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BEGINNER TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF MENTORSHIP IN TWO FREE STATE PROVINCE PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

School of Education, Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own independent work which I submit for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. I have not submitted it before for any degree or examination at any other University.

Lehlohonolo Mofokeng



17 March 2025

ABSTRACT

While researchers agree that transitioning from teacher training to enacting what the student teachers and BTs learned is one of the most critical phases of any teacher (Gravett & Ramsaroop, 2015; Jokikokko et al., 2017; Zuljan & Pozarnik, 2014), considering the 31 years of democracy, there is still not much research in South Africa that has explored the nature of mentorship for BTs in secondary schools generally, and specifically in the Free State Province. It is further unclear how mentorship support, if existing, helps BTs to adjust well in their new work environments. Thus, this qualitative study aimed to explore BTs' experiences and perceptions of mentorship and examine existing mentorship programmes, if any, in the Free State province public secondary schools. To achieve this, the study asked the question: What are the secondary school BTs' experiences of mentorship in the Free State Province? This question was supported by the following sub-questions: (i) How do BTs perceive mentorship in their secondary school? (ii) What are the existing mentorship programmes in the selected secondary schools? (iii) What are the factors that influence the BTs' experiences and perceptions of mentorship (iv) How can the BTs be supported in their respective schools? Subsequently, by answering these questions, it is hoped that this will contribute knowledge to ongoing research debates on the best practices of mentoring BTs and the form and shape their mentorship programmes should take. Furthermore, it is hoped that this study will provide education authorities at provincial and national levels with more empirical data as they decide on the best way to support BTs in the formative phases of their teaching careers. Therefore, I argue that sharing these insights will contribute to the improvement of the schooling system in general. Positioning theory and Archer's concepts of structure and agency were theoretical frameworks which helped to understand the shifting multiple relations the BTs needed to navigate in the schools as the communities of practice (Barnes, 2004). The paradigmatic orientation that informed this study was interpretivism, which enabled the foregrounding of participants' voices and understanding the subjective world of human experience. Phenomenology was the research design because of the opportunities to reveal hidden meanings from BTs about their mentorship experiences and perceptions, because sometimes experiences are subconscious, and interaction foregrounds them (Neubauer et al., 2019). I used purposive sampling to choose five BTs from two public secondary schools, semi-structured individual interviews, a semi-structured focus group interview, and reflective journals to collect data. To analyse these data, I used Fairclough's CDA because of its ability

to uncover any implicit meanings through which power is enacted (Fairclough, 1993), because the nature of mentorship includes power relations.

The study found that, while BTs saw value in being mentored by their senior colleagues, they often felt stranded and unfavourably positioned due to sparsely available mentorship support. Secondly, BTs' sporadic informal mentorship support involved subject content knowledge workshops by the district education officials. Their preferred form of a mentorship support was characterised by collaboration between themselves and their senior colleagues and amongst themselves as BTs. Their lack of support to deal with learners' disruptive behaviour, learners' socio-economic issues, inadequate access to instructional materials and the absence of a brainstorming platform influenced their experiences and perceptions of mentorship. While it will be ideal for principals to be directly involved in the BTs' mentorship programmes, their multiple and competing commitments will compromise the quality of their involvements. As such, this study recommended that principals need to identify senior teachers among their staff who could be assigned a manageable number of beginners to mentor. The second recommendation that this study made was that instead of senior teachers perpetuating their condescending and exclusionary cultures towards BTs, they need to begin to acknowledge and value the unique contributions that they could bring to the schools. In addition, the study recommended a need for policymakers at national and provincial levels to find creative and efficient ways to deal with the delays of procuring instructional materials that hamper BTs' curriculum delivery commitments. To help BTs to deal better with the emotional traumas that come with helping learners with their socio-economic challenges, schools and district education officials need to avail psychological services to them. Furthermore, the study recommended more regular content-based workshops for BTs, especially in the first few months after their appointment as full-time teachers. The study also recommended a need for HEIs and provincial education departments to collaborate with a private sector to absorb on ad-hoc basis retired teachers to serve as advisors to BTs by providing them with constructive regular feedback after lessons they had observed and any other professional challenge they may need assistance with.

Keywords: Beginner teachers, positioning theory, structure and agency, mentorship experiences

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DEDICATION

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ABBREVIATIONS

ATP	Annual Teaching Plan
BT	Beginner Teacher
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CEPs	Cultural Emergent Properties
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DfE	Department for Education
DH	Departmental Head
EA	Education Assistant
ECT	Early Career Teacher
FGI	Focus Group interview
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HOD	Head of Department
ISPFTED	Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
MMM	Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality
MTMM	Many-to-Many Mentoring
MTOM	Many-to-One Mentoring
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPFTED	National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
NS	Natural Sciences
NSNP	National School Nutrition Programme

NT	Novice Teacher
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OTMM	One-to-Many Mentoring
OTOM	One-to-One Mentoring
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
PGM	Peer-Group Mentoring
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers Union
SBST	School-Based Support Team
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SDL	Self-Directed Learning
SMT	School Management Team
TP	Teaching Practicum
TTF	Teacher Task Force
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
US	United States

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Chapter 1: A Need to Recognise the Value of Mentoring Beginner Secondary School Teachers

1.1 Introduction and Background to the Study

It is widely acknowledged that at the centre of a healthy schooling system are the teachers (Deacon, 2016; Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2024; Spaull, 2013), who prepare future generations for effective participation in a changing society marked by technological and scientific advancements. It is undeniable that teaching has become more complex over time because teachers are called upon to respond with agility to the multifaceted socio-cultural and economic challenges, which creates a sense of ambiguity and uncertainty for even the most experienced teachers (McCrory et al., 2023). It is, thus, important to offer quality mentorship to beginner teachers (BTs) in their intricate stage of learning in the field and develop teacher identity. Given the holistic significance of teachers in any society, the Global Teacher Status Index 2018 report commissioned by Varkey Foundation reveals a bleak picture about the status of teaching in the world, indicating that teaching is only desirable to a few people (Dolton et al., 2018). Similarly, the United Nations Statistics Division (2021) posits that the world faces an ongoing teacher shortage that threatens the stated aim of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.1 to "ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education" by the year 2030 (p. 5). Recent data continue to show that persistent needs remain, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and for secondary teachers in Southern Asia (UNESCO and Teacher Task Force (TTF), 2024). Considering the information, BTs need a professional community to support them during their critical early career phase in the teaching profession and acknowledgement of how challenging it is at the beginning of the teaching career (Shanks et al., 2022).

The loss of teachers from the profession before retirement age is a challenge faced by developed and developing countries across the world (Maku & Begi, 2017). The then Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, responded to a parliamentary question[1] by presenting a table that indicated a teacher shortage of approximately 24 000, which has since been clarified as the number of teacher vacancies in the country (Palm, 2022). However, during a presentation to the South African Parliament, the National Treasury and the South

[1] The former Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga made this presentation in the National Assembly (Parliament of South Africa) on 7 April 2021.

African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) warned of possible teacher shortages due to natural attrition and unsatisfactory compensation (Business Tech, 2021). It appears a contentious issue, given the differing opinions on the shortage of qualified teachers or existing qualified unemployed teachers in South Africa. Interestingly, earlier Pitsoe (2013) opined that those who are admitted into initial teacher education programmes (ITE) choose teaching as an alternative rather than the first choice, because it has lost its status as one of the most important professions. Worryingly, the status quo remains as McCrory et al. (2023); Räsänen et al. (2020) have found that the professional challenges the teaching profession deals with make it one of the least attractive careers, especially the youth, because of a myriad of factors. These include ill-disciplined learners, high teaching and administrative workloads, lack of parental support, the media's negative portrayal of the teaching profession, and low university admission scores required to become a teacher, as some of the demotivating factors that result in teachers' unplanned exit from the profession.

Considering the above-mentioned factors, it is unsurprising but still concerning that teaching was first choice to only 49% of the current South African teaching force, the lowest among participating countries with their average standing at 67% (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2019). In the South African context, the topic of teacher demand and supply has developed into an issue of national concern (Gustafsson, 2022; Van Broekhuizen, 2015) because of the increased number of teachers leaving the profession immaturely (Mafukata & Mudau, 2016; Paterson & Arends, 2009; Tournier et al., 2019). For instance, the Western Cape Provincial Department of Education has recently been criticised by teacher unions and civil society for continuing with their plans to not renew contracts of teachers in temporary posts, while relocating others to schools with vacant posts as a cost-cutting measure (Mail & Guardian, 2024). By relocating teachers, it means most of the schools in remote areas remain understaffed compared to their counterparts in urban areas (Spaull, 2019), and teachers remain overworked. One will argue that these worrying incidences undermine existing policy interventions by the national Department of Basic Education (DBE) to recruit and retain the highly skilled quality teachers. For example, the Department of Education developed the National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development (NPFTED), whereby the department acknowledged the importance of supporting BTs through induction and mentorship (DBE, 2006) by ensuring that "systems are developed" (p. 13) to achieve this goal.

Subsequently, the Teacher Development Summit was held in 2009 to further conceptualise and re-imagine teacher professional support in South Africa. One of the resolutions to emerge out of the summit was the Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa (2011-2025) (ISPFTED) which culminated in the *New Teacher Induction Guidelines for the Orientation Programme*. Through this, it was envisioned that "selected highly competent teachers and subject advisors will be identified to develop the capacity and capability to induct new teachers into the world of work" (DBE, 2011). The department of education recognised the importance of formal induction programme with quality experienced teachers to guide and mentor the newly appointed teachers in the profession, to support their long stay. As such, the DBE (2020) recently commissioned a few research institutes to pilot new teacher induction in some of the provinces[2] covering primary and secondary schools. The preliminary findings from the pilot presented some challenges that included lack of support by the education district officials and school principals. As a result, the DBE (2020) points out that the success of this programme depends on a multi-stakeholder involvement and that management teams need to be trained to effectively induct BTs at school level. As plausible as these initiatives could be, Kadenge (2019) has lambasted the tendency of these initiatives existing only in the archival systems and not translating to much action on the ground, primarily because of teachers who have prematurely left the teaching profession. Researchers (Petersen, 2017; Watkins, 2016; Zoutendijik & Mpisi, 2022) cited lack of support by supervisors and senior colleagues as important aspects which this study explored and interrogated.

During the first year of BTs' teaching, they often report feeling confused, anxious and ineffective in delivering the subject matter (Harmsen et al., 2018; Woest, 2018), because of unpleasant encounters with learners, inadequate support by their senior colleagues and being assigned the subjects for which they were not trained (Bertram, 2023). This means effective and quality mentorship is critical in the early years of teaching to keep the BTs in the profession. However, as important as it is having teachers in the classrooms, it is equally significant to have those who are highly motivated and committed. Otherwise, the risk is compromising the quality of educational experience and academic performance for the learners. Thus, keeping teachers in the system means both the provincial and national

[2] The new teacher induction programme was piloted in one education district of these three provinces: KwaZulu-Natal, Free State and North-West.

education departments should strengthen their efforts to address the challenges that discourage teachers from executing their professional duties. du Plessis and Sunde (2017, p. 134) state that "requiring beginning teachers to teach large classes or subjects and grade levels outside their field of qualification makes difficult teaching posts even more challenging." While there are differences in the South African schools, some schools are overcrowded, mainly serving learners from impoverished communities, which could cause anxiety for BTs to manage. This does not overlook that some BTs attended and did teaching practices in such schools, however, the difference is that they are qualified permanent staff members in the schools. Colognesi et al. (2020), assert that there is disconnect between what schools think are the BTs' professional needs and what BTs think are their professional needs, and this creates a discomfort among the BTs as they feel their professional needs are not adequately met.

As such, the above-mentioned complexities and concerns heightened the need to interact with BTs to explore whether they experienced any mentorship in their respective schools, examine mentorship expectations and needs, and understand their experiences of mentorship support in the schools. Authors (Caven et al., 2021; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Waterman & He, 2011) posit that one way of addressing the problem of BT retention is through induction or effective and quality of mentorship. Furthermore, Ingersoll and Strong (2011, p. 201) scrutinised 15 empirical studies that were done since the mid-1980s and found that most reviewed studies claimed that "support and assistance for BTs have a positive impact on three sets of outcomes: teacher commitment and retention, teacher classroom instructional practices, and student achievement." Considering this, the current study interacted with BTs in different schools to gain insights into their mentorship experiences and the nature of mentorship that was offered in their respective schools.

1.2 Rationale of the Study

Even though Waterman and He (2011) cautioned that the "findings about the connection between mentoring programmes and new teacher retention are inconclusive," BTs' mentorship plays a key role in enhancing their experiences about the teaching profession. For example, Zhu et al. (2020), and Rietman and Karge (2019) found that availing mentorship support to BTs in the early stages of their teaching careers played a significant role to keep them in the classrooms. Earlier, Wasonga et al. (2015) argued that it was imperative that

teacher mentoring be pursued as an in-service option to address the professional inadequacies in BTs. Tang et al. (2024, p. 432) contend that BTs need to develop what they call "buoyancy" which is their ability to respond to daily professional barriers with calmness and assurance. As such, BTs who are buoyant are in constant pursuit of sufficient easy access to "contextual resources" (support of their colleagues, family and friends) and "personal resources" (taking care of oneself or family and friends) and, thus, are best positioned to respond expertly to these professional challenges (Tang et al., 2024, p. 443). This necessitates the availability of mentorship support to BTs as early as possible, to help them adjust to their new work environments and learn about the teaching profession in general. It is because of such studies that I conceptualised the current study, to explore and interrogate existing mentorship supports and BTs' experiences and perceptions of mentorship in public secondary schools.

1.3 Personal Motivation

Apart from the scholarly debates, the conceptualisation of this study was driven by my personal mentorship experiences as a BT in my workplace. During my undergraduate studies in one of the South African universities, I remember my roommate and I fantasising about how we were going to transform the schools where we would be placed, which we identified as representing excellence in extra and co-curricular activities. In other words, we always imagined the schooling system to be a flawless terrain overflowing with and embracing ambitious pursuits. This imagination was triggered by our schooling experiences which were characterised by dysfunction and insufficient exposure to enriching educational opportunities. So, we dreamed of the schooling system which was different to the one we experienced growing up and giving educational opportunities to our learners that we did not have. Then I was hired in 2016 as the accounting teacher that was responsible for Grade 10 and 11 classes. My idealism soon vanished when I had to deal with the reality of teaching over-age learners who generally had respect but saw me as their peer because I looked young and, although they did not know it, the age difference between myself and some of them was just four years. As a result, some of the female learners considered me young enough to be their potential boyfriend, which would have been a serious misconduct for a teacher, who is considered a parent to the learners. These experiences were compounded by the absence of a formal mentorship programme at the school. On my first day, I was hurriedly introduced to staff and assigned learners. Other questions such as where the classes were located, the procedure for making copies of learner materials, and general labour matters such as the

types of leave I was entitled to and to whom I needed to submit leave forms in the event I was absent from work, I had to work out myself.

The assumption was that as a newly qualified graduate, I had a lot worked out about the profession, despite having been a student teacher visiting schools for practical and not a staff member. The lack of induction and guide from a mentor was exposed when I manhandled a learner for not doing his homework, which was eye opening for the school and resulted to orientation on classroom management and a few coping strategies by the then line manager. I was frustrated and disorientated, because I did not know how to deal with such learners' behavioural problems during the lessons, although I was taught about classroom management during my undergraduate studies and experienced some during teaching practicum (TP). In some instances, I had to deal with learners who came to class intoxicated with illegal substances and I had to struggle with these uncharted territories because I was not mentored on how to address them. These feelings of frustration and disorientation are common among the BTs when they first join the teaching profession (Holloway, 2023; Zhu et al., 2020), because the university theory and limited practicum in and out of different schools and classrooms are never enough to prepare BTs for the profession. This initial experience does not overlook that professional learning is a process.

My next challenge was content knowledge deficits for two reasons. First, there were glaring differences between the accounting I did in undergraduate studies and the one at high school level. For example, at tertiary level, the way we dealt with certain accounting entries differed from how they are dealt with at high school level. So, it took some adjusting to come to terms with these contrasting realities. The second reason was that it had been 3 years since I last dealt with any accounting content because I enrolled for honours studies in policy and governance and my master's research was on instructional leadership practices. Although later the Department of Education organised a content training workshop for BTs that was facilitated by experienced teachers, it was offered when I had already misinterpreted several concepts. It got worse when I first met my subject/curriculum advisor, which was an unpleasant encounter, because there was no communication about the expectations from the school and the district office. The departmental official had certain subject-related expectations I was not prepared for in advance, such as the contents of my subject file and

how many classroom activities I had to give to my learners per week. These were supposed to be communicated during induction or mentorship, to ensure readiness when the departmental officials arrived. Thus, the experiences gave impetus to this study, and Dewey (1938) described how "every experience is a moving force. Its value can be judged only on the ground of what it moves towards and into" (p. 38). My five years of teaching experience were a moving force, and its values gravitated me towards exploring BTs' mentorship experiences and the nature of mentorship programmes that exist, if at all, in the Free State province public secondary schools.

1.4 Problem Statement

In higher learning institutions, the BTs are dominantly equipped with the theoretical information about teaching, and limited practicum, especially in South Africa. Despite acquiring certain competencies from teaching training programmes that prepare BTs for school environments, du Plessis and Sunde (2017) and Baguley (2019) have expressed concern that BTs often struggle to adjust well to their new workspaces, because of a disjointed theory in ITE programmes and practice (work environment). Bertram (2023, p. 25) argues that student teachers should "do work-integrated learning in a range of different schools" that capacitates them to deal better with different school realities so that when they join the teaching profession as full-time staff, they are less shocked and overwhelmed. To achieve this, the author proposes that ITE training programmes should infuse in their courses skills that train their students to have a "professional judgement and agency" (p. 25) so that they can be able to quickly scan the different affordances and constraints that are presented by their school working environments. Thus, considering the number of graduating teachers in higher education institutions (HEIs), which has increased from 9 000 in 2010 to around 28 000 in 2019 (Böhmer & Pampallis, 2022), there is insufficient information and little research that has explored how BTs manoeuvre in the new school contexts as teachers.

Globally, Darling-Hammond (2021) investigated the makeup of high-quality teacher training courses across five countries (Canada, Australia, China, Finland, and Singapore) often ranking high in international benchmark tests. The findings indicate that teacher training courses in these countries have a strong emphasis on inquiry-based learning process that prioritises experienced teachers to mentor student teachers to be competent teaching professionals, by encouraging them to reflect on their teaching. For this study, it is further unclear whether and how BTs in the Free State Province secondary schools experience some

kind of mentorship as part of professional learning and teacher identity development. While researchers agree that transitioning from teacher training to enacting what the student teachers and BTs learned is one of the most critical phases of any teacher (Gravett & Ramsaroop, 2015; Jokikokko et al., 2017; Zuljan & Pozarnik, 2014), considering the 31 years of democracy, there is still not much research that has explored the nature of mentorship for BTs in secondary schools generally, and specifically in the Free State Province. It is further unclear how mentorship support, if existing, helps BTs to adjust well in their new work environments.

After graduation from the institutions of higher learning, there seems to be an assumption that BTs are the responsibility of the school, rather than there being a continuing partnership between teacher training institutions and schools, at least the initial 2 years in the profession. In addition, because of competing priorities in schools, BTs are often left stranded (Çakmak et al., 2019) and thus denied the opportunity for professional growth and learn under an experienced colleague through mentoring. This does not overlook the workload issues for the university supervisors and teachers, however, there is little research that examines BTs' experiences and perceptions of mentorship support, and what they have learnt from the mentorship programmes, is concerning. In particular, the transitioning process from being an undergraduate pre-service teacher to a BT is often a daunting and unpredictable phase for some, because of conflicting realities between university and the school environments (Cross et al., 2020). Thus, how BTs perceive the transition is under-researched, particularly in secondary schools that are in remote areas, hence the importance of exploring and understanding how BTs immersed themselves in the complex school contexts and demanding profession. Therefore, quality and effective mentorship programmes help. While mentorship is important to induct BTs in the new school, it is not clear which mentorship programmes exist in public secondary schools located in the Free State Province.

1.5 Aims of the Study

This study aimed to explore the BTs' mentorship experiences and examine their perceptions of mentorship in the Free State public secondary schools.

1.6 Objectives of the Study

In line with these aims, the study had the following anchoring objectives:

1) To interrogate and understand BTs' experiences of mentorship in public secondary schools
2) To gain insight into the BTs' perceptions of mentorship in public secondary schools
3) To identify existing mentorship programmes in public secondary schools in the Free State Province
4) To analyse and problematise the factors that influence BTs' experiences and perceptions of mentorship
5) To identify different ways in which BTs can best be supported.

1.7 Research Questions

Considering the above-mentioned objectives, this study answered the following main and sub-research questions:

- What are the secondary school BTs' experiences of mentorship in the Free State Province?

The four supporting sub-questions were:

1. How do BTs perceive mentorship in their secondary school?
2. What are the existing BTs' mentorship programmes in the selected secondary schools?
3. What are the factors that influence the BTs' experiences and perceptions of mentorship?
4. How can the BTs be supported in their respective schools?

The first question implored me to interrogate the BTs on the kind of mentorship support they received, if at all, since they had taken on their teaching responsibilities and how they experienced this support. It was based on the empirical understanding that the teaching profession, especially for new entrants, can be daunting because of the multiple challenges it presents. Kadenge (2021) argues that these challenges are compounded by the district officials' failure to properly diagnose the BTs' professional needs so that these challenges are successfully dealt with from an informed position. Against this backdrop, this research question underscored the importance of understanding how BTs in their respective public

secondary schools experienced mentorship and to what extent these experiences influenced their professional identities.

With the second sub-question, I aimed to understand how the BTs' varying degrees of mentorship experiences influenced their perceptions of the kind of support that is provided to them. The BTs' perceptions of the mentorship support or lack thereof have significant consequences for the teaching profession. For example, Rietman and Karge (2019) found that BTs' stay in the profession was enhanced by multiple support structures that were made available to them. These included "access to a cohort of professionals to reflect and grow with. In addition, an outside person, a person who was giving them feedback to enhance their teaching, observed these participants in their classroom" (p. 16). Also, according to Ingersoll and Smith (2004), BTs who receive multiple forms, as opposed to a single form of mentorship support, are more likely to stay in the teaching profession. Therefore, depriving them of this imperative may lead to their exodus and this will potentially destabilise the schooling sector. In other cases, they may not leave the profession for different reasons, but they may develop undesirable attitudinal behaviours that inhibit proper execution of their duties.

On the other hand, the second sub-question recognised that BTs have to be met where they were, that is, being supported in customised ways rather than assuming a homogeneous approach without acknowledging their unique professional needs. According to Gordon (2020), it is important to personalise any mentorship support availed to BTs to maximise its impact and success. In addition, Daly et al. (2021) reason that by attending to the BTs' individual professional needs means spending a considerable amount of time with them to understand them as individuals—what motivates and worries them—which will lead to the development of tailor-made interventions while also responding to system-wide requirements. While there may be a common mentorship programme structure, the content and approach may need to be adjusted once a needs analysis has been conducted based on the availability of suitable mentors who will meet the mentees' customised needs because pairing will be important to facilitate this process successfully (Burger et al., 2021). In this way, the BTs' best interests are foregrounded in the mentorship programmes.

The aim with the third sub-question was to shed light on some of the contributory factors in the way that the BTs experienced and perceived the mentorship support or lack thereof in their respective schools. This question invited exploration of the existing misconceptions about the kind of mentorship support various education stakeholders think BTs need and what they really need in the South African public secondary school context. Among the factors contributing to the kinds of experiences and perceptions BTs will have about mentorship support, literature recognises a few, such as the existence of a trusting mentorship relationship and whether the BTs feel they have mentors with whom they share similar professional aspirations (Bressman et al., 2018; Gordon, 2019; Mahwire, 2021). By uncovering any of the existing gaps this question identified, it is hoped better intervention programmes are designed.

1.8 Significance of the Study

This study argues that investing in quality mentorship programmes aimed at BTs will enhance the quality of their professional experiences and this will keep existing high quality BTs (García & Weiss, 2019; Reitman & Karge, 2019) and attract more into teaching, especially considering that the quality of the schooling system is judged by the quality of its workforce (Armstrong, 2015; Darling-Hammond, 2021). In consequence, by conducting this study, I contribute knowledge to ongoing research debates on the best practices of mentoring BTs and the form and shape their mentorship programmes should take. This is particularly important given the tendency to neglect BTs in teacher development conversations (Kadenge, 2019). Foregrounding BTs' voices about their experiences and perceptions of mentorship will serve the important role of sharing important insights with the secondary school authorities that speak to their unique mentorship experiences for effective implementation of formal mentorship programmes suitable for the school context. In addition, this means that public secondary school authorities will have recent information about BTs' experiences and perceptions of mentorship in schools which will enable them to customise their intervention strategies aimed at supporting BTs. Doing this will bridge the gap between the assumed BTs' professional needs that may be held by different decision-makers within the schooling system and their actual professional needs.

This way, catastrophic decisions affecting BTs, and by implication, the whole schooling system will be avoided. Furthermore, policy decisions by the DBE and provincial education departments affecting BT mentorship practices will be backed by research evidence, as Mandinach and Schildkamp (2021) recognise the importance of key education decisions being backed by all-encompassing empirical evidence. In addition, conducting a study of this nature will contribute knowledge that will strengthen current teacher training programmes in South Africa because teacher educators in various ITE programmes will gain valuable lessons about what pre-service teachers need before they join the teaching profession and, where necessary, align the course content accordingly. The study is also important for BTs themselves because it is hoped that by engaging with the findings and recommendations of this study, they will familiarise themselves with common challenges other BTs face and how to deal with them. Therefore, I argue that sharing these insights will contribute to the improvement of the schooling system in general. Hence, the importance of early mentorship interventions for BTs to enhance their professional competencies as they navigate the complex realities of the schooling system.

1.9 Structure of the Thesis

Throughout the writing of this thesis, I envisioned telling a story about the mentorship experiences and perceptions of BTs and by holding the reader by the hand in this process. To reach this, I organised this thesis into six chapters and below is a summary of each chapter.

Chapter 1

This chapter has justified the conceptualisation of the study by situating it within relevant general education discourses in reference to some of the challenges faced by BTs and why they need to be offered mentorship support. The chapter went further to unpack the rationale for undertaking this study, the problem statement, aims and objectives. In addition, it addressed the research questions to be answered and concluded with the significance of the study.

Chapter 2

The chapter locates the discussion within the broader scholarly community with reference to the mentorship of BTs by reviewing literature. The aim of this review is to unpack the current discourses on the best ways to support BTs and the challenges hampering their effective mentoring. This culminates in the identification of the knowledge gaps, that is, there is dearth

of empirical research in African context to better understand the kind of mentoring support for BTs and what effect it has, and the contribution of this study to addressing these gaps.

Chapter 3

To be able to get a better glance at how BTs were received as new members of the school community, this study drew on positioning theory and Margaret Archer's concepts of structure and agency as the chosen theoretical frameworks and to uncover nuances about what they make of existing mentorship practices. As eclectic as these theoretical frameworks are, both served an important role to interrogate and examine BTs' discourses about their mentorship support perceptions and experiences.

Chapter 4

In this chapter, I discuss the methodology that underpinned the design and undertaking of this study. The qualitative study was conducted within parameters of interpretivism as it sought to understand a BTs' subjective meaning of their world (Kuyini, 2017). In addition, the research design underpinning this study was phenomenology because it aimed to "report the stories and experiences" (Creswell, 2013, p. 76) of public secondary school BTs. Semi-structured individual interviews, semi-structured focused groups and reflective journals were used to collect data. The chapter ends with the consideration of ethical and legal issues that I observed in taking up this research study to ensure its credibility and trustworthiness.

Chapter 5

This chapter's role is three-fold: to present the findings of the study by illuminating the voices of BTs in relation to their mentorship experiences and perceptions. I did this by following an iterative process by engaging with their responses from three data collection tools to make sense of the meanings they made of their mentorship support. I then located their mentorship experiences within the broader scholarly community. While engaging with the data, I interpreted the results in relation to the adopted theoretical frameworks discussed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 6

This chapter concludes the thesis by summarising the overall study by reflecting on the critical findings and the implications of the findings on policy and practice. It further gives a detailed account of the contribution for the study and also recommendations for future research projects regarding its limitations.

1.10 Chapter Summary

The chapter set the scene for the whole thesis by introducing and giving a contextual background with reference to BTs' mentorship support. The chapter cast light on challenges still facing BTs and the significant role that mentorship support could play to ameliorate these challenges. In addition, the chapter unpacked the driving force behind undertaking this study, the problem statement, aims and objectives. It took this further by addressing the research questions to be answered. It highlighted an overview of the research design and methodological approach and concluded with its significance. The next chapter examines relevant literature on BTs' experiences and perceptions of mentorship.

Chapter 2: Reviewing Literature of BTs' Experiences and Perceptions of Mentorship

2.1 Introduction

The teaching profession is as rewarding as it is challenging, not least for the BTs who often join the profession with only ITE training as their bedrock. Kadenge (2019) opines that BTs often report feeling frustrated and overwhelmed upon entering the teaching profession. Among others, there is a misalignment between what they are taught about the teaching profession in theory and what they experience in the field during their teaching practice (Esau & Maarman, 2019; Green et al., 2018; Joseph, 2019). According to Joseph (2019); Shanks et al. (2020), oftentimes BTs are expected to hit the ground running as soon as they enter through the classroom doors despite the ever evolving and multi-layers in the profession such as dealing with administration duties, as well as engaging with the parents and education officials. Although Hargreaves (2019); Ingersoll and Strong (2011) generally talk about teachers and not necessarily BTs, they are critical of their tendency to work in isolation instead of forging collaborative networks that may expedite their learning process and broaden their support base during the critical initial phases of their professional lives. BTs are most vulnerable due to the experimental nature of the initial phases of their teaching careers. In addition, they are often careful not to offend or upset anyone for fear of being judged and victimised by their colleagues, and without proper guidance from the experienced teachers who have travelled the path before, they could be frustrated and anxious. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to understand how BTs experience and perceive mentorship in two public secondary schools in the Free State province. To achieve this, related literature was reviewed to locate the study within the debates of mentoring BTs and synthesise these different voices to better understand the complexities surrounding experiences and perceptions the BTs have about mentorship in public secondary schools.

To begin with, the chapter clarifies and operationalises the key concepts that were used in this study. Thereafter, it offers a brief history of the concept of mentorship to show how it has evolved over time. It goes further to conceptualise mentorship broadly and within the teaching profession. Following this is the discussion of international, regional and local empirical studies on mentorship programmes for BTs, to identify components of successful mentorship structures and relationships. In addition, the chapter presents some of the

challenges that are experienced during the mentorship programmes accompanied by the mentorship benefits for the mentors and mentees. Finally, the chapter engages with the teacher attrition that necessitates the mentoring of BTs.

2.2 Clarifying and Operationalising Concepts

This section of the chapter clarifies and operationalises the main concepts of the study, for easy reading and understanding of the thesis.

2.2.1 Mentoring and Induction

While mentorship and induction are developmental in nature, Wong (2004) and Kadenge (2019) lambast the tendency to use them synonymously when they are not. As such, Shanks et al. (2020) posit that mentoring is a component of induction and this has prompted Kadenge (2019) to warn against conceptualising it as a stand-alone as it must be seen as an integrated form of support mechanism afforded to BTs in the early years of their professional lives. Thus, according to Abdallah and Alkaabi (2023); Lancaster (2019); Wong (2004), induction is a long-term and encompassing system-wide intervention targeted at newly appointed teachers to ease them into the teaching profession. Similarly, Ingersoll and Strong (2011) see induction as a form of BT professional development activity that focuses key areas such as school orientation, content training, and classroom management that affects their professional lives. On the other hand, mentoring as an integral element of induction addresses the pairing of an experienced teacher with a least experienced colleague to support technically (work-related) and personally (confiding and helping BTs deal with anxiety) (Dyosini, 2022). Thus, while induction is long-term and all-encompassing, mentoring can be either structured or unstructured, short-term and localised, that is, located in proximity of BTs, but the effects of which are still significant for the long-term professional success of BTs. In this study, mentorship as one of the many elements of induction was interrogated because I wanted to get up-close with the participants and understand their lived experiences. Specifically, how BTs experienced and perceived mentorship at a personal level within their local schools.

2.2.2 The Use of Different Concepts to Refer to Inexperienced Teachers

The literature is abundant with terms that refer to teachers that have just joined the teaching profession, such as newly qualified teachers (NQTs), novice teachers (NTs), as well as early career teachers (ECTs) and BTs. However, there are different interpretations in literature to qualify one as being a new entrant in the teaching profession. It will seem context dictates which term is used, although there are subtle differences between some of them. For

example, Kadenge (2019) regards NTs as teachers who "are at the start of their careers and generally lack experience in most of the duties expected of a professional teacher" (p. 22), while for Cortina et al. (2015), a teacher becomes a novice once they are in their first year of teaching and have taught in the same class as their mentor teachers. According to Olsen et al. (2020); Kadenge and Mofokeng (2024), NQTs are teachers who have been teaching for a period of 0-5 years. On the other hand, an ECT is a teacher who has just graduated from ITE programmes and has certain professional needs on their transitionary professional phase (Darly et al., 2021). According to Botha and Rens (2018); Tjirumbi and Müller (2023); Zoutendijk and Mpisi (2022), BTs are teachers who have been teaching for a period of 0-3 years.

While I could have adopted any concept closely linked to the nature of the participants in this study, such as NQTs because some of the participants had been teaching between the years that qualify them to be NQTs, instead I used the BT because it best fitted the group of teachers that participated in the study, which is those who have been teaching for 0-3 years. Despite their relative professional inexperience, it is important to acknowledge that although BTs are still in a process of learning about the complexities of the teaching profession, as mentioned earlier, they are not empty vessels into which knowledge is poured. Rather, they possess rich knowledge acquired from their ITE programmes and in-service training as they enhance their knowledge about the profession (Wasonga et al., 2015). Feiman-Nemser (1998, 2001) coined the term *educative mentoring* that is based on learning theories that depict the learner as an active participant in the learning process, hence BTs should be perceived as active participants in their process of learning. It is for this reason that I undertook this study to better understand their different and unique mentoring experiences in the South African public secondary schools' context.

2.3 A Brief History of Mentorship

The origin of mentorship can be traced back to the Greek poet, Homer's *The Odyssey* poem, thought to be composed in the 7th or 8th century BCE (Van der Walt, 2016). The poem follows the story of Mentor, a character who was entrusted with taking care of Telemachus who was the son of the king of Ithaca, Odysseus, when he left to fight in the Trojan War (Ferreres, 2018). During that time, the king was in the war and the Mentor was responsible for channelling Telemachus in the direction that he should go (moulding his character). There

are also figures in the history of humankind that recognise the value of a mentor. For example, Ferreres (2018) mentions historical figures like Martin Luther King who had Benjamin Mays as a mentor, Alexander the Great who had Aristotle, Merlin was a mentor to King Arthur of England, to mention just a few. In recognition of its value, organisations have embraced mentorship as a way of retaining employees, enhancing their workplace experiences, and increasing their loyalty to their organisations (Fowler et al., 2021). It is therefore unsurprising that mentorship is also valued in education and teaching specifically, to support resilience, problem solving, and self-efficacy for experienced and inexperienced teachers. Wexler (2020) posits that in education, mentorship is seen as a mechanism used to support new teachers to cope with professional demands and enhance their on-field experiences to retain them in the teaching profession that experiences high exit.

2.4 Conceptualising Mentorship

People are important resources in an organisation as they potentially contribute to its long-standing success, which makes mentorship one of the critical processes in any organisation. Thus, holistic and sustainable organisational growth is based on contributing to and investing in trustworthy, knowledgeable and skilled humans for effectiveness and efficiency (Vikaramanet al., 2017). Although literature on mentorship is abundant, agreeing on the meaning of the concept has been difficult. Traditionally, mentorship is seen as a working relationship whereby an experienced colleague (senior teacher) imparts knowledge to a junior colleague (BT) (Garza et al., 2019). I argue that it is not only the number of years that should be considered to regard a teacher more experienced as this assumes that any teacher who has been in teaching for long can be able to guide BTs. Instead, effective and efficient, that is, long serving teachers who have pedigree of successfully leading their professional lives, should be considered.

While their knowledge is valuable, a junior colleague, BTs for this study, might lack certain knowledge and skills in certain critical areas of the profession, which could be complemented by their experienced colleagues. For this reason, Tonna (2019) and Eisenschmidt and Oder (2018) opine that mentoring is characterised by the twinning of employees in the infant stages of their professional lives with those who have amassed teaching experience through the years. It is further critical to facilitate psycho-social development for the BTs, considering that the teaching profession that is centred on naturing human beings.

McCollum (2017) and Vikaraman et al. (2017) posit that mentorship materialises when a relatively experienced colleague is identified and trained to guide a novice one. The training of mentors is significant because recent information should be used to ensure that they have the appropriate knowledge and skills to share with mentees, rather than an ad hoc approach drawing from their own experiences that could be outdated. Mentoring in-service BTs is considered challenging compared to mentoring pre-service teachers because of competing priorities facing in-service teachers and depending on whether the contexts in which they are based believe in the value of mentoring (Aspfors & Fransson, 2015). This highlights the need to train identified experienced teachers to become effective BT mentors to ensure that they possess the requisite skills and are ready to support their mentees for meaningful and sustainable contributions to their professional lives (Wolfram, 2020). In the teaching context, mentorship is therefore about an experienced teacher taking a less experienced teacher through steps on how to manoeuvre the teaching profession (Gholam, 2018; Jill et al., 2019) and provide support where and when a need arises. Notwithstanding the where and when a need arises, the planning of the mentorship process is still important, considering the challenges BTs face during their initial teaching years. Among others, some of these challenges include learners questioning their authority and credentials, struggling with administrative duties such as compiling a portfolio of evidence, choosing appropriate lesson activities for their learners as well as being expected by schools to multitask (Joseph, 2019; Komar et al., 2021).

However, the mentorship concept has evolved from a single-sided mode of transmitting knowledge to a more reciprocal relationship where benefits are mutual. For instance, mentorship can also be mutually beneficial whereby both the mentor and mentee exchange ideas to improve practice (Kemmis et al., 2014; Pennanen et al., 2020). This form of mentorship sees mentees' experiences and knowledge worthy of being learned from and eliminates the dangers "of judgementoring by roping in the mentee as a partner in the mentoring relationship" (Hairon et al., 2020, p. 110). For example, BTs possess comparatively higher technological competencies that they can transfer to their senior colleagues. Apart from a traditional *one-to-one mentoring* approach (OTOM), there are four broad reciprocal and non-hierarchical approaches to mentoring. These are *one-to-many mentoring* (OTMM), *many-to-many mentoring* (MTMM), *peer-group mentoring* (PGM), and *many-to-one mentoring* (MTOM). Some of these approaches share similarities, thus their differences are sometimes blurred (Oliveira, 2018; Williams et al., 2019). For example, the

similarities and differences between OTMM and MTMM and MTOM are so close that it is difficult to draw distinguishable features. In this study, the MTOM was relevant as it seemed BTs had different mentors for different aspects of their professional lives. This is consistent with Packard et al. (2004); Stoeger et al. (2020) who found that their participants (BTs) valued having more than one mentor—MTOM, because they felt each mentor had different strengths from which they could benefit a great deal.

2.5 Research on Mentorship Programmes for BTs

This section focuses on the research on mentorship with specific reference to BTs by starting with the international contexts. It draws on literature from countries such as the United States (US), Norway, and Denmark as well as Australia, the Netherlands, Turkey, Great Britain, and Canada.

International Perspective

Different studies have been done internationally to enhance the knowledge of BTs, for example, Soulen and Wine (2018) conducted a qualitative study in one US urban school district in a mid-Atlantic state with six BTs and five librarians who acted as mentors. The BTs' experiences were generally positive as their mentors provided learning materials that dealt with topics that could help them to cope better with professional challenges that affected their pedagogy. As such, while the right school librarians can generally help keep the teachers and BTs in the profession, they may also help to improve learners' academic performances. The study of the Norwegian and Australian education systems by du Plessis and Sunde (2017) explored the kind of support afforded to BTs and whether there was any integration or synergy between the support afforded to BTs by higher learning institutions, education departments and schools. They found that the success of any mentorship hinges on the integrated support structure between HEIs, schools, and education departments, highlighting a need for close partnerships to address the readiness of BTs "for classrooms and school environments," (du Plessis & Sunde, 2017, p. 146). A Texas study in the US by Cross et al., (2020, p. 1302) reached a similar conclusion about the need for higher learning institutions and education districts to forge strong professional ties that support BTs and realise that "formal mentoring programs often do not happen organically and need to be mindfully built into the program and institutional infrastructure, including financial and time management support".

Formal mentorship structures, where there is a national policy instituted by the education department to assign senior teachers to mentor BTs and have graded evaluations (Stan, 2021), are increasingly recognised as the cornerstones of successful mentorship. However, in Norway, while there are formal mentoring programmes, du Plessis and Sunde (2017) highlight that "mentor programs were conducted as 'add-on' activities that did not solicit the attention of and engagement with school leaders" (p. 141). Similarly, in Denmark, Shanks et al. (2020) report that there are no nationally coordinated mentoring programmes aimed at supporting BTs; instead, municipalities and schools design their own programmes. It is concerning that this critical intervention does not get much attention from the Danish and Norway education authorities, with the latter having formal mentoring programmes but still conducting 'add-on' activities, while the former leaves the task to municipalities and schools. In Denmark, the BTs who had a mentor "felt more supported than those without a mentor" to support the importance of well-structured mentorship than ad-hoc or non-existence (Shanks et al., 2020, p. 10). In Canada, Kutsyuruba et al. (2019) conducted a multiyear mixed-method study to evaluate the impact that mentoring has on the well-being of the BTs. A total of 1 343 BTs with teaching experiences ranging between 1 to 5 years participated in the national study and found that they were supported in varying degrees and forms. The authors argued that the cornerstone for their well-being is the schools' willingness and ability to create "a school climate that is inviting, supportive and conducive for new teachers' learning, development, collaboration and connection" (p. 2047). Only 27% of the participants reported being formally mentored, compared to 73% who were informally mentored, and a lower feeling of well-being from the BTs who did not have a mentor at all (Kutsyuruba et al, 2019). The number of informally mentored BTs as compared to the formally mentored is a concern when literature supports the use of formal mentorship programmes, although Norway suggests that having a formal mentorship does not mean successful mentorship.

In the Netherlands, Aarts et al. (2020) undertook a qualitative study with 35 BTs across 18 schools based in the south-west region of the country, which aimed to explore the concerns of BTs and the kind of support they were offered to deal with their concerns during their first two years of teaching. Of the total number of participants, 42% of first year teachers and 50% of second year teachers were concerned about managing the teaching workload. Other concerns ranged from dealing with learner behaviour and designing their lessons in a way that suited their learners. The concern from the findings was that the support that was offered to BTs lasted mainly for year one, and the BTs in second year of teaching were left

unsupported with possible assumptions that they can do it by themselves. This despite their mentorship programme envisioned to last for three years (Aarts et al., 2020). The duration of mentorship programmes could be severely hampered by limited financial and other physical resources; hence, Bonfiglio-Pavisich (2021); Shanks et al. (2020) concluded that to lengthen the time needed to mentor BTs beyond one year, the relevant government education departments need to allocate more financial resources towards mentorship programmes.

