CWPPS were instructed to leave the school as a CWP site and revert to the sub-site. The new site manager questioned what the CWPPS would be doing, especially during the holiday period when they were not at school. This finding suggests that the new site managers were not briefed about the Grade R diploma pilot, hence the instruction to CWP participants to return to sub-sites from the rural school. The return of CWP participants from the school may have resulted in the experience of the CWP participant students being unfavourable. Given the context of rural culture, a return to the CWP site was experienced as a demotion when compared to working at a school as a teacher.

The change of municipal demarcations implied that the institutional structure (of the CWP) was not stable, the institutional rules and regulations were fluid, and it was possible for the programmes such as the Grade R teaching diploma to be disrupted with far-reaching consequences for the emotional wellbeing of affected participants. Participants felt ashamed and embarrassed about being downgraded from the status of teacher and returning to '*bushing*' (a term CWP participants used for clearing bushes) and clearing paths in the veld for learners.

It is suggested that the CWP improves its approach to the handover of programmes from one implementing agent to the other and from one site to the next to avoid such emotional turmoil.

The site manager, by removing the CWP participants from the school sub-site, was using the power derived from their position in the CWP field. The site manager's decision to return a participant to the sub-site also highlighted the CWPPS' relative position in the field as lower than that of the site manager. The return to the sub-site represented a downgrade of status and, therefore, of the symbolic capital gained from being a CWP participant working as a teacher assistant. Had the CWP institutional structure been stable, with Lima continuing and bringing its institutional memory to bear, the CWPPS would never have had to endure the humiliation and the concomitant loss of self-esteem and self-worth that went with the return to the CWP sub-site from school. At school, CWP participants usually worked in the classrooms and thus were not exposed to the elements, while at the subsite, the participant worked outside at the mercy of the natural environment, including the rain, the sun, the wind and the cold.

In conclusion, the change in the macro forces of the geopolitical landscape had negative consequences on the experience of the CWPPS during the study for the GRTD at the micro level. The experience at the micro level was mediated by the meso-level forces – in this case, the CWP site management. The negative experiences, which also caused emotional stress to the CWPPS, occurred as the social agents interpreted the rules in the emergent field of CWP as well as their understanding of the EPWP norms and standards. Social agents' cultural capital and habitus were key in how they experienced the struggle to obtain a livelihood from the formal Grade R qualification.

### **8.3.12 NWU ADMISSION AND REGISTRATION PROCEDURES**

The Grade R diploma pilot was a project sponsored by the DCOG, and therefore admission was facilitated by Lima. Students were registered for the whole three-year programme at once. Hence the students got automatic reregistration even when they failed many modules from one year level to the next. This became clear when CWP participants were given examination timetables with up to 20 modules in the second year. The rules of the game for a bursary or project students appear to be different from those who were paying personally. This became clear upon the expiry of the memorandum of agreement for the minimum regulation time, at which point the participants had to learn to register annually and manually. It can be inferred

that having a CWP bursary from the DCOG in some way delayed the acquisition of the university habitus and cultural capital. The development of the participants' agency thus was delayed owing to being in a government-sponsored programme. The meso level (being a project) impacted the micro adversely, despite good intentions. In other words, the individual was not adequately socialised about the ritual of registration because they were part of a project. The CWP participants had to reach out to the researcher to assist with their registration in their fourth year of study as they had no track record of getting registered as individuals prior to 2018.

### **8.3.13 CLASH OF THE RULES OF THE GAME: TWO EXAMINATION OPPORTUNITIES VERSUS BURSAR'S DECISION**

This section explains the implementation of the rules of the game, expressed through the suspension of students from the Grade R Teaching Diploma programme. This major event in the lifecycle of the Grade R diploma pilot occurred in February 2017. The bursar (the DCOG), after the students had completed two-and-a-half years of study (from June 2014 to December 2016), decided to suspend the registration of the CWPPS who had not acquired a certain number of credits. The suspension, however, disregarded the rule that a student was afforded two examination opportunities for a module annually. The suspension was difficult to accept for the CWPPS since their socialisation to the registration ritual was inadequate. Registration occurred automatically, and there was also some communication breakdown as students received the third-year study material from the university before they could establish that they were suspended. More details regarding the intervening period leading to the suspension are given below. In other words, the bursar (the DCOG), as the referee in the field, with information about academic progress from the university (the higher education field), decided that those CWPPS who had shown unsatisfactory academic progress would have their registration suspended. However, the university, Lima and DCOG had made some efforts to assist students at risk, including travelling to physically meet with the CWPPS and encourage more effort and excellence.

### **8.3.14 THE BURSARY CONDITIONALITY AND HABITUS ACQUISITION**

NWU appreciated that they had admitted a special group of students. They went out of their way to appoint a project officer who would attend to queries from students on the CWP DCOG

project. Therefore, any issue regarding the students would be sent to this officer, and they would work it out with NWU. The total funding from DCOG to NWU ran into a couple of million rands over the three-year period. As a compromise, NWU did not require that the CWPPS observe some of the progression rules, such as limits to the number of modules they could study in a study period or observing the maximum number of modules a student could carry from one year to another. NWU may have become complicit in the lack of access with success by not observing their own rules determining progression to the next study period. Granting concessionary treatment of the Grade R Diploma pilot project students through registration across a qualification period became a source of concern as the NWU again agreed to suspend students who were eligible for a second examination opportunity in the semester immediately after the first sitting of examinations. The second examination opportunity was the distance education equivalent of a supplementary examination that was not granted to the CWP participant student.

### **8.3.15 AT-RISK INTERVENTION STRATEGY**

In 2016, the parties to the Memorandum of Understanding devised a strategy to support students at risk of not completing the qualification. While it was not reasonable to register for as many as twenty modules, this was possible as the NWU system automatically re-registered the students (see Section 8.8.3). Students failing many modules may have been an indicator that they may have been neglected. Allowing registration for twenty modules may have constituted symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1986) against the students who were still finding their feet in higher education. After noting the high failure rate, NWU, the DCOG and Lima, devised a student-at-risk intervention strategy. They engaged the CWP implementing agent at the time, the Dhladhla Foundation, and met with the CWPPS and warned them of the possibility that the bursary would be withdrawn in August 2016. At the meeting, which included the NWU Grade R teaching diploma programme leadership and the part-time facilitator at Lima, the participants were given an extract of the bursary terms and conditions that they ought to meet to pass their modules and to avoid later being withdrawn.

The students-at-risk meeting, therefore, encouraged the CWPPS to work hard. The meeting appears to have received attendance by all the CWP participants because the suspended set of students did not understand this development quickly. They proceeded to do their assignments and expected to sit for examinations in 2017. The suspended students sent their assignments,

and they were not marked in 2017. The suspended students also struggled for clarity on their situation. They could not get the timetables as they were not registered at NWU.

In other words, an intervention strategy was devised and implemented at the meso-level, but it did not find full cooperation at the micro-level because eight individual (micro-level) participants were suspended (as discussed in the following section). The experience of suspension was traumatic and emotional for the participants (as discussed in Chapter Seven).

