

**Pre-vocational Education: Teaching experiences of  
novice pre-vocational teachers at a pre-vocational school**

**by**

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# **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this study to learners with special education needs.

# DECLARATION

I declare that **PRE-VOCATIONAL EDUCATION: TEACHING EXPERIENCES OF NOVICE PREVOCATIONAL TEACHERS AT A PREVOCATIONAL SCHOOL** is my own work and that all the sources I have used have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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**Sargoonam Pillay**

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**Date**

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**Dr Linda Jairam**

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**Date**

# ACRONYMS

PV	Pre-vocational
LSEN	Learners with Special Education Needs
DoE	Department of Education
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ADD	Attention Deficit Disorder
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder
NCSNET	National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training.
NCESS	National Committee on Education Support services.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Pre-vocational Education is the context in which the research was undertaken. The study explored how novice pre-vocational teachers experienced their teaching at one pre-vocational school. The literature review provided insight into aspects of pre-vocational education, experiences of novice teachers and the policy of inclusive education. It was also discovered that there is a lack of literature pertaining to pre-vocational education in South Africa.

The qualitative data was examined through the lens of complexity theory which lent an understanding of how novice pre-vocational teachers navigated their way in a new and unfamiliar environment. The data also revealed that problems existed in pre-vocational education. The findings revealed that despite the challenges faced by novice pre-vocational teachers, a state of order emerged from the chaotic conditions.

In making recommendations, it was noted that guidance and mentoring of novice pre-vocational teachers are vital in the teaching of learners with special education needs. It was further recommended that a needs analysis of pre-vocational education be conducted by the Department of Education.

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KZN Department of Education request to conduct research letter

School request to conduct research letter

Letter to participants



## CHAPTER ONE

### BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

#### **Introduction**

At a global level, pre-vocational (hereafter PV) education was established because of a perennial challenge facing education in general. More specifically, the challenge concerned the fact that learners continued to exit special classes after schooling with little or no academic and/or technical skills to allow them to be independent thinkers and economically productive young adults before embarking on their vocations. In the South African context, PV schools are special schools catering for learners with mild to moderate learning disabilities, and these schools are often referred to as special trade schools.

Learners exit the primary or secondary school education from age twelve to fifteen years, depending at which point the learner is unable to cope with the academic programme of the mainstream school. A psychological report, with a diagnosis of learning disability, is a requirement for admission at a PV school. Together with learning disabilities, such learners have a host of other related disorders such as Epilepsy, Attention Deficit Disorder, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder and Foetal Alcohol Syndrome. As a consequence of these added challenges, learners deteriorate into having poor numeracy and literacy skills. Most problematic, furthermore, are behavioural problems that range from mild to severe condition.

Clearly, teachers at the PV schools are faced with huge challenges. Such challenges begin with the responsibility to draw up the curriculum. One of the reasons this is a challenge is that these teachers have to modify the mainstream curriculum content of both secondary and tertiary education to the level of the learners with special needs. All of this has to take into consideration the fact that the PV school also offers functional academic subjects, yet the final grade is grade 10. Thus, the PV programme does not offer grade 11 or 12. Essentially, learners are trained for the world of work and ultimately to become self-sufficient, independent members of society. Learners exit the school with a testimonial compiled by the

school together with skills certificates for workshop subjects that have been completed during the course of study.

As a teacher at a PV school for the past twenty six years, I have noticed the complex and dynamic nature of its operation. It is characterized by uniqueness in that it is very different from mainstream education and from special classes and other special schools. Learners with special education needs, for example, are trained in vocational subjects. Feelings of uncertainty often overwhelmed me at the initial stages of my involvement with PV schools. This was due to the diverse special needs of learners, the barriers they were faced with and the unique curriculum that needed to be designed and taught.

My personal navigation in a new and unfamiliar environment was accompanied by much stress, anxiety, and a general sense of fear and confusion. Added to the state of confusion was the pressure of ensuring that learners were indeed ready for the world of work as the PV school was their final exit point in formal education. It took me many years to adapt to PV education and its learners and to finally achieve the equilibrium and even temperament that is so vital for the teaching of learners with special education needs. Given the complexity of the nature of PV education, where learners have special needs but have to be trained for a mainstream world of work by teachers who are novices to this type of education in question, a space presented itself for exploration in this area of study. Most importantly for this study, at both local and international contexts, little is known about the experiences of novice PV teachers. This became the motivation for this study as my interest was on investigating how novice PV teachers at one PV school experience their teaching.

### **1.1 Purpose of study**

By means of an exploration of the lived experiences of novice teachers in the PV schools, this study is designed to create a platform for the often unheard voices of inexperienced teachers who teach in such schools. This, furthermore, is geared towards developing hope and contribute into enhancing an understanding of PV novice teachers of their context of work and, most importantly, to 'lead further enquiry' (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p. 398) in this area of study, for it is evidently under-researched. Critical engagement with the experiences of novice PV teachers, moreover, will provide the general public with an opportunity to understand the complexity of negotiating a new profession in a new

environment. It is also hoped that the study aids in the improvement of practice in relation to PV education. It is within this context that this qualitative study of the experiences of novice PV teachers may further serve as an important contribution to the development of PV education.

## **1.2 Key Research Question.**

The key research question for this study is:

- How do novice teachers in pre-vocational schools experience teaching?

## **1.3 Review of Related Literature**

As my study involves more than one phenomenon, I will include in my literature, a review of PV education and of novice teachers. Further, since PV education is part of LSEN (Learners with Special Education Needs), my study warrants a discussion on the philosophy of Inclusive Education. The theoretical framework of complexity is used as a lens through which I viewed this study. Mention must be made of the challenge in finding studies conducted with teachers in PV education in the context of the South African education system. Neither are studies of novice PV teachers in the national or international arena available. Due to the dearth of studies, related literature was reviewed. The lack of studies conducted in my area of study (experiences of novice prevocational teachers) is indicative of the need for my research. A brief overview of the related literature will follow.

## **1.4. Interpretations of Pre-vocational Education**

The earliest interpretation of PV education in the international arena was offered by Leavitte and Brown (1915) to be an education that is beneficial "...where no special provisions are made for pupils who are failing in the usual school work, or who are apparently hopelessly behind grade or are certainly out of harmony with aims and methods of so called "general education" (iv-preface). Years later, in a Mauritian study, Dhunookchand (2003) echoed a similar statement as Leavitte and Brown (1915), that the project is geared towards developing in students those essential learning competencies in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes which could not be achieved during their primary schooling. In the South African context, PV curriculum has its major subjects fall in the learning area of Technology.

Studies pertaining to PV education includes Dhunookchand's (2003) impact evaluation of Mauritian education; a paper by Ministry of Education and Human Resources (2011) on strategies for pre-vocational education; Ibiwumi (2011) and the review of curriculum in Nigerian education; Kiadese (2011) on the teaching effectiveness of pre-vocational subject teachers in Nigeria and most recently, Mujumdar (2012), whose study involved the significance of vocationalization of education and skill development in India.

In New Zealand, a study conducted by Lee (1992) shows that technical high schools typically offer boys PV streams of engineering, building, or an agricultural course to give them a practical skill preparing them for the non-professional workforce. Academically less able female students, furthermore, are offered a commerce stream, with subjects like typing and bookkeeping to prepare them for commerce, where it was expected that they would work, or alternatively, as Gibbons (1977) described, "needlework, cooking and domestic economy" (p. 164). In Germany, Schneider, Krause and Woll (2007) explain that the PV training year is a one-year course of training, usually offered in full-time form and designed to prepare young people for the demands of vocational training. A clear majority of participants do not have a secondary general school certificate, but it prepares the students for the world of work (p. 29).

Over three decades ago advances were made internationally in terms of PV education. Lynch, Kiernan and Stark (1982) were already alluding to techniques that were used for integrating mentally challenged and other special needs youths into the competitive labour market. They claimed then that this had led to rapid changes in training methods (p. 136). Locally, very little emphasis is placed on the training of novice teachers for the changes taking place at PV schools.

International reviews (Lynch, Kiernan & Stark, 1982; Schneider, Krause & Woll, 2007; Sa'aideh, 2008; the International Labour Office of Geneva, 2010; Efajemue, 2011; Ministry of Education in Mauritius, 2011) reflect a great deal of awareness for the need to network in PV education. Employment and workplace challenges, adult and youth unemployment, new forms of work organization and sustainable development, for example, are issues grappled with at these contexts. More generally, emphasis is placed on a renewed search for balanced skills development that can respond more closely to real workplace needs. There is the encouragement of closer cooperation between enterprises, schools and other stakeholders to deliver and assess outcomes. Locally, in terms of PV education, these practices are merely

visions articulated in the policy of inclusive education. A more extensive review of literature is offered in Chapter Two.

#### **1.4.1 Novice Teachers**

The experiences of novice teachers of pre-vocational schools are completely under-researched. Related studies on novice teachers, for example, were reviewed by Borko, Eisenhart, Brown, Underhill, Jones and Agard (1992). Their review included an analysis of novice teachers' instruction in mathematics. While Meskill, Mossop, Diangelo and Pasquale (2002) compared novice and expert teachers in the field of technology, Onafowora (2004) researched teacher efficacy. Wong (2004), furthermore, investigated successful induction programs, and Nambira, Kapenda, Tjipueja and Sichombe (2009) examined professional development needs of PV teachers. Finally, Hatch, Sun, Grossman, Neira and Chang (2009) explored the value of multimedia and novice teachers in order to understand their predicament.

According to Nambira, Kapenda, Tjipueja and Sichombe (2009), the term novice teacher refers to teachers who are professionally qualified practicing teachers, but with less than two years teaching experience. Due to the fact that the school teaching environment differs from college experiences, the term novice teacher in the context of my study refers specifically to teachers who have less than two years of experience as pre-vocational teachers.

Meskill, Mossop, DiAngelo and Pasquale (2002) caution that for the novices, classroom management can be an "overwhelming obstacle to what they see as their primary mission - affecting and enacting their plan" (p. 51). Hogan and Rabinowitz (2003), in their reviewing of studies, alludes to the distinction that experienced teachers were concerned with student understanding and utilized different strategies to assist individuals experiencing difficulties, while novice teachers catered to the level of class interest and ability as a whole. They explain that when the majority of the students' interest or enjoyment decreased, novice teachers tended to disregard the initial lesson plan and altered the other activities to maintain classroom management, regardless of the individuals who needed continued practice (p.14). Hogan and Rabinowitz (2003) assert that "this pattern of behaviour would suggest that as a teacher's schema approaches greater complexity, the classroom environment shifts from a more teacher centred approach (the teacher's focus is on teacher actions rather than learning outcomes, for example) to an environment where organization, teaching efficiency and

student understanding is at the forefront of concern (p. 14). Inman and Marlow (2004) agree and postulate that when new teachers enter the classroom, they experience disparities between the expectations of their role as teachers and actual realities faced during their first year. Teachers who do not receive assistance, knowledge, training and support during their first year may experience a sense of abandonment and confusion. The lack of studies relevant to the teaching experiences of novice PV teachers within the national and international arena point to the dearth of studies undertaken in this area. This is yet another reason this study is timely and crucial.

#### **1.4.2 The Philosophy of Inclusive Education.**

In the apartheid era, the South African system of Education “articulated a racially and ethnically segregated and differentiated system based on the ideology of Christian National Education [which was] designed to build a social structure reflecting a rigid hierarchy on the basis of race” (Porteus, 2008). The potential for meaningful participation heralded a new era of possibilities of inclusiveness in the process of developing social and educational transformation (Loebenstein, 2005 cited in Engelbrecht, 2006).

The Report of Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Service (NCESS) highlighted the need to move the focus from “learners with special needs” to a systemic approach to identifying and addressing barriers to learning (Department of Education, 1998). Engelbrecht (1999), cited in Engelbrecht (2006, p. 254), points out that the synchronicity of the establishment of a democratic society with human dignity, freedom and equality entrenched in the South African Constitution since 1994, with the increase of inclusive education practices internationally, has profoundly influenced the transformation of education in the post-apartheid South Africa. The result has been that inclusive education within the South African context has not been promoted as simply one more option for education, but as the educational strategy most likely to contribute to a democratic and just society. A flourishing democracy involves acknowledging the rights of all previously marginalized communities and individuals as full members of society, and required recognition and celebration of diversity, reflected in the attitudes of its citizens and in the nature of its institutions (Green, 2001, cited in Engelbrecht, 2006, p. 254).

In 2001, the Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education, Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (hereafter, EWP6), was published (Department of Education, 2001). White Paper 6 is the policy paper that was to lead the way for inclusive education and the visions articulated within it. To this end, Engelbrecht (2006) reminds us that inclusive education within the South African context is therefore framed within a human rights approach, transforming the human values of integration into the immediate rights of excluded learners.

Inclusive Education, as defined by Education White Paper 6: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System, amongst other definitions, is “broader than formal schooling, and acknowledging that learning also occurs in the home and community and within formal and informal settings and structures.” It is further explained that inclusive education is about acknowledging that all children can learn, that they need support because they have different learning needs, that their diversity should be respected. (Department of Education 2001).

Inclusive education is also about change in attitudes, curricula, environment, teaching methodologies and the environment (Department of Education, 2001). Howell and Lazarus (2003) maintain that the policy of inclusive education provides a framework for systemic change where strategies are oriented towards building the capacity of the system to respond to the full range of barriers to learning, including systemic barriers. In pre-vocational schools, novice teachers are not only faced with the challenges of diverse learning disabilities, but also with the application and practice of the inclusive policy as it relates to PV education. In skills orientated education such as PV education, the removal or minimising of systemic barriers is integral to the process of teaching and learning.

Barriers entrenched within the community’s belief systems have to be removed to ensure the successful implementation of work experience programmes that are so vital to the PV educational programme. Novice teachers have to first have the mind-set that learners with special needs can be taught a skill and that the skill can be executed in a place of work. Then only can novice teachers convince prospective employers that learners with special education needs are worthy of being employed. PV teachers have to practice the policy of inclusion, not only in the classroom, but also in the community by training LSEN learners to fit into society and function as responsible economically productive citizens.