Better mentorship experiences were reported in Turkey where Yirci (2017) did a phenomenological qualitative study with 22 BTs in districts of Kahramanmaraş, using semi-structured questionnaires to understand what these teachers thought was the value of a formal mentorship programme that was introduced by their Education Ministry in 2016. The BTs thought the programme helped them to cope better with classroom management, plan their lessons better, gave them opportunities to network with other colleagues and acquire better communication skills. However, there were concerns about the quality of their mentors as they thought they were inadequately trained and lacked the passion to be mentors. In the same country, Karanfil and Atay (2020) did a qualitative narrative inquiry study involving six BTs with teaching experience varying from two to four years. The participants suggested that they should be given the freedom to choose what mentorship programme courses they wanted to enrol in, as they thought some of the content was a waste of their time. From these findings, authors argued that the planning process of mentorship programmes in Turkey should place the interests of BTs at the forefront, meaning it should be flexible and consider the needs of the BTs.

To curb the exodus of talented BTs, with many teachers leaving in the first five years, and realising that there are sharp drop-out rates in the first two years (Department for Education (DfE), 2019), the British Government noted how “not enough teachers receive the high quality support and development they need at the onset of their career, when the learning curve is steepest” (DfE, 2019, p. 19). The government committed to reduce the teaching times of the BTs by 5% so that they had enough time to focus on professional development by “creating high quality, freely available curricula and training materials” (p. 21) in their second year of teaching. However, the status quo seems to remain as Quickfall et al. (2022) note that some of the British BTs still report being burdened with unreasonable teaching and administrative workloads, leading some to contemplate exiting the teaching profession prematurely. The issue of teaching and administrative workloads is a continuous concern for

BTs, although it is part of professional development to learn the overall work of a teacher, addressing the need to constantly analyse the allocated teaching and administration workload for them. It is undeniable that teaching and administrative workloads affect teachers' effective pedagogical practices because they must balance the different roles, resulting to reduced time to provide learners with formative feedback. This international review has shown that mentorship programmes are demanding and complex because they involve individuals with various personalities and expectations, however, they also highlight the importance of planning and training of mentors for efficient mentorship process.

The African Perspective

This section explores the existing research on mentorship with specific reference to BTs by drawing on regional contexts such as Zimbabwe and Ghana as well as Kenya, Namibia and Tanzania. It will conclude with the identified literature from the South African context. Generally, mentorship in most African countries is sporadic, uncoordinated and underfunded (Banja et al., 2021; Jato et al., 2022; Mphojane, 2019). For instance, despite there being evidence of the value of mentorship for BTs (Cross et al., 2020; Dishena, 2014; Gholam, 2018; Kutsyuruba et al., 2019; Yirci, 2017), there was no recognised formal mentorship programme in Zimbabwe, leading to negative mentoring experiences (Magudu & Gumbo, 2017; Manwa et al., 2016). According to Manwa et al.'s (2016) study with 30 Zimbabwean BTs across 22 primary rural schools during their first year of teaching, none of the interviewed participants had mentors and "were left alone to find their way around their teaching and the school context" (p. 68). In addition, there was unrelenting pressures of dealing with packed teaching schedules, which had negative effects on students' self-esteem and made them look incompetent to the learners. Magudu and Gumbo's (2017) qualitative phenomenological study with 20 primary school rural BTs from Mwenezi Education District in Zimbabwe found that they were deliberately allocated large class sizes, assigned 'outcast' classes and instructed to conduct co-curricular activities their senior colleagues could not do. These BTs' experiences show challenges with mentorship in rural schools and raise questions as to whether mentor teachers were trained or prepared to engage with the process, considering the marginalisation of rural education, schools, and professional development (Nkambule & Mukeredzi, 2017). In addition, the BTs were deprived of valuable information that would enrich their early career experiences and felt "largely unsupported as they grappled with these" (Magudu & Gumbo, 2017, p. 9). This highlights the nature of

relationships between BTs and experienced teachers and the school leadership, which the latter could have designed and/or design mentorship activities.

The Ghanaian BTs also reported being assigned larger than normal classes and assigned classes that seasoned teachers wanted nothing to do with (Keengwe & Adjei-Boateng, 2012), which was challenging because the BTs lacked skills to cope with such an unfamiliar context. While BTs had not necessarily prepared to teach large classes upon their entry into teaching, the guidance from mentor teachers was important given their experiences with big classes. In addition, BTs complained of a heavy teaching workload, and struggled to give prompt assessment feedback to their learners because they were overwhelmed with expectations (Keengwe & Adjei-Boateng, 2012). In Namibia, there is limited research on the support that is provided to the BTs during their early career (Ushona, 2018), however the phenomenological study with 12 BTs across all phases (primary, secondary, and combined schools) in Ompundja Circuit, Oshana Educational Region found that BTs were assigned mentors that were not supportive (Ushona, 2018). Similarly, Dishena's (2014) study of eight primary school BTs from Windhoek lacked support from the school managers and mentors, hence the critical role of leadership as mentioned above. The schools that supported BTs to satisfactory levels were because mentorship programmes were considered important, as noted by Milton et al. (2020, p. 17), that schools can act as effective professional learning sites for BTs and that "mentoring needs to be understood from an ecological perspective".

In Tanzania, Akech (2016) conducted a mixed-method study in Kongwa district with 25 BTs, exploring their perception of induction, its strengths, their challenges with the support programmes and their coping strategies. The study found that, although it is mandatory for BTs to be offered induction and mentorship support, 32,3% of them indicated they were unaware of early-career support programmes, implying that such information was not widely circulated among the BTs. The participants were further asked to indicate the methods used to induct them and 43,5% of them were able to mention them in comparison to 56,5% who said they were unaware of the methods applied (Akech, 2016). This means that it is not all the BTs who are aware of these important support strategies, which compromises the successful implementation of these support mechanisms for BTs at such a sensitive stage of their teaching careers where attrition rates are higher. Recently, Ally and Libent-Mabagala (2022) did a study in the Mbeya region of Tanzania and found that there were no nationally

instituted mentorship programmes and most of them were unsustainable and did not have any government support. These findings show that most Tanzanian regions lack government support and the support of BTs to settle in their new positions is also overlooked. On the other hand, the Kenyan BTs experienced better mentorship than their African counterparts. For example, Ochanji et al. (2017) reported that the undisclosed number of BTs who participated in their programme valued the immediate feedback they received from their mentors, felt less isolated and were motivated to remain in teaching. It thus means when BTs are fully supported by the mentors and the mentorship programme is well structured, their experiences are positive.

The South African Perspective

In South Africa, some authors (Mahwire, 2021; du Plessis & Sunde, 2017), note that formal mentorship programmes are uncoordinated and often self-initiated, as many BTs feel isolated and helpless because of limited to absent support given by their senior colleagues. The quantitative study by Hugo (2018) which explored how mentorship practices led to job satisfaction among the BTs in selected Mpumalanga urban and rural primary schools across the five quintiles, found that having a mentoring programme helps with better ways to deal with classroom management issues and improves learner academic achievement. The author further said that the success of any mentoring programme rests on the BTs' realisation that they also have responsibilities in the mentoring relationship with their mentors, which include identifying areas where they need assistance (Hugo, 2018). It was important for Hugo (2018) to make BTs understand that they also play a critical role in the mentorship process, especially the relationships that are often complex and difficult due to personality clashes. According to Shibiti (2020), teachers who are intentionally developed are likely to show high levels of engagement with their jobs and stay longer than those who are not in any training programme.

du Plessis and Sunde (2017) conducted a study in rural Orchid High School and found that none of the interviewed BTs were involved in any mentoring programmes. Mkhasibe et al. (2021) carried out a qualitative study in five rural secondary schools in King Cetshwayo District and found that BTs struggled to get their message across to their learners, due to lack of teaching experience which could have been mitigated by means of mentorship. Notwithstanding their acknowledgement that having a mentor mattered, the authors found

BTs felt they needed experienced teachers to guide them in their learning processes and lesson planning. This suggests that there was no recognised formal mentorship programme to support these teachers. Zoutendijk and Mpisi (2022) conducted a qualitative study with seven BTs in four primary schools from Ugu education district in KwaZulu-Natal, to unpack the challenges of mentorship programmes and identify the strengths and weaknesses of informal mentorship programmes that were used to support the BTs. Their findings suggested common challenges faced by the participants ranged from classroom management, being unsure of the expectations by education authorities, including school management teams (SMTs), dealing with work politics, being left on their own without the necessary support of their mentors, and relying on the knowledge and experience gained during their school visits (Zoutendijk & Mpisi, 2022). However, the BTs only got supported by their senior colleagues when they sought such help, which means in such setups the success of mentorship depends on the agency and patience of the BTs and them initiating a mentorship relationship from their senior colleagues may not guarantee their success.

In a qualitative phenomenological study involving six BTs from three education districts of the Western Cape province, Esau (2017) found that they felt isolated and unsupported by their senior colleagues. If there was a formal mentorship programme for them, their senior colleagues would still find it difficult to offer mentorship support because they "have no time to devote to mentoring novice teachers" (p. 218). Another qualitative study to emerge from the Western Cape by Daniels (2019), found that BTs were strong in subject matter content but struggled to cope with the daily realities of the school environment. One of the purposes of a mentorship programme is to guide BTs to manoeuvre the multifaceted school realities they are unfamiliar with as new members of staff and in a complex profession. In the Free State Lejweleputswa education district, Mphojane (2019) did a qualitative study involving 24 BTs. She found that most of the BTs were not formally mentored because of the absence of a national framework to guide schools on how to go about formulating mentorship programmes for BTs. There was also a general agreement among the mentors that for them to be effective in offering mentoring support to BTs, their congested teaching and administrative schedules had to be relaxed and that both mentees and mentors had to be within close zonal proximity.

Given the relative presence of mentorship programmes in functional schools that are in metropolitan areas, researchers (Daniels, 2019; Kelly et al., 2019) found that the SMTs held frequent feedback meetings with the BTs in the mentorship programme to identify and address their shortcomings. Thus, BTs felt part of the mentorship programme which helped them to cope better with the multiple classroom management challenges they initially faced before they were paired with a mentor. Mahwire (2021) conducted a qualitative study in Metro Central Education District of the Western Cape with six BTs in intermediate phase and found that five out of six BTs felt that being part of the mentorship programme enhanced their pedagogical content knowledge. By being part of this programme, some of the participants felt supported by their mentors and closed some of the subject-specific content gaps in Mathematics and Natural Sciences (NS) (Mahwire, 2021).

Even though there is overwhelming empirical evidence of the importance of mentorship for BTs, the global and regional picture of mentorship programmes depicts varying degrees of success and challenges. For example, in most of the Scandinavian countries and the rest of the developed world, although formal mentorship programmes were sparsely available, compounded by the slow progress to formalise them, they were largely dominated by informal mentorship support structures. Where formal mentorship structures existed, participants often complained about their uncoordinated nature. For other countries, the idea that someone has taught for some time and therefore is better suited to be a mentor without proper training seems to compromise the quality of mentorship experiences of the BTs. On the contrary, the regional and local literature shows that there is a strong absence of political will to implement formal mentorship structures to support BTs as they navigate uncertain professional terrains. Instead, BTs must often singlehandedly deal with any professional challenges with which they are confronted.

2.6 Components of Successful Mentorship

The transition of BTs from higher learning institutions to being a full-time teacher may be daunting, a reason Zoutendijk and Mpisi (2022) advocate for mentorship programmes, so that BTs feel supported and listened to and increase their self-confidence. This section presents characteristics of successful mentorship which assisted me to evaluate the extent to which, if at all, they were evident in the schools the study BTs were based.

2.6.1 Trust and a Mentorship Relationship

It is critical for the mentor and mentee to trust each other for the successful mentorship relationship and enjoyment of the teaching profession. Bressman et al. (2018) posit that "central to the effectiveness of any mentoring program is the development of a trusting relationship with another individual" (p. 168). BTs are new in the schools and profession and rely on the experienced teachers for guidance, support, and to help them relax as they develop professionally and personally. Trust for this relationship is important and requires openness, vulnerability, and professionalism, which transpires if both parties trust each other. Eisenschmidt and Oder (2018) underscore the importance of trust and argue that BTs determine if they can trust their mentors before they commit to being mentored. According to Atkins (2019), trust and confidentiality are key elements in the mentoring relationship for the mentees to feel that whatever limitations their mentor has identified will not be used against them in appraisal and/or promotion processes. Tonna (2019) claims that trust enables the construction and easy transmission of the knowledge process as both parties feel at ease with each other and thereby ensure that both parties "are receptive to transformation" (pg. 280). In the absence of a trusting relationship, honesty is compromised; Wasonga et al. (2015) found that, in other cases, mentors avoid certain discussions with the mentees out of fear of appearing overly critical of the BTs' practices.

2.6.2 Shared Vision Between Mentor and Mentee

The existence of common aspirations and values between a mentor and a mentee should be seriously considered when pairing the BTs with the mentors, for the successful mentoring relationship (Mahwire, 2021). One way of achieving this is allowing the mentee to choose a colleague with whom they share professional and personal values, a mentor from whom a BT draws inspiration. As time-consuming it may be, BTs could start to observe from the time they arrive at the school the attitudes and behaviours of their colleagues, especially those who teach the same subjects and belong to the same department or division to identify those with whom they share common aspirations. In addition, it would mean they need to prioritise building rich and deeper relationships with other colleagues who may help them to identify suitable mentors for them. Gordon (2019) suggests that the success of a mentoring relationship depends on the existence of a mutual understanding between a mentor and a mentee, and she suggests both the mentor and mentee need to spend considerable time together to know each other better. This means that forming successful mentoring

relationships should not be a rushed process. Earlier, Bell and Treleaven (2011) posited that allowing mentees to choose their own mentors significantly decreases "the likelihood of mismatches and increases their agency thereby positioning them more comfortably in the relations of power that are inevitably present within organisations and thus in mentor-mentee pairs" (p. 4). The authors suggest the success of such approach needs the mentees to set the deliverables before identifying the mentor so that their mentoring relationship is enriched, followed by "expressions of interest from both mentees and mentors" (p. 15).

Thus, it is not enough to have a mentoring relationship if harmony and willingness to mentor and be mentored do not exist between the mentee and mentor, emphasising the collaborative approach to mentorship to learn from each other. Eisenschmidt and Oder (2018) found that BTs value the emotional support by their mentors and the shared career aspirations with better chances of success. Dias-Lacy and Guirguis (2017) posit that availing mentorship support to BTs enables them to have a 'springboard' upon which to express their emotions and experiences and this enhances their positive impressions about the teaching profession. Without overlooking the possibility of tensions and conflict in the mentorship relationship, the discussion indicates the importance of careful planning when pairing BTs with the mentors for a successful mentorship relationship.

2.6.3 Context-specific Mentorship

As discussed in previous sections, the mentorship of BTs happens in different school contexts. Kutsyuruba et al. (2019) and Kadenge, (2021) address the importance of education authorities being context-specific when they plan teacher support programmes for BTs instead of assuming that the challenges that BTs face in their schools are homogeneous and that schools are incapable of providing adequate teacher support as long as they are given enough resources to successfully implement mentorship programmes. Hence, Daly et al. (2020) found in their Welsh study that the schools were confident of their abilities to conduct professional development activities like mentoring BTs. The BTs in the current study worked in some of the most challenging circumstances which meant they had to deal with some pressing issues such as identifying and closing content gaps and dealing with multiple societal problems[3], more than those facing their counterparts in some schools. As such, BTs

[3]More about these socio-economic challenges in chapter 5.

working in challenging environments need to have high levels of skills to deal with them (Podolsky et al., 2019). Therefore, these circumstances mean the blanket mentorship approach will not yield the desired outcomes as the kind of working environments BTs and their mentors experience in these challenging setups will require a different approach than is used in low-poverty schools.

2.6.4 Self-reliant BTs

To be self-reliant professionals, BTs need to proactively explore multiple networking opportunities to share their experiences with other colleagues outside of their school settings and engage in self-development activities, such as attending workshops or webinars. This is referred to as self-directed learning (SDL), that is, where BTs recognise gaps in their professional repertoire and seek opportunities by themselves to meet these identified professional gaps (Mokoena, 2022). Because of their limited professional experience, BTs will need to carefully consider these SDL activities to avoid redundancy and the misuse of resources they will need to pursue this. Especially considering that teachers benefit greatly from self-initiated professional development activities in terms of "content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge" (Alshaikhi, 2020, p. 1366). I argue that BTs will benefit from self-initiated professional growth opportunities if they collaborate with other BTs who share similar career growth aspirations instead of doing this singlehandedly. This will be useful as it avails the much-needed support structure for them.

In fact, Whitfield's (2019) qualitative study with six BTs in England found that they valued opportunities to network with their peers, which improved their sense of belonging. Such platforms also allow BTs to feel unrestricted by the structure and encourage them to fully explore the learning opportunities and to become self-sufficient. Hugo (2018) extrapolates that mentoring is characterised by exchange of and exposure to novel knowledge, networks, and psychological support seen by the mentee as relevant to their work and to enhance their professional growth. BTs could unlock unique learning opportunities, which enhance their self-reliance, by participating in self-initiated self-development initiatives like reading materials on wide-ranging topics like classroom management and enhancing learner performance (Hairon et al., 2020).

What has become clear from the reviewed literature above is that, while the context in which the mentorship programmes are implemented plays a significant role for their success, common features such as shared goals, mutual trust between a mentee and mentor and BTs proactively seeking out help for specific areas of the professional lives cut across the geographical regions and are not specific to certain geographical locations.

2.7 Challenges of Implementing Mentorship Programmes

2.7.1 Mentorship and Power Dynamics

It is undeniable that the nature of the mentorship relationship involves power dynamics since it involves experienced and novice individuals, as mentors are expected "to share a plethora of thoughts and ideas related to education" (Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017, p. 266) and the teaching profession in general. Notwithstanding, it is also important for mentors to always be conscious that the mentoring relationship is not based on power imbalance of a 'I know it all' attitude, but acknowledgement that there is knowledge and experience differences. Authors (Aladejana et al. 2006; Awaya et al., 2003) lament the tendency of most mentorship definitions being hierarchical and leaning on one-sided power relations, considering that BTs also bring contemporary knowledge and skills for the mentors to learn, hence the importance of trust and respect. Awaya et al. (2003) and Aderibigbe et al. (2022) warn that where the mentor assumes a higher position and claims to know it all, assuming the mentee has insufficient knowledge and experience, such mentorship programmes could create power struggles between the mentor and mentee. On the other hand, when BTs feel empowered and respected by their mentors, Mahwire (2021) found that this enhances their positive sentiments towards the mentorship programmes.

On the contrary, mentors who were authoritarian tended to be ineffective and less successful because the mentees felt their feelings and inputs were disregarded (Daniels, 2019). According to the researchers (Ewing, 2021; Kadji-Beltran et al., 2014; Pennanen et al., 2020), any mentorship programme that is based on balanced power relations tends to bear desirable outcomes as opposed to the one where the mentee feels relegated to a mere participant instead of a collaborator. This means that any mentorship programme should have the best interests of mentees at heart and promote mutual teaching and learning opportunities, because

the mentor and mentee can mutually benefit from each other (Bayar, 2014; Karanfil & Atay, 2020).

2.7.2 Mentor-mentee Mismatch

Wolfram (2020) criticises the tendency by the mentorship programme designers to pair teachers from different grades, as opposed to pairing them with mentors who teach the same grades. This complicates relationship dynamics, given the unique challenges at different grades in schools. Similarly, Blevins (2016) accentuates the importance of ensuring that BTs are "paired with a mentoring teacher that is teaching on the same grade level and/or subject level" (p. 9), to ensure that effective and successful professional learning and personal growth takes place. While this is important, however, it is also critical not to overlook the significance of considering the personality and/or characteristics of the mentor/mentee during mentor selection and/or pairing, which could cross the grade preferences. Colognesi et al. (2020) found that BTs derived much value from their mentoring relationships where they had the freedom to choose someone "whom they trust, and who is teaching the same course in the same year" (p. 270). This could help in the classroom observation, to facilitate the process of identifying any grey areas in the BTs' teaching for improvement and development. Along the same line of discussion, another mismatch to be seriously considered is the personality clashes during the pairing of mentors and mentees, which could compromise the success of mentoring programmes (Aderibigbe et al., 2022). The levels of motivation between the mentors or mentees are critical and could result in tensions and challenges if not well aligned (Holland, 2021). It is therefore important to pay attention to the pairing of mentees and mentors, acknowledging impossibilities sometimes, for a successful mentorship relationship and to enhance productivity for the mentees.

2.7.3 Mentor Training

Globally, only 22% of the BTs report to have been assigned a mentor (OECD, 2019), which addresses the need for mentor training to provide quality mentorship support and experiences for BTs. Fransson (2020) extrapolates that mentoring of BTs is inextricably linked to mentor training for proper capacitation and ensures successful mentorship programmes for junior colleagues. However, this is not always the case, as Tonna (2019) found that senior teachers had difficulty mentoring the BTs because they did not know their responsibilities, "especially in terms of the kind of rapport they forge with the newly qualified teachers and the kind of

report they would need to complete at the end of the scholastic year" (p. 277). While senior teachers have knowledge and experience in the profession, it does not necessarily mean they have all mentorship knowledge and skills for efficient and quality mentorship practices with the BTs. Similarly, in Malaysia, the impact of inadequate mentor training inhibits the mentors' ability to execute their mentoring duties successfully for the BTs' positive working environment experiences in their critical initial teaching years (Vikaraman et al., 2017). Thus, Hudson (2013) contends that mentors who possess inadequate knowledge about recent mentorship practices can potentially stunt the progress of their mentees (BTs), because mentors' teaching experiences and ideas do not translate to the improvement of novice teachers' knowledge (Bayar, 2014). For this reason, Kidd et al., (2015) posit that experienced teachers should be capacitated with the latest novel knowledge on the best mentoring practices. This assures that the BTs get value for their time, but it also strengthens their belief in the value of mentorship for their professional growth.

It cannot be assumed that experienced teachers have the necessary mentorship skills without being trained, because mentoring BTs requires knowledge "that is specific to a school context and the individual learner, supported by professional development dedicated to specialised knowledge and skills about mentoring" (Betlem et al., 2019, p. 2). OECD (2018) notes that about 50% of BTs in South Africa report to having a mentor, but the mentorship relationships are largely unstructured (Esau & Maarman, 2019) because of the non-existent legal framework that propels schools to implement them for BTs. Zoutendijk and Mpisi (2022) report that experienced teachers who mentor BTs do so voluntarily and lack the necessary skills to execute their functions with competence and confidence, due to lack of accountability and monitoring. Failure to properly mentor and train mentors denies BTs the enriched mentorship experiences. Shanks et al. (2020) posit that BTs whose mentors received training and education on mentoring "expressed higher levels of feeling supported" (p. 10) than those who did not.

This means that adequately trained mentors can identify inadequacies from their mentees and find ways to address these inadequacies. It is thus important that teacher mentors' mentorship skills are improved, to enable functioning at the highest level of mentorship. Inadequate mentor training compromises the way the BTs perceive their mentors, consequently, endangering their mentorship experiences. Bayar (2014) reports that BTs who perceived their mentors' skill level in a negative light derived less value from their mentorship programmes,

which resulted in BTs thinking that they know better than their mentors and that they were wasting time attending the mentorship programme. Similarly, Karanfil and Atay's (2020) study revealed that once BTs thought they held the knowledge upper hand over their mentors, they developed negative notions of mentorship programmes. Thus, Aarts et al. (2020) recommend that education officials need to constantly expose the mentor teachers to high level professional development platforms such as conferences and short courses on mentoring BTs, with a view to keeping abreast of new mentoring developments they will later pass over to their protégés. In a Malta study, Tonna (2019) found that mentors felt their mentoring could be of more value if mentoring BTs was a shared responsibility with other staff members who excelled in other professional areas. The hope is that these collaborative approaches will enable the mentors to sharpen their skillset.

2.7.4 Teacher Workload as a Barrier

In South Africa, one of the challenges that teachers face is having to attend to the competing responsibilities. For example, Daniels (2019) conducted a study in the Western Cape and found that despite the positive impact of having mentorship programmes, mentors struggled with multiple things such as balancing their own administrative duties with mentoring the BTs. In addition, teachers' workload is increased by expected multitasking in and outside of classrooms, which is overwhelming and causes fatigue. Matla and Xaba (2019) opine that more funding should be availed to deal with over-populated classrooms which harm the mentoring potential of experienced teachers, given the need to attend to multiple teaching and administrative responsibilities such as marking lots of scripts etc., instead of focusing on mentoring BTs. This means both national and provincial budgets should be reprioritised to fund new teacher posts created to minimise teacher workload to facilitate the introduction of a nationally coordinated mentorship programme for BTs. Van Tonder (2021) adds that the ever-changing South African teaching landscape overstretched teachers, resulting in burnout and negative feelings about their work, hence premature exit for some.

Hobbs and Putman (2016) found that the multiple responsibilities that mentors had compromised the quality of their mentorship because they had to divide their time, intellectual and other resources amongst their assigned mentees. It is therefore important that a mentor teacher's workload is reviewed and decreased, to allow special attention to the mentorship programme without competing with other duties to ensure BTs' maximum

positive experiences. DeCesare et al.'s (2016) study included 1 000 districts in the US to evaluate the kind of support afforded to BTs and found that, while there was some evidence of mentorship support for BTs, the full-time teaching responsibilities of their mentors prevented them from fully focusing on their mentorship responsibilities. It is acknowledged that senior teachers are possibly the right mentors within the profession to provide an effective mentorship programme; however, the already overloaded teachers might feel overwhelmed and decline to be mentors. To mitigate the time constraint challenge, Ewing (2021) recommends the strategy of employing external mentors, that is, part-time retired teachers to serve as mentors to BTs as they have "the luxury and flexibility of time to offer a mentee" (p. 61). Without overlooking the role that retired experienced teachers could play, the selection process should ensure that they were effective and efficient and had quality characteristics to motivate BTs.

In Scotland, Aderibigbe et al. (2022) note that the BTs are assured of a year-long teaching job, and while they undergo mentoring, their teaching time is reduced by 80% of the normal teaching time. The BTs are exposed to continuing professional development and are assigned a full-time mentor to interact with on a weekly basis for the first half of the academic year (Aderibigbe et al., 2022). Positively, Shanks et al. (2020) found that municipalities are given additional funds to support schools that accommodate the BTs so that their mentors can have their teaching duties reduced to "devote 10% of their time on mentoring duties" (Shanks et al., 2020, p. 6). This means that the mentorship for BTs is valued in Scotland, because it is incorporated in the teaching and given more time to focus on the learning aspect of the profession. A full-time mentor is assigned to the mentees, which suggests that they have well-trained mentors to ensure effective mentorship.

2.8 Mentoring Benefits to Mentors

2.8.1 Improved Instructional Offering

Schwan et al. (2020) conducted a state-wide study in the US to unpack the mentors' acquired benefits for their experiences and expertise to the BTs and found that the mentor teachers' benefits were increased professional and personal self-awareness through reflection (Schwan et al., 2020). In addition, the mentors reported improvements in how they teach and assess their learners since taking on the BTs as their mentees, which addresses the importance of

being open minded to learning from the BTs. Similarly, Tonna's (2019) study in Malta found that mentors who took their mentoring responsibilities seriously tended to find better ways of delivering their subject matter (pedagogical mastery) and enhanced classroom interactions with their learners, because "teachers often learn best from and with other teachers" (p. 270) through collaboration.

When mentors collaborate with their mentee BTs, they feel fulfilled that they are contributing to the growth trajectory of a new entrant to the teaching profession (Wills et al., 2019). Thus, the mentoring relationship benefits mentors as much as it does the BTs and hence it is important that mentoring BTs is seriously considered as its benefits can potentially benefit the general growth of teachers across the teaching spectrum. Esau (2019) concurs that, while the BTs stand to learn from their mentors, "mentors also learn from their protégés by developing new insights into their own and others' teaching and many times developing a renewed enthusiasm and commitment to their craft and career" (p. 78). This addresses the importance of reducing the mentor teachers' workload or employing quality retired teachers who will ensure that BTs learn about the complexity of the profession. In turn, the mentors, irrespective of their years of service, still learn new skills from the BTs. To ease tensions and anxiety that BTs may have about their mentors and inevitably compromise the success of the mentorship programmes, Wold et al. (2023) argue that a thorough thought process should go into pairing a mentor with their mentee to avoid any major personality clashes and differing value systems. As mentioned earlier, where possible, BTs should be paired with a mentor whose career aspirations match theirs and BTs must be given freedom to choose mentors with the hope that doing so will enhance their mentorship experiences.

2.9 Mentoring Benefits to Mentees

Like their mentors, BTs also stand to benefit from their mentoring experience. In this section, I aim to critically unpack the benefit that BTs derive from being mentored to justify the importance of mentoring them in the early years of their teaching careers.

2.9.1 Building Sustainable Relationships

One of the critically important elements of the mentorship programme is the time the mentor and mentee spend beyond the mentorship programme, because it enhances their chances of building deep professional relationships that go beyond the mentoring period. Recognising this importance, Ellul and Fehring (2017) implore the education authorities to create more space for a mentee and mentor to meet regularly to deepen the quality of their mentorship relationship and to give both the mentor and mentee an opportunity to decide if their mentorship relationship should continue. This prompted Aarts et al. (2020) to criticise the tendency of education officials to limit BT support only to entry level, that is, first year of teaching, thinking they are ready to contend with the challenges of the teaching profession. Learning about the teaching profession is timeless because of teachers as life-long learners, however, it is important to set a reasonable time or period for the BTs mentorship for developing some knowledge and skills. Gut et al.t (2014) note that the quality and success of a mentorship programme depends on the "amount of time for mentoring interactions" (p. 240), which should be carefully thought out to also ensure that BTs learn to stand on their own rather than being dependent. While Gut et al. (2014) found that mentees do not necessarily need prolonged meetings with their mentors, even seemingly insignificant gestures such as random 'in-between classes' conversations with them about their classroom experiences matter. However, they still recommended that the early field experiences be lengthened "in order to create more interaction time between mentors and mentees" (p. 257). Achieving this will ensure that both the mentor and mentee establish a deep relationship before they engage in other mentorship dimensions such as classroom observations. This could possibly help in identifying the working pairing of mentors and mentees with the same values to support an effective positive mentorship relationship.

DeCesare et al. (2016); Wold et al. (2023) recommend at least two full uninterrupted years of mentorship for BTs to learn the dynamics of the profession and build their confidence, which means retired teachers could be advantageous. In another study, Rogers et al. (2020, p. 13) found that "gains in perceived overall mentoring quality were greater at higher dosages (4-10 hours) than at lower dosages (1-3 hours)", which should consider individual BTs and depends on school context and available resources. This further depends on mentor-mentees relationship and respect, thus setting early goals and objectives becomes critical. Aarts et al. (2020) recommend that there is still a real need for BTs to be supported at least up to the third year because teachers in this phase still express discontentment about the teaching profession. It is for this reason that Wold et al. (2023) said creating sustainable human relationships depends on building long-term, as opposed to short-term, mentorship programmes; arguing that assigning inadequate mentorship time undermines the quality of interactions that could emerge between the mentor and mentee. This highlights the complexity of mentorship programmes, which requires careful consideration of the school context, especially in South Africa with different teacher qualities.

In a sample of 76 Estonian BTs, Eisenschmidt and Oder (2018) report that 58% of those who participated in the mentorship programme still collaborated with their mentors after they had exited their mentorship programme, on professional growth and learner behaviour. This is particularly significant since their overall success as professionals still depends on their willingness and availability to be guided, through mentorship (Ellul & Fehring, 2017). While going beyond the line of duty is important, Daniels (2019) cautions against both the BT and mentee crossing the boundaries as they navigate their mentorship relationship, because the closer the mentor and mentee are beyond the professional cycles, the less the quality of the mentoring programme. Equally, it is essential to note that the length of the mentorship programme affects the financial resources for the schools or education districts (Banja et al., 2021), especially for the no-fees schools. This could be a hindrance to effective and successful mentorship programmes, especially in contexts where financial resources may be a challenge because of competing needs.

2.9.2 Improved Classroom Practice

It is advisable to promote the mentorship of the BTs, especially for the classroom practices that are usually challenging because learners sometimes take advantage of new teachers. Schwan et al. (2020) found that BTs who were mentored showed improvements in their instructional offering, classroom management, and had a sense of direction about their teaching careers and being part of a caring school community. According to Hugo (2018), BTs need to be mentored by well-equipped seasoned teachers with the hope that this may create a competent and well-organised BT who in turn will become highly motivated to improve learner outcomes. Hobbs and Putnam (2016) undertook a phenomenological study involving nine BTs in the district of North Carolina and found that those who were paired with a mentor were better equipped to deal with areas with which most BTs struggle, namely, curriculum planning, classroom management and organisation. The positive aspect was that such BTs benefitted from novel ideas and cutting-edge resources their mentors shared, to improve their pedagogical practices with the subject matter.

Similarly, Cross et al. (2020) conducted a qualitative study involving eight rural school mathematics BTs in the state of Texas who were part of a mentorship programme in their final year undergraduate studies before they joined the teaching profession. Their purpose was to examine the impact this mentorship programme had on their curriculum implementation competencies and found that those who participated in this mentorship programme tended to be more effective in their choice of instructional materials and pedagogical approaches than those who did not. Consistent with these studies is Frederiksen's (2020) review of literature involving seven empirical studies who found that BTs who got mentoring and induction support were better equipped to engage with ill-disciplined learners, keeping them interested in their schoolwork and keeping them on task. Classroom practices are important skills to be developed by the BTs because they include pedagogical content knowledge and classroom management, which are challenging to balance for BTs. Even though the experienced teachers also struggle with classroom management (Lazarides et al., 2020), the problem is more pronounced among the BTs; Stahnke and Blömeke (2021) found that BTs were less likely to notice subtle disruptive learner behaviours than their experienced counterparts. This gives impetus to mentoring BTs as it is hoped that doing so will minimise such incidences and thereby enhance their general teaching experiences.

2.9.3 Improved Job Satisfaction

Job dissatisfaction is "when a teacher derives a negative or un-pleasurable emotional response from his/her subjective appraisal of his/her current job status" (Issaiah & Nenty, 2012, p. 277). In contrast, Aliakbari (2015) argues that job satisfaction occurs when teachers derive positive feelings from their current work environment. To mitigate the challenges that BTs experience, it is important to increase their job satisfaction through effective and positive mentorship (Anderson, 2012). Although the study sample included only one teacher, Gholam (2018) explored how the BT perceived mentorship, which depended on the satisfaction with the quality of mentorship experience. There was great value from the mentorship experience as the BT reported that this relationship "increased her confidence, extended her thinking in news ways, developed her self-awareness, pushed her further to work on her weaknesses, and allowed her to feel proud of her accomplishments" (Gholam, 2018, p. 9). It is one of the intentions for mentorship programmes to improve BTs' job satisfaction to stay longer in the profession, because they would have been exposed to different challenges and positives and shared skills on manoeuvring the complexities. The study by Dias-Lacy and Guirguis (2017) to understand the challenges the participating BT faced and strategies she employed to cope with these, found lack of support from the experienced colleagues and being unable to deal with unruly learner behaviour.

Although a BT could initially experience lack of support; however, the support changed her feelings of frustration and anxiety towards the teaching profession (Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017). This information was consistent with Lo et al. (2013) who found a correlation between the kind of support afforded to beginner employees (teachers) and their level of job satisfaction. Mahwire (2021) echoes the proceeding findings and said efforts to improve the experiences of the BTs in the mentorship programmes go a long way to ensuring they remain happy teachers. Interestingly, Kelly et al. (2019) found that the BTs in primary schools were more satisfied in their teaching posts than those teaching in secondary schools, which is linked to the supporting opportunities that are granted to primary school teachers relative to their counterparts in secondary schools or the extent of challenges the secondary teachers experience.

2.10 Teacher Attrition as a Factor Necessitating BTs' Mentorship

Teacher attrition in general has been a topical issue globally, but it is equally pronounced among the BTs. For example, the OECD (2021) report worryingly shows a high percentage of BTs who exit the profession because they feel inadequately supported to become effective teachers (García & Weiss, 2019; McCollum, 2014). As OECD (2021) found, prime contributors to this challenge include the profession not meeting their expectations in terms of the working conditions, which were discussed in previous sections of the chapter. In Israel and Norway, the OECD (2021) reports that the attrition rate stood at only 3,3% and 11,7% respectively in 2016. Of great concern, schools that are impoverished see heightened attrition and turnover rates (García & Weiss, 2019), although it is also experienced in communities where teachers are less regarded and appreciated. For example, in Finland where teachers are held in high regard (Pollari et al., 2018), this problem is "surprisingly prevalent" (Räsänen et al., 2020, p. 851). A longitudinal study with 98 Finnish BTs found that 34,5% strongly indicated the intention to leave the teaching profession, with just under a third (29,3%) of their experienced counterparts having the same intentions (Räsänen et al., 2020). In the Netherlands, Helms-Lorenz et al. (2015) found 29% of the BTs left their initial school of employment in the first three years; furthermore, of the 29%, "16% actually left the profession" (Helms-Lorenz et al., 2015), which was less than what they had expected. The discussion thus far shows the intricacies of the teaching profession for the BTs and the complicatedness of the mentorship process, although mentorship is still important for the BTs to provide guidance and develop certain skills.

Although the statistics on teacher attrition rates, particularly concerning the BTs, are sketchy in low-income countries such as those found in the sub-Saharan African region (Nketsia et al., 2022), Kukano and Mafora (2020) are concerned by the alarming attrition rate of Zambian teachers and the fact that it takes a long time to replace them. The instructional consequences of losing teachers include learners being without or being taught by an unqualified teacher. Because of investments countries make in developing teachers, Nketsia et al. (2022) reason that leaving teachers end up not learning "on the job and acquire the necessary teaching experience for effective practise" (p. 4) and this could be catastrophic to low-income countries as it may perpetuate social inequalities because of the lack of quality teachers. In Rwanda, Zeitlin (2020) found that the effects of learning losses were acutely felt by schools because of the exodus of BTs to highlight the importance of retaining them in the profession. One great concern in South Africa is the large proportion of BTs who leave the

profession prematurely (Mafukata & Mudau, 2016; Pitsoe, 2013; Shanks et al., 2020), because there are some BTs who can be found to be "firmly attached to the occupation for which they have been trained" (Deacon, 2016, p. 17). Although this is concerning, van der Berg and Gustafsson (2022) extrapolate that South Africa will need approximately 6 000 new teachers by 2030 to offset attrition rates that are estimated at a little under 5 000 amongst BTs in 2022 and projected to increase. The consequences of attrition rates among BTs and their retirement age-bound colleagues (55 years for early retirement and 60-65 years for compulsory exit) need to be seen in conjunction with learner enrolment rates. Considering this, learner enrolment rates in South Africa have increased from around 12 million in 2015 to around 12,7 million in 2021 and are expected to rise sharply by "6,2% between 2021 and 2030" (Spaull, 2022, p. 1). Thus, there is a continuous need for more competent teachers to remain in the teaching profession and more effective mentors. This therefore enhances calls for more competent teachers to remain in the teaching profession and more to be hired. \

2.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided a review of the literature from the international, regional, and local scholars in relation to BTs' experiences and perceptions of mentorship. It started by clarifying and operationalising some of the important concepts and a brief discussion on the history of the concept of mentorship, which was followed by its definition. It proceeded to highlight previous international, regional, and local empirical studies on mentorship programmes for BTs to identify existing mentorship practices and locate the current study within those debates with the aim of identifying gaps that this study will address. After that, the chapter examined components of successful mentorship programmes to get an overview of current forms of mentorship across different contexts with the aim of comparing and contrasting them to those found in the current study. Following that, the chapter looked at teacher attrition as a factor necessitating the mentoring of BTs and the associated consequences thereof. It became particularly clear by reviewing literature that, while there is enough empirical evidence of formal and sustained mentorship support for BTs in North America, some parts of Asia and Europe, there is little empirical research in African contexts to better understand the kind of mentoring support for BTs and its effect. Where such support is available, it is often informal and short-term, even though mentoring is seen as an important form of intervention strategy to support BTs. Also, although BTs may have been positioned in certain unfavourable ways, there were, however, silences on how their agency

enabled them to overcome this unfavourable positioning. It is such silences that give impetus to this study as they heighten a need to solidify the knowledge base, contextually, methodologically and empirically, in this critical area to have a better understanding of how BTs experience and perceive mentorship in public secondary schools in the South African context.

Chapter 3: Unpacking BTs' Mentorship Experiences and Perceptions Through Lenses: Positioning Theory and Archer's Structure and Agency

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed literature on mentorship and specifically for BTs. This chapter discusses the two theoretical frameworks as lenses that informed the analysis of data and interpretation of findings for the study. The chapter presents a brief discussion of the distinction between a theoretical framework and a conceptual framework, the justification for using both and the chosen frameworks. Following this discussion, I unpack the two eclectic theoretical frameworks for this study, positioning theory as pioneered by Hollway (1984) and extensively expanded by scholars such as Harré, and Margaret Archer's concepts of structure and agency. The chapter concludes with a diagrammatic representation of these frameworks to show the intersection between them.

3.2 Discussing a Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Framework

As an important part of research, a theoretical framework comprises of interlinked concepts and empirical assumptions grounded in theory that assist the researcher to challenge his or her perspectives (Varpio et al., 2020). According to (Adom et al., 2018; Imenda, 2014), a conceptual framework justifies the undertaking of a study by integrating related primary concepts that informed its conceptualisation. Thus, in keeping with the objectives of this study, it was important to adopt theoretical frameworks that helped to explain the meaning, nature, and challenges of a phenomenon, and further help to address the questions of 'how' and 'why' by articulating the theoretical assumptions of this research study (Adom et al., 2018). This study investigated BTs experiences of mentorship and how they perceived mentorship in relation to the factors that influence their experiences. Thus, I used positioning theory[4] and Archer's concepts of structure and agency as the 'blueprint' or guide for an inquiry (Grant & Osanloo, 2014; Ravitch & Riggan, 2012; Sinclair, 2007), to unpack the BTs' experiences and perceptions. While the theoretical frameworks anchoring this study helped to understand the shifting multiple relations the BTs needed to navigate the schools as the communities of practice (Barnes, 2004), a conceptual framework offered the study a

[4] Although positioning theory originated from Wendy Hollway (1984), it was extensively developed by Rom Harré and his other colleagues. Accordingly, the study leans more on the theory that was developed post the Hollway's era, that is, by Harré and his other colleagues.

logical structure of connected concepts that helped provide a picture or visual display of how ideas were interrelated, and showing how the connections were appropriate and useful given the research problem under investigation (Grant & Osanloo, 2014; Lester, 2005).

3.3 Positioning Theory and its Underpinnings

Positioning theory traces its origin to the work of Hollway (1984) who sought to understand how different genders are positioned in society. In this study, Hollway noted how women were more outspoken about issues affecting them when they were paired in the same group than when they were paired with their male counterparts. This led her to conclude that "discourses make available positions for subjects to take up. These positions are in relation to other people" (p. 236). This then meant that women were considered or considered themselves inferior to their male counterparts and thus thought it best to withhold their thoughts and actions but were more vocal when they were with their female counterparts because they felt they were equal. The theory was later developed by a psychologist Rom Harré and his colleagues (Davis & Harré, 1990, 1999; Harré & van Langenhove, 1999). Positioning theory has transitioned from gender studies with a specific focus to how males and females position (locate) one another "to a whole set of rights, duties and obligations that speakers have" (van Langenhove & Harré, 1994, p. 362) in conversation with each other.