### **8.3.16 SUSPENSION FROM STUDIES AND NON-OBSERVANCE OF THE TWO EXAM OPPORTUNITIES RULE**

The suspension of participants from studies also became a problematic outcome in itself. The NWU rules stated that the participant student was eligible for two consecutive examination opportunities for all registered modules. However, due to not having met the condition for the bursary regarding satisfactory academic progress, the student was suspended from their studies. The student thus lost the opportunity to take the second examination. The researcher queried this point and advocated for one participant; as a result, this student was eventually allowed to re-register and continue to study on Grade R Teaching Pilot terms and conditions. Once suspended (i.e. no longer registered with the NWU) from the Grade R teaching pilot, some of the student participants returned to becoming CWP participants at the pay level they had had before joining the GRTD; they could no longer be maintained at the supervisor level. Others maintained the status of supervisor, but as there was no justification for them to continue working at the rural school, they returned to the CWP sub-site. The university's compliance with the instruction from another meso-level force, the bursar (DCOG), thus led to adverse outcomes for the CWPPS (micro level). If NWU had observed the second opportunity rule before suspending students, it is possible that fewer students would have been suspended.

The suspension of students illuminates a clash between the logics and regularities of two fields. The field of higher education operated independently of the field of bursary financing. Their regularities clashed, resulting in negative consequences for participants. To make matters worse, communication regarding the decision to suspend the students was poor. The Open Learning Group, which provided logistical support in 2016, was not informed about the suspension of the eight students. Neither was the suspension decision communicated to officers at the call centre. As a result, when some of the participants called the call centre for an explanation, they were advised that their second year was 'paid for in full' (which was not the

case). Based on this information, the suspended students continued to do their second-year assignments as normal. They only became aware that they had been suspended when they did not receive their timetables. In this case, financial capital triumphed over cultural capital. It took the researcher's own emergent powers and properties (Archer, 2005) to enable just one of the students to write the second examination (see 8.3.8.3). Institutional habitus was not taken as important. The rules regarding the second exam opportunity were ignored. Six of the eight suspended CWP participants thus never completed their studies with NWU. The other one had to pay all the fees on their own, with the researcher facilitating their registration process.

### **8.3.17 SUSPENSION OF STUDIES AND INADEQUATE ACADEMIC SOCIALISATION OF THE CWPPS**

In hindsight, it is evident that certain rituals observed for normal university admission, such as annual registration, were not observed in the Grade R teaching diploma (as indicated in Section 8.8.3). The CWPPS were registered just once for the programme as part of a project. As a result, they were automatically re-registered each year instead of going through the annual ritual of registration. Their once-off registration, however, made it possible for them to be registered for as many as twenty modules. The study established that the CWPPS had not been aware of the existence of the registration ritual; otherwise, they would have seen on their proof of registration that the number of modules was not manageable and thus prepared themselves for fewer modules. Unfortunately, they only found out which exams to sit for when the timetables were communicated to them. Timetable clashes were noted as the sequencing of knowledge, and the pacing were brought into question. Still, access to the timetable was a controversial issue which initiated the involvement of the researcher.

The seemingly inadequate socialisation of the CWPPS into the higher education habitus led to a loss to society (deadweight loss – an effort that did not result in any outcome) when the CWPPS had to do assignments for courses for which they were not registered. Also, suspension from studies caused the students to experience shame when they returned from their studies empty-handed, while their communities may have celebrated their admission to a previously advantaged university. In other words, occurrences at the micro and individual level had consequences at the meso or community level, i.e. communities were happy with individual students registering with the university.

### **8.3.18 ISSUES WITH THE DELIVERY OF STUDY MATERIALS**

The suspension from studies of eight participant students was effected through non-registration in 2017 after the suspension got implemented. However, the suspended students still received the third-year study material, which may have caused confusion as to whether they were indeed suspended. They were later directed to return the GRTD third-year study material to NWU by depositing the material at the CWP site offices. The alternative to having proof of registration was the delivery of study material to confirm that one was indeed registered.

This study established that the grade R diploma was a paper-based programme with implications that it utilised correspondence, like in the first generation of distance education (Dron & Anderson, 2014). After formal registration in June 2014, study material was delivered to the CWPPS, but then the bursar, DCOG, did not pay fees to NWU (see Chapter Five). Mixed messaging or signals also occurred when the study material was delivered in the third year to suspended participants. The suspension of the students had not been communicated to the study material office. The decision to recall the study material was then communicated from the CWP office through the implementing agent, the Dhladhla Foundation; however, not many of the students returned their study materials.

The ethnographic and extended case method used in this study helped to establish that the agency of the CWPPS was developed through studying and becoming aware of the possible weak points in the Grade R Teaching Diploma. They understood that Lima was no longer in the picture and that the site managers had little power over them. They thus exercised their power to refuse to return the study material to the site management offices.

### **8.3.19 SUPPORT MECHANISM TO PULL THE DIFFERENT LOGICS TOGETHER**

Document analysis revealed that structures needed to be in place to which agents could defer when challenges came up with the programme. The Memorandum of Understanding, the bursary agreement forms, and the social media platform were some of the structuring mechanisms that made success possible for the Grade R Diploma pilot. Within these structures, there were agents who gave expression to the documents that may have been drawn up or who invited the CWPPS to the platform.

### **8.3.20 CONNECTING STRUCTURES AND PLATFORMS**

Lima was responsible for partnership management and the memorandum of understanding, which served the purpose of structuring each partner's role adherence which made the GRTD pilot possible. Lima, the organisation which had midwived the bursary idea, was later side-lined from the CWP and, later, the three-organisation memorandum (drawn up by Lima). Lima thus was the partnership manager responsible for bringing the partnership together, yet its Learner Support Unit was later closed. The researcher then joined the process and learnt the ropes on the way, learning about the existence of online resources which could be shared with the participants via WhatsApp, which had low resource requirements compared to email. When the researcher created the WhatsApp groups, communities of practice emerged, providing platforms for student-student interaction, which were necessary for the success of the students who were not suspended.

On the side of NWU, the study material that was delivered was accompanied by a comprehensive yearbook for the Grade R Diploma. The yearbook, or prospectus, contained the rules for the diploma, the assignment due dates, the tentative interactive whiteboard (contact sessions) and examinations timetables.

The NWU project officer initially liaised with the Lima Learning Support Unit. When the officers changed, their institutional memory was lost to the programme. The connecting mechanisms of the Grade R teaching diploma were strong in the initial stages, while the power play in the subsequent period weakened them. The thesis suggests the need to have these supporting mechanisms structured in a sustainable way so that access to success is enhanced in higher education.

### **8.3.21 CWP SITE MANAGERS AS CONNECTING MECHANISMS**

After the CWP sub-sited served as the collection and deposit point for applications and applicants during the CWP Grade R Diploma pilot recruitment drive, the CWP site managers were instrumental in facilitating the move of participant students from the CWP sub-site to the rural schools as sites for useful work. In other words, they served as the transition mechanisms for movement from the CWP field to the rural schools as a result of participants' enrolment in higher education in the diploma in Grade R Teaching at the NWU.