### **1.4.3 Conceptual and Theoretical Framework**

#### **1.4.4. Complexity Theory**

I was inspired by the authors, Anfara and Mertz (2006), who intimated that a researcher should be open to considering the applicability of a wide variety of theoretical frameworks in the many different fields of study, and disciplines in the social and natural sciences. They explain that, originally, the concept of complexity theory was successfully applied in the natural sciences such as chemistry, biology and physics so as to enhance understanding of certain emerging trends in those fields. Over the years it was also noted that most social science disciplines tend to be confronted with characteristics of non-linear and unpredictable phenomena.

Morrison (2002, p. 5) defines the notion of complexity as an organism that dynamically connects and influences its environment and, in turn is influenced by the environment. According to Stacey (2000), complexity theory encourages creativity and efficiency to emerge spontaneously within organizations, rather than solutions getting imposed and/or decisions fixed on the boundaries. According to Tosey (2002), complexity refers to the condition of the universe that is integrated and too complex to comprehend in simple linear ways. Battram (1996) remarks that complexity does not only include a number of the components, but how these components are interconnected. Fong (2006, p. 2) explains that complexity theory can be seen as a complex system that consists of a collection of interacting parts that function as a whole, with no fixed boundaries. As such, a complex system consists of independent elements that act together to bring forward organized behaviour in the system as a whole.

Consequently, this recognition has led to a surge of interest in applying complexity theory to a number of fields. Geyer, (2003) used the theory to explain politics and policies while Jorg (2004) related complexity theory to educational psychology in order to explain reality in education. Smitherman (2004) demonstrated how complexity theory can be used in the development of curriculum. Kennedy (2007) employed the theory to show how it applies to organizational and managerial knowledge. In the same year, Hase and Kenyon (2007) used the theory as a lens to explain heutagogy or self-learning. More recently, Eppel (2009) analysed the potential contribution of complexity theory as it relates to social systems and organisations.

Reviewing the above researchers work and earlier authors such as Kauffman (1995), Prigogine and Stengers (1984), Prigogine (1996), Battram (1996), Cilliers (1998) and Stacey (2000), I was convinced that complexity theory was the most appropriate theory to use as a lens through which I viewed my study on the experiences of novice teachers in a pre-vocational school. Complex phenomena are individual entities that can be divided into smaller entities. Each entity has its own characteristic and function, and can be divided into smaller entities.

Pre-vocational education is a system that is made up of different entities and complexity theory can be used to show and explain how these entities interact with each other and impact on each other. Another reason complexity theory appears to me as an appropriate theoretical framework for my study is that lies in the way in which the concepts of the theory can be associated with and used as a structure to support and explain the systems and interactions of pre-vocational education and its novice teachers. After all, both involve what Anfara and Mertz (2006) refer to as the ‘study of living, adaptive systems; their elements and patterns of relationships, how they are maintained; and how they self-organize, evolve and change’ (p. 90). A sense of abandonment, confusion and overwhelming feelings are some of the emotions experienced by novice teachers in my study. The theory of complexity explains as its concepts, similar notions that emerged from the study. How these different feelings of confusion, chaos, not knowing, fear, and a sense of being overwhelmed and adjusting tie up with the explanations embedded in the theory of complexity, will be revealed in chapter two, where the emergent processes are explored in greater detail. Given the fact that no other studies have used complexity theory to explore the experiences of novice pre-vocational teachers, it seemed appropriate to use it in this study.

### **1.5 Methodological Approach**

Given the fact that this study is designed to understand the subjective world of participants, the interpretive research paradigm was employed. In terms of the research method, qualitative research design was selected. This is because its assumptions enabled me to interrogate research findings concerning the experiences of novice teachers within a context of pre-vocational education. Sherman and Webb (1988) encourage investigation of the experiences of participants as these are ‘lived’, ‘felt’ and ‘undergone’ (p. 7).

Given these broader objectives, case study research design was chosen in order to achieve in-depth, intensive, rich, lively, thick descriptions of research findings. The case study also served enabled the study to offer a portrayal, analysis and interpretation of the uniqueness of real individuals and situations through accessible accounts; to catch the situatedness of behaviour; to contribute to action and intervention, and to present and represent reality – to give a sense of being there (Cohen *et al.*, 2011, p. 290). In this study, the case is a set of individuals (novice pre-vocational teachers) within a context (pre-vocational school).

### **1.5.1 Ontology and Epistemology**

In this study the participants are both the subject and object of the study. This is because the study concerns the participants and their environment. Unlike in South Africa, within the international context, PV education is mainly incorporated within the mainstream education and closely associated with the country's economy and needs of the community (Ministry of Education and Human Resources, 2011; Kiadese 2011; Mujumdar; 2012). Locally it is understood that PV education is for learners with special needs.

Novice teachers may be without the epistemological content of traditional teaching methods and styles because most of them come into the teaching field having had no encounter with PV education in particular, and fewer years of teaching experience in general. More experienced teachers are viewed as more capable, but we need not lose sight of the fact that they have been entrenched in the old teaching habits and practices and could experience a problem when it comes to change, especially when it comes to policy practice. In essence, for the novice teacher, this lack of teaching experience and prescribed knowledge may be an advantage to them in creating innovative ways of dealing with their situations.

One of the concepts of complexity theory is bifurcation point, where a state or condition is reached and the affected individual has to make a decision to act (Prigogine & Stengers, 1984). The data produced in this study shattered the notion that PV novice teachers' inexperience is an indication of inability to cope as effective teachers. Further explanations will be offered in chapter two.

### **1.5.2 Sampling**

Purposive sampling was used to identify prospective participants. Creswell (2003, p. 220) explains that in qualitative data collection, purposeful sampling is used so that individuals are

selected because they have experienced the central phenomenon. In this study, the sample was novice pre-vocational teachers. The term novice teacher in the context of my study refers specifically to teachers who have less than two years of experience as PV teachers.

### **1.5.3 Data Production**

#### **1.5.3.1 The questionnaire.**

An open ended questionnaire was used to produce data. The questionnaire comprised of thirty two questions.

#### **1.5.3.2 Interview**

On site face to face semi - structured interviews were conducted to facilitate the data production process. There were follow up interviews to seek clarity on some responses and for some responses to be elaborated on.

### **1.6 Data Analysis**

I was guided by the stages of analysing identified by Cohen *et al.* (2011 p. 427) in generating natural units of meaning, then classifying, categorizing and ordering these units of meaning, followed by structuring narratives to describe the content of the interviews and, finally, interpreting the data. Emergent themes and patterns were identified using the step by step process laid out by Miles and Huberman (1994) cited in Cohen et al (2011, p. 427). The emergent patterns were akin to the concepts of complexity theory which will be the theory in which my study is grounded.

#### **1.6.1 Reliability and Validity**

Following the advice by Maree (2011, p. 110), after categorization, the responses in the questionnaires were reread to check whether I captured all the essential insights that emerged from the data through the coding and categorization. This also helped me to check if I captured the ideas correctly and not added an incorrect slant or misinterpretation to the data. Validity will also be observed by revealing and discussing the findings with the participants. My interpretations of the participants' responses will be shown to the participants to further ensure that I have not misinterpreted any of their responses. Due to small sample (four participants) the instrument was pilot tested with one other novice teacher who was not part of the study. I wanted to check for clarity, ambiguity in sentences, whether the questions were

adequate, directions or any problems that could have been encountered (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p. 185)

#### **1.6.1.1 Trustworthiness and Dependability**

The term trustworthiness refers to the way in which the inquirer is able to persuade the audience that the findings in the study are worth paying attention to and that the research is of high quality (Lincoln & Guba in Johnson & Turner (2003) in Maree 2011, p. 299). Dependability refers to the degree to which the reader can be convinced that the findings did indeed occur as the researcher says they did (Durrheim & Wassenaar 2002 cited in Maree 2011, p. 299).

In order to maintain trustworthiness and dependability in the data of my research, I sought clarification with the participants regarding my interpretation of their responses. I remained aware of the risk of bias as I became involved with participants and did not allow my emotions or interests to influence the interpretation of responses. Rather, I ensured that the meanings of the experiences were purely those derived from the data produced by the participants. My objective was merely to seek insight into the participants' experiences as novice PV teachers. With the absence of studies conducted with novice teachers of PV schools, this study presented findings that would have otherwise not been considered and could initiate further research in this area.

#### **1.6.1.2 Generalisation**

The intention of the study is not to generalize but rather to simply seek insight into the participants' experiences as novice teachers at a PV school. My role as researcher was to provide understanding from the participants' perspective.

### **1.7. Ethical considerations**

The study presented no ethical problems. Permission was sought from the relevant parties before the study commenced (see appendices). The Department of Education, the Principal of the school and all four participants were signatories to permission letters issued well before the study was conducted.

### **1.7.1 Anonymity and confidentiality**

The real name of the school and the participants are withheld. The subjects the participants teach were also withheld as the PV school could be the only one offering the subject.

### **1.7.2 Limitations**

The study was limited to four participants in one school. The study was limited to finding out only the experiences of the novice teachers. The methodological approach is discussed in more detail and depth in Chapter Three.

## **1.8 Conclusion and overview of the thesis**

The above Chapter has provided a general overview to the study. Included in the chapter is a background to offer the context in which the study took place. The chapter also served as an introduction to the study, presented the problem question, the rationale and briefly outlined the methodology of the study. Finally, the chapters to follow are briefly outlined.

Chapter Two discusses literature on relevant aspects of PV education, novice teachers and how the policy of inclusive education has implications for PV education. Included in the chapter is the theoretical framework of complexity. The concepts of the framework and how they relate to PV education and novice teachers is also explained.

Chapter Three describes the methodology, research design and methods used in the study. A case is made for a qualitative, interpretative research design which includes interviews and a questionnaire.

Chapter Four presents and analysis data gathered from the study.

Chapter Five concludes the study by offering a brief summary. Certain findings will be presented and recommendations based on the findings will be proposed.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

In this chapter, literature on interpretations of pre-vocational education together with its distinguishing features and curriculum are reviewed. This chapter also reviews the literature on problems experienced by learners with special education needs (LSEN). Due to the lack of studies conducted in South Africa, international reviews will be provided. Reviews will also include experiences of novice teachers in terms of the problems they experienced as new teachers and how they managed these problems. Inclusive education and its relevance to PV education and novice teachers will also be discussed. The chapter begins with an explanation of complexity theory as it relates to my study.

#### 2. 1 Interpretations of Pre-vocational Education

The earliest interpretation of pre-vocational (hereafter PV) education, within the international context, is the one offered by Leavitt and Brown (1915). They assert that for PV education to be beneficial is when "...no special provisions are made for pupils who are failing in the usual school work, or who are apparently hopelessly behind grade or are certainly out of harmony with the aims and methods of the so called "general education" (iv-preface). Chan (1990) quotes the Encyclopaedia of Education (1985 page unrecorded) as defining PV education as "complete vocational preparation or work experience introduced as part of general education that schools organize for all pupils". He also quotes (Lauglo & Lilliz, 1988 page unrecorded) as saying "the distinctive features of pre-vocational education are that it is combined into general education so that the student does not forfeit the possibility of continuing to higher education in areas unrelated to PV specialty and it does not purport to be the complete training to entry to the occupations concerned, but is conceptualized as a preparation for such training". Most recently, Mujumdar (2012) interpret PV education as "training arranged primarily to acquaint young people with materials, tools and standards relating to a range of occupations, to prepare them for choosing an occupational field or a line of training" (p. vii).

### **2.1.1 Distinguishing Features of Pre-vocational Education.**

An outline of distinguishing features of PV education in the policies of South African Ministry of Education is not available. The following features of PV education in Sri Lanka, as provided by Diyasena (1976), closely epitomises the features of PV education as it exists in the present day at PV schools in the local context. It must be brought to the reader's attention that the courses offered by local PV schools differ according to the demands and needs of vocations offered in the community, and are not the same as those offered in the schools in Sri Lanka. PV studies were introduced at the four-year junior secondary level of education in Sri Lanka in 1972 (Diyasena 1976). According to Diyasena (1976, p. 6-7), there are five earliest distinguishing features of the Sri Lanka's PV study.

*Firstly, it entailed the learning of a set of carefully selected psycho-motor skills directly related to a vocation. Where the skill is complex and demands a level of maturity not attainable by pupils, the opportunity will be provided for the acquisition of some component skills to a level that is appropriate to the pupils' stage of development. Where the manual skills are relatively simple, pupils may acquire a high degree of proficiency in them through the school courses. Examples of the former would be fishing, carpentry, motor-mechanism and gemming. Examples of the latter would be lace-making and coir-work. Secondly, the manual work that pupils do under a pre-vocational study is geared towards production. The emphasis is on socially productive work, in relation to the particular vocation(s) under study. This means that unlike prevalent practice in the traditional practical subjects, pupils will no longer be required to do uncontextualized and disjointed bits of manual work that have no great meaning or significance to them individually or socially. Thirdly, pre-vocational study places great emphasis on the cognitive study that is necessarily associated with it. While due place is given to manual skills in a vocation, they should be practised against the background of a theoretical foundation appropriate to the level of maturity of the pupil. Accordingly, every pre-vocational study will include instruction in the appropriate theory. The theory will concern itself with the different aspects from which a vocation can be examined, e.g. raw materials, processes of production, finished products, marketing, etc. The emphasis, again, is on understanding and application of knowledge rather than on mere acquisition of knowledge*

*through the traditional subjects like geography, commerce, biology, etc. It is argued that the vocational environment would provide stimuli for the establishment of inter-disciplinary links, bring about meaningful integration of hitherto compartmentalized subjects, such as mathematics, science and social studies; provide opportunities of discovery and application of scientific and mathematical knowledge; and develop skills of learning how to learn and problem-solve through direct experience, as appropriate and suitable to the different age levels of pupils. This is considered possible because the various aspects and problems of a vocation selected for study will necessarily be related to actual, realistic and concrete situations in the immediate physical and sociological environment of the pupils rather than be based on remote and hypothetical suppositions. Fourthly, a pre-vocational study is intended to bring about far-reaching and significant changes in the affective domain of pupils. It is expected that by making a vocation a subject of study, pupils are bound to change their traditional concept of 'knowledge and wisdom' which, many think, could be achieved only through books and teachers in a school. The many situations in a vocation should awaken awareness of the fact that there are many more sources of knowledge than textbooks and school teachers. For example, pupils would begin to appreciate the vast store of knowledge and expertise that the traditional craftsmen, farmers, fishermen, etc. have. At the same time, pupils will also be encouraged to view the vocational perspective objectively and critically. The development of a 'scientific attitude' towards social and vocational problems will discourage any kind of extreme romanticization of traditional culture. Pupils will be encouraged to value the natural resources in their neighbourhood and in the country as a whole, and develop positive attitudes towards the fruitful utilization of them in their future vocational lives. Finally, pre-vocational study should help to internalize positive values associated with a 'work culture', such as dignity of labour, cleanliness, orderliness, conservation of resources and time, planning, self-evaluation, self-discipline, operation.*

Years later, in a Mauritian study, Dhunookchand (2003) echoes similar sentiments as Leavitte and Brown (1915), Diyasena (1976) and Chan (1990) that the PV project is geared towards developing in students those essential learning competencies in terms of knowledge, skills

and attitudes which could not be achieved during their primary schooling. The subjects offered at South African PV schools are panel-beating, motor-repairs, plumbing, electronics, woodwork, cookery, hairdressing, shop and office practice and needlework.