In education, positioning theory has been used to conceptualise the understanding of literacies and mathematics teaching in the various classroom settings, amongst other focuses (Green et al., 2020; Herbel-Eisenmann et al., 2015; Kayi-Aydar & Steadman, 2021). According to van Langenhove (2016), positioning theory is "seen as a starting point for reflecting upon the many different aspects of the social realm" (p. 66), and the BTs experiences and perceptions of mentorship in the schools are social realms for this study. Positioning theory reveals explicit and implicit patterns of reasoning that are realised in the ways that BTs and mentors act towards each other (Harré et al., 2009) during the mentorship processes. The understanding of the BTs' reasoning about the mentorship programmes is important in order to make sense of their experiences that are influenced by the relationship dynamics in their schools and individual personalities. Positioning theory "can be used flexibly to describe the shifting multiple relations in a community of practice and is useful for dealing with the complexities of interactions in learning, workplace and social contexts" (Barnes, 2004, p. 1). The nature of schools as the learning and working spaces are complex and include multifaceted interactions, in this study interactions between BTs and mentor

teachers (Hawkins & James, 2017; Jansen, 2020). Thus, positioning theory helped to gain insight into the explicit and implicit patterns of reasoning, critically analyse the shifting multiple relations and complex interactions that BTs experienced, and how they positioned themselves during the mentorship processes within the school contexts.

Positioning theory brings to light conventional parameters within which people carry on their lives, thinking, feeling, acting, and perceiving against standards of correctness (Harré et al., 2009). In this study, these conventional ways include but are not limited to the existing routines such as the way the BTs are treated by their colleagues and interact with learners, parents and different departmental officials, to better understand the nature and origins of their interactions. In addition, Harvonen (2016) highlights that positioning theory "aims to examine and explore the distribution of rights and duties to speak and behave in certain ways among the participants of face-to-face interactions or intra-group relations" (p. 1). BTs have certain rights and duties to perform within the schools as expected for the profession, and as teachers their behaviours are constantly scrutinised, whether consciously or unconsciously. According to Harré and van Langenhove (2010), the assigned right to act or not to act, speak or not to speak in a particular group setting, forms the basis of constructing discursive interpersonal positions. Thus, at the core of positioning theory is the understanding that there are rules that govern human interactions; in this study, the existing school's mentorship rules, if at all, that govern interactions between BTs and mentor teachers. This study sought to understand BTs' positioning within the expected rights and duties that are embedded in complex power relations, especially considering that there were instances where BTs accepted and refuted the assigned rights and duties (Harvonen, 2016). This depended on the structural enablement and disablement as well as the vested interests in the situation.

Although the BTs are qualified teachers, it does not necessarily mean they can do everything within the school context, hence "positioning theory looks at what a person may do and may not do" (Harré et al., 2009, p. 9). Teaching in a secondary school means that a BT is qualified to teach specific subject(s) and not qualified to teach specific subject(s), which means there are certain duties within the profession that are governed by qualification rules that the BTs may do and may not realistically do. Considering the discussion, BTs have a right to act or not to act, speak or not to speak, without overlooking that being a qualified teacher is interpreted differently by the schools. Thus, perceived rights and duties may play into existing storylines that constrain the way that people position themselves, which makes it

critical to understand the BTs' existing storyline to know the emergence of their positions. In the school context, the rights and duties of BTs are sometimes tacit; thus, it is the role of the mentor to inform and guide the BTs as to what is expected from them or how to act (Woest, 2018).

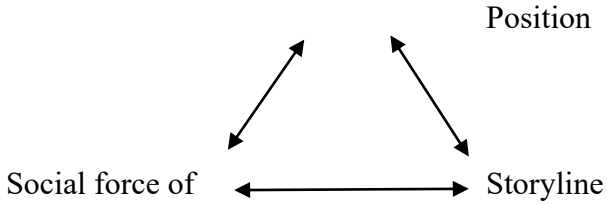
The nature of mentorship is governed by certain behaviours and expectations that BTs need to comply with, which could sometimes be considered fair or unfair. As part of human interaction, mentorship addresses power relations and how individuals use agency to manoeuvre the multifaceted working context and achieve the expected professional and individual goals. Linehan and McCarthy (2000) explain that in a school, both the BTs and experienced teachers have a degree of agency in how they position themselves during interactions, but this "agency is interlaced with the expectations and history of the community" (p. 442). Positioning theorists (Harré & Moghadam, 2010; Harré & Moghadam, 2003; McVee & Carse, 2016; Pinnow & Chval, 2015) further observe that positioning theory is about how people use words to locate themselves and others, because it is with words that "we ascribe rights and claim them for ourselves and place duties on others" (Moghaddam & Harré, 2010, p. 3). The BTs' spoken words about their experiences and perceptions of mentorship were carefully analysed, to identify how they had been positioned in the early years of the profession. In positioning theory, the focus of analysis is on the social realm where the rights and duties are distributed, negotiated, and disputed. Within the context of social interactions between people as actors in the storylines, conversations are the central forum of this kind of discursive practice (Harré, 2015).

According to the theory, the distribution of rights and duties and the construction of social episodes depend on three aspects of joint interaction (see Figure 1 below). First is the lived storyline that interlocutors adopt. In this study, this includes the BTs' history and background as well as their ongoing interactions with other BTs and senior colleagues. Secondly, the interlocutors' specific speech acts and their actual utterances. This meant critically interrogating the way the BTs talked about their work environments to derive meanings about their experiences of mentorship. Lastly, the positions being assigned and adopted by the interlocutors with respect to the two previous elements. In the current study, this included the BTs' pre-determined positions and those they assigned to themselves. These positions represent the moral aspects of the interaction, with reference to the speakers' rights and duties to say certain things within the specific social context.

The above components of joint interaction that facilitate social episodes are summarised below in the form of a positioning triad as developed by van Langenhove and Harré (1999).

Figure 1

Positioning triad



Source: van Langenhove and Harré (1999, p. 18)

Another important aspect in positioning theory is to pay careful attention to the narratives that BTs share and how they move from one position to the other. The change in positioning may have been brought about by a change in the personnel in the school setup, such as a mentor or school head. This change in positioning could be deliberate or personal to achieve certain goals, especially considering that Harré and van Langenhove (1999) posit that positioning theory is based on social constructionism. It assumes, among other things, that human behaviour is goal-directed and constrained by group norms, and human subjectivity is a product of the history of everyone's interactions with other people. Deliberate positioning, according to Hirvonen (2016), is the explicit presentation of the self as an agent through the expression of one's agency or unique point of view with the use of, for example, pronouns. Liu (2017) explains personal positioning as when a person makes a personal account about the reason(s) for not being able to act according to social expectations. Harre et al. (2009) postulate that a change in positioning often leads to a change in the actions people are performing and the meanings they attach to those actions, addressing the fluidity of positions because in place of the old one, a new one emerges. In some cases, BTs experience favourable positioning because the dominant cultural repertoire in a context promotes collaboration, and their views are acknowledged for the value they hold (Mahwire, 2021). However, in the case of this study, some of the participating BTs thought their views did not matter much in their schools because when they raised work-related concerns with their senior colleagues, especially those in management, they were ignored and labelled incompetent.

In other instances, the dominant cultural repertoire is such that certain practices are normalised, such as hostility and lack of support from the senior colleagues (Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017; Manwa et al., 2016). In such cases, participants in a storyline must look within themselves to find solutions, and this was noted in some of the responses from the participants in this study and will be elaborated in Chapter 5. For instance, one participant used personal positioning to handle a learner's ill-discipline issue when the school management did nothing after being reported. It could also be argued that the BT used a deliberate positioning by deciding and thus presented herself as an agent through the expression of one's agency or moral positioning and acted according to the social expectations of the teacher/teaching role. The positioning theory provided an understanding of how BTs positioned themselves within different expected teaching roles, as well as the kind of rights and duties they experienced and perceived as they navigated the mentorship relationships at their respective schools.

The study also adopted Barnes' (2004) positioning theory tenets, which I have briefly described in Table 1 below, because of their close link to the objectives of the study and relevance in education to serve as a lens by which to understand how the BTs were positioned in their roles and their responses to these allocated positions. Although Barnes (2004) identified fourteen positioning tenets, only the following positions played out in this study: facilitator, expert, manager, critic, collaborator and in need of help.

Table 1

Barnes' Positioning Tenets

The tenets as identified by Barnes (2004, p. 6)		**The tenets modified[5] for the purpose of this study**	
Position	**Indicators**	**Position**	**Indicators**
Facilitator	Acts to keep the group functioning smoothly, gives social support, ensures that nobody is ignored, tries to avoid or resolve conflict.	**Facilitator**	The BT ensures that other BTs get the necessary support and supports them as they encounter various professional and personal challenges.
Expert	Makes authoritative mathematical statements, and decides what is correct, or is asked for help by others who accept the answers as authoritative.	**Expert**	In this instance, the BT offers authoritative suggestions on how they think BTs should be supported.
Manager	Initiates work, invites ideas, interprets instructions, gives orders or makes suggestions about who should do what, or how to tackle the tasks.	**Manager**	In the case of BTs, this includes initiating work, inviting ideas, interpreting instructions given by their senior colleagues, or even making suggestions about who should do what, or how to engage with tasks (this is relevant when they are part of different committees in their schools).
Critic	Seeks explanations, looks for alternative methods, and disputes other people's assertions.	**Critic**	Here a BT seeks explanations, looks for alternative methods, and disputes mentors' assertions.
Collaborator	Works closely with others, uses collaborative forms of talk and engages actively in discussions.	**Collaborator**	The BTs work closely with colleagues and engage actively in discussions and seek clarity where it is needed.
In need of help	Either claims not to understand, and explicitly or implicitly asks for help, or accepts an offer of help from another and attends to the explanation.	**In need of help**	Here the BT either claims not to understand, and explicitly or implicitly asks for help.

3.4 Archer's Concepts of Structure and Agency

Archer (2003) observes that agency is about an individual's ability to navigate complex interactions in the world, and to be human is to enact some self-regulation in our lives. Then, people as agents have the power to determine the direction of their lives. Vaughn (2018, p. 63) extrapolate that agency is concerned with understanding an individual's "desire, ability, and power to determine their own course of action". This means the BTs have resilience and the ability to negotiate tough circumstances that they face in their professional lives, as will

[5]I modified the tenets to acknowledge that the context in which the current study was conducted differed from the original study by Barnes (2004) and thus some of them could not be replicated in the current study.

become clear in Chapter 5. According to Giddens (2005), humans lose their agency the moment they lose their ability to exert power over the circumstances that affect their lives. The BTs are qualified teachers and have the ability, responsibility, and power to participate in decision-making processes in the school structure and have the agency to take control of their classrooms without the mentor's presence. Reay (2004) notes that while a person's willpower plays a critical role in their agency, it is also important to acknowledge multiple ways it plays to gravitate an individual "towards certain ways of behaving" (p. 433). Thus, Archer theorises reflexive agency as originating within the internal conversation of the individual's domain of mental privacy, resulting in certain ways of behaving, and this has causal efficacy towards us, our society and the relations between them (Archer, 2000). Agency, for Archer (2003, 2007) is conditioned by social structure, and the result of individuals' reflexivity or deliberative internal conversations rests on the fact that all 'normal' people talk to themselves within their own heads, usually silently. It is the dynamic experiences within a school structure and the daily conversations with mentors that this study explored and unpacked, to understand how the BTs' agency influenced their positioning and manoeuvring within the community of practice.

Archer (2003) warns that agency cannot be talked about without acknowledging the presence of structure within which agents exist. Giddens (2005, p. 127) regards a structure "not as a patterning of presences but as an intersection of presence and absence", which means a structure consists of dual existence that enables and disables social systems within which humans as agents exist. In agreement, Archer (2007) notes that in as much as structure can be enabling, it can also present "deterrents, capable of depressing agential motivation. They do so by attaching different opportunity costs to the same course of action to different parts of the population" (p. 22). Structure, thus, affects the way agents function in their daily lives, and their choices are bound by the structure that offered them these choices (Carter & New, 2004). The structure also includes the nature of conversations BTs have with colleagues, rules, and policies within which they are expected to operate in the school and education system. All these could influence their experiences and perceptions of mentorship. Although structures within which BTs operate have the potential to restrict them, Archer (2003) notes that people have the exclusive power to re-write their story in ways that they want, because "no one can have an ultimate concern and fail to do something about it" (Archer, 2013, p. 24). This deep sense of agency was noted in some of the participants in this study when they

referred to instances where they decided to address some of their challenges on their own, realising that their senior colleagues were unavailable to support them.

To effect change, it is critical for the BTs to recognise the constraints of the structural properties that are unique to them and pursue the course of action as a collective to, "transform the situations that they are faced with" (Shozi, 2018, p. 17). Archer (2003) postulates that structural barriers do not exist in isolation of the agent, they are enabled and constrained by the agents themselves, whether consciously or unconsciously. Considering this, when individuals feel favoured by the structure, they might not challenge it; only when individuals feel constrained do they begin to challenge it, because "a vested interest is an interest vested in a position" (Archer, 2003, p. 5). Thus, BTs' responses to structural disablements "varies with agents' personal concerns and degrees of commitment, together with the costs different agents will pay to see their projects through" (Archer, 2007, p. 21). Because BTs felt constrained by the structure within the schools, in the focus group discussion they overwhelmingly proposed regular meetings with their peers to brainstorm ideas on how to overcome their challenges. However, there were differences amongst the participants because some seemed reluctant to act upon some of their concerns out of fear of victimisation or appearing too vocal and others decided to challenge the status quo using the knowledge they possessed, because "emergent properties also motivate us towards various courses of action" (Archer, 2007, p. 21).

On the basis that people "may pursue the same course of action from different social contexts one can talk of them being differentially constrained and enabled" (Archer, 2003, p. 4). The nature of interaction between the BT and the mentor within a structure is a complex process that could be enabling or constraining, depending on the dominant culture in their respective schools (organisational culture) and their personality. Vorster (2010) mentions that it is people's innate reflexive ability that provides them with the driving force to want to change things, which Archer (2007) sees as the regular exercise of the mental ability. Consequently, individuals' reflexive nature affords them the opportunity to critically analyse their circumstances in relation to structure and propels them to seek change in their lives, whether directly or indirectly. However, Larsen-Freeman (2019) adds that people's reflexivity does not exist in isolation. In addition to "intra-communication", it functions within other external conversations individuals have with others and the environment. Therefore, to understand the magnitude of the agency, it is important to interact with it in relation to the surrounding

environment, “if understanding the uniqueness of learning trajectories is a goal” (Larsen-Freeman, 2019, p. 73). The interaction with the BTs was critical to understand the nuances of their experiences with, and their perceptions of, the existing mentorship programme, if at all, in the respective schools.

3.5 Positioning Theory and Archer’s Concepts of Structure and Agency

There were constraints in both frameworks that could be addressed by using their strengths to fill the gaps that are identified in each framework for the study. For example, according to Kayi-Aydar and Miller (2018), one of the shortcomings of positioning theory is its inability to clearly distinguish roles and positions assigned to people in different settings. In other instances, it can sometimes inadequately explain “storylines from which people draw as they position each other” (Herbel-Eisenmann et al., 2015, p. 186). To clearly distinguish roles and positions that emerged from the BTs’ interactions with their colleagues in the school environment was important in this study as it allowed me to identify those assigned to them and how they responded. In addition, sometimes the context in which positioning theory is enacted suffocates storylines by ‘actors’ (Wagner et al., 2019), which means the work environment where BTs were based sometimes concealed their roles, making their positioning unclear.

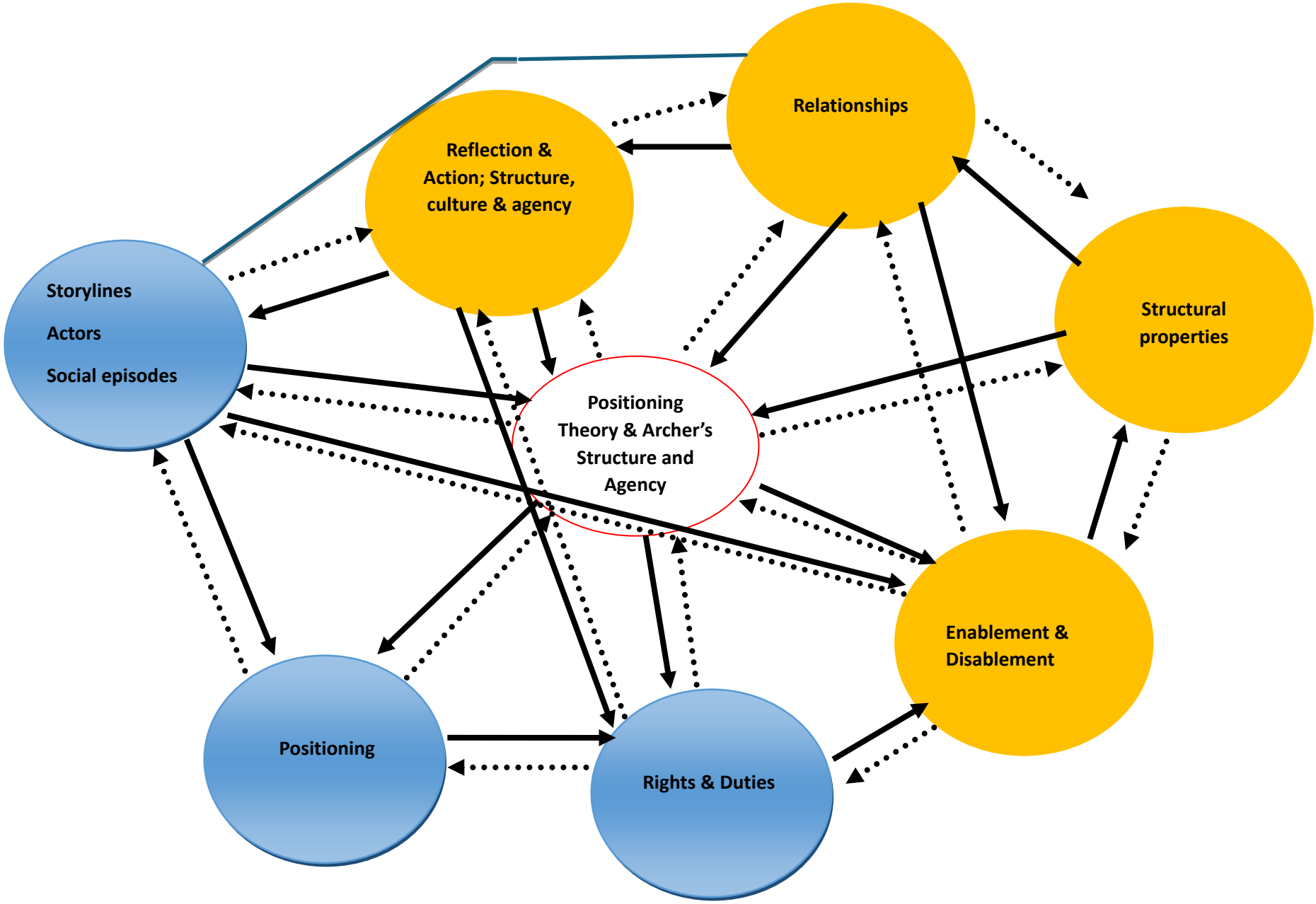
Against this backdrop, this study used Archer’s concept of structure and agency to address the identified shortcomings in the positioning theory. However, using it alone was inadequate because of what Archer (2003) calls *contextual continuity,* that a human’s next course of action is heavily dependent upon their socialisation, that is, their familial backgrounds. Not reducing the value of contextual continuity, it was imperative in this study to equally acknowledge the BTs’ multiple forces of influence since their positioning was influenced by a multiplicity of factors beyond their familial socialisation. For example, one participant cited a previous mentoring experience in another school he worked at, as the reason he felt favourably positioned in the current school. This was because he could draw from those past experiences when the current work environment posed certain challenges. Although it is important to value reflexivity in shaping human behaviour, as advanced by Archer (2003, 2007, 2012), it is not only the monologues that shape human behaviour. Caetano (2016) posits that the outward interactions people have with others in specific social contexts should also be strongly considered to gain a better understanding of the complexities surrounding human behaviour.

Notwithstanding the preceding shortcomings, these frameworks complemented each other and offered a better way to understand the BTs' experiences and perceptions of mentorship. Figure 2 below illustrates this point. For example, BTs could not reflect and act if there were no existing relationships between themselves and their mentors, although the formation of those relationships was affected by the structure and the dominant culture in their school environments. Also, the formation of relationships created storylines, and these storylines created social episodes and vice versa. Then, there are structural properties which involve vested interests by which agents negotiate complexities in the structure and culture. By having vested interests, BTs may overlook certain impediments because they do not affect them or choose to challenge these impediments imposed upon them by the structure and culture, as will be presented in Chapter 5. These structural properties influenced relationships BTs had with their senior colleagues and relationships influenced structural properties.

Similarly, existing enablements and disablements determined the response towards structural properties. On the other hand, rights and duties were the privileges to which BTs felt entitled and responsibilities they were assigned respectively. However, the rights and duties assigned to BTs depended on their positioning within the structure, meaning whether they felt favourably or unfavourably positioned depended on the prevailing atmosphere in their school contexts and their relationships with colleagues. In addition, the way BTs as actors were positioned within a structure affected their storylines and social episodes since they were not merely assigned rights and duties, they also reflected and acted upon them, when necessary, in relation to the structure and culture by using their agency. The BTs' storylines and social episodes were also significantly impacted by mentorship experiences such as being adequately supported by senior colleagues in some instances and being inadequately supported in others. Furthermore, the kind of relationships BTs had with their mentors were either enabling or disabling, depending on their positioning.

Figure 2

Intersection of Positioning Theory & Archer's Structure and Agency


Relationships
Reflection & Action; Structure, culture & agency
Storylines
Actors
Social episodes
Structural properties
Positioning Theory & Archer's Structure and Agency
Enablement & Disablement
Positioning
Rights & Duties

3.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed two eclectic theoretical frameworks, positioning theory and Archer's concepts of structure and agency for this study. The key concepts from each of these theories were foregrounded to illuminate their relation to the aim, objectives, and research questions of the study. The diagrammatic display in figure 2 represents the way the different concepts and theory were used inter-relationally to make meaning of the study and findings. The next chapter elaborates on how the study was empirically designed and conducted.

Chapter 4: Understanding BTs' Experiences and Perceptions of Mentorship: Methodological Discussion and Position

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the discussion focuses on the research methodology of the study. According to Symes (2010), it is important for researchers to bear in mind what the end goal of the study, and the collected data to achieve this goal should be credible and trustworthy (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Research methodology is a theory of how an inquiry should proceed and is also a 'tool' a researcher uses to extract meaning from the data (Leedy & Ormrod**,** 2010). Thus, this chapter provides a philosophical discussion about the two contradictory paradigms often used in research, positivism and constructivism, the part of which is interpretivism, and justifies the choice of interpretivism for this study. This will be followed by a discussion of the research design adopted in the study. The chapter will proceed to highlight data generation procedures that were followed in the study, including sampling, the chosen analytical framework for data analysis and ethical considerations. I will conclude by elaborating on the strategies for ensuring trustworthiness of the study findings.

4.2 Paradigmatic Philosophical Discussion

A paradigm is a set of presumptions about significant aspects of our reality, which gives rise to a certain way to view and interact with the world around us (Neuwenhuis, 2010). A significant relationship exists between paradigm and methodology because the methodological implications of a paradigmatic choice permeate the research question/s, participants' selection, data collection instruments and collection procedures as well as data analysis, something which was observed diligently in this study.

4.2.1 Philosophical Foundations

There are philosophical foundations upon which paradigms are built, namely ontology, epistemology, and methodology as well as axiology. The ontological foundation engages with the nature of reality and epistemology addresses the ways of knowing, while the methodological foundation focuses on how to pursue knowledge and eventually gain some understanding of knowledge (Khatri, 2020; Park et al., 2020; Patel, 2015). Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) reason that axiology debunks ethical matters that researchers must observe

when conducting research studies. It was important to acquaint myself with these philosophical underpinnings to "improve the quality of research and heighten the creativity" as a researcher (Hoosier, 2019, p. 70). According to Hoosier (2019), ontologically (nature of reality), positivists believe that there is a single "truth", while interpretivists view the nature of reality as multi-faceted and created by people working together. Hence, in this study interacting with the BTs was important to understand their experiences and perceptions of mentorship from their respective schools, which could be influenced by multifaceted realities. Epistemologically (knowing the reality), positivists think reality can be measured by means of statistical tools, while interpretivists think reality needs to be interrogated and it is used to uncover the meaning of episodes. In this study, this was achieved through the interactions with the BTs in their natural environments. Methodologically (finding out the reality), positivists use surveys and experiments, while interpretivists use grounded theory, phenomenology and discourse analysis, among others. The methodological basis of this study was phenomenology, which I expand on later in the chapter. Irrespective of the paradigmatic assumptions, all research must follow strict ethical protocols for the participants (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

4.2.2 Positivism

When positivism is applied in social sciences research, it is done differently compared to how it is used in the natural science fields. According to Alharahshen and Pius (2020), the paradigm of positivism deals with reality in an observable manner which leads to generalisations about the social phenomena. Thus, positivists assume that the reality of one group of people is similar across all sectors of society (Alharahshen & Pius, 2020) and overlook that the social milieu dictates the experiences people have about their social environments. To achieve this, researchers who use the positivism paradigm rely on statistical models to interpret data and believe "larger samples improve consistency in data and representation of the population characteristics, facilitating better generalisations regarding the causes of phenomena in nature'' (Park et al., 2020, p. 691). This paradigm was not relevant in this study because the study appreciated the dynamism in the BTs' experiences and perceptions of mentorship, while it also sought to foreground the BTs' voices in their natural settings instead of making assumptions about their lived mentorship perceptions and experiences. Since positivism believes there is a single way to uncover meanings people make of their reality, it was irrelevant because anchoring this study was the idea that there are multiple angles to understand the phenomenon.

Contrary to the belief that acquisition of knowledge follows a linear pattern based on predetermined processes, critical and poststructuralist paradigms challenge this view and illuminate the idea that people's actions and words are not neutral but carry power that they may use to dominate others. Thus, Asghar (2013) notes that critical theory seeks to dismantle hegemonic structures. In research, this means research participants are recognised as equal knowledge contributors instead of the researchers assuming a domineering role. According to McKenzie (2021), critical theorists dig deeper to interrogate people's actions as they believe doing so will uncover the deeply hidden meanings they carry. As such, researchers must be mindful of and regularly reflect on the impact of their actions on the participants. On the other hand, Norton (2014) and Weedon (1997) postulate that poststructuralism uncovers the power of language in perpetuating the status quo. According to Weedon (1997), humans have subjectivity which means that "an individual can be simultaneously the subject of a set of relationships (in a position of power) or subject to a set of relationships (in a position of reduced power)" (Norton, 2014, p. 64). Central to these paradigms is the idea that humans' voices must be central to the whole knowledge production process instead of being on the periphery. As a result, below I critically discuss the research paradigm that foregrounded the participants' voices to gain insight to their unique contributions.

4.2.3 Interpretivism Paradigm

The focus of this study was to understand the BTs' experiences and interpretation of mentorship in their respective schools. It further sought to make sense of how they negotiated their positions as they navigated various mentorship relationships with their senior colleagues. Thus, interpretivism was appropriate because it seeks to understand the subjective world of human experience, which means "get into the head of the subjects being studied to understand and interpret what the subject is thinking or the meaning s/he is making of the context" (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017, p. 33). Researchers who adopt this paradigm need to understand the individuals and their interpretation of the world around them, which can be understood by interacting and dialoguing with the participants, because "people's experiences and the meanings attributed to those experiences matter" (Kadenge, 2019, p. 52). Hence, interacting with the BTs was critical using individual semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews (FGI) to get the different positions and reflections.

According to Klein and Myers (1999), in the interpretivist paradigm, both the researcher and participants are co-creators of knowledge, hence reflective interaction. This includes seeing participants as important stakeholders in knowledge generation and deciding with them the logistics of data collection, such as the suitable time and place for collecting data (Pieper & Thomson, 2014). In this study, the data collection process involved back and forth telephone calls with the participants, negotiating suitable times for the individual interviews and FGI, because teachers have administrative work and meetings that happen spontaneously. Klein and Myers (1999) argue that researchers need to understand that "participants, just as much as the researcher, can be seen as interpreters and analysts" (p. 74), because during the data collection process they reflect on their experiences they have overlooked and analyse their actions. One of the strategies to encourage participants to freely participate in the study, unlocking the process of knowledge co-creation, is open communication between the researcher and research participants (Mertens, 2009). To achieve this in the study, I ensured that participants expressed their views without feeling belittled or unappreciated. This meant BTs were seen as equal 'think tanks' for the research because I wanted to gain insights into their experiences of mentorship in their schools.

4.3 Research Design

The nature of research follows a logical structure; hence, research design is a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and the execution, or implementation of the research strategy (Durrheim**,** 2006; Hoosier, 2019). This study used phenomenology to understand the BTs' unique lived experiences and perceptions of mentorship in public secondary schools. Creswell (2013) asserts that if the aim of the researcher is to "report the stories and experiences" (p. 76), then phenomenology is an ideal research design. This is linked with the interpretivism paradigm which intended to make sense of and interpret what the participants were thinking, and the meanings they made about mentorship in their school contexts. In addition, Teherani et al. (2015) argue that a firm understanding of complex issues requires exploration "from the perspective of those who have experienced it" (p. 670), hence this study intended to explore BTs' experiences and perceptions of mentorship. Thus, listening and dialoguing with the BTs about their stories and experiences was important, and further examined whether and how it linked with their perceptions of mentorship in the schools. Mokgobo (2015) mentions the importance of the researcher having an open mind when collecting data "on how individuals make sense out of a particular experience or situation" (p. 56).

The principle for phenomenology is to understand that how people define their world is related to the interactions they have with others, how they perceive others to perceive them, and the ways in which they have learned to deal with life experiences (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). It was therefore critical to understand how the BTs' interactions with their senior colleagues have affected their experiences and perceptions of mentorship and how they have adjusted the expectations, if any, they had prior to joining teaching on full-time basis to cope with their on-field experiences. According to Neubauer et al. (2019), phenomenology provides an ideal opportunity to learn more about what may not be clear to those interested in a phenomenon, because sometimes experiences are subconscious, and interaction foregrounds them. Neubauer et al. (2019) posit that learning from other people's experiences "is a foundational premise of research" (p. 91) and it was my intention to learn from the unique experiences of the participants to "maximise the effectiveness of feedback for workplace-based learning" and contribute to the existing research (p. 91).

4.4 Research Approach

Considering the discussed research paradigm and design, qualitative approach was appropriate for the current study because of the focus to interactions in a natural context. There are three research approaches which are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods, within which researchers can locate their studies. As mentioned earlier under positivism, quantitative approach needs a bigger sample, is value free, uses numbers and statistics, and makes generalisations, which was not the intention of the current study (Faria & Almeida, 2017; Hoosier, 2019). On the other hand, the mixed-methods approach has been described as a complementary research approach that merges qualitative and quantitative research approaches with the understanding that doing so strengthens the research study as existing gaps from the one are minimised by the other (Creswell, 2021; Dawadi et al., 2021; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). It was unsuitable to use this approach in the current study because of what Dawadi et al. (2021, p. 28) call priority of the study, that is, research questions and objectives of the study leaned solely on understanding the phenomena in their natural setting and I prioritised interactions with the participants instead of seeing their experiences and perceptions of mentorship as faceless and emotionless. The study did not have any aspect that needed engagement and analysis of numbers or statistics but was value-laden with people's experiences, emersed in their respective 'real' life situations.

The interpretivism paradigm and phenomenological research design informed the qualitative research approach, which requires interacting with the participants in their natural setting to make meaning of their experiences. Qualitative approach was relevant because it is naturalistic, interpretative, and concerned with exploring, describing, and interpreting the social actions from the interior (Njie & Asimiran, 2014). It thus allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study (Eyisi, 2016; Hoosier, 2019) through interaction with the participants. The positioning theory and agency frameworks, and interpretivism and phenomenology, place the lived experiences of people at the forefront, which are also prioritised in the qualitative research approach. A qualitative research approach promotes a holistic view to the participants' behaviours, which includes "interaction, thought, reasoning, composition, and norms" (Eyisi, 2016, p. 93). The nature of this research was to gain access to the unknown experiences and perceptions and the factors that influenced BTs' experiences of mentoring in their schools. Table 2, below, presents a summary of the research design and approach for this study.

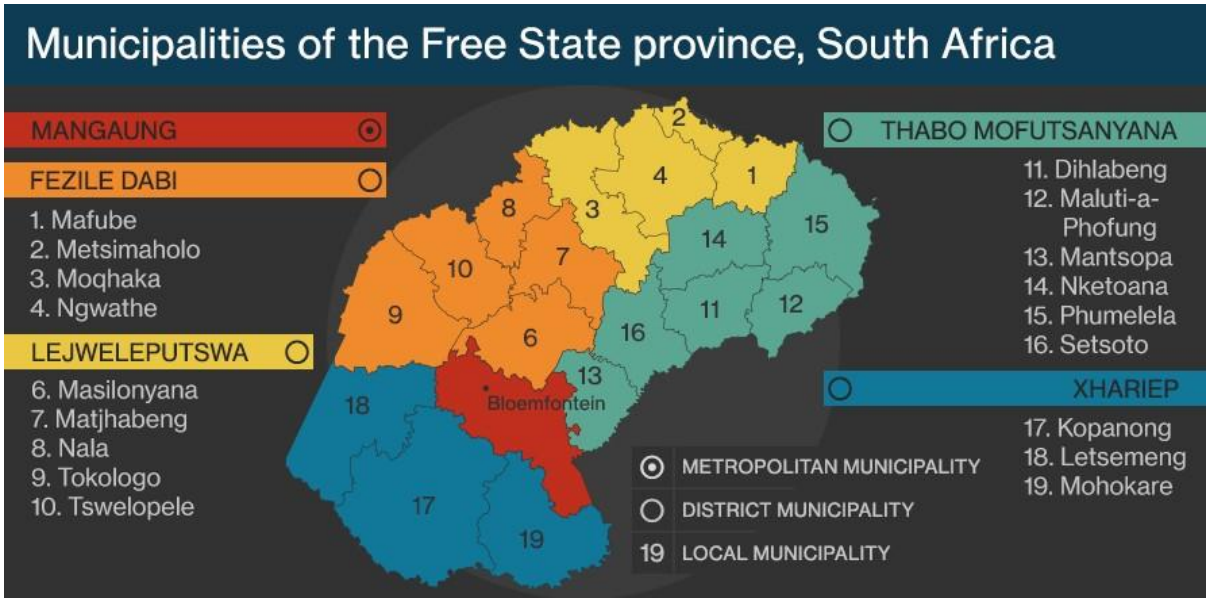
4.5 Introducing the Context of the Study

This study was conducted in Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality (MMM) (see Figure 3 below), and the schools were in the Bloemfontein region, which is the capital city of the Free State province. Although the region's citizens enjoy ease of access to most basic facilities and privileges often found in modern societies such as recreational activities and lower unemployment rates (Jemberie & Kumar 2019), they still face structural challenges such as poorly maintained public roads (Rammile et al., 2024) and lower levels of economic activity. Furthermore, amongst the eight metros in South Africa, MMM has the highest rate (45,5%) of individuals benefiting from social grants according to General Household Survey (Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), 2024). Situated in MMM is Motheo Education District, which is one of five education districts in the Free State province. Out of a total of 400 schools in the district, 85 of them are secondary schools (Khobe, 2021). The district has a combination of wealthy public schools, with a strong network of alumni, and heavily state-reliant public schools, characterised by learners from poor economic backgrounds. Motheo also is host to only four public same-sex schools in the Free State province. Amongst the 85 secondary schools, I sampled two pseudonym public secondary schools for this study, Boabab Secondary School and Manankwe Secondary Schools. Both these schools generally serve learners from economically deprived communities, and they are no-fee paying. Their

learners are provided food through national feeding scheme programme by the provincial education department.

Figure 3

Depiction of Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality



Source: (Alexander, 2024)

4.6 Sampling and Selection of Participants

It is always advisable that a researcher chooses participants who will share "experiences related to the topic of research, not participants who necessarily represent some larger population" (Gay & Airasian, 2000, p. 139). The sub-sections below detail the selection of participants and schools and the sample of the study.

4.6.1 The Selection of Participants

The BTs did not represent the entire population, rather a group of BTs from two different public secondary schools in the Free State Motheo Education District. I thus used purposive sampling which is a form of sampling where the participants with specific characteristics are chosen for a particular purpose (Mokgobo, 2015); hence, the BTs who had been teaching in public secondary schools between 1 and 3 years. I intentionally chose BTs who could answer the research questions and reflect critically on their experiences and perceptions of mentorship. I relied on the list that was provided by the principals and Departmental Heads (DHs) to identify the relevant BTs in their respective schools, while guided by the number of years in the teaching profession. However, this did not take away the participants' power to accept or decline the invitation to participate in the study as Munje and Jita (2020) warn that some of the participants may participate out of fear of their leaders and managers. I also

ensured that I recruit more than one teacher per school one BT to have a variety to choose from and limit the chances of not having a representative in a school. This decision worked advantageously because three of the participants who had initially volunteered to participate withdrew their participation for various personal reasons, highlighting some of the challenges of the data generation process. Pain and Francis (2003) posit that convincing the targeted group to agree to participate in the study is challenging, because they can withdraw participation during data generation process in the study. Thus, I kept the remaining participants interested in the study by explaining the "intrinsic value of participating in research" (Roschelle et al., 2014, p. 13), which was the contribution to the improvement of future mentorship support structures and sharing their unique experiences that may help future BTs. The chosen participants were able to reflect critically on the nature of the mentoring they have been involved with in their respective schools. Initially, eleven BTs had agreed to participate in individual interviews but after the withdrawal of some participants and having the participants who could not attend all the interview sessions across the data collection methods, I was left with five participants. Fortunately, qualitative research allows the use of small sample that allows in-depth engagement and analysis; hence the four participants' generated data were analysed in detail, and their findings are presented in the next chapter. The representation of the remaining sample was one teacher from Baobab Secondary School and four from Manankwe Secondary School (see Table 3 below for more information).

I had anticipated the possibility of some participants withdrawing and I therefore used convenience sampling to choose four additional participants, one from Boabab Secondary School and three from Manankwe Secondary School. I conveniently recruited these four additional participants based on their easy accessibility (Stratton, 2021) as they were already stationed at the schools I had earlier recruited other participants. Table 3 included all participants who had initially agreed to participate but withdrew totally or partially and those who participated fully across all the data collection methods (Etikan et al., 2016), except for one participant who only participated in two of the three data collection methods[6]. Although gender and race are included in Table 4, representing a final sample, they were not a selection criterion to determine the participants in this study. Instead, the number of years in the school

[6]Although the firth participant did not submit his reflective journal entries, I decided to include his data in presentation of the findings because he shared some rich insights which I felt would enrich the quality of the study.

and the willingness to participate voluntarily were the criteria for participation. In addition, the subject specialisation of the participants did not play a part in their selection, because the study focused on experiences and perceptions of the mentorship as BTs.

4.6.2 The Selection of Schools

I used purposive sampling to identify the schools because they had the participants who would provide me with the relevant information to achieve the objectives of the study (Etikan et al., 2016). In addition, I used convenience sampling because I wanted to save time and money on travel expenses (Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024) as the schools were in a 6 kilometres radius of each other, which meant that I would not travel long to get to my next appointment at another school in case a participant cancels an appointment or the scheduled slots were closer to one another. I also chose the schools based on my close working relationship with them as I regularly offer free extra accounting lessons to their grade 11 and 12 learners as an intervention strategy in our cluster.

Table 3

BTs' degree of participation across the data collection instruments

Pseudonym Participant name	**Individual**	**FGI**	**Reflective**
Success	Participated	Participated	Participated
Nandipha	Participated	Participated	Participated
Nkahlanipho	Participated	Participated	Participated
Morena	Participated	Participated	Participated
Matshaya	Participated	Participated	Did not participate
Smouse	Participated	Did not participate	Did not participate
Nortje	Participated	Did not participate	Did not participate
Tinashe	Participated	Did not participate	Did not participate
Anesu	Withdrew	Withdrew	Withdrew
Jane	Withdrew	Withdrew	Withdrew

Table 4

Final sample of participants who participated across all the data collection instruments, except Matshaya

Participant	Pseudonym school names	Teaching experience	Gender	Race	Grades teaching	Subject specialisation
Success	Manankwe Secondary School	3 years	Male	African	8-12	History and Social Sciences
Nandipha	Boabab Secondary School	3 years	Female	African	10-12	English and Computer Applications Technology
Nkahlanipho	Manankwe Secondary School	2 years and 3 months	Male	African	10-12	Mathematics and Mathematical Literacy
Morena	Manankwe Secondary School	2 years and 8 months	Male	African	8-10	English & Sesotho
Matshaya	Manankwe Secondary School	2 years and 9 months	Male	African	8-12	Natural Sciences and Life Sciences

Table 2

Summary of the research design and approach

Research approach	Qualitative				
Research paradigm and design	**Interpretivism:** The paradigmatic orientation of this study was interpretivism as I sought to understand how the BTs made sense of their experiences of mentorship in their respective schools because "people's experiences and the meanings attributed to those experiences matter" (Kadenge, 2019, p. 5). **Phenomenology:** Furthermore, I used phenomenology as a research design because it aligned with my intentions to "report the stories and experiences" (Creswell, 2013, p. 76) of the BTs as they navigated complex realities in their schools as new employees.				
Main research question	What are the secondary school BTs' experiences of mentorship in the Free State Province?				
Sub-research questions	How do BTs perceive mentorship in their secondary school?	What are the existing mentorship programmes in the selected secondary schools?	What are the factors that influence the BTs' experiences and perceptions of mentorship?	How can the BTs be supported in their respective schools?	
Objectives of the study	To interrogate and understand BTs' experiences of the mentorship in public secondary schools.	To gain insight into the BTs' perceptions of the mentorship in public secondary schools.	To identify existing mentorship programmes in public secondary schools in the Free State Province.	To analyse and problematise the factors that influence BTs' experiences and perceptions of mentorship.	To identify different ways in which BTs can best be supported.

Sampling techniques	This study used purposive and convenience sampling (Etikan et al., 2016; Mokgobo, 2015).
Participants	There were five participants in the study across the two public secondary schools, one from Baobab Secondary School and the remaining four from Manankwe Secondary School.
Data sources	For all the research questions, primary data sources were individual interviews, an FGI and the reflective journals.
Analytical framework for data analysis	The analytical framework adopted in this study was Fairclough's (1995) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model which comprises three intertwined processes of language analysis, namely: textual, processing and social analysis.

4.7 Qualitative Data Generation

The data generation process is as important as the selection of participants for the study, and I carefully selected research methods that ensured the gathering of detailed information responding to the focus of the study and the research questions. According to Qhosola (2016), data should be collected in its raw form. In this study, this meant representing each BT's data verbatim without misrepresenting their experiences and perceptions of mentorship. I used semi-structured individual interviews, FGI, and reflective journals, which represent multiple data generation for credibility, as advised by Creswell (2013).