Noteworthy, and very important, were the personal emergent powers and properties of the local municipal site manager as an agent. Those (site managers) with strong self-efficacy were able to immediately transfer the enrolled cohort of CWP participants to the rural schools, while those who lacked confidence could not decide for the students; hence, some CWP participant students went to schools but negotiated the terms of working at the school. The CWP prescribed only eight days a month, and as the other days were not paid for, the CWP site managers could not force the participants to be at school for the whole time as this went against the regularities of the CWP field. One site manager could give a CWP participant maternity leave (Chapter Seven), while another stated that there was no provision for maternity leave and removed the student from the CWP register when they were unable to work due to the birth of their child. The CWP regularities appeared oblivious to the realities the CWP participants faced, impacting their experience negatively.

### **8.3.22 PRINCIPALS AT THE SCHOOLS**

Being a Diploma in Grade R Teaching student demanded that the student be a practitioner at the school. This was non-negotiable, as the qualification sought to be a professional development tool for the underqualified Grade R teachers (already) at rural schools. NWU, therefore, tweaked the rules so that they could also be part of rural development for the ECD. For this, the students needed to be at school daily for the three-year period. In this case, complementarity between the regularities in the field of rural schools, NWU and the CWP emerged. If the CWP needed to produce a proper Grade R teacher, they needed to do the CWP useful work at schools to get adequate experience. In other words, observance of the rules of the game for the Grade R qualification led to the CWP participants in rural areas graduating from the sub-site to the school, depending on the agency of the site manager (as explained in Section 8.11.2). The principal was also important in granting the CWP participant study leave when they had to prepare to write for the examinations while their CWP site was the rural school. Another observation was that in the education field, the enrolment for studies could lead to a student applying for study leave to concentrate on studying, yet for the CWP participants, it meant more days at school and probably less time for studying.

### **8.3.23 REGULARITIES AT SCHOOL VERSUS THE CWP RULES**

Another meso-level clash emerged regarding the conflicting time demands between the two institutions, the CWP and the schools. Here the regularities of the CWP, where the participants were required to be at work for eight days per month, clashed with the regularities of NWU, which required them to be at school from Monday to Friday for at least twenty days a month. What approximated that amount of time at the CWP was the work of the supervisor. Not all participants were at supervisor level. A variety of experiences were then reported as to how much time was spent in the schools, but the solution came in August 2016 from the DCOG, who wrote a letter advising that all the participants were to be at school and also be remunerated at the supervisor level. This declaration also brought new challenges, depending on the school or the context of the student. For a student who had been working for twenty days a month but getting paid for eight, this was a welcome development. In other words, the CWP attempted to harmonise the regularities of schools and the need to give the CWPPS a full school experience. The R2 400 monthly stipend approved by the DCOG was significantly more than the R600 that the participant who had not been supervisors had earned and enabled them to buy appropriate clothes for their role as student teachers.

Problematics between the regularities of CWP participation versus being in the rural school manifested in two instances. Firstly, the participant student may have worked at the subsite as a supervisor, not the rural school. As a Grade R diploma student, they needed to fulfil the RWIL component by attending the requisite three consecutive weeks, or they needed to change to being full-time at school, yet there was no provisioning for their replacement at the subsite (as explained in Chapter Seven). The second instance arose where the CWP sub-site was also at the rural school, and the CWPPS doubled up by working for both the CWP as a supervisor and yet also worked as a teacher assistant. This meant a significant burden on the CWP participant carrying out both duties. The agency of the principal came to the fore where they could assist with moderating the duty load of the CWP participant student. The regularities of the CWP, therefore, clashed with those of the rural schools, but the rural school logics prevailed so that the CWP participant fulfilled the requirements to get the Grade R diploma.

### **8.3.24 PRINCIPALS AND AWARENESS OF DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CWP**

At the CWP site, local reference committees (LRCs) appointed from the community proved important. The LRCs consisted of councillors, community caregivers, police, school principals and traditional leaders. These met and identified useful work for their different sites (Andersson & Alexander, 2016). Where a school principal was part of the LRC, they could be amenable to the presence of the CWP participants at their school for the Grade R Diploma pilot. However, those that did not understand the pilot sometimes made unreasonable requests. Some principals requested another letter describing the duties of CWPPS at school and listing the dates the student would be at the school (Chapter Seven). This resulted in the CWP participant staying at the sub-site since the local municipal site manager and the Dhladhla Foundation did not have the authority to write the letter. The DCOG was also not able to provide additional documentation over and above the instruction that all Grade R teacher diploma participants were to work full-time at the schools. In cases where the site manager was agential and active, the participants did not experience these challenges. Some CWPPS continued to work at the schools despite being suspended, or when they had completed the qualification and were looking for a Grade R teaching post. Thus, the principals' personal emergent powers and properties assisted or obstructed participants' completion of the Grade R diploma qualification. The institution of the principal served either as an enabler or an inhibitor to participants having a positive experience in the CWP diploma in Grade R.

### **8.3.25 EFFECTS OF SILENT RULES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GRTD PARTICIPANTS AND MATERNITY LEAVE**

A few different applications of the maternity leave policy emerged from the data, illustrating the difference between where rules are silent and where the rules are explicit. In one municipality, the CWPPS was allowed to go on maternity leave for over a year, while in another, the site manager indicated there was no provision for maternity leave, and the participant had to leave the CWP if she could not work; in this case, the participant fortunately found a post as a Grade R teacher three months after having to leave the CWP.

Agents in the different fields thus used their capitals to better their position in the high-stakes game. Bourdieu, 1986 argued that capitals had conversion ratios. The CWP participant used their matric certificate to enrol in the formal qualification. Enrolment in the Grade R Teaching diploma programme could also be viewed as an attempt by participants to increase their

professional and academic capital by gaining symbolic capital in the form of the certificate, which would then lead to a better position in the field of primary education while also graduating from the CWP field. The poverty and unemployment field gave rise to the CWP field, which, in turn, gave rise to the Grade R Teaching diploma field. The transformative power of education enabled participants departure from the Grade R diploma project to mainstream employment.

### **8.3.26 COORDINATING MECHANISM FOR GRADE R DIPLOMA PROGRAMMES**

Subotzky and Prinsloo's (2011) model describes the student walk from recruitment to graduation and identifies the need for a mechanism to link the university habitus to the student habitus. The model is silent about whether the university should have explicit structures in place to ensure that the student acquired the university habitus. In this thesis, initially, the training coordinator, through her experiences and passion, helped the participants to bridge the articulation gap between the student and the university. This included bridging the geographical gap since students resided far from the university. The training coordinator understood the CWP participant student walk as she had the benefit of history and experience. Her habitus as a teacher, and also a student from the rural areas, motivated her to treat each CWPPS as very important and in need of personal assistance. She also had capital and power as she read and understood NWU's rules. Once she had left the programme, it became more difficult for the participants to continue. Some participants persisted and persevered, while others gave up; some were suspended from their studies.

The emergence of the researcher as a coordinating mechanism was also mediated by his rural habitus and his higher education habitus, both as a student in the field of academic development and as a lecturer involved with teacher training. This educational capital proved useful when certain rules, such as the last outstanding module, needed to be invoked. The researcher's involvement started when CWPPS requested him to assist with the timetable. The request for a timetable activated more interest, the search of which then led to other online but crucial resources necessary to make the largely paper-based programme accessible to the CWPPS. Further investigations revealed that the NWU widened opportunities for students by availing internet at the learning support centres. Internet access was necessary for other purposes, such as online registration for Work Integrated Learning. The timetable also emerged as a crucial artefact which could be accessed online or requested from the NWU via email. Writing an

email required data or internet, which could be available via NWU student Wi-Fi at the learning support centre. The timetable also emerged as a structuring mechanism, the availability of which could enhance the experience of the Grade R diploma.