### **2.1. 2 Current Studies in Pre-vocational Education.**

Current studies indicate that the essence of PV education as spelled out in its distinguishing features from far back as 1915 is still intact. In Nigeria, according to Kiadese (2012), PV subjects are still offered in the junior secondary phase of education. The author quotes The National Policy on Education (2004) as outlining the following as objectives of PV education in Nigeria:

- Acquisition of technical skills;
- Exposing students to career awareness by exploring usable options in the world of work and;
- Enabling youth to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology.

The author goes on to add that the PV subjects include Business Studies, Home Economics, Basic Technology, Agriculture, among others, and are also offered at the Junior Secondary level of Education in Nigeria. The PV subjects include Business Studies, Home Economics, Basic Technology and Agriculture, among others. The PV subjects are tremendously important to the economy of Nigeria; as they lay a solid foundation for the training of future Technologists, Accountants, Managers and Entrepreneurs (Kiadese 2012, p. 5). Ibiwumi (2011) mentioned that the technical and vocational subjects in Nigeria are tagged as PV subjects. In India, Mujumdar (2012) claims that the linkage between economy and education was never so clearly visible as now and the lack of employment opportunities in conventional graduates has led to the shifting of focus on the skill-based, industry orientated teaching and learning pedagogy (p. 2).

In Germany, Schneider, Krause and Woll (2007) explain that the PV training year is a one-year course of training, usually offered in full-time form and designed to prepare young people for the demands of vocational training. A clear majority of participants do not have a secondary general school certificate, but it prepares the students for the world of work (p. 29).

The course, however, is not part of special education. A study conducted by Bennie (2005) in New Zealand reveals that learners with mild to moderate levels of intellectual disability attend special schools that offer vocational subjects. However, these schools are not called PV schools. In Mauritius, 'The Diploma in Pre-Vocational Course' was launched in August 2002 (Dhunookchund, (2003, p. 17).

A recent study in Pakistan by Sallad, Joubish and Khurram (2010) indicates that there is no formal curriculum for learners with disabilities in PV education. However, since 1980, interest in vocational rehabilitation, vocational training and placement of the disabled has increased considerably. The education for the persons with disabilities, vocational skills training facilities, career guidance, counselling and job finding, organizational and institutional support, are all needed to do this work in different places to cater to the adverse training needs of at least 1.1 million people of fourteen to twenty years of age (p. 535). In South Africa such support does not exist. It is the responsibility of the teacher to arrange for work placement of the learners for 'on the job' experience. The teachers teaching time does not include allocated time for networking with relevant stakeholders in the community. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) who could assist in the networking process have not been identified. If the teacher chooses not to place learners in work establishments, then learners are simply disadvantaged of the opportunity to gain work experience as there is no policy that compels such duties of the teacher.

Sallad, Joubish and Khurram (2010, p. 538) report that training in Pakistan included development of fine motor skills, gross motor skills, eye-hand co-ordination, pre-writing skills, pre-reading skills, mathematical skills, social skills and communication skills. Activities like painting, cutting, bead threading etc. were included in the pre-vocational curriculum for developing fine motor skills. Activities for learning concepts of number, quantity, mass and volume were included in the curriculum for developing mathematical skills. Similarly for developing social skills, communication included both expressive and receptive language development. It was also observed that some of the activities were common for developing different areas for example; gripping was used for fine motor development and at the same time also for developing pre-writing skills.

### **2.1.3 Problems experienced at PV schools**

As no study has been conducted in South Africa to ascertain the problems experienced in PV schools, the following problems related to schools in Pakistan (Sallad, Joubish & Khurram, 2010, p. 359 ) that were preparing learners with disabilities for the world of work have been identified:

- Most of the special schools are offering only prevocational training programs;
- There are no standard curricula and only those vocational skills for which vocational teachers are easily available are taught and also because fewer resources are needed and not on the basis of market demand;
- More over the duration of vocational courses is not sufficient to get mastery on the skills required to do a job and to compete with the able bodied persons;
- Most of the schools were having an annual system of assessment, but still significant number of schools had no assessment systems at all. These were schools teaching mentally retarded children;
- Many schools have all the different types of assessment system like; monthly, quarterly, half-yearly and annual systems;
- Due to the shortage of teachers in schools the teacher-student ratio is high i.e. 1:15, which is not an ideal situation in Pakistan;
- The training equipment is present in most of the schools but not sufficient to the needs of students or is not properly utilized due to non-availability of trained vocational teachers;
- All the schools do not have the facilities of psychological assessment, speech therapy and physiotherapy to cater for the special needs of students;
- There is a lack of trained vocational teachers due to insufficient teachers' training facilities;
- The special schools do not have any record about the job placement of their ex-students. Some of the special students were employed by their own schools where as others got jobs in areas they were not trained for and;
- Some of the students were absorbed in their family business.

The above problems help one understand the nature and context within which novice PV teachers function.

#### **2.1.4 Technical High Schools**

A distinction needs to be made so that the reader is clear about schools that are similar to PV schools due to the subjects they offer and the learners that attend them. In South Africa, a school offering the subjects such as those offered in mainstream pre-vocational education in Nigeria, Sri Lanka, New Zealand and Germany would be known as Technical High Schools. Technical high schools are also mainstream schools. In New Zealand, a study conducted by Lee (1992) reveals that technical high schools typically offer boys pre-vocational streams of engineering, building, or an agricultural course to give them a practical skill preparing them for the non-professional workforce. Academically less able female students are offered a commerce stream with subjects like typing and bookkeeping to prepare them for commerce, where it was expected that they would work. Mention must be made once again that PV education in South Africa is part of special education and is not offered in mainstream schools.

#### **2.1.5 Pre-vocational Education and Society**

Although international PV studies are based mainly on mainstream education, PV education as it is in the South African context, Learners with Special Education Needs, (LSEN), has not been completely ignored. Over three decades ago advances were being made in terms of PV education in the context of special education. Lynch, Kiernan and Stark (1982) were already alluding to techniques that were used for integrating mentally challenged and other special needs youth into the competitive labour market. They claimed then that this had led to rapid changes in training methods (p. 136).

Other international reviews, (Lynch, Kiernan & Stark, 1982; Schneider, Krause & Woll, 2007; Sa'aideh, 2008; the International Labour Office of Geneva, 2010; Efajemue, 2011; and the Ministry of Education in Mauritius, 2011) reflect awareness for the need to network in PV education. Mention is made of employment and workplace challenges, adult and youth unemployment, new forms of work organization and sustainable development. Emphasis is placed on a renewed search for balanced skills development that can respond more closely to real workplace needs. There is the encouragement of closer cooperation between enterprises, schools and other stakeholders to deliver and assess outcomes. Mujumdar (2012, p. 3) encourages "the establishing of new relationships between educations, the world of work and the community as a whole".

In a study done at a PV school in Mauritius by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources (2011), the major challenges pertain to addressing the issues of quality, relevance, achievement and the opening up of opportunities for further development. Specific to these challenges are the following weaknesses:

- Untrained teachers. Most of them have no pedagogical skills to teach students with major learning difficulties;
- Negative perception of prevocational stream. The project has led to a negative branding of students;
- Lack of self-esteem and self-confidence among students;
- High drop-out rates mostly in the second and third years;
- Failure of many students to access the National Trade Certificate Foundation Course after three years of Prevocational Education and;
- Absence of formal certification. Whatever the children have learned is not recognized and this acts as a demotivating factor for them to work hard (p. 3).

Against the backdrop of the history of PV education and current studies in the international arena, and its mainly mainstream nature, the unique and complex dynamics of PV education as it exists in South Africa, is accentuated. The reader needs to be reminded that in South Africa, because PV schools are special schools and the learners that attend these schools are special needs learners with mild to moderate learning disability, there are further implications for teachers. Teaching learners with special needs in a PV school is not regular, nor traditional. In essence, learners with special needs are meant to be trained and prepared for the world of work in a mainstream society.

## **2. 1.6 Understanding learners with Intellectual Disability**

Griswold and Goldstein (1999, p. 315) quote the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder 1V (DSM-1V page unrecorded) as classifying intellectual impairment among the disorders first diagnosed in infancy, childhood, or adolescence. Intellectual impairment is characterised by an IQ of 70 or below and at least two impairments in adaptive functioning. Mertens and McLaughlin (2004, p. 136) is quoted by Vlachos (2008, p. 22) as stating that the

World Health organization (2002) recognizes four levels of intellectual disability based on Intelligence Quotient (IQ): mild, with a mental age of 8, 5 – 11 years; moderate, with a mental age of 6, 0 to 8,5 years; severe, with a mental age of 3. 75 to 6.0 years; and profound, with a mental age of 0 to 3, 75 years.

To give the reader some idea of the range of learning disabilities at the particular prevocational school in this study, it would be worthwhile mentioning that ex-learners have become entrepreneurs, others are successfully employed; many are married and have stable relationships. On the other end of the scale, ex-learners are unable to work; a percentage work in informal establishments, many depend on social grants and others stay at home without formal or informal employment. The current learners are made up of learners who can read fluently, learners who are average readers and comprehend to a small degree and those who cannot read or comprehend the written language at all. Learners may be able to communicate in English well but may not be able to complete practical tasks adequately. Other learners may not be able to communicate well but are efficient in practical skills. Still many learners have the ability to perform tasks but lack the confidence due to fear of failure and rejection, a common occurrence of their past school lives. Due to repeated failure many learners have poor self-concepts, emotive problems, moral issues, are unable to socialize appropriately, and have specific personality traits.

### **2.1.7 Problems experienced by learners with intellectual disability.**

#### **2.1.8 Poor Self Concept**

Landsberg (2005) notes that learners with an intellectual disability find it difficult to reason accurately and logically, which distorts their self-description and could eventuate in unhappiness and self-defeating behaviours. They often experience feelings of intellectual inadequacy and incompetence when compared to other learners. Prolonged stigmatisation triggers an expectancy of failure, an attitude of helplessness and an outer directedness. All of this becomes a vicious cycle that reinforces a poor self-concept and poor cognitive functioning (p. 387).

### **2.1.9 Poor Moral Judgement**

Landsberg (2005) explains that moral judgement involves deciding between right and wrong and is linked to the development of cognitive development. Learners with disabilities find it difficult to predict the outcome of their actions and therefore find it difficult to avoid negative outcomes (p. 386).

### **2.1.10 Affective Problems**

Affective development refers to the development of feelings, emotions and mood. As with moral aspects, there is a connection between the level of cognitive development and affective development. Feelings in learners with intellectual disability are often simplistic, short in duration, difficult to control and characterised by liability. Further, they may experience crippling unhappiness, anxiety, hostility, rejection and feelings of unworthiness (Landsberg 2005 p. 386).

### **2.1.11 Social Problems**

Landsberg (2005, p. 387) explains that intellectual disability causes impaired judgement which will result in inappropriate actions. Social cognition involves complex cognitive processes and skills that often create problems for persons with intellectual disability. The author identifies the following complex social cognitive skills:

- putting oneself in somebody else's position (role taking);
- perceiving and interpreting the characteristics of other persons accurately;
- interpreting other people's motives and feelings correctly;
- understanding social role expectations;
- understanding the rules that govern social relations;
- establishing and maintaining friendships;
- appropriately judging matters on an oral basis;
- listening and understanding what other people are saying, as well as being able to communicate one's own ideas effectively in response to them and;
- Being sensitive to the finer nuances of social and emotional interaction.

### 2.1.12 Personality Problems

Landsberg (2005) identified several different personality attributes of learners with disability:

- overdependence on adults in the immediate environment;
- wariness during initial interactions with adults;
- a lowered expectancy of success;
- an outer directed style of problem solving;
- diminished pleasure in solving challenging problems;
- preference for tangible as opposed to intangible rewards and;
- less differentiated self-concept linked to lower ideal self-image.

Given the above scenario of the type of problems that learners experience besides academic limitations, teachers are faced with a complex situation. For the novice teacher, the complex nature of PV education can be very daunting. The role of teacher shifts beyond the teaching and learning that takes place in the classroom. It is clear that teachers have to extend themselves beyond the fences of the school to make PV education work. Further, having reviewed the literature discussed earlier in this chapter, elements of networking, collaboration and co-operation of the different stakeholders such as the Ministry of Education, the PV schools and the teachers , parents, government, NGOs and work establishments stand out as vital vehicles that drive PV education.

On the other side of the coin, sadly, what emerges is the lack of such activity in South Africa. Whilst it is not part of my study to look for the problems facing PV education, but to merely record the experiences of novice prevocational teachers, it is inevitable that the inadequacies of PV education, as practiced in South Africa, come to the fore. Another important aspect of PV education is curriculum and the need for review in order to meet the needs of learners and the community. Ibiwumi (2011) agrees that the dynamics of social changes and the peculiarities of educational initiatives in different settings all over the world do call for curriculum reviews with a view to meeting the emerging needs and values of the society, arising from the need for relevance in the form of education for functional living, self-sustenance, and self-reliance (p, 325).

## **2.2 Curriculum**

Ibiwumi (2011, p. 325) iterates that curriculum is central to education at all levels and that it is indeed an instrument for possible education and it is the medium through which educational institutions seek to translate the societal values into concrete reality. The author cites Alade (2005, page unavailable) as defining curriculum as a programme of education prepared for a definite group of learners within a timeframe in order to achieve the intended behavioural outcomes. Ibiwumi (2011, p. 325) also cites Okundaye (2003, page unrecorded) as seeing curriculum as the inner engine which propels education to achieve for both the individual and the society what they hold up as prize.