4.7.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

The focus of the study was to understand the BTs' experiences and perceptions of mentorship in public secondary schools, and I chose individual interviews to interact closely with the participants. The semi-structured interviews allowed me to "establish a connection between several topics" (Queirós et al., 2017, p. 378), which were interview questions that represented research questions. According to McGrath et al. (2019), the semi-structured interactive data collection method is appropriate if the aim of the study is to forge an understanding about an individual's phenomenon instead of "generating generalizable understandings of large groups of people" (p. 1002). Although prior to the individual interviews with the participants I prepared questions, the flow of the conversations dictated whether I ask follow-up questions to allow them to expand on and/or clarify their claims and to afford them the "freedom to think and express their experiences" (Nkambule, 2014, p. 120). Thus, semi-structured interviews allowed for the altering of interview questions and to add questions that emerged from the participants' responses during the sessions (Corbetta, 2003; Queirós et al., 2017;

Ruslin et al., 2021), because the planning of questions does not consider responses from the participants (See appendix A for individual interview schedule).

This was particularly important in the current study given that experiences and perceptions are elements that are not cast in stone, they are unique and fluid. As a result, it was important that I listened carefully to the BTs' responses for any additional valuable insights that they had outside of the prepared questions. Mononyane and Tshelane (2024) extrapolate that a researcher's duty is to see research participants as people who have valuable knowledge that can be shared; thus, who do not merely act as passive objects onto which questions are posed but active participants. Teachers are usually busy, a reason I respected their time and planned for each interview session to last not more than 45 minutes, without limiting their desires to talk at length about their experiences. Fortunately, no individual interview went beyond this estimated time without the participants being informed of the planned time (see Table 5 below for the duration of each participant's interview). The interviews were conducted in a quiet classroom environment that the participants identified as ideal for the session. For Nkahlanipho, the interview happened during his double free period as the ideal time to meet because of his other competing priorities after school.

For all other participants, the sessions happened after school (see Appendices A1-4 for transcribed individual interview responses) as they requested. Oftentimes, I had to come back to the same school on different days because we had scheduled the interviews days apart based on each participant's availability. Considering that my and participants' schools' knock-off time was 14:30, scheduling our interviews for 15:30 suited everyone, which allowed me enough time to drive to their respective schools for the interview and not to compromise my teaching duties as a full-time teacher. I used my mobile phone to audio-record all the interviews with the participants' consent, because at the beginning of the study I explained the reasons for recording them. At the end of each interview, I transferred the recordings to a password-protected folder on my laptop to minimise space congestion on the phone. The decision to audio-record them was advantageous because I played and replayed the recordings during the transcription phase to accurately capture participant's responses and commence with the first stage of data analysis. This also allowed me to go back to the participants after the initial interview session where they said something which was unclear and needed their clarity. For instance, when I transcribed Morena's individual interview, he did not specify which self-initiated strategies he used to deal with ill-disciplined learners that

he mentioned he struggled with, so I made a follow-up call and he replied in detail through a written text on WhatsApp.

As noticed in Table 5, all interviews were less than 30 minutes when I planned for at least 45 minutes. Considering how emotionally and physically draining teaching is, they may have rushed to answer the questions so that they go rest at home, hence our interviews did not take the planned 45 minutes, However, this did not compromise the quality of their responses as I encouraged them to take their time to answer the questions.

Table 5

Duration of individual semi-structured interviews

Participant	Interview duration (minutes)
Success	17 minutes, 10 seconds
Nandipha	29 minutes, 34 seconds
Nkahlanipho	23 minutes, 13 seconds
Morena	20 minutes, 24 seconds
Matshaya	15 minutes, 38 seconds

4.7.2 Focus Group Interview

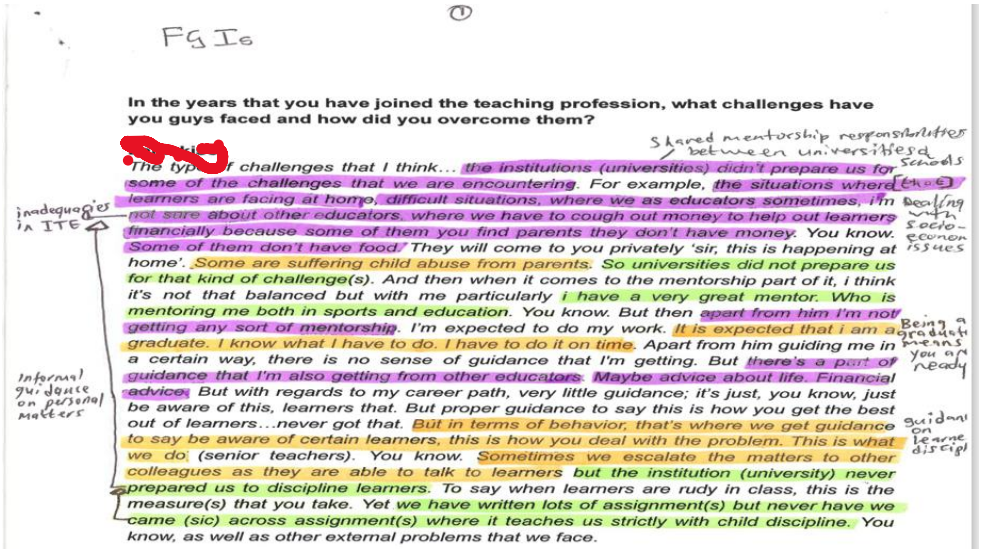
In addition to the individual semi-structured interviews, I used an FGI "to capture experiential differences in people with similar background, thereby giving rise to new perspectives" (Nyumba et al., 2018, p. 25). By using focus groups allowed me to gain different insights from BTs as a collective that I could not in the individual interviews. For example, while all the male participants in the study had experienced female learners initiating intimate relationships with them, two of them did not mention it in our respective individual interviews until Nkahlanipho brought it up in our focus group discussion. I had one group of participants who agreed and availed themselves for group discussion. Muijeen et al. (2019) caution that there should be enough participants to have a discussion. There were five participants in the group, four from Manankwe Secondary School and one from Baobab Secondary School and it lasted for 46 minutes, as participants discussed and debated about their experiences of mentorship in their respective schools (Gundumogula, 2020). According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), the small number of participants may hinder the quality of responses gathered and the participants may influence each other's responses and thereby

compromise the quality and credibility of the responses. I considered this information seriously, a reason I ensured that each participant participated in the discussion to enrich the responses for the research questions (see Appendix B for FGI schedule and B1 for its transcription). The FGI enabled the creation of "a social environment in which group members are stimulated by one another's perceptions and ideas, thereby increasing the quality and richness of data" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 363). This advantage was observed when participants' mentorship experiences at their school triggered responses from other participants and enhanced the quality of the discussion (Figures 3 and 4).

The quality of the FGI relies on the participants' interest in the topic. I thus approached participants who showed keen interest during the individual interviews to participate in the FGI. Nyumba et al. (2018) caution against selected members not attending the discussion, addressing the importance of over-recruiting by at least 10-25% the target number. As mentioned earlier, this study only had one group that represented the FGI, and did not compromise credibility because I recruited the participants who were information rich, and they were eagerly engaged in the discussion throughout the session. The FGI took place in the staffroom of Manankwe Secondary School and lasted for 46 minutes, as mentioned earlier, because the nature of the discussions was such that members shared their experiences in a way that solicited responses from other members, and this also afforded me an opportunity to ask follow-up questions and seek clarity. During the discussion, I paid careful attention to each participant's responses, to prevent one voice dominance, as Gundumogula (2020) warns that one of the imminent challenges of FGIs is the discussion being taken over by certain members of a group. As mentioned earlier, all participants participated actively during the FG discussion, although the responses were not the same for each participant, but each participant's voice was heard and acknowledged by means of setting the ground rules (Kadenge, 2019).

Figure 4

Success's comment soliciting a response from Nandipha



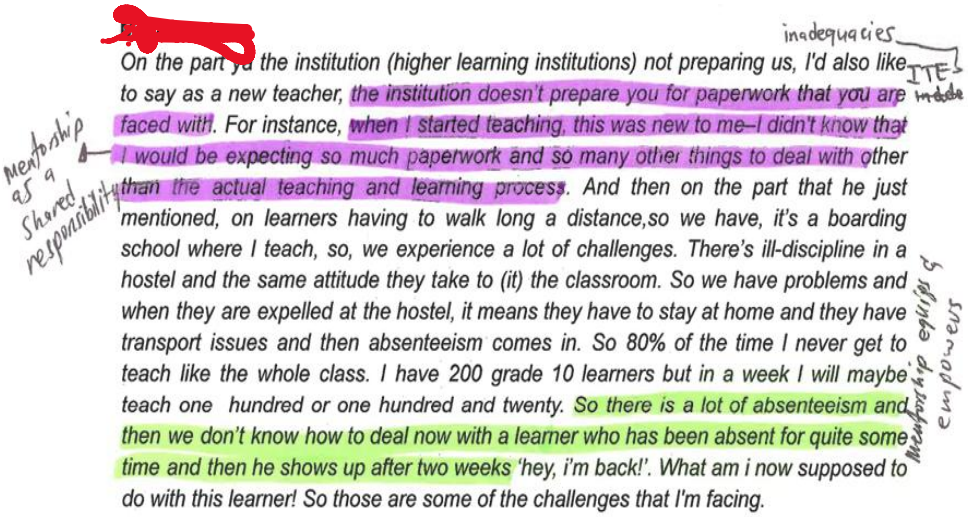
FG I6

In the years that you have joined the teaching profession, what challenges have you guys faced and how did you overcome them?

The typ[es] of challenges that I think… the institutions (universities) didn't prepare us for some of the challenges that we are encountering. For example, the situations where learners are facing at home, difficult situations, where we as educators sometimes, i'm not sure about other educators, where we have to cough out money to help out learners financially because some of them you find parents they don't have money. You know. Some of them don't have food. They will come to you privately 'sir, this is happening at home'. Some are suffering child abuse from parents. So universities did not prepare us for that kind of challenge(s). And then when it comes to the mentorship part of it, i think it's not that balanced but with me particularly i have a very great mentor. Who is mentoring me both in sports and education. You know. But then apart from him I'm not getting any sort of mentorship. I'm expected to do my work. It is expected that i am a graduate. I know what I have to do. I have to do it on time. Apart from him guiding me in a certain way, there is no sense of guidance that I'm getting. But there's a part of guidance that I'm also getting from other educators. Maybe advice about life. Financial advice. But with regards to my career path, very little guidance; it's just, you know, just be aware of this, learners that. But proper guidance to say this is how you get the best out of learners…never got that. But in terms of behavior, that's where we get guidance to say be aware of certain learners, this is how you deal with the problem. This is what we do (senior teachers). You know. Sometimes we escalate the matters to other colleagues as they are able to talk to learners but the institution (university) never prepared us to discipline learners. To say when learners are rudy in class, this is the measure(s) that you take. Yet we have written lots of assignment(s) but never have we came (sic) across assignment(s) where it teaches us strictly with child discipline. You know, as well as other external problems that we face.

Figure 5

Nandipha's response Success's comment



On the part of the institution (higher learning institutions) not preparing us, I'd also like to say as a new teacher, the institution doesn't prepare you for paperwork that you are faced with. For instance, when I started teaching, this was new to me–I didn't know that I would be expecting so much paperwork and so many other things to deal with other than the actual teaching and learning process. And then on the part that he just mentioned, on learners having to walk long a distance,so we have, it's a boarding school where I teach, so, we experience a lot of challenges. There's ill-discipline in a hostel and the same attitude they take to (it) the classroom. So we have problems and when they are expelled at the hostel, it means they have to stay at home and they have transport issues and then absenteeism comes in. So 80% of the time I never get to teach like the whole class. I have 200 grade 10 learners but in a week I will maybe teach one hundred or one hundred and twenty. So there is a lot of absenteeism and then we don't know how to deal now with a learner who has been absent for quite some time and then he shows up after two weeks 'hey, i'm back!'. What am i now supposed to do with this learner! So those are some of the challenges that I'm facing.

4.7.3 Reflective Journalling

The nature of the study allowed the use of reflective journals as part of the research method, allowing participants to write their everyday mentorship experiences in their own time. Journalling grants researchers access to the naturally unfolding sequences of events to which they may not have otherwise had access (Bloor & Wood, 2006), a reason I requested the participants to write a journal. Reflective journalling is a means to document one's latest experiences or events and reflect on important points that affect your life (Lutz & Paretti, 2019; Mbhiza et al., 2024), thereby allowing the participants to document the experiences as

soon as they happen to promote deep reflection and learning about these experiences. Thus, I gave participants a set of guiding questions to which they could refer as they reflected on and documented their experiences of mentorship (see appendix C for reflective journal schedule). Maringe et al. (2015) also highlight that reflective journals help the participants to record what they think are "significant episodes" (p. 371) in their settings, which could have been forgotten during individual and focus group interviews. To achieve this, I requested participants to use their phones during spare times, audio-record their experiences, or traditionally write during their spare time or after work, rather than wait until after school to write them.

The 'self' audio-recording as part of journal writing was important because teachers are always busy multi-tasking, which might be difficult to find time to sit down and write in a journal. This method was helpful because it allowed teachers to constantly record themselves as they went through different social episodes that affected their experience as BTs. In addition, by documenting these experiences presented me with an opportunity to insights into the kind of support they may have or not received from their senior colleagues as they navigated what could be unfamiliar and uncharted terrains to some of them in their respective schools. According to Burns (2020), if it is done well, journalling can help shape a person's professional identity if the mentor and mentee have constant communication about their experiences, as this will allow the mentee to reflect and consequently improve on the areas that were identified by a mentor.

Burns (2020) also cautions against aimless journalling, whereby actors (BTs in my case) engage in this form of exercise without "connecting the observations to their professional growth or understanding" (p. 3). Thus, to mitigate this risk, I explained the process of how the BTs should reflect on their observations and every moment/day experiences of a mentoring support or lack thereof. To ensure they derive meaning from this journalling exercise, we discussed the different ways of writing reflective journals, rather than assuming they already knew how to do it. Nkambule and Mukeredzi (2017) highlight the guiding questions I included in this study's reflective journals for BTs to ponder. Namely, a) What happened today at your school that affected you as a new teacher? b) How did your senior colleagues support you in terms of these experiences? c) Why did things happen like that? d) What does this mean? e) What could you have done differently? These questions were helpful because they helped me to frame appropriate specific questions to ask the BTs so that

they document rich experiences based on the correct set of questions. Although I had these questions, they also wrote whatever they thought was important to reflect on in relation to mentorship or their perceptions in relation to the experience(s).

4.8 Data Organisation and Analysis

This study used individual semi-structured interviews, an FGI, and reflective journalling with the same four participants who participated across all the data collection methods. Subsequently, it meant that voluminous data were collected which needed careful organisation for easy understanding and analysis (Nkambule, 2014). De Vos et al. (2011) see data analysis as a step-by-step process which gives structure and order to research once the data is collected. Considering that I met the BTs on different days, I created a folder for individual interviews immediately after interview sessions so that I did not misplace them amidst others, clearly labelling them according to the participants' assigned pseudonyms. I created a separate file for the FGI transcript to differentiate it from the individual interviews. This simplified the transcription process and proved helpful during the data analysis phase because I could separate the BTs' responses according to the data set to identify the nature of their responses across the data set and whether there was consistency between what they said during the individual interviews and the FGI about their experiences and perceptions of mentorship. Wisegute (2012) posits that data analysis is a process of organising data into meaningful pieces so that it becomes useful, and this happens during the data generation process rather than after the data generation process. It was therefore important to seriously consider this discussion given that disorganised data would cause confusion for the readers and take time for the analysis process. The sub-sections below provide a detailed description of the processes I followed to organise and analyse the data, including the analytic framework that aided in making sense of it.

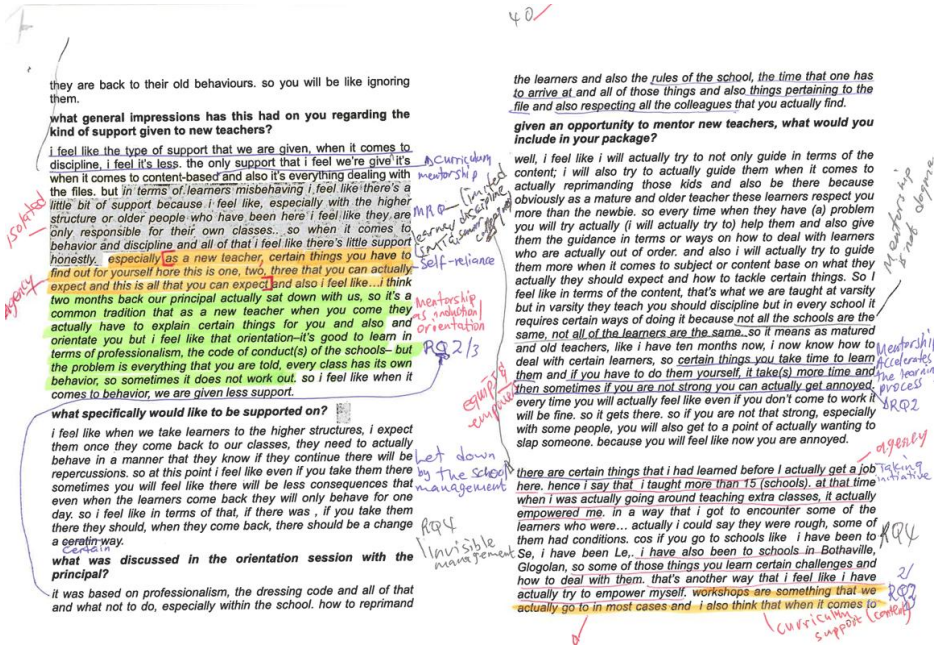
4.8.1 The Transcription Process of Individual Semi-Structured Interviews and FGI

As a first step in analysing data, Bailey (2008) explains a transcription as a conversion of audible and visual data into written form. I transcribed all interviews and started with the analysis process, as I highlighted relevant information I identified as addressing the research questions, rather than wait until I had completed the transcriptions. Nkambule (2014) states that going through this process allows the researcher to "identify any gaps or misunderstandings that need clarification, to reconnect with participants for clarity where necessary". After the transcriptions, I listened carefully to each individual interview and the

FGI interview three times, firstly familiarising myself with the information, secondly reading with coding in mind and, thirdly, reading and re-coding to ensure that I did not miss any information, using different colours from the initial coding (see Figure 5 below as an example and Appendices A1-5 for the remaining transcribed sheets). In instances where the participants code-switched to Sesotho or Setswana during interviews, I translated this to English to allow non-native speakers to follow their responses but still presenting original native language responses.

Figure 6

Success's transcript showing the messiness of data analysis process



The transcription processes took approximately four months as I listened carefully to responses to make sure I did not miss anything. The advantage of transcribing the data, as mentioned above, was to start with the analysis, as opposed to outsourcing someone to engage with the process. Because of the iterative nature of this process, and the importance of being in the right frame of mind throughout, I took up a month-long study leave so that I dedicate sufficient and undistracted time to this crucial stage of data analysis. It was a tedious but fulfilling process because I immersed myself in the data to ensure that I closely follow the direction and shape the data were taking me and never miss finer details which may have compromised the quality of the study findings. Similarly, reading and analysing the data took approximately seven months, as I constantly engaged with my supervisors after coding, re-

coding, categorisation of codes and identification of themes and sub-themes (see Figures 6 and 7). This was another frustrating process because when I thought I had addressed any weaknesses the supervisors identified, there were additional gaps to which they suggested I attend. However, as frustrating these were, these engagements were helpful because they enabled me to identify and think about the nuances that I had initially missed and give a proper structure to my emerging themes and sub-themes. Where the participants mentioned something which sought clarity, I arranged follow-ups, and they were generous with their time to clarify what they meant (See Figure 6). In instances where the participants code-switched to Sesotho or Setswana during interviews, I translated this to English to allow non-native speakers to follow their responses (Mbhiza, 2021).

Figure 7

Supervision meeting to discuss themes and sub-themes

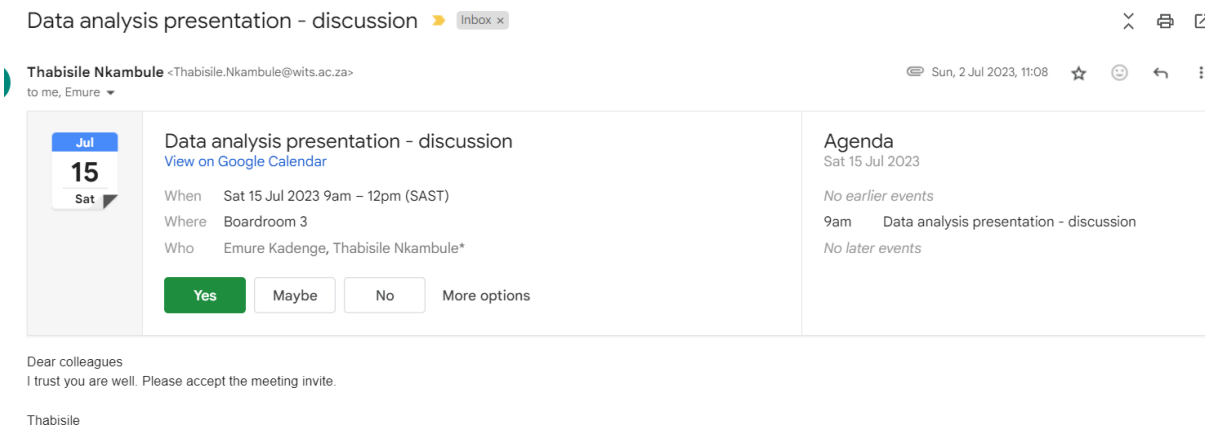


Figure 8

Supervisors' corrections of my initial themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
Inadequate beginner teacher (BT) support	• Not supported to deal with parents & ill-disciplined learners • Assigned low-academic achievers & difficult access to the instructional materials • Stranded and mistrusted • Pressure to produce the results but little support • ~~Mistrust by senior colleagues~~ • ~~Difficulty accessing the instructional materials~~ • ~~Management does not care~~

4.9 Data Analysis

As mentioned earlier, the data for this study were extracted from individual interviews, an FGI and reflective journals. I decided to use the inductive approach to analyse the data, allowing the data to speak for itself, thereby being able to gain better insights (Campbell, 2020) into BTs and their mentorship experiences and perceptions, instead of using a deductive approach. The inductive approach was suitable because I did not want to draw conclusions about the BTs' experiences and perceptions without engaging with them at a deeper level, which means allowing them to speak for themselves by using direct quotations. As Mezmir (2020) observes, "an inductive approach is appropriate when prior knowledge regarding the phenomenon under investigation is limited or fragmented" (p. 23). As I mentioned in Chapter 2, while research exists on BTs' experiences in South African schools, it is still limited when the yearly graduation numbers and employment of new teachers are considered. A deductive approach, on the other hand, assumes that existing literature has data from which certain conclusions about the phenomenon under study can be drawn (Azungah, 2018).

4.9.1 Analysis of Semi-Structured Interviews and FGI

I then used Miles and Huberman's (1994) 4-step data analysis step process, which is shown in Figure 8 below, to make meaning of the collected on-field data. As I briefly mentioned in the previous section, I firstly familiarised myself with the data by listening to the recorded individual interviews and FGI several times, followed by diligent reading and analysis of the transcriptions. First, I started this process by focusing on individual interviews as I considered them laborious because of having four participants that were involved rather than one FGI. To simplify the process of tracing the voices of participants in the focus group discussions, I deliberately specified names of the participants in the interview discussions to trace the responses back to them during the analysis stage. I also made notes in the margins, referred to as research memos or codes (Mezmir, 2020) which were further categorised into themes and sub-themes (see Appendices D1 and D2). Because I printed the transcripts, I used highlighters with different colours to highlight the important anecdotes from the participants as they were emerging.

The next step was the data reduction, which Miles et al. (2013) later renamed data condensation, to make it manageable and give the story direction and meaning (Kadenge, 2019). This meant considering the data carefully to decide which anecdotes were irrelevant in line with the objectives and research questions for the study and notice which did not cut across many of the BTs to form themes. This was followed by displaying data in a presentable and sensible way as (see Appendix E) I considered different ways to display data and finally chose thematic analysis strategy. I identified initial patterns that aligned with the study objectives and from them codes emerged that I categorised based on the patterns (see Figure 9). This led me to identification of themes and sub-themes that "enabled a better reading of the data" (Kadenge, 2019, p. 67), because in recent times it has become significant to show rather than to tell (Miles et al., 2014).

Figure 9

Components of Data analysis: Interactive Model (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 12).

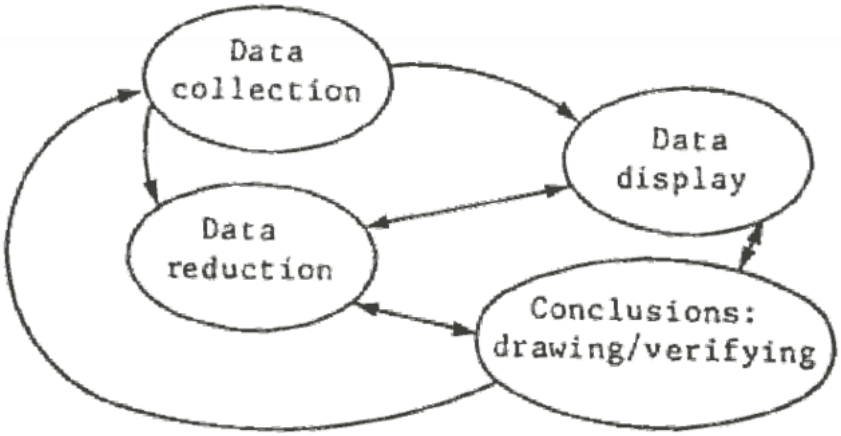


Figure 10

Categorisation of the codes

Themes	Sub-themes	Verbatims & Codes	
		Verbatims	Participant Code
Curriculum support	Sporadic orientation on subject-related matters	*The only person that they assigned me to was my HoD, acting HoD, Ntate Banana, who was just clarifying a few things: 'this is what we have to do—curriculum related things. Like, this is the material[content] that we need to cover.*	**Success**
		So far, I have only attended one workshop for the language department. The workshop was fruitful, and I learned a lot from the subject advisor. However, I am of the view that having workshops every now and then or at least once a term could be very helpful to beginner teachers. A one-day workshop is not sufficient to cover the whole year's curriculum.	**Nandipha**
		In terms of curriculum…ai, I think I didn't have, you know, orientation. I just went to my DH (department head). Then obviously, I will just seek help. Then he gave me the materials to say this is what we do, this is what we are not going to do. This is what we cover the curriculum, the ATP works this way.	**Nkahlanipho**
		Workshops are something that we actually go to in most cases, and I also think that when it comes to content based, it empowers you. it gives you a bit of background. Certain things that you were not even aware, you are like 'oh, this is how it's meant to be done because I feel the	**Morena**

4.10 Analytical Framework: Critical Discourse Analysis

After the above detailed and tedious but informative process, I used Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (CDA) as an analytical framework to unearth some of the taken-for-granted meanings from the BTs' experiences and perceptions of mentorship in public secondary schools. At the core of this study was the assumption that the experiences and perceptions that they have about mentorship are closely linked to the social context in which they find themselves, the school for this study. Fairclough (1993) opines that CDA is about critical textual analysis to uncover any implicit meanings through which power is enacted, which was only uncovered after analysing the transcribed interviews to identify the nature of mentorship that includes power relations. I used Fairclough's (1995) three intertwined dimensions or processes of language analysis, namely: textual, processing and social analysis. Textual analysis is about unmasking and unpacking of the meanings of the verbal (spoken) and non-verbal (written) language in a discursive episode. In the current study, it meant

identifying specific words that participants used to talk and write about their experiences and perceptions of mentorship in the interviews and journals. For example, the participants constantly referred to being left to work things out on their own since they were university graduates, who are assumed to be bringing new knowledge, sophisticated ways of teaching and are tech-savvy, all these could be perceived as a threat by those who have been in the system for a long time. For the BTs, such words represented helplessness, sink or swim approach, being stranded and a sense of vulnerability.

The processing analysis highlights "the production and interpretation of text, and it is a piece of social practice" (p. 136), which meant careful analysis of the transcriptions and identified words from the initial process and the interpretation of the information based on the context for emerging themes and sub-themes (see Figure 9). Social analysis addresses issues of power and refers to the exploration of the way a discourse manifests at different levels in society (Rodgers et al., 2005). This addresses the relationship with positioning theory where it talks about the rules that govern human interactions and Acher's concepts of structure and agency that influence the nature of discourses, which is the way BTs talked about their experiences and perceptions. The use of words that represented power relations and struggles in BTs' daily professional lives. For example, BTs' constant referral to being policed by their seniors uncovered the restrictedness and voiceless they felt, which was associated with being new to the teaching profession and thus were relegated to the periphery. At the core of CDA is the understanding that humans use language to transfer their power onto others (Van Dijk, 2006), hence careful analysis of the language the BTs used during interviews to represent themselves and their mentors.

Figure 11

Analysis of the transcriptions and identified words

Success	**Manankwe**
Marumo	**Baobab**
Kareli	**Manankwe**
Moloi	**Manankwe**

Success			Nandipha		
Individual interviews	**FGIs**	**Reflective Journal**	**Individual interviews**	**FGIs**	**Reflective Journal**
Mini curriculum orientation	Dealing with learner socio-economic issues	Mentorship is valuable	Challenge dealing with learner discipline	Mentorship as a shared responsibility (collaboration)	Dealing with learner socio-economic issues
You are a graduate, so you are ready	Inadequacies in ITE	Lack of learner respect	Lack of resources	Gap between initial teacher education (ITE) and practice	Limited curriculum support through departmental workshops
Gap between initial teacher education (ITE) and practice	Informal support on personal matters	Mentorship as exchange of ideas	Improvising to access the resources	Mentorship equips and empowers	Inadequate curriculum support from the SMT
Inadequate support on curriculum and learner discipline matters	Guidance on learner discipline	Emotional support	Little support from the school management	Little support from the school management	Lack of orientation
Lack of parental	Little support from the	Availability of time	Mentorship	Policies must be	Lack of SMT support to

The importance of interviews and their transcriptions is that participants are not always conscious of the selected words and language when they talk about their experiences and perceptions, which represent social issues. Hence, McGregor (2003) posits that CDA propels people to view language not merely as a tool of communication but as a resource that carries meaning and affects how they interact with the perceptions, experiences and the present. The conversations with the BTs did not only reflect language use, but the choice of words to explain their experiences were important because they were a result of social interaction within a particular context. For example, one participant was made to question her professional competence because when she reported ill-disciplined learners to the principal, she was lambasted as she was expected to master classroom management that was learnt at the university. Afterwards, those learners often ridiculed the BT by laughing at her upon realising her reporting was ignored. This meant that the BT acknowledged, willingly or unwillingly, the limitation of her power to take any action beyond her principal and she felt unheard and unseen as a result. Also, in CDA, language "cannot be considered neutral, because it is caught up in political, social, racial, economic, religious, and cultural formations" (Rogers et al., 2005, p. 369). Consequently, the words people use are ideologically connected and resemble what they consider to be their deepest beliefs about the

world around them. For example, one participant recounted how some colleagues refused to offer him any professional guidance and support because they saw him as a threat due to the content and technology knowledge and training that is perceived current, thinking that by helping would empower the BT and disempower them.

In the current study, silence was evident when some of the participants chose not to disobey the school authority, even though they were at odds with those decisions. Although it may be customary for qualitative researchers to solicit responses from the participants (Polit & Beck, 2010), Kawabata and Gastaldo (2015) caution that silence can be a valuable communication tool in qualitative studies. Furthermore, using CDA allowed me to explore possibilities of extracting what the BTs may not have said in what they said (Fairclough, 1999), which mean reading between the lines using the words and sentences. Where the participants possibly feel excluded or disempowered, silence can serve as a powerful symbolic exercise to remind us of the daily experiences (Müller et al., 2024) of the mentorship relationships. This was identified in the face-to-face interviews and FGI as participants used cues like body language and use of hands that represent anger and feeling disempowered, facial expressions like frowning and their meanings within the research context. Given that "communication systems differ across cultural contexts" (Kawabata & Gastaldo, 2015, p. 2), it was equally important that I appreciate the cultural orientations of my participants. Some participants may have considered sharing certain experiences as being rude or disrespectful of their senior colleagues, hence chose to be silent when certain issues were discussed or chose not to respond or give a short response to certain questions. This was observed in the short interviews for some participants, as I could not 'force' them to say more than what they had already said.

4.11 Ethical Considerations

It was crucial that I consider all the ethical protocols while conducting this study since qualitative research is often personally invasive (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006), Thus, during and after my interactions with the participants, I constantly reminded myself of ethical responsibilities that are embedded in conducting research. For example, when the participants said something which I had a different view on during our interactions, I maintained impartiality by respecting their ontological and epistemological positions (Mbhiza, 2021). For instance, one participant felt it was easier to work with older teachers than it was working with younger teachers because the latter liked "to flex their muscles" to mean they were

unnecessarily difficult when his experiences were different from theirs. In addition., during an interview with the participants, I engaged in a reflective process by "examining and re-examining the different reasons for conducting the research and the various influences it might have on others" (Karnieli-Miller et al., 2009, p. 287). Constant critical reflection during the research process, especially the data generation process is critical for a researcher, because it is easy to be immersed in a process and overlook some of the ethical processes to consider. In the following sections, I discuss the different ethical protocols I observed from the inception to the final stages of this study.

4.11.1 Accessing the Research Sites

To gain access to the schools and thus be able to work with the selected BTs, I first applied to the Free State Department of Education (FSDoE) for access to the school and my application was approved (see Appendix F). This preceding application was submitted concurrently to the University of the Witwatersrand Ethics Committee for ethics clearance, which took five months because there were corrections I had to do, and this was eventually granted (see Appendix G). Brown et al. (2020) acknowledge that being granted ethics clearance is an important step in producing quality research and "encouraging good research practice at multiple levels" (p. 749). The University of Witwatersrand Ethics and FSDoE applications included letters to the principals of targeted schools, and I explained in detail the nature of the study (see Appendix H). After the school principals had granted permission, I met with the identified research participants to introduce myself and left them with the letters of invitation (see Appendices I & J), detailing the purpose of the study and the nature of activities to be done with them, and consent forms to explain their rights (see Appendices K & L). The whole process took approximately three months, including the waiting process, because the University of the Witwatersrand Ethics clearance took longer than anticipated, resulting in delayed data generation.

4.11.2 Anonymity and Confidentiality

Researchers must prioritise the protection of their participants because of associated risks of sharing information that may offend some people. Hence, in any study involving humans, their identities must be protected to the maximum (De Vos et al., 2011; Qhosola, 2016), to ensure that the information will not be traceable to them and the schools. I, therefore, assured the participants that throughout the writings and presentations emanating from this study, neither their real names nor those of their schools will be disclosed to anyone outside of this study. I did this verbally and the information was also included in the letters I gave them, to

continuously remind them of the rules and their rights. However, because anonymity and confidentiality could not be fully guaranteed in the FGI, I discussed only the questions that could be comfortably shared in a group, and the sensitive ones were individually discussed. Before commencing with the discussion, I agreed with the participants that whatever information was shared would not be discussed outside the interview context. It was a verbal agreement, because I thought there was no need for a contract because they were adults, and our interactions were built on trust. I further assured participants that I would use pseudonyms, as shown in Tables 3 and 4 earlier, that would not be traceable to them in all the submissions and presentations in and outside of the university.

4.11.3 Informed Consent

In qualitative research, interaction with the proposed participants is also critical to explain the study and attend to any emerging questions that might need clarity (Nkambule, 2014). According to authors De Vos et al. (2011), Fleming and Zegwaard (2018), and Hugo (2018), researchers need to be transparent with their research participants with full details of the study, that is, the nature of the questions they are going to be asked, the demands of the research project to which they have been asked to commit, what their data will be used for and the consequences that come with being part of the study. As mentioned earlier, I personally hand-delivered the information sheet and consent letters to the principals and arranged a meeting with the potential participants to thoroughly explain the purpose of the study and addressed any questions that participants had about the research. I thus handed them information sheets and consent forms which they read, signed, and retuned. However, I made it clear that signing them did not deprive them of their right to withdraw from the study "at any point throughout the study" (McCollum, 2014, p. 44). I also made the participants aware that the information was mainly for my doctoral studies, including presentations in local and international conferences and journal publications.

4.12 Ensuring the Quality of the Study's Trustworthiness

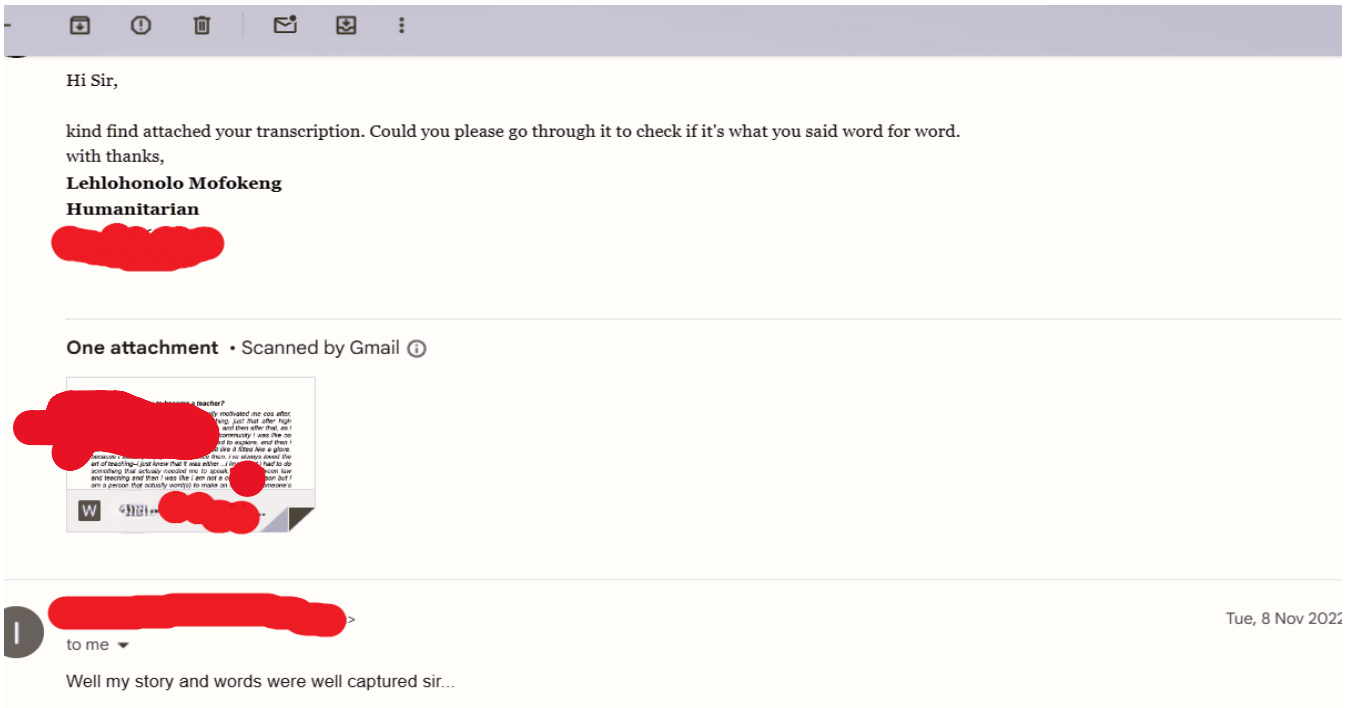
In the sections below, I unpack the processes I followed to ensure maximum trustworthiness of the data and study findings. In research, ensuring trustworthiness is critical and refers to the ability of research findings and gathered data showing quality that can be trusted (Babbie & Mouton, 2007). It encompasses components such as credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability.

4.12.1 Credibility

According to Lincoln and Guba (1989), credibility refers to the extent to which the research findings solicit trust from its readers. In this study, credibility was ensured by means of triangulation as I used semi-structured interviews, an FGI, and reflective journals that were complementary data source. Creswell and Clark (2007) state that triangulation is a strategy whereby researchers use more than one research method to collect data, and the methods complement each other to ensure various information. Hence, credibility in research is reached when the views of the research participants and how the researcher presents them are congruent (Mokgobo, 2017). Using the three data sources enabled a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences and perceptions of mentorship. During the data analysis stage, I did what Korstjens and Moser (2018, p. 122) and Sikicikoglu et al. (2024, p. 37) call member checks by emailing each participant their transcribed interview responses to confirm their accuracy so that I avoided any misinterpretations of their responses (See Appendix M). I also emailed back the transcribed FGI to the participants to confirm fair representation of the information they shared, and all confirmed good representation (See Figure 9 below). Doing this "ensures the researcher has accurate data to analyse" (McKim, 2023, p. 45) and shows respect for the participants and their responses.

Figure 12

Participant's confirmation of their transcribed interview data.



4.12.2 Transferability

In this study, on top of providing the interview passages from both individual interviews and the FGI, I presented detailed discussions of the participants' brief background, their schools, the sample size as well as interview procedures and the data generation processes I followed. I seriously considered this in this study because as a researcher it was my responsibility to provide the reader with a "thick description of the participants and the research process, to enable the reader to assess whether your findings are transferable to their own setting" (Korstjens & Moser, 2018, p. 122). According to Mokgobo (2017), doing so would enhance the chances of the study findings being replicated in other similar settings.

4.12.3 Dependability

Key to research is the ability of the research findings to continue to be depended on over time, but this depends on the context in which it was conducted. Thus, dependability means the ability of the research findings to produce the same results if repeated in the future (Elo et al., 2014), which relies on the explanation of the research processes that "should be reported in detail, thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work, if not necessarily to gain the same results" (p. 71). Against this backdrop, the critique that my supervisors provided throughout this study enabled its findings to be relied upon as they acted as intellectual auditors because of their expertise in the areas of mentorship for BTs. They achieved this by critically examining all the raw data collected, my analysis and interpretations and the recommendations I made in this study as well as conclusions drawn. In all this process, they were seeking coherence and clarity of thoughts I presented, and they confirmed this was achieved. To allow the reader to "assess the extent to which appropriate research practices have been followed" (Shenton, 2004, p. 71), I also provided detailed methodological procedures that I followed throughout the writing process of this thesis. The study was also the subject of rigours of institutional ethics clearance. To promote transparency and thereby enhance dependability of the study, I have provided access to all the processes in which I engaged in the relevant appendices of this study, including data generation methods, raw and analysed data as well as how I was able to gain access to the schools and participants.

4.12.4 Confirmability

To achieve confirmability, researchers "secure the inter-subjectivity of the data" and "the interpretation should not be based on your own particular preferences and viewpoints" (Korstjens & Moser, 2018, p. 122). Thus, it was important that I was free from bias and, to achieve this, the data that I collected had to speak for itself and not be based on what I wanted

the participants to say. According to the Moon et al. (2016), confirmability deals with whether another researcher independent of the study can confirm the findings presented. I audio recorded all the interviews to allow my supervisors to listen independent of me and confirm the utterances of the participants as inscribed in the transcriptions and whether these were consistent with my interpretations of the data.