The researcher's presence in the study, justified by the methodology of the Extended Case Method, added a mentoring mechanism or structure to the pilot programme. The thesis proposes that all government-sponsored programmes have a disinterested party who understands the student plight while also knowledgeable of the university habitus. This (disinterested) party should also act as an ongoing monitoring and evaluation mechanism. The party can guide the student walk towards the acquisition of the university habitus. Throwing the funding at the problems will not yield the desired results. There needs to be a programme that includes a passionate individual who also understands the higher education habitus, while also appreciating the rural habitus and the low socioeconomic status of the enrolled students. Such a structure would have an aerial view of the different parts of a programme, enable troubleshooting of constrictions and ensure that the government funding did not go to waste, as occurred when the students were suspended and discontinued their studies.

#### **8.4 MICRO-LEVEL ANALYSIS**

This third and last part of the synthesis recognises the participants as individuals. The analysis focuses on the micro level, although with cognisance of the impact of the meso and macro level forces on the micro level. At the micro level, the focus is specifically on the emotional experiences of the participants during their journey through the Grade R diploma pilot project.

CWPPS experienced a range of emotions in response to their experiences over the period of study (as discussed in Chapter Seven). Their emotional journey also followed a temporal journey, where initial periods were exciting as they applied and got invited to write entrance tests. As the tests were administered at hotels, they found this quite exciting. Later, the CWPPS got even more excited when they got admitted to NWU at the campus of a previously advantaged institution (Potchefstroom). Their communities and families were proud that they were enrolled at a university when there were no universities in the Ugu District.

#### **8.4.1 CWP PARTICIPANT RELOCATION FROM SUB-SITE TO RURAL SCHOOL**

As the pilot programme demanded that the participant needed to relocate to the field of the rural school, the participant no longer had to wear the CWP orange work suit, which improved their sense of self-worth. As the CWPPS did useful work in the basic education field, they still needed to observe the diploma module assessment rules, including the RWIL. They had to submit portfolios, which were not easy to compile and were costly, as the different components needed financial capital, which they did not have, as they earned only R600 per month. This resulted in some discouragement. Working for twenty days while only being paid for eight days each month was viewed by the CWPPS as a challenge. However, attending the contact sessions, where modules were explained during the interactive whiteboard sessions, made some feel supported, and they began to pass the portfolio modules, making them excited and hopeful.

#### **8.4.2 CWP PARTICIPANT INTERACTION WITH THE EXAMINATIONS AND RESULTS**

Examination periods caused stress to the CWPPS as they generally struggled to be in possession of the timetable artefact needed as an entry requirement. CWPPS also had to leave their loved ones to be close to the examination centre venues due to geographical distance, which caused anxiety as this was a new but necessary development to ensure success during the studies. The receipts of assessment results were a time when the CWPPS felt depressed if they failed and hopeful when they passed well.

#### **8.4.3 CWP PARTICIPANT AND ELEVATION TO SUPERVISOR STATUS**

When the letter elevating all CWPPS to the level of supervisor came in August 2016, the participants were exhilarated as their incomes quadrupled from R600 to R2400. For participants whose total income had been R600, the jump was significant as they were able to function better as teacher assistants at the rural school. The low point came in February 2017, when the happiness of becoming a supervisor level in the CWP was dashed as the registration as an NWU student was suspended for students with unsatisfactory academic progress. Emotions of shame and disgust followed when the reality of no longer being a student sunk into the CWPPS' mind. Suspended CWPPS were required to return from the rural school to

the CWP sub-site to do the CWP useful work. The increased income got reduced to the original R600, which caused emotional stress to the affected student.

#### **8.4.4 CWP PARTICIPANT AND GRADUATION AT THE MAIN CAMPUS**

Students who graduated in minimum time in 2018 were also treated to the once-in-a-lifetime experience of travelling by aeroplane after also travelling in a hired car from the CWP sub-site to King Shaka International airport. On top of the coverage of all transport costs, the DCOG also covered the cost of hiring the graduation attire for the CWPPS. To cap it all, the graduates were invited and attended a post-graduation dinner with the Deputy Minister of the DCOG, where they felt appreciated and valued. At the dinner, they were the guests of honour.

The best CWP participant was later invited to the budget presentation by the KZN Minister of Education (Member of the Executive Council-MEC) as their (MEC's) special guest in 2018, which constituted a huge boost to the participants' confidence and sense of self-worth. Personal esteem challenges were later faced when they struggled to find employment as a grade R teacher; some became despondent. Some felt discouraged as there was no clear articulation pathway into the Bachelor of Education. They needed to apply afresh. Bursary and funding opportunities such as NSFAS were no longer obvious because the CWP participant now possessed a qualification. The Grade R diploma made the graduates underqualified. A Bachelor of Education qualification made them fully qualified.

#### **8.4.5 CWP PARTICIPANTS AFTER THE MINIMUM DIPLOMA STUDY PERIOD**

CWP participant students who did not make it in minimum regulation time got worried that they could no longer get support as the bursary period had lapsed. After the bursary subsistence period, anxiety about university fee payment crept in. The researcher intervened and shared their fears with the bursar and the university. The bursar liaised with the university to allow them to complete the qualification. The registration ritual was difficult for the CWPPS as they had inadequate socialisation. The need for proof of registration would emerge when NWU observed its rules of the game where an unregistered student could not get their script marked. The NWU assignments office gave hope to the CWPPS as they could speak in their language and request a callback. When the participants graduated, they got quite excited that they could now practice as Grade R teachers. The graduation date was another high point in the GRTD

pilot as emotions overwhelmed the participants, who cried tears of joy at their success. The crowning moment came for the participant when they were offered a post as a Grade R teacher.

## **8.5 DISCUSSION**

This discussion gives the conclusions that can be drawn from the earlier synthesis of the thesis. It emerges that the inequitable distribution of resources, information and availability of capitals has a negative effect on the realisation of social protection through higher education. A seemingly insignificant occurrence, such as a phone call, could make a huge difference regarding whether a student continued with their studies or not. Asymmetrical power distribution was observed when some site managers enabled the transfer of the CWP participant from the sub-site to the rural school site. Unequal distribution of information was observed when the CWP sites provided different levels of support to their students with resultant different outcomes from the diploma. The CWP also found itself having the least power compared to other meso-level institutions. As the most emergent structure, it had to give in to the rules and regulations of the other fields.

When considering how the CWP Participant struggled during the study of the Grade R diploma, it emerged that there is a need for a coordinating structure to hold the conflicting logics together. The need for a coordinating mechanism is so crucial that, without it, the programme may not be as successful as desired. Macro-level forces do influence activities that take place at the meso level, and these, in turn, affect the individual at the micro level.