### **2.2.1 Pre -vocational Education and its unique curriculum**

As a teacher of the PV school, I am aware that curriculum for PV education is not developed by the Department of Education (KZN). As a result, respective teachers, responsible for the different subjects, were tasked with the drawing up of syllabi. The National Curriculum, Curriculum 2005, (Department of Education, 2000) is the framework from which the PV curriculum is supposed to be drawn up. However, PV subjects include subjects such as Panel-Beating, Welding, Hairdressing and Beauty, Shop and Office Practice, amongst other subjects. It is worth pointing out that Curriculum 2005 does not include these subjects in its broad framework. However, functional English and Mathematics are drawn from the broad national curriculum that is meant for mainstream curriculum. Essentially, teachers compile their own curriculum and teach what they believe is appropriate. To date, there has been no authority that checks if the knowledge content is updated, current or appropriate. Much is left to the conscience of the teacher where content is concerned. Given the aforementioned context of PV education, I was intrigued to find out how novice teachers who were new to the profession and new to prevocational education and its unique nature, experience their teaching.

### **2.2.3 The Philosophy of Inclusive Education.**

Inclusive Education, as defined by Education White Paper 6: building an inclusive education and training system, amongst other definitions, is a “broader than formal schooling, and acknowledging that learning also occurs in the home and community and within formal and informal settings and structures.” (Department of Education 2001, p.16) It is further explained that inclusive education is about acknowledging that all children can learn, that they need support because they have different learning needs, that their diversity should be respected (Department of Education 2001).

Inclusive education is also about change in attitudes, curricula, environment, teaching methodologies and the environment (Department of Education, 2001). Howell and Lazarus (2003) purport that the policy of inclusive education provides a framework for systemic change where strategies are oriented towards building the capacity of the system to respond to the full range of barriers to learning, including systemic barriers.

For novice teachers in a prevocational school, the array of diversity of learner needs within a classroom could be indeed overwhelming. Without understanding learners with special needs or the importance of inclusive education, novice teachers may not be able to practice its philosophy. Unfortunately, some novice teachers were not part of the inclusive education training and others were not adequately trained. In a study done by Shalem (2003), it was concluded that in-service training for teachers in South Africa was fragmented and short term, lacking in in-depth content and knowledge. Two teachers from each prevocational school attended the inclusive education workshop after which, they were expected to cascade the information to the rest of the staff. Engelbrecht (2006, p. 257) confirms that the cascade approach to training only trained one or two educators from each school and that the information cascaded was not accurate.

Boer, Pijl, and Minnaert (2009) concluded after a review on teachers attitudes on inclusive education that teachers are negative or undecided in their beliefs about inclusive education and do not rate themselves as knowledgeable about educating pupils with special needs. The above finding is mirrored in the data of my study where novice PV educators reveal that they had no idea how inclusive education applied to learners at a PV school. Even though the participants were aware of the diverse intellectual disabilities of learners and the unique nature of the PV school, they were not aware that they had to network with the community establishments for curriculum reform and work placements. Nor were novice teachers aware that all lessons need to have a bearing on how it would benefit the learner in the place of work. More important than inclusive education in mainstream schools in the context of my study, is the inclusion of PV learners into the world of work and an inclusive society.

#### **2.2.4 Inclusion in Society**

The above efforts that are made internationally remain mere visions that are expressed in Inclusive Education, White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001). Howell and Lazarus (2008) believe that change is necessary for the way in which individuals understand, conceptualise, explain and thus respond to different learner needs within the learner

population. Swart, Engelbrecht, Eloff and Pettipher (2002), cited in Engelbrecht, (2006, p. 257) maintain that the context of change and inclusive education implies a redefinition of the traditional, isolated roles of teachers to a more collaborative role in the accommodation of diversity in inclusive classrooms.

Banks (1994) suggests that major goals of a transformative curriculum that fosters multicultural literacy should be to help learners to know, to care, and to act in ways that will develop and foster a democratic and just society in which all groups enjoy cultural democracy and cultural empowerment. Carrim (2007) cited in Ntombela (2011, p. 6) agree that inclusive education has been embraced as a means towards the creation of a caring, inclusive society and teachers do have a critical role to play as change agents in the creation of such a society.

Bennie (2005) purport that an “increasingly, non-categorical, inclusive approach to special education is taking hold in New Zealand implying that every school should develop in ways that enable it to respond appropriately to the full range of diversity in the community it serves” (p. 32). He quotes The New Zealand Disability Strategy as being “aimed at achieving a more inclusive society and is informed by an understanding of disability as a socially constructed phenomenon rather than something that exists inside a disabled person. As a consequence disability is viewed not as something that people have, but as something that happens to people: a process that happens when one group of people create barriers for others in terms of access to places, activities and opportunities taken for granted” (p. 33).

Sa'aideh (2008) has observed that reforms have often ignored teachers, except as tools to carry out new mandates and programs. But evidence that teachers are the most important factor in the effectiveness of schools and the quality of a child's education is now too strong to ignore. Teachers are not constants in the educational equation. Instead, they are perhaps the most important variable. Locally, very little emphasis is placed on training of novice teachers for the changes taking place at PV schools. Allen and Martin (1992) observed that the school, the learner and the community are interrelated. Parents and learners are often left out of policy development and therefore do not understand the vital role they play in the learners' school life and school's functioning. Educating in the community is not simple work that takes place beyond the school fence. It involves a particular way of practice and location. In other words it means looking at paradigms and processes that practitioners appeal to when thinking about their work (p.107). One of the regular complaints of all teachers at the

prevocational school where I teach is that most parents treat the school as a day care centre, viewing teachers as primary caregivers and not getting involved in the learners' school life.

### **2.2.5 Implications for Novice teachers in relation to Inclusive Education**

In PV schools, the pressure of novice teachers is compounded by the unique needs of PV education and its learners. The new teachers are not only faced with the challenges of diverse learning disabilities, but also with the application and practice of the inclusive policy as it relates to PV education. In skills orientated education such as PV education, the removal or minimising of systemic barriers is integral to the process of teaching and learning. Barriers entrenched within the community's belief systems have to be removed to ensure the successful implementation of work experience programmes that are so vital to the PV educational programme.

Enhancing the recognition and acceptance of the basic rights of all South African children to be accommodated in inclusive school communities involves an acknowledgement of the complexity of the dynamic interaction between societal as well as contextual factors and the continuous development and evolvement of supportive and collaborative inclusive learning communities on all levels of the education system (Engelbrecht 2006). Ntombela (2011) quotes Mathibe (2007) as stating that teachers' professional development needs to focus on giving them appropriate attitudes, knowledge, skills and values to perform their tasks well and resourcefully. This is even more critical in inclusive education where teachers need to know and understand what barriers to learning are, how to address them as well as get hands-on training in classroom strategies that promote inclusion (p. 7).

Novice teachers have to first have the mind-set that learners with special needs can be taught a skill and that the skill can be executed in a place of work. Then only can novice teachers convince prospective employers that learners with special education needs are worthy of being employed. PV teachers have to practice the policy of inclusion not only in the classroom but also in the community by training LSEN learners to fit into society and function as responsible economically productive citizens.

### **2.3 Novice Teachers**

Novice teachers of prevocational schools are completely under-researched. The search for studies relevant to the teaching experiences of novice prevocational teachers, in the national and international arena, point to the dearth of studies undertaken in this area. This is yet

another reason why I have endeavoured to embark on such a research journey. Related literature will be used in my study.

Meskill, Mossop, Diangelo and Pasquale (2002) compared novice and expert teachers in the field of technology; Onafowora (2004) researched teacher efficacy; Wong (2004) looked at successful induction programs; Nambira, Kapenda, Tjipueja and Sichombe (2009) investigated professional development needs; Hatch, Sun, Grossman, Neira and Chang (2009) explored the value of multimedia and novice teachers; Hogan and Rabinowitz (2003) also examined the differences between expert and novice teachers and Uwanga (2010) looked at novice teachers' coping strategies in Namibia.

### **2.3.1 Interpretation of Novice teachers and Mentor Teacher**

According to Nambira, Kapenda, Tjipueja and Sichombe (2009), the term **novice teacher** refers to teachers who are professionally qualified, practicing teachers but with less than two year's teaching experience because the school teaching environment differs from colleges experiences. Freeman (2001) cited in Bulent (2003) view novice teachers as those teachers who have three or fewer years of teaching experience. The term novice teacher in the context of my study refers specifically to teachers who have less than two years of experience as prevocational teachers. The term **mentor teacher** refers to professional qualified practising teachers who have teaching experience of more than four years (Nambira, Kapenda, Tjipueja & Sichombe 2009, p. 7).

Meskill, Mossop, DiAngelo and Pasquale (2002), caution that for the novices, classroom management can be an "overwhelming obstacle to what they see as their primary mission - affecting and enacting their plan" (p. 51). Hogan and Rabinowitz (2003, p. 19) report that novice teachers indicated that they were "unprepared to effectively" handle misbehaviour in the classroom. The authors also divulged that "while novices may have difficulties in managing such situations, given the lack of experience, they were surprised that novice teachers were unable to simply recall the events of misbehaviour" (p. 19). When new teachers enter the classroom, they experience disparities between their expectations of their role as a teacher and actual realities faced during their first year (Inman & Marlow, 2004). Meskill et al., (2002) cites Kagan (1992) as stating that novice teachers feel they must first and foremost master the routines and rituals of new contexts before anything else. Teachers, who do not receive assistance, knowledge, training and support during their first year, may experience a sense of abandonment and confusion.

### **2.3.2 Problems experienced by Novice Teachers**

Nambira, Kapenda, Tjipueja and Sichombe (2009), discovered that most of the novice teachers in Namibia were not introduced to the essential document which is the Broad Curriculum nor did they have any idea on how to maintain discipline in the classroom (p. 13). Further, the role of mentoring and coaching were not well known among novice teachers. This was because mentoring, coaching and professional support was not well structured or more specifically formalized (p. 24). In the same study, novice teachers found it necessary to be equipped with the necessary skills especially on how to go about identifying learners who were not motivated as well as rendering the correct assistance (p. 25). Further, novice teachers felt that they did not have the necessary skills to identify learner needs (p. 26) nor were they trained on the variety of assessment strategies (p. 33). It was also reported that novice teachers were challenged by the adaptation to the teaching and learning demands and the process of applying the theoretical knowledge to the classroom situation (p. 69).

In a study done by Wong (2004) in American schools, isolation was the common thread and complaint among new teachers. Uuwanga (2010) refer to schools in Namibia where novice teachers are assigned a mentor or have a helpful expert teacher to help them cope with problems and overcome any sense of anxiety, numbness or isolation they might experience and for them to become competent and skilled professional teachers. Dhunookchand (2003) did an impact evaluation on PV schools in Mauritius and found that teachers felt that textbooks were essential because they were facing difficulty in their teaching without a book. This can be understood in the sense that full confidence can be developed to teach without a book only after longer experience (p. 12). Uugwanga (2010) claims that his first year of teaching was a “confused period because of the responsibilities that I had to take up as a full time teacher” (p. 5).

When thinking about the classroom while planning instructional strategies (lesson planning), novice teachers tend to regard the class as a whole. That is, novice teachers do not think in terms of individual students. Rather, they think in terms of “a class” of thirty-five (or so) students. Expert content specialists, on the other hand, perceive the classroom as comprised of unique individuals. Perceiving the classroom on these two levels impacts the requisite analysis needed by the expert and novice to solve the problem of curriculum planning (Hogan & Rabinowitz, 2003, p. 9)

Wong (2004) expresses that new teachers want more than a job. They want to experience success and they want to contribute to a group (p. 50). He is of the opinion that what keeps good teachers teaching is structured, sustained, intensive professional development programmes that allow new teachers to observe others, to be observed by others and to be part of networks or study groups where all teachers share together, grow together, and learn to respect each other's work. Wong (2004, p. 53) further made reference to a New Teacher Induction Program which noted: "we teach our teachers how to teach the required benchmarks and standards, manage the classroom environment, set appropriate procedures, and maximize instructional time. We are a very cohesive district and we want new staff to feel wanted, valued, and respected by the way we support them through the induction process. We want them to be comfortable to take the risks of trying new things and learning from their peers and their coaches".

## **Conclusion**

One can gather from the literature study that PV education is unique. Whilst PV education may differ in certain aspects as discussed in the literature, essentially, internationally and in South Africa, PV education offers education for the world of work. However, in South Africa, PV education is mainly provided for learners who have special needs. The discussion on problems experienced by learners who attend PV schools has provided the reader an idea of the diversity of learners that novice PV teachers have to teach. The literature review has also revealed problems experienced with PV education and problems experienced by novice teachers. The discussion on inclusive education highlighted the need for networking and support from all stakeholders involved in not only the education process, but also the securing of employment. With the thread of complexity running throughout the literature review, it seemed appropriate to use the theory of complexity as a lens through which I viewed the data of my study.

## **2.4 Theoretical Framework**

The theory that was used to view the data of my study was complexity theory. Theory has been interpreted by Kerlinger (1970, p. 9) in Cohen et al (2011, p. 9) as "a set of interrelated constructs (concepts), definitions and prepositions that present a systemic view of phenomena"

### 2.4.1 Complexity Theory

Complexity refers to the condition of the universe which is integrated and yet too rich and varied for us to understand in simple common mechanistic or linear ways. We can understand many parts of the universe in these ways but the larger and more intricately related phenomena can only be understood by principles and patterns - not in detail. Complexity deals with the nature of emergence, innovation, learning and adaptation' ( Battram, 1998 p. v cited in Tosey 2002, p. 1).

Researchers of novice teachers (Meskill, Mossop, DiAngelo and Pasquale (2002); Wong (2004); Ewing and Manuel (2005); Nambira, Kapenda, Tjipueja and Sichombe (2009), Uugwanga (2010), Ibiwumi (2011), allude to a sense of abandonment and isolation, inadequacy, confusion and overwhelming feelings, unpredictability and risk due to challenges faced. Similar emotions experienced by novice teachers have emerged in the data of my study. The theory of complexity is appropriate in explaining similar notions. How these different feelings, of confusion, chaos, not knowing, fear, and a sense of being overwhelmed and finally a need to fit in and adjust, are explained by the theory of complexity. What follows are complexity concepts, which assisted in understanding how these different feelings, played out in my participants' experiences and actions. I will elaborate on how the theoretical perspective was used as an analytical lens to help me explain and understand the experiences of novice teachers in PV education.