4.13 Chapter Summary

Through this chapter, I have provided a detailed explanation of the processes and methods I used to collect and sort the data I collected by way of semi-structured individual interviews and an FGI. The chapter also provided detailed justifications for the adoption of the research design, approach, methodology, selection of participants and the data analysis framework as well as ethical considerations and how its findings could be trusted. The following chapter elaborates on the data presentation and analysis.

Chapter 5: Being Caught in the Middle: Chronicles of BTs' Experiences of Mentorship Support

5. Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the methodological elements of the study which includes the research paradigm, research methods, design and approach shed light on the importance of interacting with the participants in their natural environment to understand how they make sense of their experiences of the mentorship support in two Free State public secondary schools. Against this background, this chapter firstly presents themes and sub-themes, as shown in Table 6 below, that emerged across the different data sets. This is followed by a discussion of the themes and sub-themes, drawing from the theoretical and conceptual frameworks and the literature review. As mentioned earlier, the data analysis process was inductive whereby themes were extracted from the data sets.

Table 6

Themes and sub-themes

Themes	
BTs' experiences of professional support and strengthening the subject content knowledge	
The principals' orientation intervention to support BTs	
Lack of collegiality and school community support	
Themes	**Sub-themes**
Mentorship is a shared responsibility	Under preparedness in Initial Teacher Education Programme
Navigating a cocktail of challenges	Challenges in managing ill-disciplined learners
	Confronted by learners' socio-economic issues
	The absence of a platform to brainstorm ideas
	Inadequate senior colleagues' support
BTs' agency to cope with professional challenges	Confronting classroom management constraints
	Demonstrating creativity to make up for insufficient instructional materials and improve classroom practice

5.1 BTs' Experiences of Professional Support and Strengthening Subject Content Knowledge

It is important to support BTs with subject content knowledge to ensure effective teaching. The theme addresses BTs' experiences of support with subject content knowledge from the subject advisors and supervisors (DHs), through off-site content-based orientation sessions. The concerns for the participants were the nature of support from the subject advisors and DHs who did not provide comprehensive mentorship, as BTs believed it was fragmented and irregular. Researchers (Kadenge, 2021; Okeke & Mpahla, 2016) note that BTs attended off-site workshop sessions outside of their classrooms and schools, usually at district offices, without proper mentorship within the schools. Considering that BTs mostly had three years of teaching experiences, they were still building and strengthening their content knowledge in 'real' classroom contexts, hence, concerns with the guidance from the DHs. The recent research on South Africa's teachers' subject knowledge suggests that some lack or have insufficient knowledge to confidently transfer to their learners, because it is below what is usually expected (Jita & Ige, 2019; Taylor, 2019; Venkat, 2019). Thus, the BTs' unsettling experiences are understandable within the context of continuing learners' poor performances in different subjects, which is usually linked with teachers' quality content knowledge. The dissatisfaction was demonstrated by 'strong' language used by BTs during interview discussions and in their journals.

The responses illustrate the point:

> *In terms of curriculum, I think I didn't have, you know, orientation. I just went to my DH. Then obviously, I will just seek help. Then, he gave me the materials to say this is what we do, this is what we are not going to do. This is what we cover in the curriculum, the ATP (annual teaching plan[7]) works this way.* **(Nkahlanipho, Manankwe Secondary School)**

> *So far, I have only attended one workshop for the language department. The workshop was fruitful, and I learned a lot from the subject advisor. However, I am of the view that having workshops every now and then or at least once a term could be very helpful to beginner teachers. A one-day workshop is not sufficient to cover the whole year's curriculum.* (**Nandipha, Baobab Secondary School**)

[7] Annual teaching plan is a policy framework implemented by the Department of Basic Education in South Africa that shows the sequential order of topics teachers must cover within specific timeframes.

The findings present inadequate and insufficient guidance that did not meet the BTs need for positive professional experience, because some had to initiate interaction by going to the DH and "seek help", hence unsupportive mentorship. Although BTs are classified as qualified teachers with 2-3 years of experience, however, given the complexity of teaching profession with unexpected surprises, there were expectations from the BTs to be supported with navigating content materials and the use of ATPs. It is unwritten rules and information that experienced teachers understand the unique struggles of the profession, hence the importance of guiding newly qualified teachers to engage and manoeuvre the implementation of education policies to ensure success. Researchers (Yue, 2019; Soe, 2018; Chu et al., 2017; Nantanga, 2014) agree that structured mentorship and effective orientations help BTs to meet expectations of the profession to facilitate 21st century teaching and learning skills for learners' academic success. They enter the profession with dreams of making a difference in the lives of their learners, but the enthusiasm dies within the first few years because of inadequate mentorship support. This especially affects BTs who teach in schools located in economically challenged contexts, as noted with participants in this study who are located in semi-rural context and have experienced insufficient guidance. Daniels (2019) report that BTs who teaches in metropolitan areas often receive adequate pedagogical support from their SMTs. In addition, Mahwire (2021) established that the general feeling amongst the BTs was that being part of the mentorship programme enhanced their pedagogical content knowledge because they had an opportunity to meet with seasoned colleagues who were open to share their unique professional insights with them.

The meeting with experienced subject specific teacher is important to highlight things that could be overlooked by BTs while are observed by subject advisors during visits, for example, Matshaya said:

> *Simple thing, the file, the LF (subject advisor) said what's happening here with the file? Mr Moshao[8] tried to tell you, ohk, you have to file the index etc…because he's also teaching. I mean, he's teaching physical science, maybe he's not familiar with maths things that much now, he couldn't point some stuff…* (**Manankwe Secondary School**)

[8] I used a pseudonym to observe anonymity.

The assisting mentor was knowledgeable and experienced, although he was not in touch with the recent development in the mathematics subject because of being assigned to physical science subject. While Cross et al., (2020) state that being part of mentorship programmes also sharpens BTs' ability to choose the best instructional materials and pedagogical approaches than those who navigate the complexities of the teaching profession singlehandedly, it is critical to assign appropriate subject specialist to ensure correct guidance and support. Similarly, Akhalq, Chishti and Iqbal (2016, p. 435) study found that mentoring where mentors have extensive knowledge in a specific subject are more likely to be offer effective mentorship to BTs, to become confident and knowledgeable in their subject and profession. It is, therefore, important that schools assign a mentor who teaches the same subject as the mentee to ensure a well-structured subject specific knowledge, otherwise *"when the LF came, it looked like I don't know what I am doing, my file was kinda a mess according to her. To me again, those were small things."* (Matshaya **Manankwe Secondary School**). Notwithstanding that teaching is a life-long learning process, however, the BTs should develop observation and analytic strategies during meetings with subject advisors to enhance their knowledge about the profession. Archer (2007) talked about an individual's practice "personal reflexivity" and argues that within contexts where individuals are situated, social structures are experienced as either constraints or enablements, thus, how individuals negotiate between structure and agency will be dependent on their 'mode' of reflexivity (p.4). Hence, reflexivity is important for BTs which is accomplished through internal conversation with self, for self-reliance and development.

The workshops are also critical for BTs as spaces that support continuous learning and strengthening their subject specific content knowledge. It is understandable that, generally, workshops provide opportunities to discuss current topics or changes in the curriculum, share teaching and learning ideas, and engage in hands-on practical training. BTs' responses show different number of attended workshops, which were appreciated because of learning opportunities. Morena from Manankwe Secondary School said:

> *Workshops are something that we actually go to in most cases, and I also think that when it comes to content based, it empowers you. It gives you a bit of background. Certain things that you were not even aware, you are like 'Oh, this is how it's meant to be done', because I feel the last workshop I went to was much more empowering in a way that you felt that 'Okay, I've been going at this thing this way, there's actually another way of actually dealing with it'. So, I was like 'Okay, it means workshops are actually good'.*

Sharing the same sentiment, another BT was not 'privileged' to attend more than one workshop per year: *I have only attended one workshop for the language department … A one-day workshop is not sufficient to cover the whole year's curriculum.* (**Nandipha, Baobab Secondary School**)

It is interesting that two teachers employed by the same institution, the FSDoE, and located within the same district, have had different exposure to workshops. However, this explains dynamism in positionality that BTs experience because positions are contextual "and people can construct and shift between positions" (Tait-McCutcheon & Loveridge, 2016, p. 329). These shifting positions are dictated by the structural order and the role of agents within this structure because "structures impose certain rights and duties" (Van Langenhove, 2017, p. 4) that BTs should negotiate. Having said this, the dissatisfaction with organised workshops, imposed by structure, is clear in Nandipha's response *"I am of the view that having workshops every now and then or at least once a term could be very helpful to beginner teachers. A one-day workshop is not sufficient…"*, which could be another way of exercising agency through reflectivity. By the same token, her protest about a limited exposure to these workshops suggests she was experiencing what Davies and Harré (1999) call forced self-positioning, that is, being forced to accept the modus operandi of the provincial education department (Huang & Wang, 2024). Thus, it holds that BTs' positioning involves a complex interplay of what they think they can and cannot do, say and cannot say.

It is also worth mentioning that content workshops are not organised by teachers, but the provincial department, hence constraining a number that could be attended by BTs. Based on Nandipha's response, it could be argued that she was wishing for more workshops to enhance pedagogical content knowledge. Edward and Shukia (2021) posit that "lack of effective pedagogical content knowledge is associated with poor instructional practices", hence the importance of BTs attending workshops for continuous professional development and learn from experienced colleagues. By attending workshops, BTs position or are positioned favourably as this presents opportunities to learn new teaching and learning skills, enhance subject-specific knowledge, and classroom management skills, which are all important for them. AbdulRab (2023) extrapolates that teachers' professional development helps them meet new expectations to facilitate the development of 21st century skills in learner-centred learning. Although the information is not specific to BTs, it is equally critical that they are

exposed to workshops in addition to mentorship. If there is limited professional development trainings, the seniors could play an active role in closing that gap as Morena uttered *"I'm getting support in terms of everything that revolves around content and how to set the tests … I'm actually enjoying it, working with older people because I feel like, with them they are there to guide you, they are not there to flex"*. Morena's sentiments reveal that he was enjoying a certain degree of professional autonomy, and this enhanced his sense of belonging within his collegial network. According to Giralt-Romeu et al. (2020), the way a person responds to circumstances depends on their level of socialisation to imply that in instances where BTs such as Morena feel accepted to act in response to the environmental stimuli, they may exercise their agency and confront their challenges. Without overlooking some inconsistencies in the BTs' experiences with content knowledge enhancement, it is commendable to hear some BTs talking positively about the support in schools,. Hobbs and Putnam (2016) found that BTs who were paired with a mentor were better equipped to deal with curriculum planning, which, inter alia, includes identifying and using the best teaching strategies. Contrary, Symeonidis et al.'s (2023) found that some BTs complained about the inconsistent professional growth opportunities through the workshops they received, with a view that being regularly exposed to such professional growth opportunities would enhance their pedagogical skills. These studies illuminate the significance of intentionality by schools to regularly expose BTs to professional growth opportunities (Fallen, 2022; Hudson et al., 2012).

5.2 The Principal's Orientation Intervention to Support BTs

It is well established that principals are key stakeholders in the induction process of BTs (Frasson, 2020; Klages et al., 2019; Kutsyuruba & Bezzina 2024). BTs perceive the presence of principals in the mentorship support structure as a symbol of goodwill and it gives them the assurance that they are not alone as they traverse the uncharted territories of new school environments, a phase often characterised by uncertainty. Even though it was clear they still needed more support, two teachers in this study remarked on the orientation sessions with their principal which is customary at their school:

> *I think two months back our principal [actually] sat down with us; so, it's a common tradition (at the school) that as a new teacher when you come they actually have to explain certain things for you… the dressing code and all of that… what not to do, especially within the school. How to reprimand the learners and [also] the rules of the school, the time that one*

has to arrive at and all of those things and also things pertaining to the file and also respecting all the colleagues that you actually find. (**Morena, Manankwe Secondary School**)

We had an orientation. I think it was 1 hour 30 minutes with the principal…. this is what the school is about, expect this, expect that, be careful of this and that, but in terms of curriculum…no, I think I didn't have, you know, orientation. (**Nkahlanipho, Manankwe Secondary School**)

As important as these teachers perceived these orientation sessions led by their principal to be, Nkahlanipho's remarks "but in terms of curriculum" reveals he had certain reservations as he had hoped to have an orientation session geared towards the subject content matter but that was a missing piece of the puzzle. His comments suggest having this element in the sessions could have been helpful for his career growth. Notwithstanding the importance of classroom management and knowing about the culture of the school, BTs were mostly concerned with being guided with implementing pedagogical content knowledge in class. Similarly, Morena felt the orientation sessions were generic and thus inadequately addressed the unique challenges that he faced in each classroom as learners within the same school presented different challenges. This implies that BTs needed to be orientated on specific challenges that they had expected to encounter during teaching and learning in the classrooms and empowered with some strategies to use, while learning to develop theirs:

… but I feel like that orientation, it's good to learn in terms of professionalism, the code of conduct(s) of the schools, but the problem is everything that you are told, every class has its own behaviour, so sometimes it does not work out. (**Manankwe Secondary School**

When Nkahlanipho and Morena used a conjunction 'but' in the above extracts, they were assuming a position of an opposer and in some instances, this represents "condescension" (Herbel-Eisenmann et al., 2015 p. 187) by challenging their assigned positioning from mere passive to active participants in a discourse. Likewise, Morena's use of "but I feel like… but the problem…" took a deliberate position as Felix and Ali (2023) explain deliberate positioning as explicit presentation of the self as an agent through the expression of one's agency or unique point of view with the use of, for example, pronouns. The BTs use of "but" may also represent an appeal for help (Barnes, 2004) by alerting their supervisors to their professional needs, without ignoring the other aspects of the profession. Other than that, these

comments reveal the complexities that surround the development of mentorship programmes because BTs have unique circumstances they would like to be supported on and to assume their developmental needs are homogenous can render them unsuccessful (Gordon, 2020). Considering the time constraints that plague many school principals (Klages et al., 2019), it will always be a challenge for the Manankwe Secondary School principal to allocate time to attend to individual BTs and perhaps it is the reason he arranged a once-off group orientation session for them. In addition, as plausible as a customised mentorship support programme is, it raises important questions about its feasibility in a developing country like South Africa with a multitude of challenges competing for limited financial resources.

Nonetheless, these findings still underscore the importance of the principal's full involvement in the mentorship programmes for BTs. Different studies have found that principals play different important roles in the mentorship support provided to BTs. The principal's actions were therefore unsurprising because *"it's a common tradition (at the school) that as a new teacher when you come, they actually have to explain certain things for you"* (Morena, **Manankwe Secondary School**), to ensure that they are fully informed of the expectations. In addition, the BTs at Manankwe Secondary School spent *"1 hour 30 minutes with the principal…"* (Nkahlanipho). It was commendable that the principal dedicated so much time with the BTs to explain the code of conduct and culture of the school, because it possibly means the principal values the role and BTs in the school. For example, a study found that, although principals may not always be directly involved in the daily running of mentorship programmes, their presence is significant because they facilitate the pairing process between the BTs and their mentors (Fallen, 2020).

In the case of this study, the presence of an orientation programme at Manankwe Secondary School may have seemed insufficient to these BTs, but the information they received from it may have shed light on some of the system requirements and experiences from the seasoned colleagues that would be helpful in the future. From being immersed in and exposed to such platforms, the BTs learned about the institutional culture and the general expectations by the school management that may help them to minimise costly professional mistakes. However, for Nandipha (**Baobab Secondary School**) the absence of a basic orientation programme frustrated her:

> *I feel like if we were in an environment where the principal had meetings with all the staff members and spoke about his vision of the school and how he wants things to be handled, then we would be able to better handle situations because we will know gore [that] no we've had this discussion with the principal and this is what he said.*

While Nandipha had her own expectations of and aspirations towards her principal, it is unfortunate these were never realised, even though Kutsyuruba and Bezzina (2024) found that BTs appreciated their principal's efforts to orientate them because doing so enabled their integration into the school community and lessened their anxiety. To further highlight the principal's significant role in the mentorship process, Morena remarked that:

> *When you [are] actually teaching and you just see your principal standing at the door and say, 'You are fine?' you feel safe. You also feel like 'Okay, I have support. At least there's someone who has my back' because you can see that he's walking around, ensuring that learners are not outside, and you are now responsible for your own class. You know even if there is a problem, you can easily contact him.* **(Manankwe Secondary School)**

The above comments address the importance of having a present school principal to whom the BTs feel they have easy access, not overlooking their busy schedules.

5.3 Lack of Collegiality and School Community Support

BTs have done TP in the schools and are aware of the classroom complexities while they were students; however, mentorship is still important to address the context specific issues. The participants valued being mentored, although their experiences were less desirable because what they had hoped for and what they had experienced were incongruent. For example, Nandipha (**Baobab Secondary School**) during focus group discussion said, *"I don't think we are adequately supported … there's no support at all that is given to the new teachers … it's like we are after-thoughts…"*. Notwithstanding a brief orientation support by the principal, BTs from Manankwe Secondary School still felt inadequately supported. The findings from the individual interviews and focus group discussion present the importance of collegiality and community school support as part of mentorship, rather than leaving BTs to 'sink or swim'. On this, Nandipha said, *"I have never raised any concerns to anyone … everyone is functioning like everything is fine … you also think let me just continue* (individual interview). As new staff members, BTs experienced a reality shock because of the multiple challenges they faced and felt overwhelmed, resulting to 'numbing' themselves than

reporting where necessary. The inadequate support for the BTs was emotionally draining and linked to anxiety, stress, and imposter syndrome because some felt not 'welcomed' in the schools. The responses illustrate the point:

> *I'm struggling, yoh!, I'm drowning with poetry. I'm drowning and I don't have that kind of support. I wish I had, maybe someone o kareng fela [who could say] you know, 'Let me come and do at least one poem with the learners and Mme B o bo le teng ka classeng [while you mam - B observe as I teach] so that you can see how it's done.' But I don't get that. I don't know who to go to.* (**Nandipha, Baobab Secondary School**)

> *I think it would be best for a new teacher to know that not everyone is gonna [going to] help you out. Even if we are doing the same thing, akere? [right?], we're just teachers, we can just help out, but I feel like somehow there would always be that person out there who just wants you to just not do well in terms of life. I think if we knew that this is the workplace, not everyone is gonna be [going to] happy about you.* (**Nkahlanipho, Manankwe Secondary School**)

> *I feel like most young educators, they are just being left to fend for themselves…. to be honest, some educators see you as a threat, you know. They feel like you [are] gonna [going to] take their position or you gonna [are going to] do a much better job… at my lowest I feel like I'm wasting my time.* (**Success, Manankwe Secondary School**)

The BTs were concerned with the lack of collegiality, acts of suspicions among their seniors, and a sense of school community support, which not only relied on a mentor to guide new teachers but worked collaboratively with experienced teachers to assist where there was a need. The feelings of scepticism amongst colleagues, lack of trust, and feelings of isolation suggest that there was no formal mentorship that supported BTs, which Hargreaves (1994, p. 195) characterises as "contrived collegiality" relation, which is administratively regulated, compulsory, implementation-oriented, fixed in time and space and predictable. The BTs suggested that staff positions were deliberate, inadvertent, and presumed that new teachers would bring new knowledge and skills that were superior and were a threat *"some educators see you as a threat, you know. They feel like you [are] gonna [going to] take their position"*, resulting in desertion. They felt unable to cope with their expected professional duties and positioning themselves as confident qualified teachers was challenged and dissolving, hence the diminished feelings of self-esteem *"I'm drowning, and I don't have that kind of support…"*. Furthermore, the moral orders and the rights and duties associated with the teaching profession and their lived experiences in the schools influenced the constructed storyline, which showed lack of collegiality and community school support for the BTs (McVee et al., 2021).

The BTs experiences further represent the construction of teacher identity, which depends on positionality particularities between rights, duties, identities, and "moral fields" (Van Langenhove, 2017, p. 7). According to Van Langenhove (2017), "moral fields are the invisible space in which persons live their lives" (p. 8), hence navigating and activating specific moral fields determines the ways that individual storylines are constructed as a part of everyday interaction (McVee et al., 2019). Thus, while BTs physically live amongst other colleagues within the school, their thoughts, as an invisible space, are unknown although they influence their identity construction and development. Nandipha said:

> *I didn't know that I would be expecting so much paperwork and so many other things to deal with other than teaching and learning process.* (**Baobab Secondary School**)

Workloads and administrative paperwork that continue to be challenging for teachers generally and is part of the expected duties in the profession, although BTs were overwhelmed. Seemingly, BTs do not see administrative work as part of the important practice, hence, they expected assistance from the experienced colleagues, which represents teamwork than *"... to know that not everyone is gonna [going to] help you out"*. The BTs' responses above are concerning because the sense of lack of collegiality and collaboration results to early exit to the profession, rather than learning from each other as their experienced colleagues were in the same position at some point in their careers. As mentioned earlier, teaching is complex because teachers are not only expected to teach, but there are more duties that they are expected to engage with such as guiding their newly appointed colleagues. However, the response by one of the BTs revealed the level of discontentment with his senior colleagues because he felt they did not dutifully support him:

> *Just to be asked, 'What do you need?' That's all we need with some of the challenges we come across. You know, not being able to deal with a problem is a problem itself. That's what we need, assistance to the challenges that we complain about. If we can get help with that, I think we can have a better working environment.* **(Success, Manankwe Secondary School)**

The belief is that having proper mentorship guidance from the senior colleagues is important, assuring them that things will get better, irrespective of the multi-pronged challenging issues.

Harré & Van Langenhove (2010) talked about explicit self-positioning as someone who has the right to ask questions and direct the decision-making process and is achieved by either expressing one's agency or unique point of view. It could be argued that the above responses represent BTs as individual that represent explicit self-positioning, as they realised the importance of agency and make decisions where possible because they are on their own. The response *"not being able to deal with a problem is a problem itself"* is powerful because it shows critical reflection and the significance of collegiality, given the common goal to teach. If problems remain unsolved and addressed, they could escalate and be out of control, while exposing the lack of teamwork in the school, hence showing 'ubuntu'[9] to your colleagues. Some of the problems and challenges include shortage of teaching materials, assessment of learners' work, managing workload, teacher-parent relationships (Uwamahoro, 2022).

Notwithstanding the professional expectations, it is still important that BTs are guided on how to manoeuvre sensitive spaces like meeting parents and assessment of learners' work. The participants' responses below highlight this:

> *I feel like if I was prepared enough, every challenge that I was gonna [going to] come across was not gonna [going to] faze me because I was better equipped and better prepared. So, some of the things are not discussed and the procedures, okay… I'm not sure but there are some procedures that are not addressed, to say if this is happening this is what you need to do. This is how you go about it.* **(Success, Manankwe Secondary School)**

> *I don't think there's enough supportive structure. Maybe if there was, things would have turned out not to be the same way or maybe I would have predicted what was going to happen and then be prepare for that. This has therefore curbed my growth as a teacher because instead of harnessing the good practices from my seniors, I now have to [must] develop myself without guidance.* (**Nkahlanipho, Manankwe Secondary School**)

The emerging storylines from the above excerpts show how BTs longed for mentorship support and having mentors who made time to listen to their concerns. They aspired to have mentors who played a pastoral role in their professional lives as they seemed to suggest that was associated with enhanced emotional wellbeing, rather than *"... at my lowest I feel like I'm wasting my time"*. However, because BTs as actors within a storyline cannot always choose their assigned positions as they are dictated to by structural properties (Archer, 2003),

[9] Ubuntu is commonly referred to as the understanding that a person cannot exist in isolation but is part of a broader community (Ewuoso & Hall, 2019)

they had to work with what was available to them since *"I think it would be best for a new teacher to know that not everyone is gonna [going to] help you out."* This considered that as full-time staff members, they are contractually bound to fulfil specific professional duties, whether conditions are favourable or not. It seems these duties, now as full-time state employees, weighed heavily on them compared to their TP phase often characterised by fewer and less-demanding professional expectations. Hence, the following response *"I think if we knew that this is the workplace, not everyone is gonna be [going to] happy…"* is alarming in a context where young teachers leave the profession prematurely. Thus, to know that they could rely on emotionally present mentors seemed reassuring to them, but this was not the case.

This lack of clear formal mentoring structure also addresses missing induction processes for BTs for better performance until they adjust and get used to their professional work, environment, and staff in the schools. It is, therefore, unsurprising when some say, *"I feel like if I was prepared enough, every challenge that I was gonna [going to] come across was not gonna [going to] faze me"*, because they would have been well-prepared to face issues head-on. BTs' induction could support positive relationships with staff members and learners that encourage unity, respect, and collegiality, consequently quick adaptation to the new working environment rather than feel like *"I don't think there's enough supportive structure … This has therefore curbed my growth as a teacher … I now have to [must] develop myself without guidance"*. Without overlooking the importance of agency and positionality for BTs, such responses highlight tensions in schools which further influence their induction or lack thereof. Abdallah and Alkaabi (2023) opine that teacher induction is a major ongoing professional development that is designed to meet the needs and requirements of new teachers and to eliminate their concerns, hence its critical role. Thus, the BTs seek assistance and guidance to be effective teachers than being suspicious of their knowledge, to have *"... a better working environment"*. It is important that BTs should not feel *"being left to fend for themselves…"*, instead work to achieve the common goal that ensures supportive working environment for the success of learners. Several studies have found a correlation between the availability of mentorship support and BTs' improved well-being (Burger et al., 2021; Kutsyuruba et al., 2019; Tonna, 2019).

Although there were concerns with the nature of mentorship that BTs experienced, some evidence of empowering mentorship was mentioned by some participants, for example, Morena (**Manankwe Secondary School**) said:

> *What is nice is when it comes to setting tests and all of those things… So, they allow me to actually set those tests as a form of me actually getting experience and learning more. Whatever I've set I take it to them [senior colleagues], and they are like 'Okay this is nice and I think you should change one, two, three'. And that's how I feel like they are actually supporting me and actually growing me.*

> *… the support I currently have is from the teachers that I am actually working with, cos (because) I'm working with older people. So, because I'm teaching English in grade 8, I'm working with someone experienced. That's the support that I think, that I've gotten so far, content based…* (**Matshaya, Manankwe Secondary School**)

It is clear from the responses that when BTs get support from the experienced teachers, they feel a sense of growth and confidence to teach and plan developmental assessments. Notwithstanding that BTs are graduates with subject specialisations, especially the secondary school teachers, guidance from the senior teachers is still important to build experience, growth, and confidence. By proving this form of empowering mentorship often, BTs may feel seen and heard, which sends a strong message to them that they are an important part of the school community. When BTs start to share important duties with their mentors, they harness deep reflective skills which can lead to the identification of their professional shortcomings and accelerate their professional growth as a result. As such, Baguley (2019) posits that if the system is to stem high attrition rates among BTs, it is imperative that they be given targeted classroom-based support such as help with lesson planning.

5.4 Mentorship is a Shared Responsibility

The previous theme and sub-themes dominantly highlighted BTs' mentorship challenges, with some positive experiences when support is given to the new teachers. This theme and sub-themes present the need for relationship and partnership between teacher training institutions and schools, as participant responses suggest that teacher training education failed

to address some of the challenges they were facing in the schools. The importance of collaboration is understandable because it is equivalent to an African proverb "it takes a whole village to raise a child" (Gehrke & McCoy, 2007, p. 493). This suggests the need for the involvement of multiple stakeholders to ensure life-long learning and teacher retention, especially when some BTs feel that *"... in this institution mentoring is a challenge cause not a lot of educators have time to be mentoring"* (Success, **Manankwe Secondary School**). Collaborative support for BTs, which Portner (2005, p. 78) calls "collaborative-doing", supports active involvement, responsibility, and accountability of different committed people for successful adaptability in new schools. For example, Morena (**Manankwe Secondary School**) wrote in his journal that *"in terms of disciplining the learners, I had to learn everything myself as I was not afforded with any support. With content I was fortunate to be working with experienced teachers who guided me through everything,* which suggest selective support from the senior teachers who were not necessarily appointed as mentors for the BT but taught content. Nantanga (2014) extrapolates that new teachers will develop the competencies better and faster if all stakeholders take full responsibility for their development, which further reduces premature exit to the profession.

5.4.1 Under preparedness in Initial Teacher Education Programmes

While on campus, the nature of the ITE programme to which pre-service teachers are subjected is dominantly theoretical as they learn about various school and classroom challenges; hence partnership with the schools to make the link between theory and practice during TP. Due to the complexity of the teaching profession, it is not easy for teacher training institutions to replicate the day-to-day realities of actual classrooms that BTs will encounter (Nantanga, 2014), hence the importance of some kind of partnerships with teacher training institutions. Most participants mentioned the assumptions schools make about their preparedness and the insufficient training from the universities, as Matshaya (**Manankwe Secondary School**) mentioned during the interviews that *"... like what you learn from university and what you get when you get to the workplace, they are two different things. There are so many things that they skip, like, there are so many things that they don't tell us..."* Similarly, Success reflected in the journal that *"Educators assume that you are ready to teach, and the university has prepared you enough"*, overlooking the complexity of the profession and the differences between universities. Although content and design of each of the teacher education courses in South Africa's public HEIs are not homogenous (Nkambule,

2020), their overarching aim is to expose pre-service teachers to the dynamics of the teaching profession.

One way to achieve this is through teaching practice where pre-service teachers spend a considerable amount of time (depending on the institutional programme) in a school setting, under the supervision of a seasoned teacher, preparing, observing and delivering lessons (Robinson & Rusznyak, 2020). However, the participants highlighted the acquired false impressions during teacher training once they experience the reality of the profession, which is noted in the responses below:

> *The university gives us this narrative that you just get there, you teach and it's nice and you have fun, but they don't tell you that you get to schools where there is [are] no books. You will get to schools where there's … there is a lot of challenges, you know. Especially discipline. Ja. I feel like the institution [university], on their side, need to prepare. They need to, I don't know how, but during their practicals make sure they get constructive feedback so that they update on how to tackle some of the challenges and better equip students.* (**Success, Manankwe Secondary School**)

> *For instance, the file. I did PGCE [Postgraduate Certificate in Education]. Never ever at any point did I know that there was admin ya [of] file— ya [of] teacher file. I didn't know. And I didn't even know how to compile one when I started teaching… this is a real-life situation, it's not in a university whereby we're just talking, where they just give you strategies on how to tackle problems, but this is the real life, it's different.* (**Nandipha, Baobab Secondary School**)

The disconnect between ITE and teaching realities in the school environments were highlighted by the BTs. In their view, the teacher educators impressed on them the idea that different curriculum offerings at their higher learning institutions and teaching realities in schools aligned. Different higher learning institutions make efforts to provide the best experiential learning opportunities through micro-teaching lessons and mainly TP for prolonged periods throughout the study period the student teachers are enrolled in their programmes (Ji et al., 2022; Msimanga, 2020). However, the BTs lamented this training because they thought it insufficiently prepared them for the types of schools that exist in some parts of South Africa, including their current schools of employment. Their understanding was that the course content in various teacher training programmes had to closely resemble the teaching profession challenges and opportunities on the ground, but they felt they were let down. Similarly, Woest (2018) found that some of the participants in her study were disappointed that higher learning institutions prepared them on how to use various

tech-embedded teaching approaches notwithstanding limited chances of accessing such in the schools they would later work at.

Issues of learner discipline and preparing student teachers for classroom discipline are a serious concern for BTs, however, they did not only complain but also made suggestions for the teacher education institutions. Success said, *"I feel like the institution [university], on their side, need to prepare … make sure they get constructive feedback so that they update on how to tackle some of the challenges and better equip students."* This reiterates the importance of partnership, where universities interact with the schools and improve their courses by exposing student teachers to examples of different classroom management practices. Notwithstanding the TP that gives BTs the opportunity to learn about classroom management and learners' disciplines, their responses suggest that it is not enough because of limited time. Adams et al. (2022) posit that "inadequate classroom management is not only one of the crucial beginning teachers' problems, but also one of the main causes for stress, lack of job satisfaction and teacher dropout" (p. 727). Thus, considering that all participants are concerned with under preparedness while they continue to experience challenges with classroom management and disciplining learners during the lessons, it is critical for teacher training institutions to think of partnerships.

On the other hand, a participant addressed the perceptions senior colleagues have of fully qualified BTs because of high expectations placed on BTs. The response illustrates the point:

> *I think other teachers, including maybe our management, think maybe we know everything just because we come from the university. You've been to a university, you can handle any situation, but they don't understand that we [are] still new. Even if I know but I have to adapt, this is a real-life situation. It's not in a university whereby we're just talking, it's different when you are now a full-time teacher.* (**Nkahlanipho, Manankwe Secondary School**)

The participant felt that some teachers and management were impatient with them and less supportive because they were graduates and possessed the right competencies to attend to whatever challenges they faced. The developing storyline "they don't understand", as evidenced above, suggests Nkahlanipho may have sought help from his senior colleagues and was met with hostility. Curtis et al. (2024) state that positioning is inexplicably linked to interaction, such as that which occurs during a mentoring conversation to ensure that all actors understand their roles and responsibilities within a collaborative relationship, to prevent BTs from feeling disempowered. As a result of such experiences, the BT felt

unfavourably positioned to not challenge the status quo and remain silent on his desire to be exposed to more professional development opportunities to strengthen his teaching competencies. In this school set-up, it seems practices are strongly etched on respect for authority and hierarchy and anyone who challenges this arrangement may be assigned unfavourable duties. This confirms the point made by Harré et al. (2009) that, despite their desires to be positioned favourably, the social activities BTs have access to not only depend on their abilities but also on the assigned duties and rights in relation to the dominant culture. This means that the dominant moral orders in the working environments in which BTs are located, dictate what they can and cannot do, say and cannot say. In this study, BTs seem to have been assigned statutory duties, that is, complying with the predetermined "local corpus of sayings and doings" (Harré et al., 2009, p. 6). To protest what Archer (2003, p. 6) calls "structural disablements", which constitute moral orders that inhibit an agent's ability to exert their power and influence, BTs first need to recognise the power that resides within them (Giddens, 2005).

The findings above have unmasked glaring disparities that exist between practise and theory (Baguley, 2019) and bring to question the quality of ITE training that BTs experience (Deacon, 2016). According to Cross et al. (2020), BTs who received proper mentorship support during and beyond their ITE training were better placed to cope with multiple in-service challenges compared to those who did not receive it. Kelly et al. (2019) have also found that the BTs who felt their ITE programmes adequately capacitated them, found the teaching profession more desirable than those who did not. This highlights the importance of pre-service training in developing teachers who are empowered to deal with the multiplicity of factors that affect the teaching experiences of the BTs. These studies demonstrate the importance of collaboration amongst the key stakeholders to address some of these challenges. To support this point, Success acted as a collaborator by suggesting the formation of a multi-stakeholder strategic partnership between the schools, education departments and higher learning institutions to combat the existing on-field professional gaps amongst the BTs through coherent and relevant mentorship programmes:

> *I think a mentorship programme is what is needed. You know. And I feel like institutions have to [sic] have active teachers. New teachers to share their experience you know because there are a lot of situations that take place in high schools that I feel like institutions are not addressing.* (**Manankwe, Secondary School**)

By imploring those concerned to join hands to enhance their mentoring experiences in the formative teaching years of their careers, the BTs also exhibit their expertise (Barnes, 2004). This confirms what Aderibigbe et al. (2022), and Awaya et al. (2003) have argued, that BTs need to be seen by their experienced colleagues, including education officials, as equally capable partners whose knowledge and unique experiences can enhance the understanding of how successful mentorship programmes can be conceptualised. Although Success had particular expectations about the schooling system and expertly suggested what needed to change for other BTs to feel capacitated enough to deal with professional challenges, he overlooked what Archer (1995) calls cultural emergent properties (CEPs), which is "people's theories, ideas, beliefs, values and norms" that are espoused by a particular group of people (Namakula, 2021, p. 50). In other words, currently such developmental activities where BTs play an active supportive role, ably anchored by their district education officials, are not the shared values, norms and beliefs.

5.5 Navigating a Cocktail of Challenges

The schools represent big organisations with individuals from different socio-cultural, economic, and political backgrounds; hence, challenges are inevitable. During the focus group and individual interviews, including the BTs' reflective journals, participants talked about and reflected on the various challenges to which they had been exposed and felt inadequately supported by the school management, having had to navigate a cocktail of challenges. Authors (Botha & Rens, 2018; Ballantyne & Retell, 2020) mention that when BTs are confronted with a gap between theory and practice, they experience reality shock and praxis shock in their initial years as they enter the teaching profession. Similarly, in this current study, the BTs experienced a cocktail of challenges that were overwhelming for most of them.

5.5.1 Challenges in Managing ill-disciplined Learners

The BTs' primary source of frustration emanated from the helplessness they felt not being able to manage ill-disciplined learners. Some felt that learners disrespected them because of the perceived close age gap, which disadvantaged them as compared to their senior counterparts. This is how one of them narrated it:

> *We are made to feel small because some of these learners don't respect us as young teachers. But the problem is, when these young people, especially these learners, when they see us, they see a potential boyfriend or girlfriend. Which is different to the experienced or older teachers.* (**Morena, Manankwe Secondary School**)

> *The work environment is fine. It's just the learners because we are new teachers, and they don't respect us that much… I also want to talk about the girls. They think…it's the same thing le bona [with them]. Akere bo bro tsa rona lekeisheneng they go to them wabona [You see, our brothers in the location date them]. So, they feel like maybe they have somehow have [sic] have [sic] a chance with us.* (**Nkahlanipho, Manankwe Secondary School**)

It is undeniable that the teaching profession, like other professions, is experiencing younger teachers which could present advantages and disadvantages, as mentioned by BTs above. Resalaiti (2022) talks about the advantages of little difference of age gap between learners and young teachers, which makes it easy to form the common ground and facilitate communication. However, BTs' experiences were different because of the practices and behaviours that are influenced by the dominant socio-economic context, characterised by older men initiating intimate relationships with them and ultimately leading some of the learners to assume their younger teachers are their equals, hence "*when they see us, they see a potential boyfriend"* and because some of these learners do not see anything wrong with these intimate relationships with older men in their communities, they extend this behaviour to their schools and somehow *"feel like maybe they have somehow have [sic] have [sic] a chance with"* some of the BTs. This could be problematic to some of the teachers who do not consider this a serious professional misconduct as De Wet (2024) notes that some teachers abuse their position of authority and that some female learners are their "property". A Parkes' et al. (2022) study in Uganda also found that 4,2% (35 out of 844) of the girls were victims of teacher-on-learner violence. In South Africa, a study by Moosa and Bhana (2020) explored how primary school teachers in South African construct the need for more male teachers in Foundation Phase teaching and the dominant discourse that was used by the participants was that men are "violent sexual predators" and the notion that "children are vulnerable and in need of protection from men" (p. 69).

Learners' ill-discipline and classroom management are a general challenge for teachers, irrespective of the number of teaching years, although experience does help to limit the intensity of ill-discipline. In this study, BTs had several incidents of learners behaving disrespectfully and undermining their authority. For example:

> *there was once an incident neh, where I almost got slapped by a learner. In another incident, while we were doing [the] corrections, one learner pulled out his leg to trip the other learner and he almost fell and then a nka stelo [the victim took a chair to hit the perpetrator] and was badly injured but at a previous school where I worked, I never experienced discipline with learners.* (**Nandipha, Baobab Secondary School**)

> *Where I come from, the children [learners] were disciplined but then when it comes here [at my present school], we don't have much of discipline [learners are ill-disciplined], so it becomes [a] problem.* (**Matshaya, Manankwe Secondary School**)

From the excerpts above, BTs were overwhelmed by episodes of learner ill-discipline at their current schools, and it is interesting that both reflected on minimal incidents of learner ill-discipline where they previously worked. To perpetually being exposed to disruptive learner behaviour interferes with the BTs' ability to attend to their core teaching duties because they constantly must reprimand disruptive learners. Nonetheless, although not ideal, being exposed to problematic learners in their current schools may be a unique opportunity for them to develop their other survival and coping skills which could be useful for their future growth in the teaching profession; especially for those who have ambitions to serve in SMTs where they will be expected to deal with such problems tactfully and maturely. Several studies have found that BTs often struggle with classroom management and the support from their senior colleagues assists to calm learners (Botha & Rens, 2018; Dyosini, 2022; Swart, 2013). Because of BTs' limited professional classroom experience, it was unsurprising that they encountered such challenges as engaging with ill-disciplined learners with different behaviours. However, the interventions of their senior colleagues made a difference, thus addressing the importance of collaborative mentorship for professional development. Çakmak et al.'s (2018) study found that while BTs struggled with classroom management, they were fortunate to have experienced colleagues helping with strategies on how to address this.

Despite several studies pointing to the significance of effective parental involvement in their children's schooling (Lawrence & Fakaude, 2021; Tan et al., 2020), and applying effective parenting strategies to instil discipline in children (Sege & Siegel, 2018; Ward et al., 2020; Weisenmuller & Hilton, 2020), one teacher felt let down by what he considered to be ineffective disciplinary parenting strategies used by his learners' parents. As such, the BT felt this worsened the learners' ill-discipline and consequently exacerbated his bad early career experiences:

> *Sometimes you feel like you call a parent and then the parent when they get here le bona [they]… it's like… they can't deal with that child. It's like ngwana enwa o ba hlotse [they also cannot deal with their child] at home, everywhere. So, I'm like, 'Okay fine, if you're having a problem with your own child, what can I actually do to the same child because, number one, I can't beat your child. There's nothing I can do to your child.' It's like when you try to involve the parents, and in most cases it does not work out because the same way this child behaves here (at school) is the same at home.* (**Morena, Manankwe Secondary School**)

Notwithstanding that teachers act as secondary parents in a school; however, primary parenting plays a crucial role in laying good discipline foundations that are reiterated at school. This is even more important within a context where teachers are decapitated by the National Department of Education which has criminalised various classroom disciplines, leaving teachers confused of the alternative classroom disciplines. The BT addresses the same point above *"… what can I actually do to the same child because, number one, I can't beat your child. There's nothing I can do to your child…"* because the system does not allow teachers to touch a learner, including shouting and finger pointing at them. Although outdated, Uher (1924) defined discipline as manifested not only in the school classroom, but also in the sociological concept of criminal elements (in Kropáč et al., 2023). It is questionable whether teacher training institutions prepare future teachers on different strategies to discipline learners, considering the various concerns that have been addressed in the findings. Kropáč et al. (2023) opine that the teacher is expected to have the necessary knowledge and awareness of the means of achieving discipline to ensure a functional educational process, which is undeniable with the alternative ways to exercise it. Thus, BTs raise the issue that learner discipline is a challenge for parents at home, further addressing 'younger' parenting, which causes complexities for schools and teachers with limited creative discipline strategies.

In case of another teacher, he seemed to suggest if he had been adequately capacitated by the school management, he would have been better able to deal with learner ill-discipline. This is how he articulated his feelings:

> *They never told me how to handle discipline. It's something that you have to sort out on your own. They never tell you, 'Okay, we have an issue for discipline here, but this is how you go about it.' You know. I was just thrown in the lion den and then I had to see myself out. So, when it came to discipline, no one gave me heads up or how to go about it. Which is something that's problematic in teaching and learning. Especially in our school.* (**Success, Manankwe Secondary School**)

The articulation by BT above that "*they never told me…*" expresses both a disappointment and expectation that someone did not do what they had to and as such leaves them feeling frustrated and stranded. Nevertheless, Success seemingly realised, for the sake of his survival, had to "see myself out" which exemplifies a young teacher who had it in him to withstand any challenge thrown at him. While it is important for BTs to be supported by their senior colleagues, they too need to take full responsibility for their professional growth and development by reaching out to willing colleagues beyond their schools. Sen (1999) makes a point that any form of human development needs eradication of big stumbling blocks and that people need to recognise that their agency is "central to addressing these deprivations" (p. 2). Thus, by expecting less from their senior colleagues, BTs minimise feeling neglected and start taking full ownership of their own professional trajectories.