## **8.6 CONCLUSION**

The CWP Grade R diploma programme was developed in alignment with the Sustainable Goals, primarily with SDG 4: Quality Education but also supports SDGs 5, 8, 10, and 17. SDGs emanated from the supranational forces represented by the Millenium Development Goals. This directive (from SDGs) at the supranational level was followed through by South Africa at the national level through Vision 2030, the National Development Plan, which sought to deal with the triple challenge of hunger, poverty and unemployment. Unemployed youth residing in marginalised areas (also called the second economy) were enrolled in the Community Work Programme, a second economy strategy project. The lead agent for the CWP, Lima, sought to enhance the level of qualifications at rural schools in synergy with helping CWP participants

graduate from the second economy to the mainstream economy. Selected participants were enrolled at NWU in a distance Grade R diploma programme. During their studies, their CWP useful work was shifted to assisting at rural schools where they could complete teacher training and get further experience on the job, thus enhancing their employability. The CWP site – the site of the struggle in the field of poverty alleviation – thus shifted to the school. The dynamics of the clashes between the regularities of the school and the complimentary logics of the CWP had a range of effects on the experience of the CWP participants as they continued their studies. The positive experience of being enrolled at a university was celebrated at the launch of the programme in 2015; later, this experience was capped by a formal dinner at their graduation ceremony, sponsored by the Deputy Minister in the department that had provided their bursaries. In the intervening period, the rural capital brought by the students was not validated. The CWP participant students had to learn the Grade R teaching habitus and the rural school habitus. The doxa, habitus and capitals valued in higher education became more important. The coordinating mechanism was provided by the Lima training coordinator until their position was terminated; after this, the students were assisted by the researcher, which employed the extended case method rooted in the critical paradigm and did not wait for the completion of studies to intervene. The 16 participants completed their qualification and were appointed to teaching posts, thus graduating from the second economy strategy project to mainstream employment as Grade R teachers.

## **9 CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

### **9.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter provided a synthesis of the study using a theoretical framework based on Bourdieu's field theory concepts of field, capital, and habitus; and Margret Archer's (2007) concepts of structure, culture and agency. Drivers that saw the conceptualisation of the social protection programme and higher education were discussed using macro, meso and micro perspectives. This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

### **9.2 REFLECTIONS ON THE USE OF THE EXTENDED CASE METHOD**

The researcher adopted the Extended Case Method (ECM), undergirded by his belief in empowering rural students to enhance their chances of achieving their aspirations for their lives. Empowerment and emancipation form the bedrock of the critical paradigm. The choice of the ECM was motivated by the axiological assumptions of the researcher, where they chose not to be a neutral observer but to intervene to improve the outcomes of the CWP participants in the Grade R diploma pilot.

The researcher interacted ethnographically with CWP participants who were studying in their contexts, which included their homes, the CWP sites, the rural school and the learning support centre sites, which also doubled as the assignment submission sites and examination sites. Observing the CWP participants in these different contexts enabled the collection of ethnographic data on the typical daily life experiences of the CWP participant. The instruments of data collection were semi-structured interviews, document analysis, WhatsApp communication and observations in the various study contexts. The interviews were especially useful at the start as the researcher sought to gain insight into the CWP and develop rapport with participants so as to conduct the research from the position of an insider.

The rurality of the participants' homes presented access challenges to the researcher. WhatsApp enabled the participants to access the researcher to discuss the challenges they faced more easily. The researcher's positionality as an insider enabled him to liaise between NWU, the CWP and the bursar as needed. The researcher's interactions with the participants and other players in the Grade R diploma pilot were instrumental to the pilot achieving the outcome of the CWP participants graduating both from NWU with a diploma and graduating to the mainstream economy when they were hired as Grade R teachers.

### **9.3 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The study revealed that the CWP participants became empowered when they received their Grade R teaching qualification and were hired as Grade R teachers, thereby graduating from the second economy to the first economy, which was the goal for which the Grade R diploma programme was conceptualised. Participants' epistemological access to higher education was facilitated by the Lima training coordinator and the researcher. While this assistance may have tended to be paternalistic on some occasions, over time, the agency and digital literacy of the CWP participants developed. Specifically, they learnt to use email and WhatsApp. They were able to find and use online resources on the university's website. They were able to apply to enrol for a bachelor's degree qualification using capital from the diploma in Grade R. The positive impact of the pilot project resulted in increased income, as envisaged by the United Nations (2015) report.

The fact that participants were placed at rural schools for their CWP work facilitated their gaining teaching experience, which increased their employability after they earned their qualifications. By the end of the Grade R diploma programme, the CWP participants had an average of more than two years of experience in a rural school environment. The majority of CWP participants whose studies were not suspended found employment as Grade R teachers using the social capital of the community of practice of the Grade R diploma WhatsApp group, where jobs and contacts were shared. These contacts and networks continued to expand. Mlatsheni (2007) and Guma (2011) argue that South African youths do not have sufficient networks for employment opportunities. Participation in the CWP, therefore, enabled the CWP participants to support each other and network regarding employment opportunities.

#### **9.3.1 ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY**

The methodology of the study, the Extended Case Method as applied in educational contexts is original. The emancipatory element where the researcher became an intercessor for and link for the students and the university, while not being intrinsically aligned or employed by the university is a novel phenomenon. When the researcher acted as an advocate for student (that were participating in the study, that was also having no precedent. The research advocates for a neutral party that understands the rural student plight while also understanding the university

rules so that the student walk is more generative and better and empowered graduates emerge from the university(ies).

### **9.3.2 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

**Lack of coordination and timeliness of DCOG's payment of tuition fees impacted students' academic progress.** In the debate regarding government-sponsored programmes, government as employer of last resort (GELR) programmes do not always start and end as envisaged (Masondo, 2018). In this pilot, CWP students enrolled for the diploma in Grade R in July 2014, but it was only launched in March 2015. The bursary from DCOG did not pay tuition fees for the first semester that CWP participants were enrolled. This added an additional semester to the three years by which the qualification was supposed to be completed. This additional time impacted the CWP participant's life chances, as they were no longer eligible for another bursary through the National Student Financial Aid Scheme, effectively denying the student another shot at life-changing opportunities.

**Lack of coordination between state institutions.** Furthermore, communication of decisions by government departments is usually slow and impeded by red tape and bureaucracy (Brewer & Walker, 2010). When DCOG decided to suspend some of the CWP participants, the decision was made in February when a new academic year had already started, and other functions of the university system were already in operation for the new year. The university had already sent third-year study material to the students whom DCOG had decided to suspend. This resulted in the students being confused about whether they were actually suspended or not; as a result, some completed assignments were never marked. In this case, financial capital took precedence over the doxa of higher education since the NWU cooperated with the funder's (DCOG) suspension of the students and did not allow them to write the second exam.

**Lack of institutional support for the participants.** The CWP participants were suspended due to unsatisfactory academic progress at the time that they were receiving the least support. Previously, Lima, who had managed the partnership, had scaffolded the students to acquire the higher education habitus. However, the training coordinator, whose institutional memory and education habitus had enabled her to provide this support to students, was replaced by a part-time training coordinator who did not have these resources. DCOG, the institution providing the bursaries, did not share the higher education habitus and did not offer the participants support to enable them to succeed. Effectively, the participants were left without adequate

support to succeed. The presence of the researcher was not part of the design of the pilot project and therefore did not have a formal role in supporting the participants. However, the methodology of the study allowed the researcher, who had the required capital in terms of the habitus of higher education and the habitus of the rural context of the participants, to scaffold the students that had not been suspended.