Mention needs to be made of the difficulty in finding studies that employed the complexity theoretical framework specifically in prevocational education. However, many studies have used the framework in education in general. I was inspired by the authors, Anfara and Mertz (2006) who intimated that a researcher should be open to considering the applicability of the wide variety of theoretical frameworks in the many different fields of study and discipline in the social and natural sciences. Over the years it was also noted that most social science disciplines tend to be confronted with characteristics of non-linear and unpredictable phenomenon. Anfara and Mertz (2006) allude to Levy (1994) as explaining, that, originally, the concept was successfully applied in the natural sciences such as chemistry, biology and physics so as to enhance understanding of certain emerging trends in those fields. Consequently this recognition has led to an increase in the application of complexity theory to a number of fields. Earlier researchers mentioned are Prigogine (1996) and Cilliers (1998) and more recently, Eppel (2009).

Since the democratic dispensation of 1994, the education sector seems to be in perpetual transition with numerous facets of policies being introduced against a background of alleged poor management, understaffing and a poorly paid cadre of teachers. Despite this seemingly chaotic and complex scenario, the education system has managed to survive (Kayuni 2010). He draws some insights from the chaos and complexity theory to explain why the education sector still manages to survive and show resilience despite overwhelming challenges. The study was done in Malawi's day secondary schools and analysed policy through the lens of the chaos and complexity theory. The author makes reference to Overman (1996 page unrecorded) as saying that the chaos-complexity theory gives an "appreciation, not distrust of chaos and of uncertainty, stressful times" and it further stresses that "real change and new structures are found in the very chaos they [managers or policy makers] try to prevent".

Eppel (2009) analyses the potential contribution of complexity theory as it relates to social systems and organisations. The author employed the theoretical framework earlier to analyse education policy and also mentions systems that consist of "large numbers of interdependent and self-referencing participants, interacting with each other in ways that are nonlinear, influenced by prior experiences and unpredictable in any precise sense. Her research takes a qualitative, interpretative approach to the investigation of policy processes and the author explains that this is because, as social processes it is expected that they will be dynamic, interactive and subject to multiple interpretations. Eppel (2009) talks of chaotic systems that are not completely without order and orderly patterns that can self-organise and emerge from the seemingly chaotic without external intervention (p.12).

Human beings by nature are complex, unpredictable, interdependent and dynamic. I attempted to use the analytical lens of complexity theory for a new, holistic perspective of viewing and understanding novice teachers' experiences at a prevocational school. Both the above studies, Eppel (2009) and Kayuni (2010) mention that chaos and complexity theory is one of many systems theory, however, neither uses the theory's central concepts, namely, self- organization, emergent properties, the critical role of fluctuations, sensitivity to initial conditions, bifurcation, self-renewal versus transformation and transformation: order out of chaos, to explain novice teachers experience in PV education. A sense of abandonment, confusion and overwhelming feelings are some of the emotions experienced by novice teachers in my study. The theory of complexity explains as its concepts, similar notions that emerged from the study. How these different feelings of confusion, chaos, not knowing, fear,

and a sense of being overwhelmed and finally adjusting tie up with the explanations embedded in the theory of complexity.

In the first Chapter and earlier in this Chapter, the reader was given an inside view of PV education and the dynamics that surround such a type of education. Ton Jorg (2004, p. 126) draws our attention to Vygotsky (1978, page unrecorded) who cautioned that “we should be aware that we cannot think of complexity in education without thinking about the processes involved in it. To study the subject we have to go back to the initial stages of the process”. It was with this in mind that a detailed context within which PV education functions was offered.

#### **2.4.2 Central Concepts**

The following concepts : self-organization; emergent properties; the critical role of fluctuations; sensitivity to initial conditions; bifurcations self-renewal versus transformations; transformation: order out of chaos, are in essence what Prigogene and Strengers (1984) allude to as ‘fluctuating sub-systems where order and organization can actually arise “spontaneously” out of disorder and chaos through a process of self-organization (p. xv). Cilliers (1998) states that complexity theory is predicated on a phenomenon possessing five attributes: it contains independent complicated entities; multiple entities are contained within; the entities within the phenomenon perform interrelated functions; the phenomenon seeks a common goal through a process of adaptation; and uncertainty is generated because of unpredictable interactions within itself and between itself and the environment (p. 91).

Davis and Sumara (2010, p. 1) claim that the project of education is among the most complex of human enterprises, arising in the nexus of individual interest, social need, disciplinary diversity, cultural self-perpetuation, and humanity’s. Tosey (2002) succinctly encapsulates the essence of complexity theory as it applies to educators:

*as educators, I believe we encounter this apparent irrationality any time we have done something for the best of the programme or for the benefit of the students, but are misunderstood; or we are attacked and accused of having bad intentions; or things simply don’t work as we intended – especially if the effect is the opposite of whatever we planned. Some explain this as the vagaries of life or as ‘sod’s law’ (p. 3).*

To give a basic illustration of how the experiences of novice prevocational teachers are explained by complexity theory, it will be worthwhile pointing out properties and concepts identified by Prigogene and Stengers (1984) and the attributes mentioned by Cilliers (1998). What follows is a succinct, concise illustration of concepts, as I see them, and how these concepts helped to explain novice teachers' experiences and actions. More elaborate explanations will be given in the following chapter on data analysis.

### 2.4.3 Complexity Concepts and Attributes explaining Novice Teachers Experiences.

Concepts	Novice Teachers
<b>self-organization</b>	rely on inner resources due to a lack of mentoring.
<b>emergent properties</b>	chaos, confusion, not knowing, isolation of novice teachers
<b>the critical role of fluctuations</b>	the catalyst to change
<b>sensitivity to initial conditions</b>	the unmanageability and feelings of despair.
<b>bifurcations: self-renewal versus transformation</b>	reaching a point of decision making.
<b>transformation: order out of chaos</b>	adapting and coping

PV education is an entity within an entity, a system within a system. It is part of the 'whole' education system. Within PV education are other entities, such as teachers, managers, head of departments, learners, parents, policies and practices. These entities "perform interrelated functions" (Cilliers 1998, p. 91). Novice teachers as one of the entity of the PV school, go through all the conditions that Prigogene and Stengers (1984) speak of conditions such as confusion, inadequacy and not knowing, unpredictability and uncertainty (emergent properties), and due to these uncertain, uncomfortable feelings, a point is reached that serves as a catalyst (critical role fluctuations), that forces one to make a decision (bifurcation), depending on one's own resources and inherent coping mechanisms to make the choices (self-organization), to change and alter situations (transformation) in order to achieve (order out of chaos). Similarly, Kauffman (1995) referred to self-organization as 'order for free', where order arises naturally and unexpectedly and that emerging sciences of complexity theory

implies that “order is not all accidental but that the vast veins of spontaneous order lie at hand” (Kauffman, 1995, p. 8).

These complexity concepts and properties identified by Prigogine and Stengers (1984) and the attributes mentioned by Cilliers (1998) proved useful in helping me explain the conditions that novice teachers go through in the new and unfamiliar ethos of PV education and how they adapt and navigate their way through teaching in a PV school in a more manageable way. In classroom teaching, even a small change in the behaviour, perhaps an unexpected remark from a learner or a slight change in the way the teacher conducts an activity, can have a major impact on the course of the lesson and its overall effectiveness or outcome.

### **Conclusion**

The chapter has explained PV education as it exists in South Africa and as it functions in the international arena. The review of literature included novice teachers, the policy of inclusive education and an explanation was given on how complexity theory was employed as a lens through which to view the experiences of novice PV teachers. In the following chapter, the research design and methodology of the study will be outlined. Included will be the data production technique that was used.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

Bless and Higson-Smith (1995, p. 46) view research design as a plan on strategies and techniques to employ in determining the nature of the relationship between variables. Given the purpose of this study: to investigate the experiences of novice pre-vocational teachers, the research design selected in this study is case study. In the preceding chapter, literature revealed a dearth of studies related to novice pre-vocational teachers' experiences, both in local and international contexts. The research methodology and research design used in this study were informed by the aim and the research question of the study. The lens through which the data was analysed was the complexity theory. I was inspired by Anfara and Mertz (2006) who intimated that a researcher should be open to considering the applicability of the wide variety of theoretical frameworks in the many different fields of study and discipline in the social and natural sciences. I have attempted to explore the concepts in the context of pre-vocational education in explaining and understanding the experiences of novice teachers.

Researchers usually choose between a qualitative or quantitative approach, or even use mixed-methods for their studies. The paradigm within which my study was situated was the qualitative interpretive paradigm. A qualitative research design was used as its assumptions allowed me to find answers to my questions about experiences of novice teachers within a context of pre-vocational education. Sherman and Webb (1988) encourage the investigation of the experiences of participants as these are 'lived', 'felt' and 'undergone' (p.7).

This chapter outlines the research methodology used in collecting data for this study. It begins with the key aspects or defining characteristics of qualitative research methodology. Criticisms of the approach are also mentioned. Different aspects of the research methods are explained. Reasons for the choice of the data collection process are given. Furthermore, various aspects of the research design are addressed. Following this, an explanation of how the data were sorted and analysed is presented. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations to the study.

### **3.1 Qualitative research**

Qualitative research, according to Merriam (1998), is “an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible” (p. 5). It is concerned about understanding the uniqueness of that setting, how individuals feel to be part of that setting, and how they view the world in their setting. Similar explanations are given by Creswell (2009), who argues that qualitative research is a means of exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups assign to a social or human problem. The process of qualitative research entails collecting data from the participants’ location without having to modify it. Individuals’ views and meaning about their social issues are observed as important and having a great contribution to their social world.

#### **3.3.1 Key Features of Qualitative Research**

Merriam (1998, p. 6) identifies five characteristics of qualitative research. Qualitative research is based on the view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds. Secondly, the researcher is the primary or key instrument for data collection through interviews, examining documents and observing behaviour and is also responsible for data analysis. Although qualitative researchers may use an instrument to collect data they are responsible for processing data, clarifying and summarising data rather than some computers or inanimate inventory as is the case with quantitative research. The third characteristic is that qualitative research usually involves field work in a natural setting. Fourthly, qualitative research employs an inductive research strategy. Thus it focuses on building up hypotheses, theories, abstractions, concepts rather than testing existing theories; and it focuses on observation and understanding obtained in the field. Finally, qualitative research focuses on process, meaning, and understanding and the product is richly descriptive.

More recently, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p. 539) note similar points of qualitative research: it is characterized by a concern for the individual; all theories constructed within the context of qualitative approach tend to be anti-positivist; it attempts to understand the subjective world of human experience and to retain the integrity of the phenomena being investigated; efforts are made to understand the person from within; they focus on action (behaviour within meaning), the action is meaningful to us in so far as we are able to ascertain the intentions of actors to share their experiences.

The interpretive paradigm is characterized by a concern for the individual and it tends to be anti-positivist. The central endeavour in the context of the interpretive paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience. To retain the integrity of the phenomena being investigated, efforts are made to get inside and to understand from within (Cohen et al., 2011, p.17). Qualitative research was most appropriate to my study because it allowed me to collect data (detailed descriptions of experiences) from my participants (novice teachers) in their natural setting (PV school). I would not have been able to get a better account of how my participants experienced their teaching than the verbalization of their experiences. Qualitative research also gave me the ambit to engage with, delve deeper and to interpret the data as closest to the truth as possible.

### **3.3.2 Key Criticisms of the Qualitative Research.**

Due to the subjective nature of qualitative studies, there is a greater risk of inaccuracy. According to Bernstein (1974) subjective reports may be incomplete and misleading. He points out that participant's experiences are a perception of what they believe it is. This does not necessarily mean it is the true situation. In order to overcome this limitation I had face to face discussions about the responses so that participants could offer reasons for feeling the way they did and this allowed me to see the legitimacy of their experiences.

### **3.3.4 Research Method**

Research methods are ways one collects and analyses data. These methods have been developed for acquiring knowledge by reliable and valid procedures (McMillan & Schumacher 2001, p. 9).

#### **3.3.4.1 Case Study Methodology**

Case study methodology will be employed to 'investigate real-life events in their natural settings.....while capturing both a phenomenon (the real life event) and its context (the natural setting) (Yin 2004, p. X11). I chose to undertake a case study in order to achieve in-depth, intensive, rich, lively, thick descriptions of data. The case study also served the following purpose: to portray, analyse, and interpret the uniqueness of real individuals and situations through accessible accounts; to catch the situatedness of behaviour; to contribute to action and intervention and to present and represent reality – to give a sense of being there (Cohen *et al.*, 2011, p. 290). Yin (2003) advises that the goal is to develop preliminary concepts at the outset of a case study. One purpose served by such concepts is to place the

case study in an appropriate research literature, so that lessons from the case study will more likely advance knowledge and understanding of a given topic. It also helps to identify the unit of analysis (p. 3).

McMillan & Schumacher (2001, p. 36) explain that a case may be a programme, an event, an activity or a set of individuals bounded in time and place. Becker (1992) states that with case studies, issues are complex, situated, problematic relationships. He explains that qualitative case researchers orient to complexities connecting ordinary practice in natural habitats to a few abstractions and concerns of the academic discipline.

In this study, the case is a set of individuals (novice prevocational teachers) within a context (prevocational school). Case study was also most appropriate for my study as I was able to be provided with first-hand information about the phenomenon I was investigating (experiences). It gave me a means through which I could identify with and understand the participants' world and how they experienced it. I wanted to know about the teaching experiences of novice teachers. Using the case study method, I was able to carry out the research at the school where the new teachers were teaching. This was the natural setting of the real life occurrences of the novice teachers.

#### **3.3.4.2 Sampling**

Maree (2011, p. 79) defines sampling as the process used to select a portion of the population for study. Purposive sampling was used to identify prospective participants. Creswell (2003, p. 220) explain that in qualitative data collection, purposeful sampling is used so that individual are selected because they have experienced the central phenomenon. Cohen et al., (2011, p. 156) solidifies the statement made by Creswell (2003) by stating that purposive sampling is a feature of qualitative research, where researchers hand-pick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgement of their typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought. They explain that purposive sampling was chosen for a specific purpose. In this study, the sample was novice prevocational teachers. The term novice teacher in the context of my study refers specifically to teachers who have less than two years of experience as prevocational teachers.