Attempting to understand how BTs felt structurally constrained by what they deemed to be ineffective intervention strategies by their learners' parents and ill-disciplined learners requires that we do so within the context of what Archer (2003, p. 5) refers to as "causal powers of structural emergent properties". This means that BTs, parents and learners act as emergent structural properties that contribute to how each is positioned, considering that for someone to be positioned in a storyline, there must be an interlocutor who shapes the nature of the speech acts or is shaped by the speech acts (Campbell & Hodges, 2020). In the case of Nkahlanipho, for example, female learners may have found his welcoming personality an opportunity to advance their vested interests because any exertion of power towards the realisation of a constraint or an enablement should "stand in a relationship such that it obstructs or aids the achievement of some specific agential enterprise" (Archer, 2003, p. 5).

However, of interest was to notice how two teachers got excited when they referred to better mentoring experiences they had from other schools they previously worked at compared to the unpleasant experiences at the current schools:

> *When I was at, listen to the difference, neh, Mamphori Secondary School[10], I got all the support I needed as a substitute teacher. The LF[11] [curriculum or subject advisor] was also in contact with me. The LF came regularly and the LF told me 'If you struggle with the topic, tell me. I will help you or I will come and give that lesson to the learners.* (**Nandipha, Baobab Secondary School**)

> *Early last year, I was actually an EA [education assistant[12]] in one of the schools in Metamorphosis[13]. So, I think there I got to learn in terms of administration. that side, ja, I was given a lot of support especially from my HOD [head of department] because he was teaching everything from a file, and I learned so many things in terms of professionalism and a whole lot of things because I was there for about four months. So that's when I learned ja this is… that's when I got support especially from the higher structures [senior school management]. Because that side is very much formal*. (**Morena, Manankwe Secondary School**)

The better mentoring experiences the two BTs had in their previous impressed on them the idea that the cultural repertoire across schools is homogenous but were shocked to notice stack differences that existed between their current and then workplaces. By constantly comparing schools may work against them if they overlook some of the good learning experiences that they may have in their current schools. On the other hand, those desirable mentorship practices they received in their previous workplaces could be what they needed at this point in their professional lives to minimise the effects of what they considered to be minimal mentorship support in Baobab and Manankwe Secondary Schools respectively. Morena attests that "*I learned so many things in terms of professionalism and a whole lot of things"* to suggest had it not been of those previous mentorship experiences, he would be

[10] I used a pseudonym to observe anonymity.

[11] In the South African context, an office-based educator who is a subject specialist hired to support teachers with the subject-based matters to positively impact learner academic performance.

[12] Education assistants formed part of a cohort of unemployed youth in South Africa who were deployed to different schools to act as assistants to teachers under the Presidential Employment Stimulus programme initiated by the South African government in 2020 to curb the effects of Covid-19 pandemic (Academy of Science of South Africa, 2021).

[13] I used a pseudonym to observe anonymity.

struggling because he taps into these past experiences as he navigates complexities in his formative teaching years as a full-time teacher.

In the two excerpts, it holds that BTs' positioning carried different meanings depending on the local context because "the same physical object can carry different meanings and the same meaning can be carried by different physical objects" (Harré et al., 2009, p. 7). Thus, in this instance, Harré et al. (2009) caution BTs against expecting to be treated fairly across all moral fields because the nature of their positioning will be determined by how they are received in different environments. In fact, Barnes (2004, p. 13) warns that which positions are accessible to people depends "on how their interests and capabilities are perceived by others in the group" to justify the different mentorship support Nandipha and Morena experienced in different schools. Morena's comment *"that side is very much formal"* suggests his favourable positioning may have been a consequence of the priority the school head places on BTs and the general attitude of the SMT towards BTs' professional development. It is unsurprising that they had different mentoring experiences in their current schools because a person's positioning perpetually shifts and thus they can occupy multiple positions (Tait-McCutcheon & Loveridge, 2016), and in their current schools they had been differently positioned. Francis (2012, p. 599) reminds us that people may position or be positioned in particular ways because of their own expectations of the contexts as they "bring to the particular situation their history and experience". Subsequently, Nandipha and Morena may have carried with them the past mentoring experiences at Baobab Secondary School and Manankwe Secondary School respectively from the previous schools that influenced their expectations and how different their mentoring experiences were.

5.5.2 Confronted by Learners' Socio-economic Issues

Notwithstanding the BTs' general knowledge about various socio-economic challenges, as members of the community, it is still not easy to be familiar with them. Participants were exposed to learners' socio-economic challenges, which weighed heavily on them because they were not adequately capacitated to address them. Below are two participants' responses:

> *There are social challenges that a lot of learners go through. You find sometimes a learner is not performing well. When you ask, they tell you that 'I'm molested at home', and I was never prepared for that. I don't know how to deal with someone who's going through social ills, especially home-related stuff. And then you get kids here who don't have clothes, walk long distances, they sleep in class. I do not know how to go about it, 'cos now if this particular learner is telling you, 'I'm extremely exhausted', there's nothing that I can do. It becomes a problem, I was not equipped to say 'This is what you do, this is who you go to'… 'If I eat here at school, I will eat tomorrow again at the very same place'.* (**Success, Manankwe Secondary School**)

> *I had another case in my class where one learner confided in me that she goes to bed without eating and at school her friends offer her something to eat during break. She indicated that her mother is always drunk and does not buy food regularly. I reported this case to the SBST [school-based support team] team [sic], and the matter has not been dealt with till to date.* (**Nandipha, Baobab Secondary School**)

The statement *"I had another case"* suggests that the BT has continuously experienced and reported cases to the SBST (school-based support team) without being attended to, possibly because the school was familiar with such issues and unable to assist. The participants felt constrained by the structure to exert their authority (Archer, 2003) and were possibly hesitant to exercise their powers to challenge the structure as new members in the schools. By the same token, Nandipha's unfavourable positioning may have been caused by her distant relationship with influential colleagues because they perceive her "as an outsider" (Barnes, 2004, p. 12). Success, on the other hand, felt let down by his seniors whom he thought were not transparent and forthcoming, "*I was not equipped to say 'This is what you do, this is who you go to'"*…and seems to suggest he would be in a better position to deal with learners' socio-economic challenges had he been guided properly by those who had preceded him. According to Harré et al. (2009), BTs as actors in a storyline must understand that the unfolding reality of their professional lives, that is, the status quo, is collectively determined to imply they are equally responsible for circumstances they endure. Hence, without overlooking tensions sometimes, it is important that they learn to self-position (Dyosini, 2022) by harnessing their relationships with key decision-making colleagues so that their concerns receive the necessary attention. In addition, according to März and Kelchtermans (2020), BTs need to learn how to "read the cultural and political scripts of their school's organisation" (p. 9) to achieve favourable positioning.

It is expected that complex external social issues are brought into the classroom and affect teaching and learning and learner's participation and performance. Some schools have social workers and educational psychologists to engage with some social issues, although a popular addition to former Model C[14] and private schools. Such addition is a luxury in most government schools, leaving BTs and experienced teachers vulnerable to addressing such complicated socio-economic and cultural issues. By being concerned with their learners' socio-economic conditions, it seems BTs activated what Van Langenhove (2017, p. 6) calls "personal moral orders" wherein they engage in internal dialogue about the things that bother them in their surroundings and take personal responsibility to resolve them. In this case, the social welfare of their learners; thus, assuming the position of a helper and nurturer. The post-apartheid South African government introduced the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) which has been in operation for over two decades as a measure to alleviate hunger and reduce its undesirable effects on learner participation and performance in the classroom. Despite some of its shortcomings such as inadequate nutritional ingredients and payment delays to suppliers, thereby compromising the supply of food to the schools (Berejena et al., 2018; Mensah & Karriem, 2021; Ramugondo et al., 2021), the programme has been lauded for its positive effects on the learners' school attendance and academic achievement outcomes (Malongane & Mbhenyane, 2017; Runhare et al., 2021). As evidenced in the extracts above, hunger among the learners is still a problem and, while plausible, it seems the government's efforts need to be significantly improved to eradicate it in schools.

Although it would be ideal for all the learners to receive psychological support from qualified health professionals, according to Dark (2020), counselling services are sparsely available in most South African schools, especially those servicing learners from economically challenged communities. For example, in this study, one teacher lamented the education department for depriving them of this critical service when they clearly needed it based on the constant exposure to social ills:

> *I've hardly seen any social worker or psychologist, someone to help the learners with their traumas … I seldom see one and it's been a while since I've seen one.* (**Success, Manankwe Secondary School**).

[14] Model C schools started during the time of the apartheid government in South Africa and were generally well-resourced and reserved predominantly for white learners (Christie & McKinney, 2017).

It is promising to hear the participant mentioning that at some point a social worker visited the school, considering the complex social issues learners bring in the school and classrooms which suggest a prioritised need for social workers and psychologist. Pillay et al. (2023) advise that in such circumstances where government social workers are difficult to access, teachers can use their agential powers to source help from external stakeholders such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) specialising in counselling and where such is difficult, they may use their counselling skills acquired during pre-service and in-service training. However, unfortunately in the case of this study's participants, they expressed inadequacies to deal with these challenges and their reporting often received little attention. The nature of teaching profession expects teachers to play different roles such as knowledge sharers, parents, doctors, social workers, psychologists, and financial advisors, which is beyond teachers' training and expertise.

5.5.3 Inadequate Senior Colleagues' Support

Literature widely recognises the importance of mentorship support provided to BTs (Colognesi et al., 2020; Kadenge, 2019; Kvam et al., 2023; Sowell, 2017), but most of the BTs were critical of their senior colleagues. They felt that as experienced teachers they were better positioned to provide informed guidance on the multitude of challenges they were facing. When they were supported, they felt the support was inconsistent, and it seemed that some of the senior teachers were inadequately capacitated (Gandhi & Johnson, 2016; Kupila et al., 2017) to deal with every problem the BTs experienced. For example, their reflective journal comments showed this discontentment:

> *The only support I have received thus far was with that learner who tried to establish intimate relations with me, because senior teachers came to learn about this and the particular learner was called for some sort of a disciplinary hearing. She had to apologize for such behaviour and declared to never do so again. This helped me a lot because I got to witness the power of collaborating with colleagues to reach a common goal. But, sadly, this only happened once and hasn't been so the entire time. I had to figure this all out by myself. There will be other teachers offering help there [here] and there, but it`s not enough though.* **(Nkahlanipho, Manankwe Secondary School)**

> *No proper handover was done by the HOD. The general expectation is for the HOD to at least assist in providing the necessary teaching material. The learners did not have any textbooks and there were no teacher guides either. The HOD and the school management made little effort in ensuring that I receive books and teacher guides. It was very difficult to*

> *proceed in the classroom with limited resources. From there on I took on the responsibility of purchasing some of the books I needed from my own pocket.* (**Nandipha, Baobab Secondary School**)

Morena's (**Manankwe Secondary School**) individual interview revealed the following:

> *I feel like in the beginning there was support … sometimes you will also get a feeling that they (teachers) are also busy. So, if you have certain learners who are very troublesome, at some point they will not be able to help you, because at the end of the day they can only support you so far*.

The BTs had certain expectations from the senior teachers and school management, understandably, to address some of the learners' ill-behaviours and provide support with teaching and learning resources. While some assistance was initially provided, it was short-lived because teachers also had to focus on their duties after some basic help. Participants felt that it was their supervisors' (DHs) responsibility to provide all the necessary teaching resources because they request them from the provincial and district departments but were shocked to learn that they had to buy some of these instructional resources for themselves. As challenging and draining were these realities, the BTs still exhibited resilience, and it was encouraging to hear of different self-initiated interventions to cope with some of these challenges.

For example, when Nandipha realised she had structural disablement (Archer, 2003, 2007), she discharged her agency by buying the educational resources from her own pocket. It could be argued that some BTs' agency led them to take charge because, although they may have had the full support of their senior colleagues for a deep sense of belonging (Dyosini, 2022; Kvam et al., 2023), they could not wait for mentors and/or seniors because the mentors/senior colleagues also needed to attend to their workload. Researchers (Aderibigbe et al., 2022; Daniels, 2019; Matla & Xaba, 2020) argue that senior teachers deal with a multitude of competing responsibilities such as teaching and administrative duties that inhibit successful mentoring. It is, therefore, important for the principal and education officials, at provincial and national level, to seriously consider the impediment of the teacher workload for effective, successful, and quality mentorship experiences, because reducing it for the BTs and their mentors can enhance the quality of these mentorship programmes (Pogodzinski, 2014; Shanks et al., 2020).

5.5.4 The Absence of a Brainstorming Platform

Other than being supported by their senior colleagues, BTs understood successful mentorship to be a collaborative endeavour with their senior colleagues, which includes a platform to brainstorm solutions to various challenges they have experienced and contribute to the growth of their schools as organisations. **Success (Manankwe Secondary School**) noted that:

> *I feel like our voices are not being heard. We are not being given a platform to raise our concerns, you know. 'Cos that is where the support system comes from, just to say, 'Okay, end of term, what are the challenges that you have experienced? What do we need to work on?' If we have done that, I think it was gonna [going] be easier to say, 'I'm having trouble with this, these are the challenges that I'm facing'. But that's not being done.*

This suggests that some BTs recognised that collaboration would unlock multiple growth opportunities *"I got to witness the power of collaborating with colleagues to reach a common goal…",* rather than singlehandedly searching for answers. By exploring collaborative opportunities, BTs expand their support network which may extend beyond teacher colleagues to other family and friends from whom they will source counsel. März and Kelchtermans (2020) argue that it is imperative for BTs to establish support networks beyond their schools because it allows them to reflect on their schools' micro-politics more clearly from afar in an objective and non-emotional manner. However, the mentioning of *"... end of term…"* suggests that some BTs needed interactions to critically reflect and share different experiences that will assist to strengthen some practices and identify others that needed attention preparing for the next term. Resalaiti (2022) is of the opinion that teachers should give full support to jointly promote the continuous growth of new teachers and new teachers should also combine their own strengths, make full use of their own advantages, and define their work priorities. It could be argued that the above response from Success supports what Freire (1970) calls praxis "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (p. 36). Praxis is a central defining feature of human life that is expressed through intentional, reflective, meaningful activity (Freire, 1970), which was suggested by Success to the school.

During the focus group interviews, it became clear that BTs needed to be heard and staging regular peer-to-peer reflection sessions together with their seniors in a safe space where there will be no *judgementoring* (Hairon et al., 2020; Hobson, 2017; Hobson & Malderez, 2013). Despite this, although BTs felt entitled to access certain privileges based on their perceived

sense of worth, however, their positionality in the storylines within their local contexts depends on the rights and duties assigned by their senior colleagues (Harré et al., 2009). The excerpt "*we are not being given a platform to raise our concerns, you know"* reveals that Success was assigned rights and duties that were unfavourable to him. As such, his duty was to take orders from his seniors without questioning them. Hence, he needs to recognise that the rights and duties he is exposed to depends on what he knows and does not know about his profession, because with the assistance of macro policy, he will "discover the responsibilities of school leaders and mentors to offer support and consequently, to some extent they then request to exercise their formal rights" (Kvam et al., 2023).

One BT, instead of support, felt policed, and this made her feel more disempowered than empowered. Her response illustrates the point:

> *I think it would maybe function better if the HOD would hold subject meetings with us per week so that we can raise all of the issues and concerns, and hopefully our issues would be attended to, and we will get better advice on how to deal with some of the matters. But I honestly feel like at the moment my HOD is just policing us. 'Submit the books, how many activities, marksheet this' neh, but the actual support, like I have someone I can go to when I struggle with this, I feel like I don't have that. The HOD is just there to police my work, nothing else. So, I feel like the HOD it would be so much better if we would meet in this fashion [focus group style] and then we could just raise all [of] the challenges that we have experienced. And then find better ways on how to deal with them. That would work so much better.* (**Nandipha, Baobab Secondary School**)

Nandipha clearly had a lot of concerns about the way her DH managed them in the English department and as a result believed this interfered with her work and productivity. However, she did not just complain about being policed by her DH but suggested solutions on how she believed the supervisor could lead them in the department. In addition, she advocated for collaboration among her colleagues with the belief that this will lead to effective and efficient way in which her team of colleagues in their department operated, hence, "*it would be so much better if we would meet in this fashion [focus group style] and then we could just raise all [of] the challenges that we have experienced. And then find better ways on how to deal with them."* However, it is also possible that her supervisor may seem to be policing them whereas she just fulfils her contractual obligations as a middle manager of controlling and monitoring the work of teachers to ensure they teach and assess learners as expected.

Some of the participants valued reflection as one of the strategies for success in their classrooms and beyond. They remarked as follows:

> *Let's say we teach and then after teaching we meet up and say, 'What were the challenges of the day? And how can we resolve [them]?' … it's very simple that maybe sometimes I cannot think of an idea on how to actually make something work, but someone will actually give me an idea and then most probably it might work. You will find that if you are seated with some of the experienced teachers, they might actually give you something that you don't actually know and you will actually get ideas, because some of them have learned them through the years. Hence someone says wisdom actually is not something that you can get through books but sometimes you can actually get so much information when we are seated with someone who is wiser.* (**Morena, Manankwe Secondary School**)

> *If maybe they could establish programmes whereby novice teachers gather and share information and strategies on how to deal best with such instances [different challenges they face] together with the guidance from seniors, we can be able to at least arm ourselves with knowledge and this will therefore take us a step closer to being self-reliant, good educational practitioner.* (**Nkahlanipho, Manankwe Secondary School**)

The above extracts reveal how BTs involved in what Archer (2007) refers to as reflexivity in that they could identify ways they needed to be supported, and this could mean they engaged in internal conversations reflecting on the structure and how it enabled and constrained them. By engaging in these forms of internal conversations, BTs have used their agential powers to respond to structural disablements (Archer, 2007) and challenge their positioning as new teachers (Barnes, 2004; Harré et al., 2009) as they reflect on the power and/or limitations they have in them in relation to the structure.

One of the roles BTs exhibited was leadership and self-efficacy, by suggesting valuable suggestions on how certain problems could be resolved as demonstrated by the above extracts from two Manankwe Secondary School participants. As such, schools and various education authorities need to start recognising BTs as highly resourceful employees who can contribute to the growth of their schools (Kvam et al., 2023), as opposed to seeing them as a burden and clueless subjects upon which ideas are acted. März and Kelchtermans (2020, p. 9), call this phenomenon "deficit perspective", that is, seeing BTs as mere passive participants instead of appreciating their uniqueness and richness of perspectives they bring to the table. This study, therefore, argues that schools that flourish in a highly competitive society and are responsive to societal challenges meaningfully recognise all staff members, particularly newly qualified teachers as "organisational persons" (Friedman & Kass, 2002, p. 679) who possess important

skillsets and personal qualities that can contribute to the general growth of their schools. As such, the schools need to open the channels of engagement with the BTs to tap into their talents and unique perspectives through which they tackle complex organisational challenges. Notwithstanding the time constraints and multifaceted activities in the schools, it is clear that BTs have certain knowledge and skills that could benefit the schools and teachers for effective teaching and learning and quality education.

5.6 BTs' Agency to Cope with Professional Challenges

As mentioned earlier, BTs struggled with a myriad of professional challenges in their respective schools, and this was exacerbated by their schools' inadequate support mechanisms to curtail these constraints. To confront these structural disablements and unfavourable positioning, some of them challenged these impediments by activating their agential powers. Although their challenges may have been similar, they used varied methods to address them.

5.6.1 Confronting Classroom Management Constraints

BTs in this study expressed their frustrations with having to deal with the challenges of learners' ill-discipline. It is important to acknowledge that this problem is not exclusive to inexperienced teachers because there are experienced teachers who are bedevilled by it at regular intervals. Hence, Lazarides et al. (2020) warn that it is not the number of teaching years that dictate the teachers' ability to manage their classrooms effectively but their self-efficacy which closely links with agency. In this case, BTs' self-perception is a key factor when they navigate intricate interactions with learners within a confined discipline context. This means that their level of confidence in dealing with behavioural problems posed by learners determines their course of action as relatively new staff members, who could be challenged by learners to test their decisiveness.

According to Archer (2003), there are agential structural properties such as vested interests that BTs possess, and because of these vested interests, they will discharge different coping strategies to confront structural disablements like learner ill-discipline when they feel their authority is undermined. In other instances, when BTs fear their reputation and credibility are at stake for appearing as though they cannot address ill-disciplined learners in the eyes of their colleagues, it stands to reason that they may seek creative ways to confront the issue.

Realising their agential powers and protecting their vested interests, BTs in this study used different coping strategies to deal with ill-disciplined learners. For example:

> *I have to deal with huge classes. Bo ma [around 40 learners], not 40, almost 50. It's like 48 learners in one class and just trying to get the order I had to try different methods and I think I found e berekang [the one that works]. I keep quiet. They talk, I keep quiet. I talk, they keep quiet but ha re tlo bua re le two (we are not going to both talk). So, if they want to talk, I just stand there—they can take ten minutes, I don't scream. So, ha ke sa hlola hape ke stresser like before (I no longer stress myself like before). Previously, I used to shout and scream, and it would just get out of control, and it didn't really help. So, I realised hore [that] okay I just walk in. I keep quiet, fold my arms and just look at them. So, I realized that it's working.* (**Nandipha, Baobab Secondary School**)

> *At times, Sir, I will [actually] remove the learner from the group that is [actually]… that I feel like when I combine them [actually] they are making a whole lot of noise…. I will put them in a group that is [actually] doing well academically… At some point, I will [actually] take the learner for detention. I will [actually] remain after school. Then, I will detain the learner for 30 minutes … then for some, if the behaviour persists, I will [actually] give them extra chores like cleaning the classroom after school … But in a case whereby I feel like the behaviour is extreme, this is whereby I'll now start to engage the parent. Send the letter to the parent so that they can [actually] come [to the school].* (**Morena, Manankwe Secondary School**)

> *No one took me under their wing to say 'This is what you need to do. If you come across this challenge, this is the person that you go to.' I found those things out for myself. A lot of things was self-discovery—it was never the thing that 'Okay, I have to go to mang mang [so and so] and they will tell me what to do.' I discovered on myself [on my own]. I had to ask questions: 'I have this type of learner, he's problematic, what do I do, who do I go to?' and then that's how I learned a lot of stuff on my own.* (**Success, Manankwe Secondary School)**

The three BTs had a vested interest in their learners, perhaps to see them successful in life, which may have also been sparked by the realisation that tolerating disruptive learner behaviour may prove catastrophic to the academic performance of their subject areas. They have demonstrated some degree of creativity and self-confidence in their abilities to deal with difficult learners, despite their relative years of teaching experience and lack of support from their senior colleagues. In addition, BTs understood their responsibility towards moulding their learners into responsible young adults by seeking creative ways to deal with this challenge. Kropáč et al. (2023) opine that it would be effective and desirable for newly appointed and experienced teachers to work collaboratively with the identified factors that affect teaching discipline, thus avoiding some of the problems for BTs, who sometimes find it

difficult to build and maintain discipline in the classroom when they do not know effective strategies. However, Nkahlanipho sounded less optimistic and reluctant about his coping strategies, which demonstrates low agential powers by chasing ill-disciplined learners out of the classroom and seemed reluctant to report them to the principal:

> *In terms of the ill-discipline, like the learner disrespecting you, it almost happens for maths lit. [mathematical literacy] grade 10 because wa bona [you see] I don't know what's happening with them but most of them they are gangsters. They behave that way. So, I try sometimes maybe just chase them out. Maybe go to the principal. Maybe involve other teachers but like sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't.*

The above response suggests that Nkahlanipho was not sure what to do with ill-disciplined learners because he was not sure of the reasons for their behaviour, hence make assumptions about their behaviour as resembling being members of 'gangsters'. In addition, he appears not to be aware of the department of education rules not to chase learners out of the class during teaching and learning, something that could have been clarified by a mentor teacher or the principal. Chudý and Neumeister (2014) extrapolate that BTs usually have problems with pupils' discipline and cannot estimate what they can or cannot afford, because BTs cannot easily work with rewards and punishments like experienced teachers, not only towards learners, but also towards themselves. Bandura (1977, p. 194) notes that "people fear and tend to avoid threatening situations they believe exceed their coping skills, whereas they get involved in activities and behave assuredly when they judge themselves capable of handling situations that would otherwise be intimidating."

5.6.2 Demonstrating Creativity to Make up for Insufficient Instructional Materials and Improve Classroom Practice

Earlier, I mentioned the struggles some of the BTs had to access various instructional materials. Some of these challenges are not deliberate since the schools operate in some of the most economically deprived communities (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). Often, in these contexts, not all learners have access to textbooks and teachers explore alternative means to access these instructional materials so that the academic project is not compromised. In this study, BTs used their creativity to counteract some of these challenges. For example, when some of them realised their schools would probably not buy the textbooks, they took advantage of being tech-savvy and explored alternative means to access them online.

According to Latorre-Cosculluela et al. (2021), teachers need to recognise the importance of infusing technology into their daily professional lives during these times when technology plays such a significant role in education and society at large. For instance, when some realised their senior teacher's reluctance and/or inadequate understanding of certain topics, they searched for resources on the internet:

> *So, what I usually do ka [with] poetry, neh, I google analysis and then they analyse the poem for me, line by line or stanza by stanza. And then I can only [then]… will I be able to explain it to the learners. (**Nandipha**, **Baobab Secondary School**)*

> *YouTube has a lot of content to help those who struggle with maths…. I normally consult it when I face certain content-based challenges. Khan Academy is there [also] to bridge [such] gaps. (**Nkahlanipho, Manankwe Secondary School**)*

However, another BT used his agency to tap into other creative means to bridge this instructional materials divide. This is how he recounted this:

> *It's unfortunate because I didn't have books. [So], I'd have [to write] on the board. I will have to make sure learners write every notes that I do on the board which is time-consuming. In that space where I am supposed to be presenting content, discussing with learners, we [are] busy writing notes on the board. I'm writing summaries so that they can understand. At least so that when they go home, [they] check if they understand on their own. But we also substitute shortage of books with making copies. (**Success, Manankwe Secondary School**)*

Although the availability of adequate instructional materials presented some difficulties which threatened their quest to provide quality teaching and learning to their learners, BTs were resolute and exercised their agency to confront them. Thus, I put forth the argument that, notwithstanding structural disablements they may have experienced, which represented their outer world, they looked within themselves and demonstrated resilience as a representation of their inner world. Their unfavourable positioning posed different challenges which required that they re-position themselves within this structure. By responding in the ways they did, it seems BTs practised what Harré et al. (2009, p. 10) call "deliberate" positioning in that they defied the narrative and chose to position themselves differently because agents can choose different positions than the ones assigned to them (Francis, 2012).

5.7 Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter was two-fold, to present the findings relating to the BTs' experiences and perceptions of mentorship support in two selected public secondary schools, and to critically discuss these findings in relation to the reviewed literature and the theoretical frameworks. While it emerged that BTs valued mentorship as a professional growth, such mentoring opportunities were sparsely available, and this illuminated their harsh professional challenges. Some of the challenges they faced included dealing with learners' disciplinary and socio-economic issues, struggling to access adequate instructional materials, as well as being excluded from their schools' key decision-making processes. Interestingly and possibly unsurprising, they attributed some of their challenges to inadequate ITE training and lack of partnerships between schools and teacher training institutions. It also emerged that they saw school management teams as key role players in the execution of successful and effective mentorship programmes, but their distant support and busyness were great concerns because they limited guidance for BTs. In fact, the findings from this study revealed that there was no formal mentorship programme for BTs, instead there was ad hoc guidance from content subject senior teachers that were further constrained by workload and insufficient time.

Notwithstanding the infrequency, the BTs were generally appreciative of the professional support in the form of workshops by the Provincial Department of Education as they considered it vital for their professional development. Borrowing from two eclectic theoretical lenses in positioning theory and Archer's concepts of structure and agency, the chapter demonstrated that the BTs' professional existential crisis, that is, being thrown in the deep end without limited support, was a result of multiple layers in the schooling system and. While all the participants had exercised some form of agency, sometimes the structural impediments were so pronounced that they felt helpless and ineffective. The next chapter summarises and concludes the study by providing lessons from the discussion of the findings and narrating the main knowledge contributions and the implications for policy, practice and research relating to mentorship programmes for BTs.

Chapter 6: Bringing the Curtain Down: Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

6. Introduction

This chapter draws to a close the interlaced narratives of BTs' experiences and perceptions of mentorship in two public secondary schools in the Motheo Education District, Free State province. In the previous chapter, I presented and discussed the findings of the study drawing from positioning theory and Archer's concepts of structure and agency as theoretical frameworks. In this chapter, I conclude the study by summarising its main findings, present the main contributions and make recommendations for future research.

6.1 Summary of the Study

The overarching purpose of this study was to explore BTs' experiences and perceptions of mentorship and examined any existing mentorship programmes in the Free State public secondary schools. This was necessitated by the limited scope of research in the Free State province that has investigated existing mentorship programmes with BTs, if they exist at all, in public secondary schools. To formulate a better understanding of the phenomenon under study, the study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To interrogate and understand BTs' experiences of mentorship in public secondary schools
2 To gain insight into the BTs' perceptions of mentorship in public secondary schools
3. To identify existing mentorship programmes in public secondary schools in the Free State province
4. To analyse and problematise the factors that influence BTs' experiences and perceptions of mentorship
5. To identify different ways in which BTs can best be supported.

To achieve the above objectives, main research question of the study was: What are the secondary school BTs' experiences of mentorship in the Free State Province? This question was supported by the following sub-questions:

1. How do BTs perceive mentorship in their secondary school?
2. What are the existing BTs' mentorship programmes in the selected secondary schools?
3. What are the factors that influence the BTs' experiences and perceptions of mentorship?
4. How can the BTs be supported in their respective schools?

The qualitative research methods which I used to answer these research questions included semi-structured individual interviews, semi-structured focus group discussion and reflective journals as they allowed interactions with the participants.

6.1.1 Summary of the Findings

Research methodology is the heart of the study because it shapes the findings of the study, which were presented in this chapter. The main findings that emerged from the analysed datasets are presented below:

- **Lack of Professional Support and Strengthening the Subject Content Knowledge**
  The findings showed that BTs were critical of the professional support they received from their schools. Although they were exposed to limited off-site workshops by the FSDoE to strengthen their subject content knowledge, they felt these were irregular and preferred prominent professional development opportunities to enhance their professional growth. Notwithstanding the valued on and off-site workshops, BTs felt that the FSDoE's failure to organise regular opportunities for professional development could stunt their growth. In addition, BTs felt let down by their senior colleagues to prioritise their growth in the teaching career as they often had to figure things on their own. As a result, they felt this limited their exposure to some of the advanced pedagogical approaches and strategies they could infuse in their teaching.

- **Lack of Collegiality and School Community Support**

  BTs mentioned incongruence between what they hoped for and what they experienced in their respective schools on collegiality and support, as they dominantly felt it was insufficient. It was the shocking multiple classroom management challenges that BTs experienced, which were overwhelming and caused anxiety, stress and imposter syndrome. There were expectations that senior teachers will support them with classroom management strategies, given their experiences, rather than leaving them to think of ways to discipline learners on their own. Collegiality was about working collaboratively and sharing different ways of disciplining learners and addressing classroom management, to ensure undisturbed teaching and learning. Thus, BTs felt that the insufficient collegiality was caused by jealousy by some of their senior colleagues and threatened by the nature of knowledge and skills they brought in the schools and classrooms, hence the support for collaboration to reach the common goals for learners' success. Therefore, it was the limited support and collegiality that made BTs feel more isolated than integrated into their school communities.

- **Navigating a Cocktail of Challenges**

  The findings unmasked some of the challenges BTs dealt with in their respective schools and these worsened the experiences they have had since joining the teaching profession. These challenges ranged from dealing with disrespectful learners, having to attend to learners' socio-economic issues and inadequate support by senior colleagues when they had to deal with challenges that needed their intervention, as well as being excluded from the decision-making processes of the school. They shared how being left by their senior colleagues to singlehandedly deal with these challenges made them look incompetent. The expectation from their seasoned counterparts was that, because they were university graduates, they must possess the requisite skills and competencies to confront these issues. However, BTs have limited knowledge of the school and classroom 'realities' as compared to the senior teachers who experienced and addressed these issues daily, hence, assistance and support for BTs. This suggests that some of the BTs in South African schools operate in hostile working environments that do not promote gradual growth and have less tolerance for mistakes. This hostility may harm the efforts to attract quality teachers.

- **Under preparedness in Initial Teacher Education Programme and Support for Partnership with the Schools**

  There was an overwhelming agreement amongst BTs that the ITE training they had received from their various higher learning institutions fell short of actual realities in the schools in which they had been placed. They expressed frustrations towards HEIs who impressed on them the idea that many schools in South Africa are characterised by opulence, when most of them are plagued by multiple challenges such as lack of educational resources and ill-disciplined learners. While BTs were exposed to the schools during the TP, it was limited time for them to be acquainted with the complex issues they needed to address, some using their personal finances. However, the differently experienced challenges forced them to exercise their agencies to fulfil the expected duties and develop their knowledge and skills. This also highlighted a need for HEIs to work closely with schools to identify common challenges that pre-service teachers face and effective ways they could be supported before they join teaching full-time.

- **BTs' Discharge of their Agential Powers to Challenge Existing Structural Disablements**

  There was a strong nexus between how BTs experienced their work environments and the challenges they faced. In their schools, there were multiple disablements that threatened their professional survival. However, during difficult moments in their teaching careers, BTs discharged their agential powers and challenged existing structural disablements that compromised their professional existence in teaching. For example, they dealt with the difficulty of limited access to instructional materials by writing on the board and making copies for learners. When they did not receive content-based support from their senior colleagues, they consulted online learning platforms such as YouTube or used the search engines to access the content that could simplify the subject matter. When they were overwhelmed by problematic learner behaviour, all worsened by minimal support from their senior colleagues, they used all sorts of coping strategies such as instructing a problematic learner to clean the classroom after school or standing motionless in front of the loud class to draw the learners' attention that the lesson was about to begin. To some extent, they found these strategies to be effective. While BTs in this study exhibited strong levels of agency to deal with some of the challenges, there were some instances where structural

disablements proved too strong for them, and this brings to light the possibility that human agency can be limited by the structure based on the assigned rights and duties brought about by one's positioning (Harré et al., 2009).

6.2 Implications of the Findings

The first part of this section shines light on the implications of the findings from my interactions with BTs. Secondly, it makes recommendations on the lessons drawn from these interactions. Lastly, it highlights the primary contributions of the study. Against this background, below I debunk the implications of the mentorship experiences by BTs. Based on these implications, I make recommendations for policy and practice because it renders irrelevant the quest to understand how they experienced mentorship support in their respective schools without properly interrogating why that understanding is important for policy and practice (Kadenge, 2019).

6.2.1 Recommendations for the Schools' Orientation Programme

It emerged from the findings of this study that the way BTs are orientated when they start their new roles in their schools as teachers is conceived differently by schools. These contrasting realities could mean the schools assume teachers come from the ITE programme fully informed about their professional expectations. Thus, the study recommends the implementation of formal and systematic mentorship programmes, initiated either nationally or provincially but overseen by district offices, that support BTs' transitioning process with a present SMT throughout the process to assure BTs of their support and ultimately ease tensions that they may feel. Among other things, such programme could focus on informing BTs about the types of leave to which they are entitled and the necessary administrative responsibilities that come with taking a leave (filling and submitting the leave form(s) to their supervisors on time), how to interact with different stakeholders in education (parents, learners and officials). As evidenced in this study, school administrators sometimes end up allocating insufficient to no time for BTs because of tight schedules that compete for limited time. Considering the multiple and competing commitments they have, principals need to enact distributed leadership by identifying senior teachers among their staff who could be assigned a manageable number of BTs to mentor. This pairing should factor in the subject specialty and the grade level the mentor and mentee teach to avoid misalignment.

6.2.2 Recommendations for Schools and Principals with BTs

This study has revealed that BTs are often disregarded by their school authorities in key decision-making processes, sometimes in the matters that concern them. This means that their relative inexperience in the teaching profession may suggest to some of their senior colleagues that they are not worthy of the opportunity to have their voices heard in important conversations and discussions that determine the direction their schools should take. In response, SMTs need to adopt an inclusive approach to decision-making by involving BTs in key decision-making process, which will create the impression that their opinions and views do matter. In so doing, schools can benefit from some of the unique and fresh insights that BTs can bring forth. This also enhances the school's chances of learning across cultures and generations and ultimately unearth new and novel ideas that can improve their systems. Considering that BTs recently graduated from higher learning institutions, they potentially bring with them contemporary ideas that older counterparts may miss out on, which can give schools the competitive edge. The study further recommends that principals should encourage collaborations and collegiality between experienced teachers and BTs through regular inter-generational interactions where they share ideas that shape their teaching practices. This reduces a culture of rivalry, which gives impetus to the availability of emotional resources such as a welcoming and supportive work environment.

6.2.3 Recommendations for Dealing with Insufficient Instructional Materials

Oftentimes, the SMT takes the blame for the problem of inadequate access to instructional materials by BTs. However, this is often a result of administrative backlog at provincial or national level (Langa & Naude, 2022; Mabula et al., 2023). Hence, there is an urgent need by decision-makers at both national and provincial levels to improve their systems by cutting long procurement processes that lead to delays in the provision of instructional materials to schools in general. There is also a need for schools to explore creative ways to maximise the use of their available teaching resources such as requesting resourceful schools to donate their excess textbooks. It also calls for strict controls over retrievals of textbooks from learners. Because of their youthfulness, BTs' role in this process becomes important. Where BTs use past question papers to teach and assess, they may use their agency by requiring learners to return them at the end of the year to avoid making copies the next year which will compromise the financial resources of the economically deprived schools.

6.2.4 Recommendations for Dealing with Learners' Socio-economic Issues

One of the biggest challenges BTs expressed concerns and frustrations about—and being left to deal with it singlehandedly—was having learners approaching them to help with their domestic issues. Despite there being an SBST committee, whose function is to attend to such issues, they were surprised to learn the committee members were passive and reluctant to deal with the reported cases. For an SBST committee to be properly functional, principals need to set up regular feedback sessions with a committee chair to report on the progress made, the challenges encountered and how to counter these challenges in future. This way, committee members are likely to remain engaged and responsive. Another lesson is that, although BTs exhibited agency by attending to some of these issues, they may have suffered great emotional losses in the process which may filter into their personal and professional lives. Therefore, school principals need to inform and encourage BTs to use psychological services that are available at district offices to take care of their mental health because some of the socio-economic challenges learners confine in them with could be traumatic.

6.2.5 Recommendations for Bridging the Gap Between Theory and Practice

As mentioned earlier, BTs felt their ITE training was insufficient to prepare them for school realities. Put differently, they were of the view that they were taught the content that was detached from the reality. This brings to the fore the importance of a close working relationship between schools and higher learning institutions for both to furnish each other with the relevant information on the best approaches teacher educators could use to support student teachers on their journey to becoming competent teachers. It also illuminates a need by higher learning institutions to do a post-mortem where they check in with their ITE graduates on areas in which they feel they still need professional support post-graduation and advise them accordingly. On one hand, this could present staffing challenges in a higher learning landscape where the teaching staff are already overburdened (Dlamini & Dlamini, 2024; Luzipho et al., 2023); however, it equally presents an opportunity to HEIs and provincial education departments to collaborate with a private sector to absorb on ad-hoc basis retired teachers to serve as advisors to BTs by providing them with constructive regular feedback after lessons they had observed and any other professional challenge they may need assistance with.

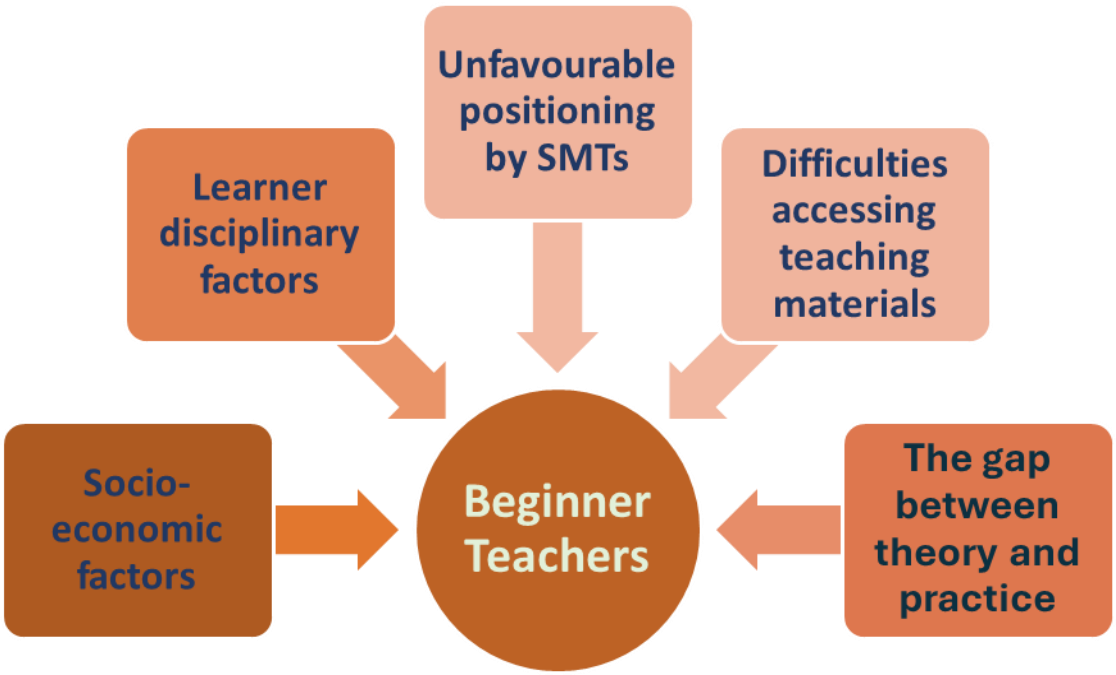
6.2.6 Recommendations for District Education Departments

BTs lambasted the sporadic content-based support availed by their district office because they felt early, and regular workshops were important for their professional growth in teaching. The fact that BTs in this study still felt inadequately supported despite attending district-based content workshops reveals the shortcomings of this form of intervention strategy by the district officials. As a result, this study recommends more regular content-based workshops for BTs, especially in the first few months after their appointment as full-time teachers. Key role players in this process are subject advisors who first need to identify newly appointed teachers' curriculum needs and arrange customised content training sessions based on the identified areas of need. On a case-by-case basis, this support could include direct learner support where BTs get an opportunity to observe their subject advisors in action and learn the best teaching practices to supplement their own pedagogical competencies.