This implies that a programme such as the Grade R diploma pilot needs to structure institutional support – with adequate knowledge of the habitus of higher education and the habitus of CWP participants in rural areas – for the participants into the programme, to include continuous mentorship and scaffolding to enable the students to transition successfully from the zone of proximal development to the zone of actual development (Vygotsky, 1976). The mentor would need to be someone with a strong knowledge of students' rights and knowledge of the habitus and doxa of the higher education field, enabling them to advocate on behalf of the participants to the funder, an outsider to the higher education field. Such a support structure would support participants to complete their studies successfully without jeopardizing access to bursaries and other financial assistance provided by the state.

**NWU showed responsiveness to students.** By allowing a previously suspended student to re-register for the Grade R teaching qualification, the NWU indicated it was an institution that was willing to listen and address issues arising from its bureaucratic nature as a large institution. NWU welcomed the researcher's involved advice and accepted the researcher's arguments advocating that the students should be allowed to complete the last outstanding module and the dean's concessionary examinations. This highlights the value of a third-party mentor who could advocate for the programme participants in interactions with the tertiary institutions while also understanding the rules of engagement and enhancing the use of government financial resources.

NWU also showed responsiveness to its students when it sent assessors back to the rural schools to assess participants' teaching practice (after previous failed attempts to find the schools) in November 2017 so that they could graduate in March 2018. This implies that an institution can be sensitive to challenges students may face and also act in a manner that enhances throughput.

The student walk from admission to graduation has many parts in the intervening period where the student is socialised and inducted into the higher education rituals.

### 9.3.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY

**Select technologies appropriate to students' context.** The Grade R diploma pilot was a print-based programme with some online presence which was not enhanced by the limited digital literacy of participants in rural situations. Appropriate technologies should be selected to fit students' habitus. The provision of study material to students on USB drives proved useless as they did not have computers. It is recommended that NWU utilise Micro Secure Digital (Micro SD) drives which interface with cellular phones and computers. This would also enable interactive whiteboard sessions to be downloaded onto the Micro SD drive to be accessed on the student's cellular smartphone.

**Learning support centre managers should be adequately trained to support students.** The study found that the manager at the NWU Learning Support Centre (LSC) did not know that Wi-Fi could be accessed via a cellular phone. The researcher connected the LSC manager's cellular phone to the Wi-Fi network. This was an indication that the manager, as the person responsible for a centre serving a large number of students, was inadequately trained to facilitate students' use of the learning support centre. While NWU had invested heavily in the upgrade of technology at its learning support centres, the incompetence of the manager created a barrier to students accessing the facilities and resources of the centre.

**Personalised Wi-Fi password.** The researcher also observed that the Learning Support Centre changed the Wi-Fi password each semester. While this deterred misuse of the connection, a more personalised system is suggested, where students use their NWU login details to access the Wi-Fi connection at the learning support centres.

**Greater access for students to the learning support centres.** It did not appear that students were allowed to access the learning support centre except during the interactive whiteboard sessions or for examination sessions. The researcher found that neither were the LSC managers members at the schools the NWU uses as LSCs. It is suggested that NWU consider increasing students' access to learning support centres during the weekend and after hours. Rural students would benefit from having a dedicated place to study as they may not have desks or suitable

study spaces at home. This would also enable them to access Wi-Fi when needed, increasing their ability to communicate with the university and their lecturers and also access online resources.

**Provision of data and zero-rating of key sites.** The recorded interactive whiteboard sessions could enhance students' epistemological access by enabling them to listen to the lecture as many times as they would like to. However, accessing the sessions requires data. It is recommended that NWU consider providing distance learning students with data to enable them to watch or download past sessions. Zero-rating the site where the downloads are posted could also facilitate access.

**Recognition of language as a barrier to learning and accommodation of home language.** Participants experienced symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1996) as their cultural realities, including language, were not recognized and accommodated by NWU. Students from deep rural areas struggled to understand the language, accents and manner of speaking of lecturers during the interactive whiteboard sessions. Programmes designed to enable individuals in deep rural areas to access higher education should engage actively with the cultural realities of these students to ensure the approach to teaching does not create unnecessary barriers to learning.

**Proper logistical planning for assessment of student practice at deep rural schools.**

The NWU provided some scaffolds to enable the CWP participants to complete the requirements for their portfolios. However, the NWU assessor failed to reach all of the rural schools to assess the participants' teaching, with the result that these participants were unable to submit completed portfolios. This would have prevented them from graduating the same semester had the researcher not intervened and advocated for the participants. NWU did respond positively to the researcher's advocacy and sent the assessor back to the schools, allowing the portfolio to be accepted past the original deadline. However, logistical challenges around assessing students at rural schools should be addressed by NWU well in advance so that this situation does not arise in subsequent intakes.

#### **9.3.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CWP**

**Role of the CWP sites and site managers in the success of the pilot.** The CWP provided variable access to their facilities and scaffolds depending on the students' ability to access to the site management offices. Some CWP participants used their agency to access the site offices

for printing and photocopying and use of the internet. Physical distance presented a barrier to some CWP participants accessing these resources.

The CWP site managers used their agency to varying degrees to facilitate, or obstruct, the transition of the CWP participants from the sub-sites to the rural schools. The CWP site managers facilitated the flow of information from the bursar (DCOG) to the participants. The site managers, therefore, acted as enablers of student access. The site managers were intimately involved with the recruitment of the local students into the CWP Sponsored Grade R teaching diploma bursary in the first place. Due to the precarious nature of the employment contract in projects where the government is an employer of last resort, there was high turnover among the site managers, who took their institutional memory with them. The site managers determined participants' continuation or removal from the CWP upon assuming duty as a Grade R teacher. They are, therefore, key agents whose buy-in into the importance of social protection through higher education cannot be over-emphasised. Empowering the site managers with information regarding student academic development could also improve the student experience while studying for a formal qualification at a distance.

**Advocacy for a transport stipend.** Lima negotiated a transport stipend to facilitate students' access to the learning centres and schools. The transport stipend incentivised learning, as the students had to participate in the interactive whiteboard session or examinations to get the stipend. When the Dhadhla Foundation took over management of the pilot, it provided the stipend on the date the CWP participant attended the whiteboard session after the session. The transport stipend distribution method was changed from after a whiteboard session to a lump sum of R1000 disbursed from the CWP site office in 2016 and 2017. This change had implications of students stopping studying due to the absence of support (some postponing studies to a later semester). This postponement would have other implications, including registration and exercise of the second opportunity rule. This implies that a lack of consistency in the provision of financial resources essential to students' access to lecturers and examinations had a negative impact on their success in the programme. Consistency when providing transport support is recommended.

**Commitment and continuity of implementing agent.** Lima, one of the CWP's three lead implementing agents nationally (Andersson & Alexander, 2016), conceptualized the Grade R diploma programme, presented it to the CWP and initiated and implemented it. Lima's learner

support unit (LSU) staff provided considerable support to the CWP participants in terms of facilitating their epistemic access to the higher education habitus and facilitating coordination between partners, and negotiating barriers. However, the CWP removed Lima from this role and appointed the Dhladhla Foundation to manage the Grade R diploma pilot.