The participants were those teachers who have been teaching in a prevocational school for less than two years irrespective of the number of general teaching years of experience they

have. The study was done at one prevocational school. My position as teacher at the chosen school had influenced this decision as I believed that I was in an advantageous position with regards to understanding the participants' responses in the context of the particular school.

At the outset of my study, four novice prevocational teachers were included in the compliment of the staff. Within the next two months of the current year, three additional novice teachers were appointed to the school. I then had the option of choosing from a total of seven novice teachers. Much thought went into choosing participants. It seemed beneficial to my study to choose teachers who were vocal about their problems and experiences and who I believed would make a valuable contribution to my study. I was conscious of choosing teachers who I hoped would engage with the questions and converse around it. I looked for visible signs of distraught behaviour among the new educators I listened for cues in staff meetings that would guide me towards my choice of participants, in other words I looked for signs of chaos and complexity.

Despite what I believed about teachers who were vocal, I did not want to ignore the silence of teachers. One particular teacher was always very quiet, made no contribution to discussions and seemed to have a feeling of inadequacy or not belonging. I believed she had a lot to say but was not addressed about the issues in question, that is, her experiences as a novice prevocational teacher. After mindful deliberations, I decided to stay with my initial choice of the four teachers before the arrival of the further three teachers. Huysamen (2001, p.178) suggests that individuals participating in research should be referred to a 'participants' rather than 'subjects'.

Of the four participants, one is a novice teacher recently out of university, (5 months). Three teachers are not novices to teaching as they have more than two years of teaching experience but are novices to prevocational teaching. Two of the four participants teach academic subjects and one teaches both academic and a workshop subject and the fourth teaches only a workshop subject. The subject the participant teaches was not a criterion for selection. The participants consisted of three females and one male. Gender was not a criterion for the selection.

### **3.3.4.3 Data Collection**

#### **3.3.4.3.1 The questionnaire.**

An open ended questionnaire was used to collect data so that the participants, could ‘give detail in their answers’ (Maree 2011, p. 61). According to Oppenheim (1996, p. 40) the chief advantage of the open ended question is the freedom that it gives to the respondent, freedom to let his thoughts roam freely, unencumbered by a prepared set of replies. As Bailey (1994, p. 122) noted, the open ended questions were used to ‘elicit the respondent’s unique views, philosophy or goals’.

When designing the questionnaire, I took the advice of Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003, p. 8) to present questions in a clear and unambiguous way so that the participant may interpret them, articulate his or her response and transmit it effectively to the researcher. Kvale (1996, p. 158) advises that leading questions may be necessary in order to obtain information that the interviewer suspects the interviewee might be withholding. Oppenheim (1996, p. 121) postulates that the function of a question in a questionnaire is to elicit a particular communication. I therefore ensured that the questions were simple yet clear to collect the data that I was interested in, for my study.

The questionnaire consisted of thirty questions. The questions were set out in such a way that it compelled the participant to recall her or his first few days at the school in order to capture their initial impressions and feelings. The questions progressed towards the participant’s stay and practice as a novice teacher in the school and how they navigated their way as a new teacher in a new type of school.

A copy of the questionnaire was given to each participant to keep for a week. My intention was to allow the participant to familiarize themselves with the questions so that thought processes would be stimulated. Thinking about the questions would also allow the participants to recall the experiences they have had and also to be conscious of experiences that were to follow. Cohen, et al (2011, p. 17) remind us that actions are only meaningful to us so as far as we are able to ascertain the intentions of actors to share their experiences. They further contend that a large number of our everyday interactions with one another rely on

such shared experiences. A further purpose of giving the questionnaire to the participants a week before the interview was to give the participants ample time to decide whether they were indeed willing to be part of the study. The questionnaire was designed in a way that allowed me as a researcher to probe for clarification and to seek deeper meaning.

#### **3.3.4.3.2 Conducting the interview**

An interview, according to Maree (2011), is a two way conversation in which the interviewer asks the participant questions to collect data and to learn about the ideas, beliefs, views, opinions and behaviours of the participant. The aim of the qualitative interview, he states, is to see the world through the eyes of the participant, and they can be a valuable source of information, provided they are used correctly. Interviews are a very common and popular way of gathering information and give subjects the opportunity to produce knowledge. (Cohen, *et al.*, 2011).

On site face to face semi - structured interviews were conducted to facilitate the data collection process. Even though Kvale (1996, p. 101) suggests that one conducts interviews with as many people as possible to gain the information sought, being a novice researcher, I chose to have a small sample of just four participants. I believed that I would be able to collect ample data to answer my research question.

The participants were required to answer the predetermined questions and as Maree (2011) cautioned, I remained attentive to the responses in order to identify new emerging lines of inquiry that could have been directly related to the phenomena being studied. Being an active participant as interviewer, it was necessary, as guided by Creswell (2003), to continually recognize participant bias, values and personal interests with regards to the research topic and process. I was conscious of keeping the interview directed closely to the areas of interest.

For each interview that was conducted, Kvale's (1996, p. 30) key characteristics of qualitative research had a major influence. These include:

- engage, understand and interpret the key feature of the life-worlds of the participant;
- use natural language to gather and understand qualitative language;
- be able to reveal and explore the nuanced descriptions of the life-worlds of the participants;
- elicit descriptions of specific situations and actions rather than generalities;
- adopt a deliberate openness to new data and phenomena rather than being too pre-structured;
- focus on specific ideas and themes, have direction but avoid being too tightly structured;
- accept the ambiguity and contradictions of situations when they occur in participants, if this is a fair reflection of the ambiguous and contradictory situation they find themselves in;
- accept that the interview may provoke new insights and changes in the participants themselves and;
- regard interviews as an interpersonal encounter; with all that this entails, and be a positive and enriching experience for all participants.

Interviewing the participants at the school was convenient for both the participants and me as the researcher as the school was our place of work. Interviews were conducted during non-teaching periods and week day afternoons. Notes and comments were made to make probing easier. I was also in a position to notice and to clear up any misunderstandings promptly, and to follow up vague and incomplete answers within a short period of time (Huysamen, 2001, p. 146).

The interviews were written recorded word for word (verbatim). Cohen, et al., (2011) note that some studies include a lot of verbatim conversation; others use fewer verbatim data. Some researchers feel that it is important to keep the ‘flavour’ of the original data, so they report direct phrases and sentences, not only because they are often more illuminative and direct than the researcher’s own words, but also because they feel that it is important to be faithful to the exact words used (p. 539).

### **3.3.4.3.3 Journal / Diary**

It was suggested to the participants to keep a diary or journal to record incidents or events as they occurred. I also kept a reflexivity journal. Kleinsasser (2000), cited in Fry (2010), explained the purpose:

*Researcher reflexivity represents a methodological process of learning about self as a researcher which in turn illuminates deeper, richer meanings about personal, theoretical, ethical and epistemological aspects of the research question (p.155).*

Participants were given the opportunity to further expand on areas they needed to talk about.

### **3.3.4.3.4 Data Analysis**

Mayan (2001, p. 21) provides the following explanation for data analysis: it is a process of observing patterns in the data, asking questions of those patterns, constructing conjectures, deliberately collecting data from specifically selected individuals on targeted topics, confirming or refuting those conjectures, then continuing analysis, asking additional questions, seeking more data, furthering the analysis by sorting, questioning, thinking, constructing and testing conjectures, and so forth. Immersion of the researcher within the data in order to become familiar with the information is a suggestion by Maree (2011). The data was looked at for patterns and similar words or expressions of experiences for which themes could be identified. Miles and Huberman (1994) cited by Cohen et al (2011, p. 427) suggest 12 tactics for generating meaning from interview data:

- counting frequencies of occurrence (of ideas, themes, pieces of data, words);
- noting patterns and themes which may stem from repeated themes and causes
- or explanations or constructs;
- seeing plausibility, trying to make good sense of data, using informed intuition to reach a conclusion;
- clustering- setting items into categories, types, behaviours and classification;
- making metaphors- using figurative and connotative language rather than literal and denotative language bringing data to life, thereby reducing data, making patterns,

- decentring the data and connecting data with theory;
- splitting variables to elaborate, differentiate and unpack ideas;
- subsuming particulars into the general notion of constant comparison;
- factoring- bringing a large number of variables under a smaller number of unobserved hypothetical variables;
- identifying and noting relations between variables;
- finding intervening variables – looking for other variables that appear to be ‘getting in the way’ of accounting for what one would expect to be strong relationships between variables;
- building a logical chain of evidence – noting causality and making inferences and;
- making conceptual / theoretical coherence – moving from metaphors to constructs to theories to explain the phenomena.

I was guided by the stages of analysing, identified by Cohen et al., (2011 p. 427) in generating natural units of meaning, then classifying categorizing and ordering these units of meaning, followed by structuring narratives to describe the content of the interviews and finally interpreting the data. Emergent themes and patterns were identified using the step by step process laid out by Miles and Huberman (1994) cited in Cohen et al (2011, p. 427).

#### **3.3.4.3.5 Production Techniques**

The management of data was done manually using different colours of paper for coding, themes, patterns and categories.

#### **3.3.4.3.6 Validity and Reliability.**

Validity and reliability are technical terms and there is a need to distinguish between them (Oppenheim, 1996, p. 122). *Validity* refers to whether the question measures what it supposed to measure and *reliability* refers to the purity and consistency of a measure, to repeatedly obtain the same results even if the measure were to be duplicated under comparable conditions. In the case of questionnaires, if it were to be applied to the same object today and next week, the results should be near identical, unless a real change in the object has in the meanwhile taken place.

With this study, validity was observed by revealing and discussing the findings with the participants. The findings as suggested by Yin (2003), was compared with the existing theory. I took the advice of Maxwell (2005) to allow for the examination of competing explanations and discrepant data – that my research was not simply a self- fulfilling prophecy’ (p. 126).

#### **3.3.4.3.7 Dependability**

When I informed my participants that I am obligated to reveal the findings of the study with them, they expressed an interest in the process of data analysis. Throughout the coding and categorization process, the participants were kept informed about how I arrived at the different themes. The objective of discussing the themes with the participants was to show that they were accurate and dependable (Creswell 2003). My role as researcher remained strictly that, ever reminding myself that my function was simply to interpret the data collected from the participants and not to influence the findings to my preference.

#### **3.3.4.3.8 Credibility**

The content of the questionnaire was examined by my supervisor to ensure that questions were adequate. The questionnaire was piloted with one other novice PV teacher as a trial run to assess the tool. This exercise helped me to add other relevant questions that I did not think about when I initially compiled the questionnaire. Interviews with the participants followed the answering of the questionnaires so that discrepancies could be addressed. As suggested by Maree (2011, p. 299) I tried to produce findings that were believable and convincing, also presenting negative and inconsistent findings in order to add to the credibility of the study.

#### **3.3.4.3.9 Transferability / Generalizability**

Durrheim and Wassenaar (2002) cited by Maree (2011, p. 299) state that generalizability is the degree to which generalisations can be made from the data and context of the research study to the wider population and settings. As my aim was simply to explore the teaching experiences of a limited number of PV novice teachers, the findings will not necessarily be generalized.

#### **3.3.4.3.10 Ethical considerations**

The study will posed no ethical problems. There was informed consent. Permission was sought from the school principal and also signed by the head of the department (Appendix), the Department of Education (Appendix) and the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal (Appendix) for the research to be conducted. Permission in the form of a written letter of request (Appendix) was also sought from the participants and they were advised of their right to abandon their position as participant, should they become uncomfortable or insecure in any way. Ample time (1 week) was given to participants to peruse through the questionnaire before the interview was conducted.

#### **3.3.4.3.11 Anonymity and Confidentiality**

Participants were treated with anonymity. Cohen, et al. (2011, p. 228) purport that a standard protection is often a guarantee of confidentiality, withholding participants' real names and other identifying characteristics.

#### **3.3.4.3.12 Limitations to the study**

The study was confined to one prevocational school. I set mental boundaries for what exactly my intent was in terms of data collection. My interest lay specifically with the experiences of novice PV teachers on a professional level. Other matters, such as colleague criticism or personal issues, not related to the focus of the study, were not encouraged.

A limited number of four participants made up the sample because the research was a small scale qualitative study. The very fact that novice teachers are in essence new in employment may have impacted negatively on the study as they may have been afraid of the possibility of victimization or unpopularity.

I cannot conclusively claim that I was completely trusted by the participants with regards to confidentiality, and as a result the 'whole truth' might have been withheld from me. I did however, do my best to reassure participants that I was bound by ethical considerations, not to use their names or the name of the school in the study.

I was conscious of my position as researcher and teacher of the school and limited any influence I could have had on the study.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH DATA

#### Introduction

In the previous chapter, the design and methodology of this study was outlined. It was mentioned that a qualitative research design was employed as its assumptions allowed me to explore the experiences of novice teachers within the context of PV education.

#### 4.1 Management of the Data

In this chapter data retrieved from the four participants will be presented and analysed. As suggested by Maree (2011) I immersed myself within the data in order to become familiar with the information as “good analysis often depends on the understanding of the data” (p, 104). The data was looked at for patterns and similar words or expressions of experiences for which themes could be identified. I was guided by the stages of analysing, identified by Cohen et al., (2011, p. 427) in generating natural units of meaning, then classifying categorizing and ordering these units of meaning, followed by structuring narratives to describe the content of the interviews and finally interpreting the data. Emergent themes and patterns were identified using the step by step process laid out by Miles and Huberman (1994) cited in Cohen et al (2011, p. 427).

Included in this chapter will be verbatim responses of the respondents. I fall within the category of researchers mentioned by Cohen et al., (2011, p. 539), who choose to “keep the flavour of the original data, so they report direct phrases and sentences, not only because they are often more illuminative and direct than the researchers’ own words, but also because they feel that it is important to be faithful to the exact words used”. The management of data was done manually using different colours of paper for coding, themes, patterns and categories. According to Maree (2011, p. 105) the coding process enables researchers to quickly retrieve and collect together all the text and other data that they have associated with some thematic idea so that the sorted bits can be examined together and different cases compared in that respect. Maree (2011) also mentions that the themes that recur will form the categories or issues which will give meaning to the text.