Such interventions would ease pressures felt by BTs in the early years of their professional lives to meet intense curriculum expectations. However, considering the heavy workload and limited access to different forms of resources experienced by subject advisors (Mouton & Malumbete, 2023; Rammbuda, 2023), district officials could pair BTs with seasoned and accomplished colleagues per subject to help enhance BTs' content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge competences. By doing this, subject advisors could tap into a wealth of knowledge that already exists within their network of teacher colleagues. In addition, the district-based content support may include the provision of electronic copies of instructional resources to complement those already in possession of BTs so that they broaden their content knowledge base. Primarily, it is hoped that the presence of district-based BT support will enhance their teaching profession experiences and provide the much-needed emotional stability in their professional lives.

The diagram below (Figure 13) represents five areas of need (five forces) identified as problematic for BTs in this study that could be used by policy makers at national level to plan their mentorship programmes.

Figure 13: ***Five Forces Model of Challenges Faced by BTs***



In summary, to counter the effects of the above-mentioned forces impacting the BTs, this study recommends that the mentorship programmes should be as comprehensive as possible to acknowledge the complexity and multiplicity of challenges encountered by BTs. It is also important to recognise that the context matters in conceiving and implementing mentorship programmes. As such, the way national and provincial education departments approach these forces will determine the extent of success they achieve. Therefore, it will not be ideal for education authorities from district to national levels to apply a blanket approach when they implement mentorship programmes because the context in which BTs operate will dictate the terms of reference of the successful implementation of such initiatives.

6.3 Contributions of the Study

In this section, I present the contributions made by this study to the existing knowledge in the field. Although there are previous studies that have cast light on the BTs' experiences of their mentorship support, the uniqueness of this study is that it critically engaged with the phenomenon through positioning theory and Archer's concepts of structure and agency. By using positioning theory, this study has contributed understanding to different ways BTs are

positioned and position themselves in their different schools in the context of South African public secondary schooling. Some of the recent local and international studies which interrogated BTs' positioning either focused on primary schools or independent schools (Curtis et al., 2024; Dyosini, 2022). Crucially, using this theory has revealed complexities surrounding BTs' positioning in ways that will shape our comprehension of the different factors that contribute to this kind of positioning in the South African public secondary school setting. For example, this study showed that the expectations that experienced teachers have of BTs as recent university graduates influence how they perceive them, and these perceptions and expectations influence how they are positioned. As such, it seems BTs' senior colleagues gave them the autonomy to decide how to handle different professional challenges they encountered in their schools because they deemed them capable and capacitated to deal with these specific challenges. This study has also shown that a lack of interest in the lives of BTs also contributes to their positioning in South African public secondary schools.

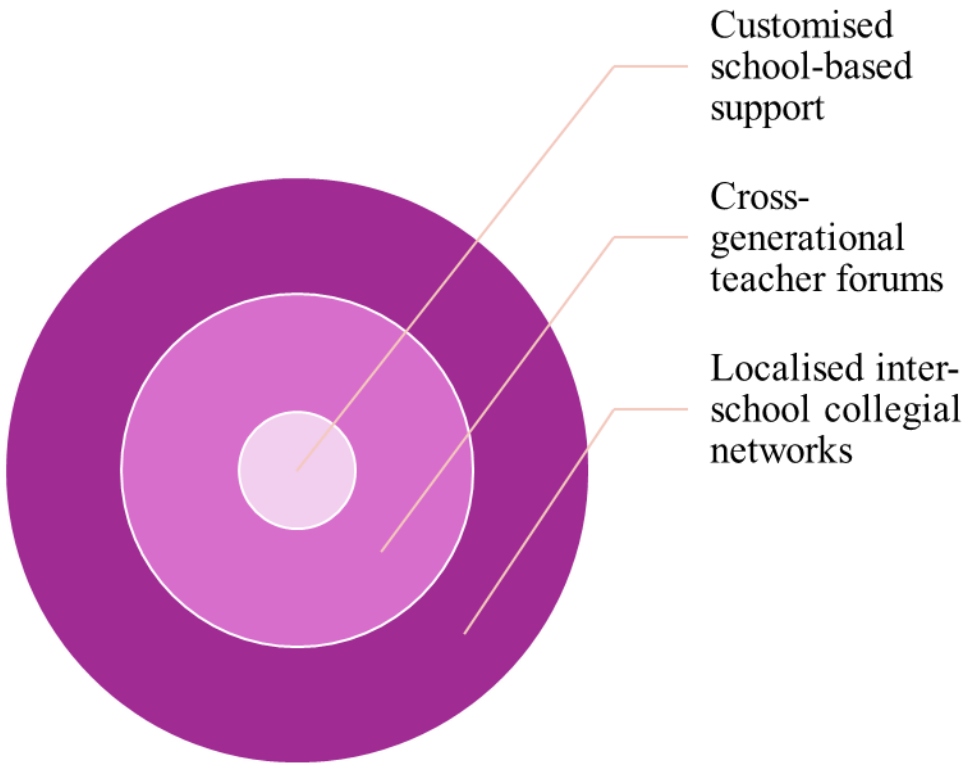
In addition, by using Archer's concepts of structure and agency, the study explored novel ways that BTs negotiated intricacies that impacted their perceptions and experiences of their mentorship support. By using these concepts, this study provided alternative ways to better understand how BTs can challenge the status quo through their agency. Also, the use of these concepts allowed me to show that institutional cultures determine the degree of mentorship support given to BTs. Thus, if the school deems it important to support BTs, systems are deliberately put in place to ensure ease of transition and familiarisation with the modus operandi of the teaching profession.

Moreover, this phenomenological study has enhanced the understanding of existing mentorship practices in public secondary schools; specifically, to be able to identify factors that act as constraints and affordances as far as the mentoring of BTs goes. This way, policy makers gain insights into the shape and form that mentorship programmes need to take, thereby improving their effectiveness and efficiency. Another important contribution of this study came from using critical discourse analysis as an analytical tool. Uncovering meanings from the texts derived from BTs' individual and focus group interview transcripts magnified possibilities to unpack their mentorship support experiences in the school environments and how and why such episodes unfolded. For example, the extent of mentorship support afforded to BTs sometimes depends on whether their senior colleagues perceive them as threats to their own professional growth or not. Simply put, if senior teachers think by

helping BTs with the intricacies of the teaching profession means they will be outshone, there is a possibility that they will be left stranded.

Perhaps a significant contribution of this study is the conceptualisation of a model, based on identified constraints experienced by BTs, as shown below, highlighting the interrelated components of a mentorship programme that can be replicated in similar contexts across the schooling sector in South Africa.

Figure 14: ***Components of a Mentorship Programme for BTs***



6.3.1 Customised School-Based Support

Because of the intimate and localised nature of mentoring, this model foregrounds the role of schools in supporting BTs with their professional needs. Through this model, I argue that schools are best placed to offer all-encompassing direct support to BTs because they are the first point of contact in their professional lives. What has become glaringly clear in this study is that, instead of applying a blanket approach to mentorship of BTs as if their professional circumstances are homogeneous, the kind of mentorship that schools provide to them needs to be customised. This way, schools reduce the risk of misusing limited resources because of

misdiagnosed problems encountered by these BTs. One of the starting points by school authorities to provide customised mentorship support to BTs can be conducting a needs analysis to identify their most pressing professional needs in keeping with efficient use of limited resources. Considering what has emerged from the findings, BTs oftentimes need to know that they can count on their senior colleagues amid challenges—even a random classroom visit by their direct line manager or principal. Such gestures by school authorities go a long way in assuring BTs they are not alone, thereby enhancing their sense of belonging in their school communities and reducing feelings of loneliness and anxiety.

6.3.2 Cross-Generational Teacher Forums

It became clear through my interactions with BTs that they wanted a platform to express their feelings about the experiences that they have had since joining the teaching profession. Importantly, they valued learning across generations instead of excluding their experienced colleagues because they believed there were important lessons to be had from cross-generational dialogues. Thus, this study calls for the creation of inter-generational teacher forums to promote deep reflective conversations across generations. In these forums, both BTs and their experienced colleagues would have an opportunity to establish trusting professional relationships. Hopefully, this would enable both to understand each other better and how to support one another in ways that enhance the professional competencies of parties involved. Forums of this nature hold promise to demystify power dynamics often associated with mentorship relationships and establish those marked by mutual learning.

6.3.3 Localised Inter-School Collegial Networks

This component recognises the power of collaborative partnerships that can emerge between local neighbouring schools which share commonalities in terms of vision for BTs. What has come out strongly from my interactions with the participants is their willingness to collaborate with colleagues within and beyond their schools. Thus, in this model, I propose the establishment of inter-school collegial networks. Through this, BTs can exchange ideas with other inexperienced and experienced colleagues on how to creatively resolve common challenges that they have experienced. In addition, this would afford involved BTs an opportunity to know that they are not alone in their journey of professional self-discovery, but that they have a coherent support system.

6.4 Possibilities for Further Research

I also shared important lessons from BTs' mentorship experiences which will be helpful for future studies. However, this study had certain limitations which give impetus to further research. For instance, a small sample of five participants meant I could not source experiences from a wider population of BTs which could have provided richer perspectives on their experiences of mentorship support. Thus, the findings of this study cannot be considered to represent perceptions and experiences of all the BTs. It would be helpful, therefore, for other studies to investigate the phenomenon involving a larger sample size. Furthermore, by choosing purposive and convenience sampling was a biased decision based on logistical challenges such as financial and time constraints that I had during my data collection journey. Because of this, I chose nearby schools with which I had established professional relationships and requested senior colleagues from them to assist me with the identification of possible BTs. Although I did my best to maintain objectivity throughout my interactions with the participants, it would be prudent for future studies to use randomised and more representative sampling techniques which are less prone to such researcher biases. In addition, this study was conducted under serious time constraints, and this meant some of the mentorship experiences of BTs could not be studied over a sustained period to at least provide conclusive evidence. As a result, it would be helpful to do a longitudinal study that would investigate BTs' perceptions and experiences of a mentorship programme.

The study used a single research approach, and I suggest that future studies should use mixed approaches to better understand BTs' perceptions and experiences of mentorship support from multiple angles. In addition, this study focused on public secondary schools, so to broaden our understanding of the mentorship perceptions and experiences, future studies could extend the reach to include independent primary and secondary schools. This would paint a comprehensive picture of the general state of mentorship support that is provided to BTs across the different sectors of the South African schooling system. Notwithstanding the importance of using positioning theory and Archer's concepts of structure and agency to unmask certain nuances from the data, it would be prudent for future studies to use other theoretical lenses to frame BTs' perceptions and experiences of mentorship. Considering the importance of higher learning institutions, future studies should look at the role that they could play in bridging existing mentorship support structures for BTs or interrogating their existing intervention programmes targeted at BTs. In addition, by using these two theoretical frameworks focusing solely on BTs without interacting directly with their senior colleagues

meant I overlooked how the frameworks could also be interpreted and analysed through the experiences of senior teachers as mentors to BTs. This way, agential and positional anecdotes expressed by either group could be compared to enhance the quality of the findings in the future studies.

6.5 Conclusion of the Study

Despite sufficient literature pointing to a need to offer mentorship support to BTs, this study has demonstrated that BTs' professional needs are neglected. It has also revealed complex multiple challenges that BTs still face in their schools, which heightens an urgent need for formalisation of mentorship programmes. These challenges include having to deal with learners' socio-economic issues, being disrespected by learners and having inadequate access to instructional materials. Worryingly, the study has shown that BTs are still pushed to the peripheries in their schools without acknowledging their voices and presence. Against this backdrop, the study has proposed a model of mentorship programmes that could be replicated in similar public secondary school settings to ease BTs into the teaching profession. In addition, the study has demonstrated that BTs consider their initial teacher training to be inadequate in preparing them for the transition phase in the early years of their teaching careers. Perhaps of significant concern is that senior teachers ignore the professional needs of BTs because they consider them work-force ready due to the presumed effectiveness of the instruction (teaching) they received from the teacher training programmes. Notwithstanding the mountain of challenges they had, BTs showed indications of resilience by discharging their agential powers. The study has shown that more research on constraints and affordances of BTs' mentorship intervention strategies still needs to be done to provide a holistic view of the nature and shape that a context-sensitive BT formal mentorship programme should take.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Individual interviews Schedule

1. **Briefly highlight the subjects you currently teach and whether you majored with all of them.**

2. **Since you were appointed at this school, has there been someone who supported and guided you professionally (did you choose or they were chosen for you)?**

3. **How have they supported and guided you?**

4. **As a result, what are your impressions of the kind of support given to new teachers?**

5. **Given an opportunity to support new teachers, what would you do differently and what would you keep?**

Appendix A1: Success individual interview transcript

What are you currently teaching?

I am teaching history only. …history and social science. I am teaching grade 9 and then I am teaching grade 10 and then grade 12.

How long have you been at this school?

It's been three years now.

During this time, has there been anyone assigned to you to support you as a new teacher?

No, not at all. No one. The only person that they assigned me to was my hod, acting hod, Ntate Ramohaua who was just clarifying a few things. 'this is what we have to do-curriculum related things. Like, this is the material that we need to cover. This is how far I left off. Cos I came here mid-year, may when I arrived, so they had covered some grounds. So he just covered a few things that I needed to do. So the assumption was the fact that I applied for this job. I am ready for the job. I'm capable. So there was no mentoring. So the assumption was I'm ready; I'm fresh from the university. I'm just ready to work. I'm prepared. They are assuming that university has done its job. They prepared me to come and then you just take over.

Apart from that (curriculum orientation), how do you feel you are being supported?

I don't feel like I was being supported enough because I was never…they never told me how to handle discipline. It's something that you have to sort out on your own. They never tell you 'okay, we have an issue for discipline here, but this is how you go about it.' You know. I was just thrown in the lion stead and then I had to see myself out. So, when it came to discipline, no one gave me heads up or how to go about it. Which is something that's problematic in teaching and learning. Especially in our school. And then when it comes to curriculum related, it was because we had to do something similar because we cannot teach the same grade and teach two different things. So, when it came to curriculum, it was not that they were mentoring on what to do—but it was what needed to be covered, at what time. So apart from that jah that was all. There was no mentoring that was done to say 'okay, this is what do I need to do, this is what…' you know nothing.

And how were hoping you are supported?

I was hoping that my HoD or someone—a senior at the school— will take me under their wing. Present to me the content that I need to do, because what the university teaches you and what you come across here—two different things. You know, they do not prepare you for these issues of discipline, issues of curriculum coverage. They do not go deeper when it comes to that. They just brush it on top. 'You need to know this. this is how you present it' but they do not tell you the type of challenges that you come across that not all learners are the same. When presenting the content, not all learners will be able to consume it the same way. So, you know, I was never prepared for that and on top of that I was hoping that the type of support that I would get would be just someone to show me a go around. someone to take me under their wing to say 'ok, here we go. This is what we do. This is how I deal with discipline. If you have a challenge this is how you go about it.' You know, I was hoping

someone would just…just for the first couple of weeks, just to help me settle in. instead, I was just thrown in the lion stead. See yourself out. This is what you need to do. Ok, go teach cos you are ready. You have a degree. You are qualified. That's all. So, no one took me under their wing to say okay 'this is what you need to do. If you come across this challenge, this is the person that you go to'. I found those things out for myself. A lot of things was self-discovery—it was never the thing that 'okay, I have to go to mang mang (so and so) and they will tell me what to do'. I discovered on myself (own). I had to ask questions: I have this type of learner, he's problematic, what do I do, who do I go to and then that's how I learned a lot of stuff on my own.

What is this other stuff that you learned on your own that you wanted support on?

There are social challenges that a lot of learners go through. You find sometimes a learner is not performing well. When you ask, they tell you that 'I'm molested at home' and I was never prepared for that. I don't know how to deal with someone who's going through social ills, especially home-related stuff. And then you get kids here who don't have clothes, walk long distances, they sleep in class. I do not know how to go about it, 'cos now if this particular learner is telling you 'I have to walk 13 kilometres to come to school. I'm extremely exhausted' and there's nothing that I can do it becomes a problem. I was not equipped to say 'this is what you do. This is who you go to.' I had to go and ask around who's the person that deals with this particular stuff. And then the other challenge was that we struggle when it comes to social worker or a psychologist here at school. I seldom see one and it's been a while since I've seen one. You know, with the challenges that I have come across, it's a big problem. And then the other issue…the main issue also is poverty and bad parenting also plays a role. It also contributes to discipline. I also came across challenges where learners tell you 'sir, I live alone. I don't have anyone. If you say I should bring my parents for discipline issues, just so you know I live alone. I don't have anyone. If I eat here at school, I will eat tomorrow again at the very same place.' So, those are some of the things I was not prepared to deal with. And then we also have a challenge of gangsterism. We get learners smoking here at school. You know, something which I was not accustomed to before practicals. I did not know how to go about it. You know, you get to class and then learners are high on narcotics or whatever they have smoked. And then that's also an issue. And then there is also an issue of teenage pregnancy. Now I have to lose learners because {now} they are pregnant. I was not prepared enough for that. Even the university or the institution never prepared us for such things. I don't think there was a lesson they were presenting to say 'you guys are gonna come across this. this is how you go about it. So I feel like the institution itself failed me and also the school staff also failed me at some point, because they never said 'guys, this is the channel that you tackle things or this is who you go to deal with such stuff. It's things that you figure out on your own. Sometimes learners come to you. They tell you 'Sir, I've not been eating for the past 5 days I don't know where my parents are.' Now I have to cough out money because this particular learner is disadvantaged and…jah, I was never really prepared in that department psychologically when it coming to this education field.

What have you done to responded to such challenges?

There are associations here in school. There are people who work with those particular cases but I'm not seeing anything much being done about that. It's like just a formality. I tell that particular person. They will call whoever they are calling and it will not get a response or the learner was able to get help or not. Hence I alluded before that I hardly see a social worker here at school. with the challenges that we come across, I've hardly seen any social worker or psychologist—someone to help the learners with their traumas. I tried to take them to the upper structures but nothing was really much done and I ended up.. if I can do something; if I can land a hand to help the learner to may be financially or food if I can give something maybe clothing I do but if I cannot help and if the upper structures cannot help, certainly enough there's nothing that we can do. There is nothing much that we can do, especially when the learners tell you that this thing is happening to me at home. My parents are almost drunk every day. Parents hardly pitch up to meetings. Staff like that. There's nothing really much that we can do because now the learner is being failed by their parents now. You know. Someone who is supposed to be working hand in hand. So, they are failing us. Like, even today, I had a case where a learner stole their phone and one of those learners it turns out that they are affiliated to other gangs. Now this learner, a particular learner, they want their phone. They told me about it. I asked them about the phone. They sold it and they bought drugs with the money. So now I have to involve police and I have to call parents in to say if you do not reimburse or pay this particular learner's phone, sadly enough I would have to assist this particular learner in opening a case against these other learners. Something that I also feel like the institution did not prepare us for. You know. It's been how many years? You know. Some of these things I feel they have always been there, but they were never really addressed.

Because of these experiences, what impressions do you have regarding the type of support given to new teachers?

The impression that I got is the system or everyone thinks that if you come from varsity or university, they assume that you know everything. You are better equipped than they were because they feel like there's' new research that you perhaps learned about. So they are expecting to consume you. Instead, it's supposed to be the other way around. You know because they feel like okay this person was gonna bring solutions to some of the problems that we have but actually it's the other way around because this person is now starting in the field. They are supposed to get help. They are supposed to get a bit of mentoring you know just to polish their skill. Even though, yes, they are ready to teach but just to harness their skill to say this is what needs to be done. This is how you do it and you can add with your experience that you have from the university. So I feel like most young educators, they are just being left to fend for themselves. You know, you have to figure out on your own. And to be honest some educators see you as a threat. You know, they feel like okay you gonna take their position or you gonna do a much better job, so hence they sometimes become reluctant to help you because sometimes they see you as a threat. Because I remember this one time I had extra classes for grade 10s but like 'this is unusual. It's not every day we see someone have extra classes for lower grades'. So now you get people who discourage you from doing such things. So now it becomes now your "mentor" seeing you as a threat. You know, seeing you as someone who wants to change. You know, when they are so comfortable with the system that they have been perpetuating all this time.

They did not deter me from my goal because I feel like I was…I'm still young and I'm still enthusiastic about teaching—I'm still excited you know. I'm still trying to find myself. I'm still trying to try out different things you know. It did not deter me. Yes, sometimes I did get a bit discouraged but it did not deter me from my goal—which was to produce good quality learners who are ready to take on the world. You know, it did not deter me much but yes at some days, yes, I feel like at my lowest I feel like but I'm wasting my time when I do not get the results that I am looking for you know but you get one of two learners that still come and say 'sir, thank you. Through you I was able to get this skill. I was able to pass at the end of the term'. Even though the outcome is not what I expected, but the little bit that I do goes a long way.

Given an opportunity to support new teachers, what would you do differently?

I think a mentorship programme is what is needed. You know. And I feel like institutions have to have active teachers. New teachers to share their experience you know because there are a lot of situations that take place in high schools that I feel like institutions are not addressing. For example, I once had learners stab each other in front of me. I once saw a learner bleed—lost their eye here on (jn) school. So, some of the things are not discussed and the procedures okay… I'm not sure but there are some procedures that are not addressed to say if this is happening this is what you need to do. This is how you go about it. But I feel like institutions need to do a better job to equip new teachers and to also… research like this one to also be displayed at schools to keep teachers updated and also institutions updated about the current affairs. You know. We are being taught about whiteboards, how to use a computer cos now institutions are more modernised, but you get here, and we still use a whiteboard. I still use a chalk. You know. Majority of learners don't have books and now I have to become creative to say okay how do I now present content even though books are very short? You know. So those are some of the things I feel like we need to focus on you know. Not the education on its own and the broader context but the deeper context and the psychological context it has on one. Especially young teachers. So, I feel like institutions more than the school itself need to prepare teachers better. Cos I feel like if I was prepared enough, every challenge that I was gonna come across was not gonna face me because I was better equipped and better prepared. Now the university gives us this narrative that you just get there, you teach and it's nice and you have fun, but they don't tell you that you get to schools where there is [are] no books. You will get to schools where there's…there is a lot of challenges you know. Especially discipline. Jah. I feel like the institution…them on their side need to prepare. They need to…I don't know how but during their practicals make sure they get constructive feedback so that can every time they update on how to tackle some of the challenges and better equip students.

How have you compensated for lack of books?

It's unfortunate because now if I didn't have books, I'd have [to write] on the board. Now I will have to make sure learners write every notes that I do on the board which is time-consuming in that space where I am supposed to be presenting content, discussing with learners, we busy writing notes on the board. I'm writing summaries so that they can understand. At least so that when they go home check if they understand on their own. But we also substitute shortage of books with making copies, especially for essential staff so that they can do activities but that on its own has challenges because now we [are] getting in GET

there's maps. Now some maps are colours. They want to ask you what's the colour of the road, what's the colour of the sand—it is a hill, is it …but now you get something that's black and white and now learners cannot see. Now we cannot really reach their potential or exercise the content that I want to present I cannot get the outcome that I want because of those minor challenges. So now I feel also that on itself also disadvantages our learners because now they will get to institutions, now this is part of them where they did not really grasp.

Appendix A2: Nandipha individual interview transcript

What motivated you to join the profession?

It's a very difficult question that you are asking me honestly. I wouldn't say teaching was my first choice. it wasn't really my first choice. but it was like the only option I had left. like ha ke ne ke sheba my situation (when i was looking at my situation) because akere i have a BTech i language practice and there were no jobs at all, so i just went for like the easiest option there was for me. It was for hore ke dire (it had to do) PGCE and then go teach. so I wouldn't say it was my first choice but it's not a bad ha kalo (it's not a bad choice). So, jah, I'm still learning and navigating my way around this. I hope it gets better.

and what are you currently teaching and do you teach what you majored in at varsity?

Yes, from my first year, I majored in English up to my B.Tech year English and then when I

got to PGCE I majored in English and CAT(Computer applications technology). of which CAT e ne ele like (it was like) on my undergrad it was computer applications, so ha ke fihla (when i got to PGCE) i had to choose CAT because it was like the only two school subjects that I had. and I was majoring in English and French, so French is not a South African language, so I couldn't take French, so it had to be English le (and) CAT.

you just mentioned something about navigating your way around it. Why are you still not settled?

because I don't know what I'm doing. I really don't know. it's like ke tla reng (i'd say) ke trial and test (it's trial and test). 'cos you do something for the first time, you see how it works and then you see the results you get and then you decide let me change–let me try this way. so it's like trial and test until you figure out okay which one works much better?

What contribution has your work place environment had on your unsettlement?

A simple one is managing the classroom. like i have to deal with huge classes. bo ma (around 40 learners), not 40, almost 50.it's like 48 learners in one class and just trying to get the order i had to try different methods and i think i found e berekang (the one that works).

which is?

I keep quiet. they talk, I keep quiet. i talk, they keep quiet but ha re tlo bua re le two (we are not going to both talk). So if they want to talk, I just stand there. they can take ten minutes, i don't scream. so ha ke sa hlola hape ke stresser like before (i no longer stress myself like before). Previously, I used to shout and scream. and it would just get out of control and it didn't really help. so i realized hore (that) okay I just walk in. I keep quiet. fold my arms and just look at them. so i realized that it's working. and other than classroom management, there used to be a problems tsa…eish the school that i'm working in neh, it doesn't have resources . so the learners don't have books. the teacher, you may or may not get the book. so some books i have to go buy them myself. le bo ma teachers guide (even the teachers' guide) i have just ordered one yesterday. so ke ha nyane ha nyane (it's a slow progress) just trying to find my way.and ha hona ope o tla go…. (there's no one who). when you arrive at a school my expectation would be for someone to show me you know what here's the ATP, here's the

learners book and here's the teacher's guide so that i know exactly where i'm supposed to start with the learners but then I didn't get that when i

got here. it was just.literally finding your own way how i can i better do this but then the last thing that i would do is let the learners fail because ha hona buka (there's no learning material). so what i do, i go buy the book, make copies out of the book i got and wa bona (you see). like when i got here, ho no sena books for literature (there were no books). i don't know what happened. i just didn't understand but the only option there was e ne e le hore nna ke lo reka the literature book so that i can make copies of the short stories they need for English and then we can continue. I can do my work and they can pass.

In struggling to find all these resources, dealing with learner ill-discipline, was there anyone in a senior position or with a much deeper experience of teaching who was there to support you?

no, not at all. like when i got…i got there a year ago. The previous school I was at was Dr V. There was order. I was teaching CAT. I was a substitute teacher for four months. I didn't struggle. the books were there. The learners had computers. like every resource that i needed was available for me and the discipline wasn't as bad. and I never experienced discipline with the learners. I feel like the management had a way of dealing with ill-disciplined learners. but when i got here it was a different story. There was like no rules. like tse beilweng (that were set) like if a learner does this, this is the action that will be taken. so the learners they know they behave this way because no action will be taken against this. so it was difficult. there was no one. and there was once an incident neh. i have had may incidents with these learners. one incident where i almost got slapped by a

learner and then another incident where a learner hits like the class it was in order. everything was going well. we were doing corrections. so ha ntse re etsa corrections (while we were doing corrections) i asked one learner to come wipe the board for me. so as he's coming the other learner pulled out his leg to trip him.so he almost fell and then a nka stelo (he took a chair to hit him) and was badly injured. it's my class, it's my period. however, neh, i was always reluctant to report other incidents like the other incident of me being almost slapped by a learner, i didn't report it because i know management is not going to do anything about it. and then the two learners, i reported them.nothing happened and then i felt like…they make you feel like you are incompetent. like you cannot manage your classroom. like when you take such issues to the management, instead of dealing with what happened they make you feel like wena o le titjhere you are incompetent and you cannot magement your class. so you don't want like to make management make you feel like o incompetent all the time. so whatever that happens, you always let it go. so it's like ay it's fine. and like there's like no one o ka kgonang o ye ko ho yena o re you know what this and this happened. ha ba di kene. even with resources. when i got here last year, i went to the vice principal.'ma'am, i don't have books for Life orientation and what what what what…'. 'no, i don't know'. and the that was it. that was the only response i got. it was like ne ke tlameile ke hate (i had to go somewhere) ha ke itse kae kae ko di…nna self, ke hona ke fihlang. nna ke expecta hore upon my arrival these things should be handed to me but then no i had to hore ke batle (i had to find everything on my own). atp, ke botse mang, ke botse mang o itsing LF ya Life Orientation–ke batle nna LF self kgore ke kreiye ATP (i had to ask someone who knew LF) so i can know where to start with these learners. It was so difficult. so like there is no order at

all. it's like it's suffocating. especially for new teachers. you don't even have experience. you don't know what you are doing and you literally need to find your way.

What do you now know that you didn't know about dealing with these challenges?

like the ill-disciplined ones, i let them go. i just…i try to control it or the ones who i feel like they are starting an argument then they are getting rowdy, i chase them out before hona le a repetition of fighting while i'm still in class. so i just ask them to leave so that i can continue. and ka taba ya di resources i just made peace and i work with what i have. you know, i buy the books that i can buy and then tse ding wa di thola kae kae (others you bump into thrown in the boxes somewhere in the school premises). and the bo ma diteachers guide i try to order and buy them instead of going to management because management doesn't pay attention to any of our needs–whether it's problems ka classroom kapa resources, like they are just not there. what i know now ke hele hore how to better handle the learners who are misbehaving in class and i don't waste my voice (i no longer raise my voice on learners). i just keep quiet, they talk, i keep quiet. and when i talk, they should be quiet. and then as for the resources, i just search like sometimes past papers from the internet and then from the department we only had one workshop and in that one workshop i feel like ke ne ke kreile a bit of enlightening or tsela e ka tlameileng ke tseye but it was only one. i would have loved to have more. particular ka bo literature. let me say, there is one gentleman, he's been working there or maybe for about three years but he's been a teacher for bo ma 20 years or so neh. so usually for English, i would ask.. just check what Ntate Ba is doing for grade 11. i used to do that like in the beginning of the year because akere i was teaching CAT and from CAT now English, so i wasn't sure now where to check hore ntate Ba o etsang and then be ke etsa ntho a e entseng. but now that it has been months working with him, i've decided not to do what he's doing because i feel like ona le kelello tsa matitjere a kgale. o batla ho etsa ntho e one. I just figured kgore some methods could change and then kgona le information…it's like, instead of using one source you can add different sources. so he'd rely on one source. 'buka ena kgale ke e sebedisa' (the old teacher would say). you could get another book e ka explainer in a different way or you know i just, i'm not doing now what he's doing neh. i just do my own thing now. Ere ke re i'm getting better now because pele ne ke sa itse ke etsang, so i'd just do what he's doing neh. so, i found my way. even when i teach now ko literature now i just do it the way i was taught in varsity. like instead of just going into the story, i discuss the plot, the theme, because these things are essential for the learner hore a understander story. le bo di characters, i just go into depth before even we start reading wa bona? a understander hore okay 'this story was in South Africa and then these are the characters. and this character is very loud what what what what…'so i discuss all the themes so that by the time we read the story ngwana o sa ntsa ana le ntho eo ya hore a tlo enjoyer story. so i think maybe the mistake i did before is not doing what i thought kgore ke etse cos ne feeler ho inyatsa (i was undermining myself). you're doing something for the first thing and you think ah no man i'm not good enough. ke hona ke qalang ho teacher but ka nako eo o tswa varsity kgale o etsa literature ha ngata ngata. so why not teach it the same way you were taught? and then my mistake was ho checker hore motho e mong oe etsa jwang be ke fihla ke etsa jwalo. that was my downfall. because i could have done maybe a better job but at least now i know hore when i teach this, this is how i want to teach it. this is how i want to explain it to them fore ba understander.

when you face subject-based challenges, who to go to for guidance?

sometimes when it's a very difficult poem, and I struggle with poetry, i did poetry ko varsity, like at language practice–the grilled us ko side ya language and short stories, novels. we did a lot of novels and a lot of editing. so i'm good at that but im not good with poems, so poems are my biggest downfall but i wouldn't say Ntate Ba ….he doesn't do poetry with grade 11, so it's like the only time these learners get to do poetry is in grade 10 with me, the beginner teacher, who herself doesn't understand poetry. so what i usually do ka poetry neh, i google analysis and then they analyze the poem for me,line by line or stanza by stanza. and then i can only then.. will i be able to explain (sic) it to the learners. so Ntate Ba ena are he's not doing poetry in grade 11 because he feels like the learners don't enjoy the poems. hape, you know, besides taba ya enjoying the poems, the learners neh are not really fluent in english, so, you know poetry, ba tlo berekisa language e difficult you know. a lot of idioms, figures of expression. so now because they are not even good in english they don't understand english, so it makes it more difficult for them to understand the poem with now idioms and figures of expression wa boh. jah. so, google is my go-to person. **even sometimes** when i'm doing a story with them, be ke feela hore the questions that i'm finding in the book are not giving me what i want, i go to the internet and search for maybe past questions or class activities on that short story.

Are you in touch with your subject advisor?

no, not at all. I feel like grade 10 is neglected. Grade 11, they pay more attention to it and grade 12. Grade 10, even when you look on the internet, you'll seldom find past papers for grade 10, English first additional. You'll find past papers for English home language! English home language for grade 10 but when I search for grade 11 neh, joh, was helping ntate Ba ka di past paper for grade 11 English first additional language, we found so many of them but grade 10 dololo. So, I feel like department yona itself is neglecting grade 10. And grade 10 is foundation mo FET phase. Grade 10 should be the foundation. That's where we should lay a good foundation for these learners mara ba re neglecta. So the LF I once tried MR O, he's a very nice man. There's nothing wrong with him, I promise you neh, but I tried to reach out. I do have his number on my phone and I was asking him to add me on the group, on the group ya all the teachers. Haikhona, he didn't respond to me; he responded to the grade 12 teacher! He's like if I'm dealing with B (the school's name), I'll talk to the grade 12 teacher. You understand, e ne le the first term and we wanted the common paper that the learners were supposed to write for first term. I personally texted him. I called, he didn't answer, so I just thought maybe o busy. Mara when he responded my text, he didn't respond to me. He responded to the grade 12 teacher. The grade 12 teacher came to tell me. So ever since then, ai no, I'm not in contact with the LF.

these experiences, what kind of impressions do you now have about the kind of support that is given to new teachers?

there's no support at all that is given to the new teachers. i feel like…when i was at, listen to the difference,neh, Dr V (at her former school as a substitute), i got all the support i needed as a substitute teacher. the LF was also in contact with me, the LF came regularly and the LF told me 'if you struggle with the topic, tell me. i will help you or i will come and give that lesson to the learners.' the LF was very okay–she was supporting me. Being a substitute teacher at a quintile level 7* school. and then here, i think, i am not sure if it's a quintile level

3 school but i think it's a quantile level 3 i'm not sure, i'll just double check for you. like, no one cares. it's like re di last thought. it's like were are more worried ka pass rate ya bana ba. and then here aa, i'm struggling with yoh…, i'm drowning with poetry, i'm drowning and i don't have that kind of support. i wish i had maybe someone o kareng fela you know let me come and do at least one poem with the learners and 'mme Ma o bo le teng ka classeng so that you can see how it's done.' but i don't get that. i don;t know who to go to. cos i feel like Ntate Ba who i say i always go to if i have problems, i feel like le ena he feels like he's not good with poems, that's why he just decided not to do poems in grade 11. ay, there's nothing. no one to go to.

and when you raise these concerns with your departmental head, what have they done?

i have never raised any concerns to anyone. ke bone like ha o tsena mo environment and everyone is functioning like ho sharp. so le wena you just think hai let me just continue. it is what it is. but kwale (former school), i feel like i had a lot of support. i never like lacked anything. i never lacked ka bo i don't know where am i going to get diactivity. subject advisor has already sent me. there was never a point where i lacked with anything. sometimes subject advisor would send videos on how to do somethings or how to tackle some topics. you, mona, it's just a different story.

What about the senior colleagues, are they also not supportive?

like, i noticed i that some of the teachers, when i got there, i didn't understand because i've never experienced it. i have never been to a school where corporal punishment was used neh. even when i was at Dr V, I've never seen corporal punishment being practiced on learners. and i noticed when i got here that the only way these teachers were dealing with the learners was through corporal punishment and i was definitely not going to do what they do. so that is why it was a problem for me. so usually is like, i don't know the learners were respecting them more because they knew they will get a hide if they don't behave neh. because you see some people when they walk into the classroom the learners, hai, everyone is seated because they are afraid neh. so when someone like me walks in, hai, they just continue because i don't. so i wouldn't say there's someone i could address hore for them to guide me on how to cope with …how to deal with ill-disciplined learners. no. most of them would just hit them. ba bare 'o ba shape?' (hit/spank them'). nna ha ke batle ho shapa bana ba batho. nna ke sharp.
and granted an opportunity to mentor new teachers, what would you do differently?

number one, someone who is straight from university, like what you learn from university and what you get when you get to the workplace, they are two different things. like, there are so many things that they skip, like, they don't tell us neh. like there are so many things that they don't tell us at university. for instance, the file. i did PGCE. never ever at any point did i know that there was admin ya file. ya teacher file. i didn't know. and i didn't even know how to compile one when i started teaching but then fortunately i learned neh at Dr V. but i would teach them number one how to compile a file and what is needed in a file. and then i would make sure that the resources that they need for teaching and learning to take place are available because that is the most important thing. for them to have to have books as soon as they arrive. here's the textbook, here's the teacher guide. and then i'll make sure the resources are available. and then number three, i'll give them general tips on how to manage the classroom. because i feel that's the mistake most new teachers do, like, when walk into the class, joh, you waste your energy screaming and shouting and then you are only stressing

yourself ha ntso entsa jwale. simple rule, you talk, i keep quiet. i talk, you are quiet. it's a very simple rule because they will not talk for 30 minutes while you're standing there. eventually they are going to keep quiet. so, i'll give them that tip that i learned the hard way. **for how long do you think they need to be supported?**

they need to be supported for a year. a year. a full year. honestly because it takes time to learn new things because remember they would also need help on how to deal with certain topics. so some topics will not be there on the first term. they will be there at the third term. so you can't be just mentoring them for the six months. what about the other six months? they will be seeing those things for the first time.

Appendix A3: Morena individual interview transcript

What motivated you to become a teacher?

well, I'd say in a nutshell, poverty actually motivated me cos after, but I have always loved the art of teaching, just that after high school I actually took a gap year, two years, and then after that, as I was helping lot of (sic) learners within my community I was like no this is it. I think maybe after two years I need to explore. and then I started actually going to teaching. and I felt like it fitted like a glove. because I actually enjoyed it ever since then. I've always loved the art of teaching–I just knew that it was either…I knew that I had to do something that actually needed me to speak. it was between law and teaching and then I was like I am not a corporate person but I am a person that actually want(s) to make an impact in someone's life. I was like teaching it is for me.

How long have you been at this school?

I think it was since October. so i will say it is around 10-11 months.

Which subjects do you teach at the school and did you major in them?

i am actually responsible for sesotho at this moment but three months back i was responsible for both english and at some point i actually went and to actually taught (sic) social science but i'm only actually qualified for languages, which is english and sesotho.

How did social sciences feature?

Well, it was actually my first time actually teaching it but because I was doing well in high school and it's one of the subject i actually love. so i was like i took it because i love taking a bit of…i took it as a challenge cos even at some point in my life i've actually taught maths, so i took it as a challenge and it was nice. i enjoyed it. i think you enjoy it more when you see that your learners are passing with high marks. i'm like this is the subject that i love. as much as i loved history more than geography but i loved the subject.

is it in your transcript?

no. cos normally you find that the school has, where they need teachers, especially in a certain subject and you can't allow learners to come to school every time without anyone actually being responsible for that.

how were you identified to teach it?

well, it was on the basis that i had, i think most probably i had fewer subject but i think had a bit of background knowledge about it because i have once when, i was actually doing practicals, at some point i actually got to a point whereby my mentor teacher actually was doing social science. so i had a bit of experience in teaching it, although it was on my transcript.

you being assigned to teach, did it have anything to do with you being a new teacher?

i was actually asked to say 'we have a shortage in terms of social science teachers, since you have a bit of space, how about we actually take some of your Sesotho classes and we replace them with at least two of social science?'. and then after some time actually i though about it and then obviously i was promised i'd be given guidance in terms of the subject and all of

those things and then i was like 'jah, it's a challenge that i am willing to accept since i have actually taught it before. 'jah. so i took upon the subject. so, i was like okay for me i wouldn't mind actually taking it.

what kind of support have you been afforded and is there someone who guides and supports you professionally?

well, i would say it depends cos i think the support currently that i have is from the teachers that i am actually working with cos i am actually working with older people so because i'm teaching english, no, sesotho in grade 8. i'm working with someone who is more experienced. and then grade 10 i'm also working with someone experienced. grade 9 and also with people who are much older than me. so, i'm actually the youngest in terms of teaching sesotho. so it has…that's the support that i think… that i've gotten so far. and i think when last year, early last year, i was actually an EA in one of the schools in qwaqwa. so i think there i got to learn in terms of administration. that side, jah, i was given a lot of support especially from my HoD because he was teaching everything from a file and i learned so many things in terms of professionalism and a whole lot of things because i was there for about four months. so that's when i learned jah this is…that's when i got support especially from the higher structures. because that side is very much formal. this side, the support that i'm getting is more content-based cos i feel the other… at least that one is being taken care of from where i come (from) now at least i'm getting support in terms of everything that revolves around the content and how to set the test. so but in terms of, i think so far, cos i was actually busy with extra classes before i were even…back in 2019 i went to a lot of schools, i think more than 15 i think. so that also it actually motivated me and actually inspired me and then the guy who was responsible for that cos it was something of CUT, an organisation under it, i think that's the support the support that i got in terms of classroom management, in whole lot of things that we need when we work with kids.

how is the content-based support organised here at school?

the thing is with grade 8, it's only me and other woman that i'm actually working with. so normally what happens is that before we actually have something that we need to deliver to the kids, we will normally sit down or either i will come to her and say this is the classwork that i think we should actually give them because it will help them in this one two, three and also even with her if she has something that feels we should actually do, she comes to me also. we speak about it and then we do it. still the same way with grade 9. we do it the same way. if you have something that you think we could actually do it for tomorrow, you will come a day before and say this is one, two three, i think we should do it and then we just do it like that.

what have you learned working with these senior colleagues?

I think it's good. I'm actually enjoying it. because one thing about working with older people, you don't clash a lot. you know how it is with young people. younger people, with older people you're like i think we should do one, two, three, they almost like they will normally agree to it because i feel like with them they are there to guide you, they are not there to flex. so i feel like with the younger generation they always want to flex. Before you agree on anything, it will have to be a disagreement and also what is nice is when it comes to setting tests and all of those things, they will be like we sit down and they will be like if you do it

like that and that. so they also allow me to actually set those tests as a form of me actually getting experience and learning more and whatever i've set i take it to them and they are like okay this is nice and then i think you should change one, two, three and that's how i feel like they are actually supporting me and actually growing me.

what are some of the common challenges that you have faced so far?

I think the challenge that I have faced so far is when it comes to the learners. We live in a generation whereby they feel like they have a lot of rights. so these learners they don't actually behave (sic). they don't listen. sometimes you…the way that i took it normally when i have a challenge with a certain learner, yes, i'd take it to the higher authorities but if it's not dealt with then i have to call a parent and then i engage. so that's…i think that's one of the challenges. sometimes you feel like you call a parent and then the parent when they get here le bona it's like they can't deal with that child. It's like ngwana enwa o ba hlotse at home, everywhere. so i'm like okay fine if you're having a problem with your own child, what can i actually do to the same child because number one i can't beat your child, there's nothing i can do to your child. it's like when you try to involve the parents, and in most cases it does not work out because the same way this child behaves here (at school) is the same at home.