The Dhladhla Foundation lacked the level of commitment and investment into the pilot that Lima had had. Lima's training coordinator, who was deeply invested in the programme and provided a range of supports to the student, was replaced with a part-time coordinator who did not have adequate background, capital or investment to support the students adequately. This resulted in a massive epistemic access gap for the students, who began to fall through the cracks, with the bulk being suspended for unsatisfactory academic progress. In the absence of adequate support by the CWP for the students to succeed, the researcher stepped in and provided significant support as the Lima training coordinator had done, enabling the remaining participants to complete the programme successfully (including beyond minimum regulation time).

This implies that if the Grade R diploma programme for students from the CWP is to be rolled out to other local municipalities, the CWP partnerships office of the DCOG (which availed the bursary) would need to invest in the partnership manager (mentor). The mentor should be committed, capacitated, have an investment in the academic welfare of the student and should have guaranteed continuity in the support for the students. The support for the students should be substantial and not part-time. The support, as it will be for students on a government sponsored programme, should attend to both financial as well as the student academic development needs.

#### **9.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Being rooted in the critical paradigm, the study sought to transform the participating students' lives by empowering them to succeed in the diploma programme and graduate to the mainstream economy as Grade R teachers. As the researcher was an outsider, it took some time for him to be fully accepted by the participants and the staff of the CWP programme. This delay in acceptance partially explains what happened as eight CWP participant students were suspended from the programme during the intervening period. While the researcher attempted to help them re-enter the programme using his agency and capitals, this was successful for only two of the eight (P22 and P25) cases. This resulted in a more restricted sample. The researcher

supported the remaining participant students to ensure they attained the qualification and became Grade R teachers.

A second limitation arose because of methodological choices: the extended case study design, sampling method and sample size restricted the generalisability of the findings. However, the strength of the findings rests in the fact that the CWP participant students represented an extreme case that can thus serve as a testbed. Suppose an acceptable number of participants attained the Grade R qualification. In that case, it could be expected that other students receiving the same kind of support and assistance could also succeed in the Grade R Teaching Diploma programme. Furthermore, the description of the research setting, and thick descriptions of findings provided in this thesis, allow readers to assess the transferability and applicability of findings to other similar settings. Thus, this study's findings may apply to similar groups, contexts, communities, and/or circumstances (Creswell, 2008). The decision will be left to the researcher or reader to confirm the findings based on their understanding and experiences.

## **9.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY**

Considering the study having focused on the experiences while studying for the Grade R Teaching diploma, the CWP participants have graduated now.

- (i) There is scope to study the experiences of CWP participants after becoming Grade R teachers and the transition to mainstream teaching.
- (ii) There may be scope to explore the CWP participants experiences while studying for a Bachelors degree at a distance, comparing the experience with the experience on Grade R teaching diploma.
- (iii) There may be scope for studying experiences of being a bursary student in Education but funded by a non-education related government department (DCOG) in detail.
- (iv) The study focused on the CWP participants sourced from the CWP. There may be scope for an emancipatory study for other students funded by the ETDP SETA on the same Grade R diploma programme at a distance.

## **9.6 CONCLUSION OF THE THESIS**

In 2017, the South African Department of Basic Education had a total of 2 875 unqualified and underqualified teachers in KwaZulu-Natal alone (DBE, 2018). The statistics are relatively higher for the foundation phase than other phases and in rural schools than urban districts. This

highlights the neglect of the foundation phase, which begins with Grade R (Green et al., 2011; Hugo, 2014; Savides, 2017). In this context, an investigation into the experiences of students training to be Grade R teachers at rural schools is vital, as successful teacher professional development could improve the outcomes of rural learners in foundation phase, improving their life chances as they progress through their education. This may positively impact the triple challenge of poverty, inequality and unemployment – the factors that led to the conceptualization of the Grade R diploma pilot by Community Work Programme in the first place, as a strategy to support rural individuals in poverty to graduate from the CWP's second economy strategy project to the first economy by acquiring a formal teaching qualification.

This thesis has presented the background to the study, with the Community Work Programme foregrounded as a second economy strategy project growing out of the National Development Plan for South Africa, along with a statement of the problem explored in the study, the research questions and methodology (Chapter One). The theoretical and empirical literature related to social protection and distance education was reviewed (Chapter Two). The theoretical framework of the study was discussed, with Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus and capital being key, along with Archer's structure, culture and agency (Chapter Three). The methodology of the study, based on the transformative worldview and the critical paradigm – which valorises emancipation and empowerment – and the use of the Extended Case Method (Burawoy, 1998) was described (Chapter Four).

The roles of different players – Lima (implementing agent), the DCOG (funder) and NWU (HEI) were presented, along with the challenges and successes that participants experienced in their engagement with these institutions throughout their journey from registration to graduation (Chapter Five). The findings were presented according to the main themes that emerged from the data: communications, teaching and learning experiences, the assessment experience and the support experiences of the study (Chapter Six). The emotional experiences of the students were explored as a key theme in the data for rural students engaging in distance education (Chapter Seven). Chapter Eight provided the synthesis of the study, showing how the macro forces, beginning with the international Sustainable Development Goals, impacted South Africa's National Development Plan. Then the meso-level forces which came from the institutions involved in the Grade R pilot are discussed, which in turn, affected individual CWP participants at the micro level. This final chapter has presented the conclusions and implications of the study.



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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



20 April 2016

Mr Cephas Makwara 214584087  
School of Education  
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mr Makwara

Protocol reference number: HSS/0318/016D  
Project Title: **An Investigation of the Community Work Programme in Rural Schools in the Ezinqoleni Municipality: KwaZulu-Natal**

### Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received 4 April 2016, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

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

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

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

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

Yours faithfully



Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)  
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

/pm

Cc Supervisor: Professor Wayne Hugo  
Cc Academic Leader Research: Dr SB Khoza  
Cc School Administrator: Ms Tyser Khumalo

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

Postal Address: Pieterburg 354001, Durban 4001

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4809 Email: [umbep@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:umbep@ukzn.ac.za) / [kymarm@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:kymarm@ukzn.ac.za) / [ssh.c@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ssh.c@ukzn.ac.za)

Website: [www.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.ukzn.ac.za)



Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howse College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

## APPENDIX B: GATEKEEPER' S PERMISSION LETTER 1



education

Department:  
Education  
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Nomangisi Ngubane

Tel: 033 392 1004

Ref.:2/4/8/708

Mr C Makwara  
118 Hayens Road, Richmond Crest  
Pietermaritzburg  
3201

Dear Mr Makwara

### PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: "AN INVESTIGATION OF THE COMMUNITY WORKS PROGRAMME IN RURAL SCHOOLS IN THE EZINQOLENI MUNICIPALITY: KWAZULU NATAL", in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 15 February 2016 to 30 June 2017.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Connie Kehologile at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report / dissertation / thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

Ugu District

  
Nkésinathi S.P. Sishi, PhD  
Head of Department: Education  
Date: 15 February 2016