## **4.2 Trustworthiness**

In order to maintain trustworthiness in the data of my research, I sought clarification with the participants regarding my interpretation of their responses. I remained aware of the risk of bias as I became involved with participants and did not allow my emotions or interests to influence the interpretation of responses; rather I ensured that the meanings of the experiences were purely those derived from the data produced by the participants. My objective was merely to seek insight into the participants' experiences as novice PV teachers.

### **4.2.1 Confidentiality and Anonymity.**

Pseudonyms were given to participants. To further maintain anonymity, I have avoided using titles such as Mr or Mrs and only used surnames. Even though names were not mentioned, it may be quite simple to identify who the participants were if I mentioned the subjects they teach. The PV school in this study may be the only PV school offering the subject. For that reason, I have chosen to omit mentioning the subject the participant teaches. The subject the participant teaches was not a criterion for selection.

## **4.3 Information about the Participants.**

Four participants made up the sample size. Of the four participants, Naidoo is a novice teacher recently out of university. Singh, Ngidi and Govender are not novices to teaching as they have more than two years of teaching experience but are novices to PV teaching. In essence all four participants are novices to PV education. Two of the four participants teach academic subjects and one teaches both academic and a workshop subject and the fourth teaches only a workshop subject. The participants consist of three females and one male. Gender and race were not criteria for selection.

## **4.4 Teaching Qualification and Experience of Participants**

Naidoo has a Bachelor of Education Degree with 5 months of teaching experience at a mainstream high school. Singh also has a Bachelor of Education Degree and has 6 years of teaching experience at a mainstream high school but has been in the PV school for the past 1 year and 2 months. Ngidi has a Teacher's Diploma and a Higher Diploma in Education with a total of 18 years of teaching experience and 5 months at the PV school. Ngidi has always taught at a primary school. Finally, Govender has an N3 Workshop Certificate qualification and has been teaching for the past 17 years, 8 months of which was at the PV school.

Govender has taught a workshop subject at the mainstream school. All four teachers have not taught at any other PV school in the past.

#### **4.5 Data Presentation and analysis**

The data will be presented under broad headings which basically cover the different aspects that the questionnaire addressed. The responses (in italics) that follow are in the context of the broad headings or issues. Raw data is presented verbatim.

##### **4.5.1 Prevocational School and Type of Learners**

The reader must be reminded once again of the dearth of literature regarding PV schools and novice teachers. However, reference will be made to relevant literature where possible. In response to this particular theme, none of the participants were familiar with PV education. However, two of the participants heard about the word ‘prevocational’ but did not know what kind of school it was or the type of learners that attended the school. None of the participants knew what the acronym LSEN (learners with special education needs) stood for. Participants commented on how normal learners looked even though they had a learning disability. The following are responses to the question of whether the participants were familiar with PV education and the children that attended the school:

**Govender:** *No, I just heard it was for children who can't make it. I didn't know they trained the children for work. Thought they were from practical grade like 9 and 10 learners.*

**Naidoo:** *No, I did not know of such a school, did not even hear of it when I did inclusive education at campus. I knew the name of the school, and heard it was for 'mad children'.*

**Ngidi:** *I thought I will find learners with learning disabilities in the school but I was used to teaching primary school children, so teaching grown-ups at the secondary school was new to me.*

**Singh:** *No, I only knew that it was prevocational, no details regarding workshops, skills or teaching – my need was to get myself a job, I held a GB(governing Body) temporary post at the other school. I knew the children were unable to cope with mainstream, I thought some of them were physically disabled.*

The literature has shown (Leavitt & Brown, 1915; Diyasena, 1976; Chan 1990 and Dhunookchand 2003, that the PV project is geared towards developing in students those essential learning competencies, in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes, which could not be achieved during their primary schooling. Learners with special needs are faced with a number of barriers, as discussed in chapter two. Novice PV teachers are inexperienced and the data has indicated that they lack the understanding of the learners. This lack in the teacher presents itself as yet another barrier for the learner.

#### **4.5.2 Orientation to the Prevocational School and the Curriculum.**

According to the responses to the above theme, none of the participants received proper orientation. Three of the participants received a physical tour of the school. Only Ngidi taught the subject she was trained to teach. She had previously taught it at a primary school. The subject was introduced into the curriculum on her appointment at the PV school. Govender also taught a subject that was new to the school curriculum. He had not taught it before. The subject was included into the curriculum on his appointment. There were no syllabi or scheme of work for both the new subjects. The following are responses to the questions of orientation to the school and the curriculum:

**Govender:** *I was asked to help in the reception office a lot, run out papers or do relief but no orientation. I did have an idea that there were workshops subjects. Even though the curriculum was different, it was not explained I found out that there are certain subjects, no one had a meeting with me or discussed the curriculum.*

**Naidoo:** *Not entirely orientated, there was only the introducing to the relevant subject educators that I needed to liaise with. Many aspects were not discussed on appointment. I was not familiar at all with PV curriculum. I gradually orientated myself with the curriculum. I had to check with the syllabus that was available, and then get my own worksheets.*

**Ngidi:** *The counsellor took me to all classrooms and workshops.*

*Then I got a class. I did not know what the curriculum was about.*

*While walking around I was told what the subjects are and I could see as well.*

**Singh:** *Only physical orientation of the school layout, example, where the workshops were, where the counsellor's office was and no other orientation. It was a walk around the school .I*

*didn't know about the curriculum, this was a struggle, I thought I was supposed to know so I was afraid to ask. I had nothing. I didn't know where to start. I later queried with other educators teaching the same subject. The teachers showed me the type of work they are doing with the learners. I have never taught the subject before.*

Since no studies seemed to have been conducted on novice teachers at PV schools, literature on orientation of PV education was unavailable. Viewing the data through the lens of complexity theory, what emerged are the elements that contributed to the chaos and disorder. Not knowing, confusion and a sense of struggle and uncertainty were attributes that Prigogine and Stengers (1984) referred to as emergent properties.

#### **4.5.3 Mentor Teachers**

The data indicates that none of the participants were assigned mentor teachers. They were however told that help can be sought from senior teachers. Returning to my earlier reference to the study done in Namibia by Nambira, Kapenda, Tjipueja and Sichombe (2009), mentoring and coaching were also not well known among novice teachers. The following are responses to the question of whether mentor teachers were assigned to the participants:

**Naidoo:** *No. I was told about other teachers I could go to for help if I needed to. I was not actually attached to her class or anything.*

**Ngidi:** *No. They should have done that, because I came from a primary school, even if they were not teaching my subject, they could have at least guided me about the learners in this school and how I was supposed to handle them.*

Existing literature supports the outcome of the data of my study. The Mauritian Ministry of Education and Human Resources (2011) alluded to challenges at PV schools to the effect that most teachers are untrained to teach learners with special education needs. Teacher Induction Programs according to Wong (2004) immediately transmits and acculturates the newly hired teachers into the educational goals, mission, and beliefs of the school. The chaos-complexity theoretical lens has helped me see that due to a lack of mentoring or coaching, participants were *sensitive to initial conditions*, a concept that identifies the sense of isolation. In chapter two, an explanation of the various psychological problems experienced by learners with special education needs was provided. Given the nature of the type of learners at the PV

school and the sense of isolation of the novice teachers, what presented itself through the complexity lens, was confusion and unmanageability.

#### **4.5.4 Actual Teaching Experience at the PV School**

The data in terms of this theme revealed that none of the teachers felt adequately prepared to teach. Participants indicated that other problems such as a lack of resources and discipline problems were experienced. The data that follows in response to the teaching experience at the PV school are embedded with utterances of “shock, embarrassment, fear, frustration, inadequacy, being overwhelmed, confusion, lack of control, nervousness, disappointment and not knowing.

**Govender:** *I was not sure what I was going to teach. There were already two teachers teaching the subject I used to teach (in the previous school). I was then asked to teach a completely different subject. There was no syllabus, schemes of work or notes for this subject. No workshop was set up for it. This created discipline problems. It was frustrating. I brought stuff in, so I mainly demonstrated lessons. They were also restless because I did not have the tools for the subject. I did theory. They were weak in theory and took long to understand and comprehend.*

**Naidoo:** *I was not prepared to teach as I was given a completely different subject from the one I was trained to teach. I had to familiarise myself with the special needs children as well as with the syllabus. I was given the impression as to teaching a very basic understanding in comparison to mainstream. I felt I didn't know what was I was doing. I felt inadequate and scared because I didn't understand the medical and psychological problems of the learners, example ADHD and Epilepsy. This affected my teaching. I was not getting through to the learners. I felt at times overwhelmed and confused. With some children there is no improvement no matter how many times you go over a lesson. I was shocked at the attention span. You couldn't do normal teaching.*

**Ngidi:** *The subject I was teaching was not being taught in the school. I had to get all the resources and notes myself. I was not prepared and I was nervous. I was used to children primary school. These are secondary school grown-ups. This is new to me. It was a shock to me. They should have put me with another teacher. It was different here. It was bad and I was embarrassed, confused and the children were different. Learners couldn't sit still for the whole lesson. They would scream and fight. I didn't know how to control them. It was hard to teach. I couldn't get them to listen; they would write a few lines in their books. I kept thinking*

*this is only happening to me. I am a new teacher. I was unhappy. Everything was new to me, even though I had 18 years' experience. They wouldn't give you a chance to teach because they want to ask your personal questions. Also they wanted to make comments and complain about someone else.*

Hogan and Rabinowitz (2003) have pointed out that while expert teachers have the capacity to view a class as comprising of individuals, the novice teacher sees the class just a whole class and not as unique individuals. The authors are saying that problems can arise due to this perception.

**Singh:** *I did not teach the subject before. I was not prepared and felt I was thrown into the deep end. I had no idea about the curriculum. I had no teaching aids or resources. The first day I gave an exercise on the board and expected learners to complete the task after I taught it. I noticed they just look at you. They were unable to do it. They have such limitations. I didn't know how to help them. It was frustrating. I realized that learners were unable to read. I came from mainstream. I was difficult to meet their needs. I felt less stimulated intellectually. Sometimes it becomes mundane and boring because learners are passive. I felt disappointed when learners did not grasp a lesson. I was demotivated. I always felt I was doing the wrong thing. There was a particular method for assessment which I didn't know about, like work habits had to be considered.*

The literature also speaks of the critical initial years of the novice teacher and supports the results of my study Inman and Marlow (2004) also found that when new teachers enter the classroom, they experience disparities between their expectations of their role as a teacher and actual realities faced during their first year. The theory helped me take note of the above conditions that the participants, experienced. The theory refers to these conditions as critical role fluctuations.

#### **4.5.5 Discipline**

With regards to the above theme, problems were experienced by all the participants.

**Govender:** *Discipline was bad because I had no idea how to keep them busy. I was also angry that I was placed in such a position (new subject, no resources, no material or tools). I was sometimes asked to fix something or another in the school, I felt so unprofessional like a*

*handyman. I was angry and I took this out on the learners. I felt that the learners were arrogant and rude. They were also restless because they did not have the tools for the subject.*

**Naidoo:** *They get restless and make sudden remarks and retorts. They make funny comments. I tried to set a tone. They tested my patience.*

Hogan and Rabinowitz (2003, p. 14) mentioned that when the majority of students' interest or enjoyment decreased, novice teachers tended to disregard the initial lesson plan and alter the activity to maintain classroom management, regardless of the individuals who needed continued practice. This pattern of behaviour would suggest that as a teacher's schema approaches greater complexity, the classroom environment shifts from a more teacher-centred approach (e.g., the teacher's focus is on teacher actions rather than learning outcomes) to an environment where organization, teaching efficiency and student understanding is at the forefront of concerns.

**Ngidi:** *Discipline was my biggest problem. They only talk and fight, make a big noise. The learners are disruptive.*

**Singh:** *Even though I laid down the rules and expected them to be followed, they were mostly ignored. Their behaviour disorders seem to come to the fore. They have various conditions. Learners did not seem to know how to interact with each other. Learners would leave the class without permission, others would not return after an interval; some learners just stand up in the class for no apparent reason. They are always picking on each other. The learners look normal but you can see the barriers, their conditions and limitations when teaching.*

In support, of the data in this study, the literature revealed that Uuwanga (2010) claimed that his first year of teaching was a "confused period because of the responsibilities I had to take up as a full time teacher" (p. 5). Hogan and Rabinowitz (2003, p. 19) report that novice teachers indicated that they were "unprepared to effectively" handle misbehaviour in the classroom. When new teachers enter the classroom, they experience disparities between their expectations of their role as a teacher and actual realities faced during their first year (Inman & Marlow, 2004). From the data provided by participants, a scenario presents itself where conditions were unmanageable and out of control.

#### **4.5.6 Coping Strategies**

According to the raw data, despite the chaotic scenario, order emerged. All four participants made efforts to alter their attitudes towards the learners; to alter their teaching styles and to get to know the learners and to understand their needs. Kauffman (1995, p. 18) intimated that ‘under a vast range of different conditions, the order can barely help but express itself’. Participants created ways of engaging successfully with learners and felt that teaching was possible only after they got to know the learners and their needs. Participants also stated that it was easier to teach in a mainstream school in terms of the type of learners and discipline; however they enjoyed the lack of pressure at the PV school that is normally associated with mainstream schools. All participants mentioned that they had to make adjustments.

**Govender:** *I have come to understand the learners. Many of them are good children who can be taught even if they’re not good at theory. The learners learn differently and I have learnt to understand their problems and where they come from.*

**Naidoo:** *I had to have a more positive approach. It was a mind-set that I had to change. I used out of teaching time to get to know learners better and developed a relationship with them. They respond better and don’t misbehave. I had to also collaborate with the school psychologist to understand the learner’s problems.*

**Ngidi:** *I have been making adjustments in finding ways in dealing with handling learners. I had to change. I had to stop concentrating on the problem and looked at where I can make a change. I had to get to know the learners and listen to what they had to say; their problems, worries, concerns and their needs. I win them over. It is easier. I changed the way I taught. I realised in a PV school you have to get involved in the learners lives so that they know that you care about them. But not too friendly. I am also doing a course in LSEN education.*

**Singh:** *The first year was a nightmare. I took my problems home every day. As time went by, it got better. I had to know the learners, their levels and abilities. I learnt to modify lessons, change curriculum content to suit their needs. Each learner learnt differently. I had to use other resource stimulation. I had to get close to learners to be able to empathise with them. So the learners became my focus. My role was not just teacher, but parent and counsellor too. I stopped looking at what was wrong with them and started looking at what I could do with what they have.*

Participant's experiences (especially the poor discipline) seemed to compel them to make adjustments and reorganize to create new and different situations. This is consistent with the theory that Eppel (2009) reveals in her study when she posits that the dynamics within policy processes which was far from equilibrium systems can bring about totally new phenomenon through self-organization and emergence. The author goes on to allude to "chaotic systems that are not completely without order and orderly patterns that can self-organize and emerge from the seemingly chaotic situation without external intervention" (p. 12).

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter the participants' responses were captured as they were answered in the questionnaires during the interview. Reference was made to existing literature which concurred with the results of the data. Further, parallels were drawn between the experiences of the participants in this study and concepts of the theory as they were employed in other studies. Through the lens of complexity, the experiences of PV novice teachers were viewed and interpreted as I understood it. The theory provided a position from which I could view the data of this study. It gave me an informed understanding of how the participants experienced their teaching at the PV school as novice teachers. It also provided me with new knowledge in terms of chaotic situations in the field of education. To this effect, it would be worth returning to an earlier reference by Kayauni (2010) who points out that despite seemingly chaotic and complex scenarios, the education system manages to survive. He also shows, just as this study revealed, that complexity theory offers an appreciation and not distrust of chaotic and stressful times and that real changes and new structures emerge from the very chaos we try to prevent

In the chapter to follow, chapter five, the study will be summarised, findings will be formulated and certain recommendations in relation to the findings will be made.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter a summary of how novice prevocational teachers experience teaching at the prevocational school, is provided. This brief discussion will include the conclusions drawn from the study which will be presented as findings. Certain recommendations, pertaining to the study will also be made. Limitations have been identified and will be disclosed.

#### **5.2 Summary**

##### **5.2.1 Statement of the Problem**

Basically, the study sought information regarding the experiences of novice teachers at a PV school.

##### **5.2.2 Experiences of Novice PV teachers**

It has emerged from the data that novice PV teachers experience many challenges during their initial years at a PV school. Many of the challenges seem to stem mainly from a sense of 'not knowing'. It must be reiterated at this stage that there is a lack of studies (both internationally and in South Africa) conducted in the area of novice teachers and PV education. As a teacher of PV education, it was observed that the National Curriculum, Curriculum 2005 (Department of Education, 2000) seems inadequate for PV education as it does not cater for the different skills subjects that are part of the PV curriculum. A similar situation exists in Pakistan. Sallad, Joubish and Khurram (2010) indicate that there is no formal curriculum for learners with disabilities in PV education.

Further, the data in this study intimates that novice PV teachers have not been exposed to the policy document of Inclusive Education and as a result have no idea as to how to implement and apply the policy at PV level. Boer, Pijl, and Minnaert (2009), also concluded after a review on teachers attitudes on inclusive education that teachers are negative or undecided in

their beliefs about inclusive education and do not rate themselves as knowledgeable about educating pupils with special needs.

Related international studies (Inman & Marlow, 2004; Meskill, Mossop, Diangelo & Pasquale, 2002; Onafowora, 2004; Nambira, Kapenda, Tjipueja & Sichombe, 2009; Hatch, Sun, Grossman, Neira & Chang, 2009 and UUwanga, 2010) also revealed similar challenges experienced by novice teachers. The findings in this study will include the challenges and coping strategies of novice PV teachers in this study.

Despite the problems, it has been noted, however, that internationally, strides are being made in terms of the recognition of PV education and the value it offers to learners who are academically challenged (Mujumbar, 2012; Dhunookchand, 2003; Kiadese, 2012; Sallad, Joubish & Khurram, 2010; Aluwong, 2002; Wong, 2004; Ibiwumi, 2011; Schneider, Krause & Woll, 2007). These studies that were conducted in India, Mauritius, Nigeria, Pakistan, America, Germany and New Zealand have reflected that the education ministries recognize the vital link between the economy and PV education. Therefore much emphasis is placed on the training of youth for the world of work. However, in South Africa, there seems to be an audible silence; a complete negation where PV education is concerned. Unfortunately, I have to caution and restrain myself, as I remember that the aim of my study was simply to gather the experiences of novice teachers at a PV school. Let me point out though, that in analysing the data to see how novice teachers experience PV education, the mention of some problems relating to PV education was inevitable.

### **5.3. Findings**

The following findings have emerged from this study on novice PV teachers and their experiences. The data revealed problems experienced by the novice teachers and how they managed their problems (coping strategies).

#### **5.3.1. Problems experienced by novice PV teachers as they emerged from the data**

- lack of knowledge about PV education and its curriculum;
- lack of knowledge about learners with special education needs;
- poor orientation on appointment;
- lack of mentoring and guidance;

- discipline problems due to lack of mentoring and poor classroom management;
- inadequate teaching resources pertaining to PV education;
- feelings of insecurity, confusion, isolation and inadequacy due to lack of mentoring;
- lack of appropriate training;
- inadequate or inappropriate qualification;
- lack of PV experience and;
- inappropriate teaching styles and methods.

### **5.3.2 Coping Strategies that emerged from the data**

- altering attitudes and mind-sets about learners with special education needs;
- getting to know the learners and their individual problems in order to understand the barriers and minimise discipline problems;
- modifying teaching styles to the level of learner's ability;
- adapting curriculum to suit learner needs;
- relying on inner resources and becoming creative in lessons;
- becoming learner centred instead of being teacher centred;
- shifting the focus from learner deficits and limitations to possibilities and;
- appreciating the value of growth initiated by challenges experienced.

At this juncture, it would be appropriate to remember what Prigogine and Stengers (1984) alluded to as 'fluctuating sub-systems where order and organization can actually arise "spontaneously" out of disorder and chaos through a process of self-organization (p. xv). Novice PV teachers did eventually take on the challenges presented to them and turned them around to create a working and productive environment.

## **5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Considering the vulnerable status of learners with special education needs and the unique nature of PV education, every measure should be taken to ensure that teachers who teach such learners are well prepared for their job. The following recommendations are based on the findings of the study:

- that teacher training institutions include PV education and LSEN education in

their curriculum so that prospective teachers have exposure to such a type of education;

- that the Department of Education play a more involved role in PV education to avoid it functioning in isolation;
- that the PV school be encouraged to practice the concept of mentoring and guidance for novice teachers;
- that orientation for PV novice teachers be developed into a more structured programme to include, the type of education PV is, the type of learners that attend the schools, the disabilities and barriers among learners and the kinds of discipline problems that may be encountered;
- that developmental workshops on discipline and classroom management be conducted for novice teachers;
- that untrained teachers be trained to meet the needs of PV education;
- that policies that guide practices be put into place for PV education especially in terms of its vocational nature and the implications for employment of learners;
- that subjects be part of the curriculum, provided that resources for those subjects are available;
- that PV schools conduct staff development workshops regarding LSEN disabilities and barriers on an on-going basis and;
- and finally, that a needs assessment of PV education be done by the Department of Education to facilitate improved functionality.

## **6. Limitations of the Study**

The study was confined to one PV school. Participants comprised of a limited no of four novice PV teachers. The study was limited to experiences only. The very fact that novice teachers are in essence new in employment may have impacted negatively on the study as they may have been afraid of the possibility of victimization or unpopularity. I cannot guarantee that I was completely trusted by the participants with regards to confidentiality (I am a teacher at the same school) and as a result, the 'whole truth' might have been withheld from me. I did however, do my best to reassure participants that I am bound by ethical considerations not to use their real names or the name of the school in the study. They were also told that to further protect their anonymity, the subjects they teach, were not revealed.

## **7. Possible contributions of the study**

- Owing to the lack of literature available in the area of novice PV teachers, this study may act as an initial deposit into the bank of literature.
- It may also stir interest among relevant role-players, such as PV schools, other novice PV teachers, the Department of Education, parents and educational psychologists.
- The study has the capacity to throw some light on novice teachers and PV education so that issues that are illuminated receive the attention they deserve.
- The limited nature of the study begs further research to be undertaken in this area of education

## **8. Conclusion**

In conducting the above study, I found it necessary to give an overview of PV education to reveal the context within which the study took place. I then attempted to understand the participants' (novice teachers') interpretation of the world around them, within that particular context (PV school). Participants related their direct experiences. Through the lens of complexity theory, I examined the data they provided. Remaining mindful of the possibility of inaccuracy or misleading information, I formed my own interpretation which resulted in the answer to my key research question (How do novice PV teachers experience teaching at a PV school?). The answer adopts the form of the findings of the study.

In examining the data provided by the participants, it was inevitable that other problems experienced in PV education would surface. Finding these problems was not the purpose of the study. Finding out what the experiences of novice teachers at the PV school were, was the focus of my study. Finally, it is hoped that this study serves as a catalyst to generating further study in PV education.

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## **QUESTIONNAIRE**

**(Questions were asked at the interview and recorded on the questionnaire)**

**It was explained to the participants that PV was an abbreviation for prevocational.**

**I also informed the participants that I wanted the response to be in my own handwriting in order to facilitate the interview process and to ensure legibility.**

1. How many years teaching at any PV school?
2. How many of years teaching at this particular PV school?
3. How many years of teaching experience do you have?
4. What are your qualifications?
5. Were you trained to teach at a prevocational school?
6. Were you trained to teach at a special school?
7. Did you know you were being appointed at a PV school?
8. Were you familiar with PV education before coming to the school?
9. On appointment at the school, what were your expectations regarding teaching?
10. What type of learners did you think were at the PV school?
11. On appointment, were you orientated to the school?
12. If yes, how was this done?
13. Were you familiar with the curriculum of PV education?
14. Were you orientated with the curriculum?
15. Did you have a mentor or a senior teacher attached to you?
16. Did you teach what you were trained to teach?

17. Recall your first day at the school, what do you remember about it.
18. Were you prepared to teach? What did you believe you were going to teach?
19. How did you feel on the first day? Give me some words relating to your emotions or your experience?
20. What were some of your teaching experiences that stay with you?
21. What were your experiences with regard to classroom management and discipline?
22. What was your impression of the learners?
23. What were your experiences with regards to the actual teaching in the classroom?
24. Tell me about your experience in terms of assessment?
25. Compared to a mainstream school, is it easier or more difficult to teach at a PV school?
26. As a current teacher at the school, do you believe you are now comfortable and adequately experienced as a PV teacher?
27. If yes, how did you achieve this?
28. If no, do you intend on changing this status?  
How?
29. How do you manage your role as a teacher in this school?
30. As a novice teacher, what suggestions can you offer so that the PV school or the DoE (Department of Education) can find useful for other novice teacher?
30. Where do you find yourself in the next few years?
31. Has your experience in a PVS school changed you in any way?  
How?



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

1 August 2012

Mrs Sargoonam Pillay  
211557432 School of  
Humanities

Dear Mrs Pillay

Protocol reference number: HSS/0634/012M

**Project** title: Prevocational Education; **Teaching** experiences of novice prevocational teachers.

Provisional approval- Expedited

This letter serves to notify you that your application in connection with the above has been approved, subject to necessary gatekeeper permissions being provided. This approval is granted provisionally and the final approval for this project will be given once the above condition has been met. In case you have further queries/correspondence, please quote the above reference number.

Kindly submit your response to the Chair: Prof. **S Collings** Research Office as soon as possible

Yours faithfully

Professor Steven Collings (Chair) cc Supervisor Dr V Jairam cc Academic leader Dr D Davids cc School Admin. Mrs S Naloker  
Professor S Collings (Chair)

Humanities & Social Sc Research Ethics Committee

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**kzi kzn education**

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KWAZULU-NATAL  
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Ref.:2/4/8/283

Ref.:2/4/8/283

Inspiring Greatness

Mrs Sargoanam Pillay  
9 Astoria Road  
Hillary  
4094

Dear Mrs Pillay

#### PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **Prevocational Education: Teaching Experiences of Novice Teachers at a Prevocational School**, 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 01 August 2012 to 31 December 2013.
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 Mr. Alwar 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 Director-Resources Planning, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to the following schools and institutions:

  
10.1

**Nkosinathi S.F.**  
Sishi, PhD Head of

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

9 March 2012

**RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

I am an educator in the above school and in the final year of a Master's Programme (Educational Psychology).

As fulfillment of the degree, I am required to conduct research and submit a dissertation.

My research topic is "Prevocational Education: Teaching Experience of Novice Teachers,"

I intend conducting interviews with four novice prevocational teachers. The interviews will be conducted during non-teaching periods and after school hours.

It is hoped that the documented experiences of novice teachers will serve as a contribution to the improvement of prevocational education.



Thank you for your co-operation

S. Pillay  
(Persal no. 10995447)

9 Astoria Road  
Hillary  
4094

**RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH.**

Mam

I am in the final year of a Master's Programme (Educational Psychology) at the UKZN Edgewood Campus. In order to fulfil the degree, I am required to conduct and submit research pertaining to the above specialization.

My research topic is *"Prevocational Education: Teaching experiences of novice prevocational teachers"*.

I have identified four teachers at the school who meet the criteria for the study. I hope to interview the teachers and also request for a questionnaire to be completed. The questionnaire relates only to teaching experiences. I need to conduct two interviews per teacher.

I give you my undertaking that the interviews will be done only, during non-teaching periods and that every ethical procedure will be followed to maintain the confidentiality of the data collected.

Permission has also been sought from the Department of Education.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Mrs Pillay  
(student No. 211557432)

(Principal)

Date: 8 March 2012

Mn/ Mrs/ Ms

**RE: REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH**

I am in the final year of a Master's programme (Educational Psychology). As fulfillment of the degree. I am required to conduct research and submit a dissertation.

My research topic is: "Prevocational Education: Teaching Experience of Novice Prevocational Teachers."

need to conduct two interviews with four novice teachers. The interviews will be limited to the experiences of novice teachers at one prevocational school. As a teacher who meets the criteria of participants for my study, I request your participation.

It is hoped that your experience as a novice teacher will serve as a contribution to the improvement of prevocational education.

Please note that should you wish to retract from the study, for whatever reason, you are at liberty to do so.

Thank you for your co-operation.

S. Pillay  
Student no. 211557432

---

**Response to request.**

hereby acknowledge receipt of /letter and I will participate / will not participate in the study.

Thank you