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

POSTAL: Private Bag X 9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200, KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa  
PHYSICAL: 247 Burger Street, Anton Lembede House, Pietermaritzburg, 3201. Tel. 033 392 1004  
EMAIL ADDRESS: [kehologile.connie@kzndoe.gov.za](mailto:kehologile.connie@kzndoe.gov.za) / [Nomangisi.Ngubane@kzndoe.gov.za](mailto:Nomangisi.Ngubane@kzndoe.gov.za)  
CALL CENTRE: 0860 596 363; Fax: 033 392 1203 WEBSITE: [www.kzneducation.gov.za](http://www.kzneducation.gov.za)

## APPENDIX C: GATEKEEPER' S PERMISSION LETTER 2



**cogta**

Department:  
Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs  
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Tel. +27 33 366 2836 Fax. +27 33 364 5069  
Postal: Private Bag 2 9078, Pietermaritzburg, 3200  
Office: Ntshali Building, 330 Langa Thabo Street,  
Pietermaritzburg, 3201

Enquiries: In buzo: Navras:	Mr. EN Moloi	My Reference: Inkomba Yami: My Verwysing:	EPWP Social responsibil ity	Email:	Nhlanhla.Moloi@kzncogta.gov.za	Date: Usuku: Datum:	26/05/2016
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### MEMORANDUM

**CC** : **MR MP DUZE**  
**DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL: DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING BRANCH**

: **MRS B MGUTSHINI**  
**CHIEF DIRECTOR: LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**FROM** : **MR EN MOLOI**  
**DIRECTOR: EXPANDED PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME**

**DATE** : **26 MAY 2016**

**RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH ON EDUCATION SUPPORT COMPONENT OF THE COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAMME (CWP).**

The above subject refers.

1. Attached herewith is the letter of request, accompanied by the research proposal, of Mr C Makwara who is a PhD candidate at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.
2. He would like to conduct an extensive study on the education support component of the Community Work Programme in the Ezingqoleni Municipality, Ugu District site of the CWP.
3. His research requires him to conduct interviews where participants will be partaking on a voluntary and anonymous basis.
4. Students are obliged by the University's ethical policy to protect participants and the organisations they are studying.

BACK TO BASICS: SETTING OUR COMMUNITY LETTER **B-B**

**RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH ON EDUCATION SUPPORT COMPONENT OF THE COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAMME (CWP).**

5. To ensure swift data collection process, officials from the Department and the relevant Implementing Agent will be monitoring this process.

6. Clarity on why researcher wants to conduct study and the value to be added by the research study is as follows:

- The concern of researcher is on the Education Support Programme of the CWP, not the whole programme particularly the Grade R Diploma.
- The Grade R diploma is in its pilot phase wherein LIMA provides the linkages function.
- Being in pilot phase implies the need for creation of a repertoire of experiences which would surely aid the implementation when the programme gets rolled out to other provinces. Currently the pilot is in KZN, Free State and the North West. The researcher has proposed to study KZN participants.
- Being in pilot also points to experimentation, which if unsuccessful means the plugging of funding. Therefore, a study of the experiences should be in tandem with the need to use resources efficiently and effectively.
- The programme is in CWP however, implementation involves schools – KZN Department of Education has given the researcher a green light to continue with research activities, (please find attached permission letter).

7. Upon completion of the study, the student will share the outcomes or results with the Department.

**RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH ON EDUCATION SUPPORT COMPONENT OF THE COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAMME (CWP).**

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL:

- Notes the contents of this memo,
- Notes that both the Department and participants will not suffer in the data collection process, and therefore,
- Grants Mr. Makwara permission to conduct his study in Community Work Programme (CWP).

<p>SUBMITTED BY:</p> <p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>Mr EN Moloi:</p> <p>Director: EPWP</p> <p>Date: _____</p>	<p>SUPPORTED BY:</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>Mrs. B Mgutshini:</p> <p>Chief Director: LED</p> <p>Date: <u>31/5/2016</u></p>
<p>APPROVED/ NOT APPROVED/ VARIED:</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>Mr. MP Duzel</p> <p>Deputy Director General: Development &amp; Planning</p> <p>Date: <u>02/06/2016</u></p>	

Comments

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## APPENDIX D: INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR AUDIO RECORDING

### Consent to audio recording form



118 Haynes Road  
Richmond Crest  
Pietermaritzburg  
3201

24 January 2016

### CWP PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR AUDIO RECORDING

Dear Participant

My name is Cephass Makwara, a student of the University of KwaZulu Natal School of Education currently pursuing doctoral studies. I wish to request your consent to participate in my study entitled: **Investigating the Community Work Programme (CWP) in the Eziqoleni Municipality Rural Schools**. In the study, I wish to get your experiences of the CWP as participants who are pursuing the Grade R diploma with the UNW. I wish to elicit your perceived value of the programme in the rural schools. You have been identified as one of the key informants who could provide an insight into what is taking place. The process will take the form of three interviews: The first will be a baseline on your life history, then you will be requested to take photos which will be the basis for the second and final interview. This letter therefore requests your consent to have the interviews audio recorded to enhance an accurate description of what would have transpired during the interviews.

Your participation in the study is voluntary, no monetary benefit may be derived, and you may withdraw at any point without any disadvantage to you. The participation takes the form of individual interviews, taking photographs (of what you perceive as valuable part of your experience), and answering some interview questions. The interviews take a maximum of one hour. The dates and times will be negotiated with you.

When I come for second interviews, then I bring summaries of what transpired in the first interview for you to verify the accuracy of what I would have captured. I will turn off the tape at any point that you ask me to, and you may choose not to answer any of the questions at any time.

To be completed by participant:

I..... hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research, and I consent to participating in the research and to be audio recorded. I understand that participation is voluntary and I am at liberty to withdraw from the study at any time, should I so desire.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR CWP FCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

- i. How did the school receive you with the changed status
  - ii. Describe your relationship with your mentor/other teachers/principal
- f. Describe any other livelihood activities beside CWP (eg. Child support grant, etc).
- g. How do you spend your earnings? How has the local economy benefited from CWP in your opinion?
- h. Explain how the earnings from CWP have affected/changed your family/livelihoods (food, duties in the household – male and female, capacity to borrow ... mashonisa).
- i. Can you reflect on the changes that may have taken place in you as an individual as well as how others relate to you as you became a UNW student when still being a CWP participant.
- j. What are your views regarding the following:
  - i. Wages/salaries
  - ii. Working hours
  - iii. Health and safety
  - iv. Benefits
  - v. contracts
- k. what role (if any) did the following play in your securing the position you now hold:
  - i. The CWP
  - ii. The Dladla foundation
  - iii. The Lima RDP
  - iv. CoGTA
- l. How does the fact that you are a student of the NWU as well as a CWP participant affect one another?
  - i. Do they complement each other? If so explain how.
  - ii. Do they get in each other's way? If so, how are you resolving the tensions
  - iii. What would be your ideal situation, ie, what would you want to see in place for you to succeed?
  - iv. Do the weekend classes help in your distance learning? Can you describe the complementarity between theory and practice in your case.
  - v. Are your mentors supportive
- m. Do you have any other thoughts that you may want to share concerning the interaction between the CWP, education and rural schools welfare?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR RESPONDING TO MY QUESTIONS

APPENDIX G: ANALYSIS DIAGRAMS