Do you feel adequately supported by your senior colleagues (in management etc) to deal with such challenges?

i feel like in the beginning, there was support but the problem is they will support you but the problem is how many learners will get to misbehave? so sometimes you will also get a feeling that they are also busy. so if you have certain learners who are very troublesome, at some point they will not be able to help you because at the end of the day, they can only support you so far and then you feel like with a lot of number of learners that we have and the type of learners that we get, especially in most schools that are surrounding here, it's a bit of a challenge, especially with the learners in Lekgalong it's a challenge. so I feel like there's support but it's not sufficient. especially with the laws that prevent certain things because you know learners cannot be suspended so we have to be annoyed, so it gets to a point you cannot always report. and this is happening cos these learners they only, after they are being reprimanded, they cool off one or two days and the third day they are back to their old behaviours. so you will be like ignoring them.

what general impressions has this had on you regarding the kind of support given to new teachers?

i feel like the type of support that we are given, when it comes to discipline, i feel it's less. the only support that i feel we're give it's when it comes to content-based and also it's everything dealing with the files. but in terms of learners misbehaving i feel like there's a little bit of support because i feel like, especially with the higher structure or older people who have been here i feel like they are only responsible for their own classes.. so when it comes to behavior and discipline and all of that i feel like there's little support honestly. especially as a new teacher, certain things you have to find out for yourself hore this is one, two, three that you can actually expect and this is all that you can expect and also i feel like…i think two months back our principal actually sat down with us, so it's a common tradition that as a new teacher when you come they actually have to explain certain things for you and also and orientate you but i feel like that orientation–it's good to learn in terms of

professionalism, the code of conduct(s) of the schools– but the problem is everything that you are told, every class has its own behavior, so sometimes it does not work out. so i feel like when it comes to behavior, we are given less support.

what specifically would like to be supported on?

i feel like when we take learners to the higher structures, i expect them once they come back to our classes, they need to actually behave in a manner that they know if they continue there will be repercussions. so at this point i feel like even if you take them there sometimes you will feel like there will be less consequences that even when the learners come back they will only behave for one day. so i feel like in terms of that, if there was , if you take them there they should, when they come back, there should be a change a certain way.

what was discussed in the orientation session with the principal?

it was based on professionalism, the dressing code and all of that and what not to do, especially within the school. how to reprimand the learners and also the rules of the school, the time that one has to arrive at and all of those things and also things pertaining to the file and also respecting all the colleagues that you actually find.

given an opportunity to mentor new teachers, what would you include in your package?

well, i feel like i will actually try to not only guide in terms of the content; i will also try to actually guide them when it comes to actually reprimanding those kids and also be there because obviously as a mature and older teacher these learners respect you more than the newbie. so every time when they have (a) problem you will try actually (i will actually try to) help them and also give them the guidance in terms or ways on how to deal with learners who are actually out of order. and also i will actually try to guide them more when it comes to subject or content base on what they actually they should expect and how to tackle certain things. So I feel like in terms of the content, that's what we are taught at varsity but in varsity they teach you should discipline but in every school it requires certain ways of doing it because not all the schools are the same, not all of the learners are the same. so it means as matured and old teachers, like i have ten months now, i now know how to deal with certain learners, so certain things you take time to learn them and if you have to do them yourself, it take(s) more time and then sometimes if you are not strong you can actually get annoyed. every time you will actually feel like even if you don't come to work it will be fine. so it gets there. so if you are not that strong, especially with some people, you will also get to a point of actually wanting to slap someone. because you will feel like now you are annoyed.

there are certain things that i had learned before I actually get a job here. hence i say that i taught more than 15 (schools). at that time when i was actually going around teaching extra classes, it actually empowered me. in a way that i got to encounter some of the learners who were… actually i could say they were rough, some of them had conditions. cos if you go to schools like i have been to Se, i have been Le,. i have also been to schools in Bothaville, Glogolan, so some of those things you learn certain challenges and how to deal with them. that's another way that i feel like i have actually try to empower myself. workshops are something that we actually go to in most cases and i also think that when it comes to content based, it empowers you. it gives you a bit of background. Certain things that you were not even aware, you are like 'oh, this is how it's meant to be done because i feel the last workshop i went to before, after we closed off, that one i felt like it was much more empowering in a way that you felt that 'okay, i've been going at this thing this way, there's actually another way of actually dealing with it'. so i was like 'okay, it means workshops are actually good'

Appendix A4: Nhlakanipho individual interview transcript

Why did you choose to become a teacher?

To tell the truth meneer, I didn't just choose teaching nje. At first, I did engineering and some of the things happened and I decided no man let me just go for teaching because I passed maths that well at school. so i thought like i'd have a chance to do something great but for my mother. My mother wanted me to study education but nna i wasn't interested. i was like no i'm gonna do electrical but then things happened, then it led to me changing the course. Then I did teaching. That's how it happened.

What were those things that 'happened'?

it was the fact that. enklek, i did civil. i wanted to do electrical but enklek a lot of things happened but i ended up doing civil. then there was drawing. so we learned afterwards that almost all the kids that we attended with started doing drawing at grade 10. so it was like, hai man, imagine me doing physics at university. i didn't even do physics from grade 10.

how do you find the work environment so far?

the work environment it's fine. the relationship i have with the colleagues is just brilliant. i have nothing to complain about. it's just that maybe with the learners because weare new teachers and they don't respect us that much. but i think maybe it will change with time because some the kids, we just come to this school and they've been here before us. so they think maybe they know everything more that us but i don't know what's going on but the relationship with the learners is not that great. sometimes though but not all of them. the fact that akere obviously they live here in location, so they somehow have friends that are maybe at my age. so they think jah we are of the same age. that respect of being a teacher and the learner it's not that, it's not that clear with them. and i think also because…i also want to talk about the girls. they think…it's the same thing le bona. akere bo bro tsa rona bo lekeisheneng they go to them wabona. they date them. so they feel like maybe they have somehow have a chance with us because wa bona their boyfriends they are almost the same age as us.

how do you maneuver around these challenges?

nna i just try to tell them that there's no chance that something will work out between me and them but we somehow use the other teachers, these that are older. they help us with those kind of situations (girl learners hitting on them). we go and tell them for this girl is doing something like that then they will just put them down and tell them a few words. and then after that, it helps us because sometimes you know when i try to rectify the situation by myself the learners could just say "hey, you're the one who wants me." then it's between me and her (it's her word against his).

How do you deal with classroom-specific challenges?

we do have and a lot. but like for nna wa bona, I do have ill-disciplined learners like in mathematical literacy. In pure maths, grade 11,12 I don't have that much. we will just be like s/he didn't write, the class activity. it's minor staff. but in terms of the ill-discipline like the learner disrespecting you, it almost happens for maths lit grade 10 because wa bona i don't know what's happening with them but most of them they are gangsters. they behave that way. so i try sometimes maybe just chase them out. maybe go to the principal. maybe involve other teachers but like sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't.

Since you arrived at the school, has there been someone you have been assigned to support you?

no, there's no mentorship programme. i'd say maybe if i'm struggling with something, i would go to other teachers and explain the situation and then they just give me an advice to say 'just do this, just do that' but in terms of having that kind of relationship whereby this person is responsible for me, ai there is no such. i go to anyone if maybe i want an advice.

With the challenges that you have had so far at the school, do you feel supported to cope with them?

i wouldn't say i am not supported but like with your point neh i would say there is no support structure neh. it's just that it's…it's just me i'm able to take care of myself. so maybe it's that kind of mentality that makes me not to just want to seek out for help. but i…sometimes situations happen wa boh. i'd feel like this is way beyond my knowledge. maybe i should just go and ask for help. then jah it happens that way. but like there is no supporting structures. there's no person that i would like this person i know i could go to him or her if i get in trouble.

Did the school do anything to further shape understanding of the things you now know about it? like regarding curriculum and classroom matters?

In terms of the school nje, we had an orientation. i think it was 1,30 minutes with the principal…. this is what the school is about, expect this, expect that. be careful of this and that but in terms of curriculum…ai, I think I didn't have you know orientation. I just went to my DH (department head). then obviously, i will just seek help. Then he gave me the materials to say this is what we do, this is what we are not going to do. This is what we cover the curriculum, the ATP works this way.

having been assigned to teach grade 12 maths. Did you have prior experience?

I didn't have any prior experience. I knew nothing about grade 12. I just know maths nje. so like i'd say grade 12 is fine. it's just that it's a lot of pressure. they expect you to just produce results. things like that wa boh. so., we are put under a lot of pressure without considering the fact that hey i'm new in this thing wa bo. but like nna i do believe because of my LF, he's maybe i'd say, i wouldn't say too friendly but he understands the situation that i'm at right now because unfortunately this school is known for fact that we are not performing that well in mathematics, so i think maybe…it's a work in progress. that's how i think maybe he's my supporting structure. together with my DH, other teachers in my department

you mentioned your other colleagues. How are you being supported by them?

they do support me if maybe i have a problem with say maybe the understanding of a certain topic. I would go. i don't normally do that because i just maybe, you just watch youtube just for better understanding of a certain topic. that's what i do but like…if maybe i would decide to go them like Mr N, i normally go to them. then we just discuss a few things with them. but like yona, in terms of enklek i am not sure if i'm supposed to say this…

Be as free as possible. Whatever we discuss here, stays here.

okay, we had a meeting wa bo whereby my DH wanted to introduce this program whereby maybe during…after school hours for extra classes these other teachers would just do a certain topic for a week. He saw that I was under a lot of pressure; need some help. let's do

this thing as atea–not just it's yours Mr K. but the other teachers didn't want that. they just told him blankly to tell 'no we are not going to be involved in grace 12'. but it's not about me. It's their stuff that happened throughout years. they told me fore 'it's not about you. wena we could help you. it's that that the way they were treated wa bona. so they just didn't want anything to do with 12. even 11, grade 11 and 12, enklek they don't want anything to do with it.

and how were you able to overcome that challenge?

ah, nna i just do my own thing. but bona we are not…there's no like bad relationship between anyone. we good wa bona. just that it's between them and departmental head. that is why like i can't get so much help from them. but i know i can go to them and discuss a few things–how to approach this–because they taught grade 12 before but in terms of helping me like formally, ai, they are not gonna do that.

So you say when you face certain content-based challenges, you consult Youtube?

jah, nna i normally consult YouTube maybe ask my LF cos he's always available for such matters. and then Mr N sometimes wa bo. i do that sometimes. during like…i what i normally use is YouTube.

Having had these experiences, what kind of impressions do you now have about the kind of support that is given to new teachers?

I don't think we are adequately supported. i don't think so because i feel like when we get to a situation, we just need to adapt. and obviously i think other teachers, including maybe our management, think(s) maybe we know everything just because we come from the university. 'you've been to a university, you can handle any situation'. but they don't understand that we still new. even if i know but i have to adapt. this is a rel life situation. it's not in a university whereby we're just talking nje. where they just give you strategies on how to tackle problems but this is the real life. it's different. but like I don't think there's enough supportive structure. maybe if there was, things would have turned out not to be the same way or maybe I would have predicted what was going to happen and then prepare for that but like i had to do what I have to do. because like this is the situation that I am in right now.

what do you wish you knew to prepare for what happened?

i would say maybe if i knew that……..enklek let me tell this neh nna i am not the kind of person who goes out and just get involved with a lot of people. but like, judging from the things that are happening in this school, i think it would be best for a new teacher to know that not everyone is gonna help you out. even if, we are doing the same thing akere, we're just teachers, we can just help out but i feel like somehow they would always be that person out there who just wants you to just do well in terms of life. i think maybe if we knew that this is the workplace, not everyone is gonna be happy about you. not everyone is gonna like you and that learners will always challenge you. it doesn't matter even if it's content or maybe like in terms of behavior. if maybe we knew that we're not in control of everything.

being afforded an opportunity to support other new teachers, what would you and not include in that support structure?

i think if maybe i was some kind of a manager for new teachers, i'd focus on the fact that we have to consider that these learners they come from the location. We know how things are.

some of them are rough and i think maybe the poverty. new teachers need to be enlightened with that because these learners you'd, akere maybe we're teachers then we expect learners to wear full school uniform, things like that, arrive on time but like we do have learners who are being challenged like on a regular basis. if we knew at first that i shouldn't be just maybe saying some things wa boh because they affect them. because obviously they come…they live under poverty. the economic structure at their homes is not that well. akere we're new teachers? they (learners) even like want to date us they want to get in relationship with us. i think maybe if…i would just try and come up with strategies whereby we can prevent that. because i don't think there's nothing we can do about it because it's the learners who are doing that. nna i just come to work.i dress nicely.i'm just my own person but bona somehow they think maybe we're trying to attract them and they think maybe do have a chance with you, so maybe the strategies on avoiding that.

Going back to the orientation session with the principal, what was discussed in that?
what he expects from us as teachers, our behaviour and like how does the school operate, what do we have in this school. what we don't have in this school so that we're not just stranded when we walk around. how the kids (learners) behave. and a little bit of history about the school and how it operates. because i feel like this school is just not …it's different from other schools because i feel like we just most of the times we feel like we do have…we operate under a lot of challenges….i understand every school has their own challenges but like when i hear the information from other teachers who are teaching at different schools, we do have a lot of problems. so the principal was just enlightening us with that. this is what we have, our learners come from very far. we normally have kids who are just being here at school maybe ka bo 9 o'clock and we have to be at 7:30 and learners will be here be at 8:30. and we have to consider the fact that hey they come from far. but like it's not reason enough to just let the learners do whatever they want, understand that, but we have to consider where they live, their economic standard. and he was just telling…obviously about the relationship that we have with other colleagues. like don't involve money around. don't just mix; this is the workplace. there are certain things that you have to share. there are things that you don't have to share. he's not gonna choose like you have to involved with this person but be careful. be careful because all of us, we are teaching and everyone wants to prosper in their life wa bona. but people will still try and bring you down somehow for their own gain. things like that. kore, he was telling us like expect a lot of things to happen because this is the workplace. jah, it was about that and i felt like it was the right thing to do.
how much time of support do you need to feel settled?

i think time for me doesn't necessarily mean like you know everything. maybe 'id say maybe after a year i know, aa. i think like every day is a new challenge. there's something new. maybe just say if ever i was not teaching grade 12, i was teaching just internal classes, i would know about internal classes and how to approach, how well does their curriculum i have to cover but like when you go to grade 12, it's a new thing. it's like maybe i know you know how to teach but the pressure wa boh, the expectation it's different. i think we're always learning. but i feel like in terms of adapting at the school and this is a workplace i'd say maybe six months. by now i think i do know everything there is but not like the whole thing. there's still something new that might happen.

Appendix A5: Matshaya individual interview transcript

Why did you choose to become a teacher?

I think the environment where I come from motivated me. cos i saw that where i come from like we had lack of education, like most of my peers they didn't have that interest when it comes to education. so i wanted to bring about a change. especially the environment. i wanted to work where i come from but due to circumstances. but jah it was to bring about change.

how long have you been at this school?

it is year 1, six months.

What are your experiences so far at this school?

To be honest, I taught at three different schools. no, four different schools. and all of them, they are so different. but then this one, it is somehow, the children here neh they are so different from one another but they belong to the same school but they are different from one another. so other schools, yes, they were different but not that much. if you understood one child…but here so, so different environment. different backgrounds. all those things.

is there anyone in senior position who has supported you since your arrival here?

based on my time here since last year, yes, there is support that I get, especially from my HoD. the support on how to manage things. if maybe there is a difficulty in how to manage things here at school. how to manage them in terms of the discipline. all those things.

What are common challenges that you have faced and how have you been supported to deal with them?

where i come from, the children were disciplined. but then when it comes here (when it comes to this school), we don't have much of discipline (much discipline) so it becomes (a) problem. but then based on the support that i get on how to deal with such situations when they come about.

Were these support strategies on how to deal with learner ill-discipline introduced before or after the incident had happened?

to be honest, the situation happened before. After that they get to be introduced (support mechanisms). Then we get (got) to talk about them after they had happened. you understand? the situation can happen now, we will talk about 'okay the situation has happened. now we have to prepare for the future.' cos some other things they just happen without you knowing about them. like, okay there is a situation like this. the children get to misbehave like this. Now when you talk about that, you have experienced it. now they start giving you the support on how to deal with something that you've seen (experienced) before.

In terms of curriculum matters, how have you been supported?

in terms of the curriculum, i have been supported quite perfectly. because I didn't find any difficulty when it comes to the curriculum based situation. that's why i was saying that most of the things I learned them from my HoD. Since I'm teaching the science-related subjects, now in terms of the curriculum, there is a certain procedure on how to deal with such subjects. that's why i was saying that before i get (got) to teach grade 12, I was teaching grade 10 last year. I started teaching grade 12 this year. then i have the support in terms of how to tackle matters related to curriculum. like the procedures that has (have) (sic) to be followed. i'd say that maybe in a term we (will) meet three to four times. then we get to discuss the curriculum-related matters. ***what were your majors at varsity?***

I majored in natural sciences and life sciences but I have the degree in B Sc. in genetics and physiology. Then I did the PGCE. and i teach both subjects.

Apart from your departmental head's support, how has the school supported you with the common challenges that you face as a new teacher?

Usually when you start teaching here, they will just do a mini workshop whereby the principal is there, the deputy principal is there with the new teachers. then they start projecting on those matters that you might have, you might encounter, while you are teaching here. now they tell (guide) you on how to deal with such things. the support that you must get from your HoD. They emphasize that–that if you want support, you must first consult the HoD. Then after that if the matter gets more difficult or you want more support, then you will enquire to (with) bigger departments (escalate it to them). most of the points that were discussed there, it was like for us teachers. I would say that. That's why I was telling you in terms of (the) discipline, you have to see the event first, then get to talk about it. but then it terms of that workshop, that is whereby, just like any other school, you

get to be told on the dressing code. all those things. they support you on, like if you have the emotional instabilities, that's why i was that if you have those kind of things, you have to talk to the HoD first. get the support there. but then some other matters (that) related to the teacher and the kids (learners), some of them they were not introduced. so you had to see them first. that's why i was saying that, i saw it myself that this environment (the school) is different from the environment that i was teaching (at) before.

what was that environment like?

we had discipline there. children were disciplined. When I'm talking about (the) discipline, the discipline is just a general term. like, children were arriving early at school, seated during breaks. no disruptions during the time of teaching but then here it's different. it really effects me a lot because…i will just make a simple example: if there is a disruption while you are teaching, now there's no like team work. so if i'm free, i will just go outside, then maintain (order). Maybe I'll just make sure that the school is fine, the teachers are teaching and all of those things. but then if i'm in class, the class next door, there's no one. the children are out. now i have to take my own time of teaching, go outside, discipline other children. because period one is 30 minutes. you cannot go outside and talk to other kids while you have your own time (period to attend to).

how long did that workshop last and what was discussed in it?

it was from 2, because i think we had two workshops, it was from 2, if i'm not mistaken, to 4. if i remember well, the first one touched on those…the dressing code things, all the things that you as a teacher you are supposed to do. then the second one…was based on the management of the classes. like if you are the class teacher, you have to manage your class like this. the class rules, the sweeping…all those things. It was classroom related. to me they were good, i would say that because some other things i didn't know that i was supposed to do right away. i thought maybe you just do it at your own time but i knew hore okay that workshop helped that if you come to your class, always your class has to have rules in order to the discipline or whatever in your own class.

with what you know now and what you have experienced, what would you do differently that you didn't experience the way you wanted?

i will just draw just one instrument that has all the protocols, all the instructions that has (have) to be followed as one, as a team. So if you have a certain instrument and I have the same instrument as you, that simply means all the strategies that we (will be) implementing will be the same. cos when we are divided, it becomes a problem.

Do you sense division among the new teachers at this school?

yes, because some other things are known by others and some of us we don't know. such as, that's why i was saying in terms of the discipline. i might encounter a certain thing, then i get to go and talk to the management. we discuss it as two individuals, then we come with a solution but then the other teachers they don't know how to deal with that situation. ***so information is not shared evenly among new teachers?***

it's not the same. That's the thing.

How long would you like to be supported through mentorship?

support is not something that does not have duration i think because we encounter different situations everyday. you might think that you know something to find out you don't. and you might need support on that, even if you have 30 years experience.

What impressions have these experiences had on you regarding the kind of support that is given to new teachers?

I would say that…the team. I don't think we work as a team. that is not emphasized too much. If we had that one workshop whereby we are all involved and we all have (like) the same thing to follow, like the same path to go with, we will deal with similar situation(s) the same way. so (the) impression is that yes we might have teams but then we are not as a collective team. For ***an (sic)*** *example, I will just say if there is a disruption, someone will just pass the kids without talking to them or maybe telling them to go to class. I will talk to them. So you see? it brings the division amongst us.*

Do you feel like the new teachers at the school are adequately supported to deal with many challenges that they face?

no, that's what i was saying to you. I said to you, we encounter the situation first, then we get to deal with it after. if you are prepared for something, you will have to deal with it right there. but then if you encounter something new that you did not expect, it's a problem now.

Appendix B: FGI Schedule

1. In the years that you have joined the teaching profession, what challenges have you guys faced and how did you overcome them?

2. How do experienced teachers deal with what you grapple with? Is it unique to you?

3. Have you tried to seek out help from your DH or anyone in senior management and how did they help?

4. Having experienced what you experienced, what impressions have these created regarding the kind of support given to new teachers?

5. How else would you like to be supported?

6. In what ways do you think being supported will help you?

7. How do you think your mentoring experiences have shaped the way you see the teaching profession?

8. In what ways do you wish you were supported?

Appendix B1: FGI Transcriptions

In the years that you have joined the teaching profession, what challenges have you guys faced and how did you overcome them?

Success

The type of challenges that I think… the institutions (universities) didn't prepare us for some of the challenges that we are encountering. For example, the situations where learners are facing at home, difficult situations, where we as educators sometimes, i'm not sure about other educators, where we have to cough out money to help out learners financially because some of them you find parents they don't have money. You know. Some of them don't have food. They will come to you privately 'sir, this is happening at home'. Some are suffering child abuse from parents. So universities did not prepare us for that kind of challenge(s). And then when it comes to the mentorship part of it, i think it's not that balanced but with me particularly i have a very great mentor. Who is mentoring me both in sports and education. You know. But then apart from him I'm not getting any sort of mentorship. I'm expected to do my work. It is expected that i am a graduate. I know what I have to do. I have to do it on time. Apart from him guiding me in a certain way, there is no sense of guidance that I'm getting. But there's a part of guidance that I'm also getting from other educators. Maybe advice about life. Financial advice. But with regards to my career path, very little guidance; it's just, you know, just be aware of this, learners that. But proper guidance to say this is how you get the best out of learners…never got that. But in terms of behavior, that's where we get guidance to say be aware of certain learners, this is how you deal with the problem. This is what we do (senior teachers). You know. Sometimes we escalate the matters to other colleagues as they are able to talk to learners but the institution (university) never prepared us to discipline learners. To say when learners are rudy in class, this is the measure(s) that you take. Yet we have written lots of assignment(s) but never have we came (sic) across assignment(s) where it teaches us strictly with child discipline. You know, as well as other external problems that we face.

How did the school try to bridge that gap?

I don't think they have a solution for that. Because first of all, we escalate the matter (up). Nothing is being done. Learners come back. Still the same behavior. Still encountering the same problem. Time for teaching sometimes is disrupted because a particular learner is not disciplined. I don't have any form of discipline apart from talking. You know, even the government itself doesn't say much about how should we discipline learners. Yes, we write them down. We take them to the principal but nothing is being done. You know, that's the sad reality, so even the institution (university) itself—we have been asking lecturers before 'but how do we discipline learners, when this thing, corporal punishment is being taken away?'. What have you replaced it with? Nothing.

How do experienced teachers deal with what you grapple with? Is it unique to you?

I think it comes with experience because I feel like they deal with matters due years of being in the profession. And with us, we (are) still trying to find our way. Still trying to find more ways of disciplining learners. Still trying to find yourself as well. 'Okay this is what I'm good at and this is how I'm disciplining learners…' I think it still boils down to individuality and creativity as well.

Matshaya

Is there someone who'd want to add on what has just been said?

I'd say that i want to divide this mentorship. i 'd say that most (of) higher departments, even the institution as well, they mostly focus on the curriculum mentorship rather than focusing on social mentorship. So we are more exposed to curriculum mentorship rather than social. We are mostly mentored on that because the institution (higher learning institution) and the school, they only expect the results. They don't mentor us in terms of the social wellbeing of the kids–how do we deal with these kind of things. So individually we might be exposed to different situations and we deal with those situations differently.

What are some of these unique challenges that you faced and how did you deal with them?

There was this, the common one neh, that i had recently. I have two kids in my class whereby they were dealing with the rape case. So,when you are not exposed to such things, you don't know how to deal with them. But then i had to take up measure whereby i had to call the parents and i had to analyse the situation. Then that's whereby i involve the higher departments (seniors). But then you see that i'm exposed to the situation first. Already.

Had you been offered enough guidance, how do you feel you would have handled the situation?

I think If i was correctly mentored on that (those) aspects, i think it could have been more easier because i'd know that if these situations come(s) about, i would have to take this procedure in order to deal with the case because the case took up two months to deal with it. So if i had the correct mentorship, i will know step number 1, go to the higher department, then we talk about it and then we come to a solution.

And also adding on that, we have a high problem of substance abuse. Majority of learners here in our school suffer from substance abuse. You get when you teach after break when you teach, most of the learners can't consume the information because they are under the influence of substance abuse. So now we are not prepared for that. So how do i now deal with that learner who's high? How do I now teach? And now later on they ask you 'you are not giving us the results' but did not mentor us on how to, say, when the learner is high, this is how you deal with the matter. They are expecting results. Hence i'm saying the only thing they concern (are concerned about) is for you to tick out the content but the social aspect of it, they did not consider it at all.

Matshaya

And for you to excel in terms of the curriculum , you have to excel first on the social being. Because you don't know the background of the kid, for him or her to excel in the curriculum aspect, he has to excel first on the social wellbeing.

Then now you get a situation whereby most of the learners live very far. Travel for two hours, one hour, 30 minutes, they get here and tell you 'sir, i'm very exhausted.i'll be able to consume information after that' and then again the institution and the department expect you to get results. And they did not mentor us for that (dealing with social challenges). Sometimes

you wanna conduct extra classes but learners will tell you ‘sir, i am walking for two hours. By the time we’re done at four o’clock–by the time I get home it will be dark. it’s not safe i’m walking.’ so we cannot do some of the things cos we’re restricted. Mainly we are affected by the social aspect of it.

Nandipha

On the part ya the institution (higher learning institutions) not preparing us, I'd also like to say as a new teacher, the institution doesn’t prepare you for paperwork that you are faced with. For instance, when I started teaching, this was new to me–I didn't know that I would be expecting so much paperwork and so many other things to deal with other than the actual teaching and learning process. And then on the part that he just mentioned, on learners having to walk long a distance,so we have, it’s a boarding school where I teach, so, we experience a lot of challenges. There’s ill-discipline in a hostel and the same attitude they take to (it) the classroom. So we have problems and when they are expelled at the hostel, it means they have to stay at home and they have transport issues and then absenteeism comes in. So 80% of the time I never get to teach like the whole class. I have 200 grade 10 learners but in a week I will maybe teach one hundred or one hundred and twenty. So there is a lot of absenteeism and then we don’t know how to deal now with a learner who has been absent for quite some time and then he shows up after two weeks ‘hey, i’m back!’. What am i now supposed to do with this learner! So those are some of the challenges that I'm facing.

How do you deal with these mentioned challenges?

Well, in most cases, sometimes it’s very difficult to try and go back to and give the learner all of the information that has been done in class because they have been absent for so long. So the learner at the end of the year, i feel like it’s his or her responsibility to catch up because you’re the one who was absent. So at the end of the day, the learner fails because they are absent and i don’t know how to help them because they are 200 learners. Like, I can't reach out to each and one (every) one of them. it becomes a very difficult task for me and then some of the major challenges is that the learners do not understand the medium of teaching and learning. So if they don’t understand like, where i teach, like their English proficiency is very low. So they don’t…actually i feel like i’m drowning. I’m fighting a losing battle in a sense that i am in class, i am expected to use this language and they don’t understand it. So how will they even understand the question papers. So as a result, when they do write exams, the only reason they pass is because of assignments and you know…because it’s from the corrections and whatever but when we have exams i usually, i teach english and my learners score very low marks but major problem is that they don’t understand the medium of language …of teaching and learning. So its’s a huge problem for me because there’s no one to mentor me on how to deal with it in an efficient way. Like i’m just alone and trying to figure out how to do it but they are so many of them i can’t reach out to each and one of them. So it is a huge problem for me. I don’t know how would one try to fill in the gap. Cos i feel like their english proficiency for grade 10 learners is not where it’s supposed to be. So when i came in as a grade 10 teacher, i don’t know how to fill in that huge gap but i can see, identify the problem, but i don’t know the procedure on how to assist them because i can see that there’s so much that should be done to assist these learners but me being the only person there and them being 200 i feel like i’m drowning.

Have you tried to seek out help from your DH or anyone in senior management and how did they help?

Honestly speaking, for the better part of the year i did not have an HoD and there was a bit of an like (sic) unstability (instability) at our school because we didn’t have a principal–it was

acting principal–and I feel like she wasn't attending to most of our issues. So this matter has not been taken forward to the hod nor to the department.

Morena

Well, for me the challenges that i've had so far is in relation also to the language. language part of it, i found that some of…most of our kids here i think they were doing Setswana when they were still in primary level and when they get here, they have to do Sesotho and is always a challenge. Some of them when you have to give them tasks, they will always be like 'no, i don't know sotho' and all of that. So now I (also) feel like the problem that we're getting here it's with regard to the policy that has actually been imposed on us but we are not being taught on how to deal with certain issues in regards to discipline–we can deal (with) it in this way. So we told when you get here the mentorship that we will be given is no corporal punishment but we are not told if it (is) not corporal punishment what should you use. Because now it's giving us a problem cos even the university has not prepared us for this. They only told you you can use one, two, three but the ways or the method that they gave us, those ones they only work with model c… all of these…detentions, your quiet corner all of those things. When you put our kids to a corner, for them that is enjoyment because they are now going to do jokes. For them it's hilarious because even if you call them one by one and then you speak to them they don't listen because the only language they listen to is the one that they receive at home. Which is when you make something wrong they lock the door and you know…and matters are actually about to escalate. Hence I'm saying we are not being told or taught on how to deal with certain matters. So the only thing that we're told is here's what you must do: you must have your file, you must do this one, two, three that's curriculum and then the last words that they leave you with is 'meneer, no corporal punishment'. And that's the only word that comes into your mind. And everything just becomes bad and you don't know how to deal with them because you're only told 'don't' but they are not saying 'if you don't do that, this is how you should do in your classes: you must do this to them. See if it works for you. This is how you must treat them, this is how you must do. Let's see if it works out for you. If it does not, I'll give you plan B on how to actually plan around everything' but we are not being told that. No corporal punishment then everything is on. Just have to be annoyed everytime in your class.

Mr M*atshaya*, you say no learners should fail. Where is that coming from?

Obviously, from the head. No corporal punishment, neh, but then learners shouldn't fail.

Success

And the other thing I feel like the institution also failed us (on) is the fact that some of the kids here come with knives. When you go to the toilets while doing your rounds, you'd get them hiding knives and stuff. You know. That's a very traumatic experience for other educators. Some of us come to the locations–we are exposed to them but for someone who lived in the town, it would be a very traumatic experience seeing a learner holding a knife. And I'm part of the safety committee group. We (have) done a survey. A lot of learners have seen other knives at school. You know. Substance abuse. Like they are very dangerous and I think it was about four weeks back–a learner got stabbed just outside the school, you know, and it was gang-related school things. They never prepared us for this. So i feel like the institution (universities) is failing us a lot. They only prepare us when it comes to the content-how to present, how to consume… but a lot of things they did not prepare us for.

Matshaya

Those are the things that affect the academies.

Nandipha

Again, I think the issue with the discipline, neh, it will never stop because learners are aware that no action is taken against them. They know, 'ai, you will take me to the principal's office. That will be it.' so if ever maybe the school had a policy and if a policy is already there, the policy should then be implemented.

Matshaya

We must have one policy whereby (which) all of us we have to follow.

Success

A guideline to say if a learner is disrespectful or misbehaving, this is the procedure that needs to be taken and the learner will be dealt with.

Morena

Also, I feel like different areas have different types of learners. So if you go to certain areas, especially in the rural areas, the behaviour is not compared to this one. So if you take a teacher, maybe from some of us, we find that some of us have done our practicals in **Kwagga** and you come to this side of Blm. That side when you get there, most of those learners know (that) if they call your parent and then that one for them saying that we will call their parent for them, it's a reason for them to behave. Come (to) this side, when you come to Blm and you say we call them the parents, they say 'no, there is no problem'. Because us it's gotten to a point whereby that side (rural), they fear their parents and then when you get to this side of Blm (urban), it's like parents like(s) to be nice to their own kids and when you become nice it means when they get here, some of them (learners), they feel like you will take…they (parents) will take their own side because they wouldn't even listen to own teacher because they think they know them at home. Hence it's giving us a problem when you get here you find that the learners here are not the ones that you have been meeting when you were actually doing tour practicals because learners are different. If you look at learners in Blm and then you go to a very rural area, and you will compare them in terms of discipline, it's not the same.

Nandipha

Just to add on that. When you look at model c schools, they have, like, policies on how to handle ill-disciplined learners and those policies are just not there for decoration–they are actually being implemented. So the biggest problem with our schools is these policies are not being implemented. And, again, usually, the learners do behave in model c schools because they know 'hey, i'm gonna be expelled'. But then with our schools, they know nothing is going to be done. But then again, I think it will pose a problem for the entire country if our learners were to be expelled because imagine the amount of learners who will be out of school with no future. You know. So I don't know; it is a problem. I don't know if you get what I'm saying, like we could solve it but if we do solve it by expelling them we will be causing more problems for the entire country.

Matshaya

But i'd say the school is run by the management. So the fear has to be implemented (instilled) by the management. We cannot say that one school has to deal with a certain manner than their kids are disciplined. yes, they are fine but then here it is a

different…but then we can implement the same procedures that the village schools are implementing. We can do the same thing here. Some other things are taken serious somewhere else just like she way saying: like the procedures, the policies are being implemented but then other schools, they just say okay here is a policy but then the kids they don't behave in class but neh but when you bring to the higher management 'like, okay it's fine. Call the parents, you must do this and this and this neh. The kid is back tomorrow. But then other schools, they implement measures that are more extreme. Not like expelling the kids but then they have the policy that is followed. So the kids tend to have the fear (that) once you call your parents you know what will happen.

Morena

And also there's…i don't know…but in terms of schools, especially in the rural areas, there's another school, i think they call it Mtwe back in Kwagga. What they, they actually cos they also have the same issues, what they actually did different was…cos they also had a lot of issues because in terms of Kwagga, what they did different(ly) i remember they beautified their own school by learners which were ill-disciplined. So sometimes the principal will make them clean the yard everytime they misbehave. So when you get into that school, it's so nice because sometimes the principal if the learner is late will tell that when you are coming, because already you see you are late, come carrying a rock, a big one, and when they get there, they paint it, all those rocks is nice–the school is nice. Everytime they know when they do something wrong, there must be (a) form of discipline and because you can't beat them but there's more something that says 'don't do this to them.' They are allowed to clean the school. They are allowed to beautiful the school. So that's how he did it. And now the school is well behaved. It's well, it's nice. So sometimes I feel like the schools in terms of schools, they need to find ways around everything. In terms of learners, learners hate cleaning. They hate doing anything in terms of chores and everything, so if they misbehave and you punish them in that manner most of them they will actually ensure that they don't do that and if we are very strict that they have done one, two three, we need to observe them on a daily basis that they are actually carrying out those tasks, some of them they will actually i think they will start behaving in most cases.

Success

And then going back to the mentorship programme, i feel like most schools, neh, including ours, (we) have a problem that (we) as novice teachers we are not being integrated into how the school is being run; especially in finance, food. You know the amount of learners that are being accepted. We're not included in that decision making. When we talk (about) decision-making, we know nothing. We just come here. We teach. We leave. You know. We don't know the school's vision. What's happening...You know. we (are) not being groomed into the top position. Not once have I heard the deputy or the principal saying 'this is how I run the school. I'm planning that in five years' time, if i do retire, if no one is taking over, I expect you to play this role in helping the school's progress'. Nothing is being done with regards to that. Everything is kept the (a) secret.

Nhlakanipho

I feel like you guys have said a lot. Wa bon. And I feel like akere we're in the same school? I have the same challenge as theirs. But I feel like they haven't said one thing. The fact that these learners want us. They want to be in a relationship with us. And it's a difficult

challenge. And you were not taught at the university as to what to do when we get in a type of a situation like that and I feel like maybe we haven't talked about that.

Success

Jah. It's another challenge. A serious one.

Nhlakanipho

Because nna i feel like…i had that…you know mos last year (reminding other participants of his experience) there was a learner who told me point blank, like in class,

'sir, i really want you'.

Success

Yeah, they do it. I experienced the (a) similar challenge this year. Where a learner in front of every learner…other learners told me that 'sir, i really want you and i feel like i

can get you'. How do I now deal with that? How does learning and teaching continue after other learners have seen that? And i know very well myself even if I escalate the matter, nothing will be done.

Nhlakanipho

And if you, I feel like maybe he decides to solve the matter on their own, it's your word against theirs. So it's not gonna work. So that is why nna i decided to involve other teachers. Wa bo? 'Hey, go and help me. This is the situation. This girl is doing this in class.

Morena

Hence I feel like sometimes we are made to seem small because some of these learners don't respect us as young teachers. But the problem is when these young people, especially these learners, when they see us they see a potential boyfriend or girlfriend. Which is different to the experienced or the older teachers. When they see them, they see a parent. Because this person is older or maybe they are the same size or the same age as their mothers. Hence they are actually some of them they are respecting them. But with us they see this person is on (in) his early twenties, almost probably this person actually can become my blesser in any way. So hence they are actually doing all of these things which… they are actually giving us a problem. Because in most cases I will find that, especially when I go to grade 10 learners, when it comes to grade 10 learners, (the) majority of the people who are giving a problem are ladies, and sometimes you are thinking to yourself, what is happening here? There is nothing i can do because when they are…normally what happens is when one person does this, and you try to reprimand, for the mere fact that they are seeing that is causing you to…an emotional blackout, they…some of them are now…you will actually take this person to the principal or actually the HoD or some sort and if they see that this person (perpetrator) was not dealt with, some are coming. It's like they are trying to prove wena you failed. It doesn't mean some of us will fail. So it's like all of them will come and attempt. Take an attempt.

So it has happened a lot that you reported matters and it was never dealt with effectively?

Success

nothing was done and it saddens you when nothing is done. Because now the learners will report back to them 'nothing happened. You know, we can still continue'. And i think the majority of other learners being ill-disciplined is because they know nothing is gonna happen.

Having experienced what you experienced, what impressions have these created regarding the kind of support given to new teachers?

Success

I feel like novice teachers are neglected. And you know some of these teachers see you as a threat again. You know. Some of them, they don't see you as someone who needs to be taught. They see you as a threat. So sometimes they are reluctant to help.you know. So I won't say it was (a) warm welcome. You know. So sometimes it's difficult as a novice teacher to say I got a warm reception from my mentors. No. Some of them feel like you (are) so young. You know. You still have a way to go. They don't care cos some of them (they) are heading towards retirement. They are not invested.

Matshaya

I guess to them it all comes down to experience. It's like you have to gain experience.

You have to see for yourself…

Success
They like that. It's like why should I help you if I got it the hard way? So it's like that.

Nandipha

I like what he said about the principal sharing his vision. I feel like if we were in an environment where the principal like had meetings with all the staff members and he spoke about his vision of the school and how he wants things to be handled, then we would be able to better handle situations because we will know gore no we've had this discussion with the principal and this is what he sad. So now I will know when I see learners smoking, this is what I should do because the principal has actually discussed it with the whole staff but now, these things they, hey, they don't talk (about) these things with us, neh. So you just end up, if you see a learner smoking in front of you, hai, you just end up passing by because if you take the learner forward nothing is being done, so what the hell!

Success

At the end of the day, you become like a menace to learners. Learners will see you like you after them because other educators are not doing anything about it. They will end up targeting you–maybe damaging your car because they will feel like this guy is after us. Other educators are letting this matter go but you are after us. They will end up targeting you. They will make sure they make your life a living hell.

Morena

And also, i remember when i was doing my first year, when i went to my practicals back in Kwakga. There was also a primary school. That's when I learned that a leader leads from the

front. You don't just tell them what to do but sometimes you ensure that there's discipline. You don't tell them to discipline but you must try to ensure that you discipline before they can. So what normally happened, in most schools, especially in some of the schools here, let me just say some of the schools in certain areas, you will even go to a school, and then you will leave without ever seeing the principal walking around trying to discipline learners. Which is sometimes you can say is causing problems because sometimes when you (are) actually on your practicals or teaching and you just see your principal standing at the door and say 'you are fine?' and then the learners will look at them and somehow if somehow that person normally makes rounds and then try to discipline them–you feel safe. You also feel like 'okay, I have support'. At least there's someone who has my back because you can see that he's walking around, ensuring that learners are not outside and you are now responsible for your own class. You know even if there is a problem, you can easily contact him. So in some of the schools, you will find that you will even leave the school without seeing him. Hence i'm saying in most cases i feel like if we were actually given support, especially the first few years, that maybe in some times maybe the HoD will just walk into class and then just ask on how is your relationship between you and the learners, if they are actually respecting you, cos sometimes you will find that your learners, these learners, they fear HoDs or they fear some people who have been in the school for years. So sometimes when they see the presence of that person there, they can see that this person has the support of his own Hod or someone else. Sometimes it can actually change their own mind and then most probably they will start respecting you.

How else would you like to be supported?

Nhlakanipho

I think action matters because like she said wa bona, maybe you guys will just talk–bounce a few ideas but implementation wa bona it's what matters. Because in this school especially, things like we will go in a meeting (to) discuss 'oh, this is how we have to deal with things. This is how we want learners to do what' but the actual part of doing it is not being done! So it doesn't… we even have the code of conduct but i haven't even seen it. It's not even being implemented, so hai, sometimes we just talk, talk nje nothing gonna happen.

Nandipha

Very so true. Educators are very good with talking. They can have endless meetings talking and coming up with suggestions–they are very good at that–but then when it comes to the implementation hai..

Success

Me i feel like our voices are not being heard. We are not being given a platform to raise our concerns first of all, you know. Cos that is where the support system comes from. just to say okay end of term, what are the challenges that you have experienced? What do we need to work on? If we have done that, I think it was gonna be easier to say 'I'm having trouble with this, these are the challenges that I'm facing' but that's not being done.

Morena

Hence also, i actually like that idea because i think somehow it works. Also when i was actually doing extra classes, what normally happens if we are actually doing a week, every single day, let's say we teach and then after teaching we meet up and say what were the challenges of the day? And how can we resolve (them)? And if you are seated like this, it's very simple that maybe sometimes i cannot think of an idea on how to actually make

something work but someone will actually will give me an idea and then most probably it might work. So if you let's say maybe you do something like this…if we were given such a support. And say maybe per week, maybe on a Friday and we say let's meet: what were the challenges the entire week? And how do we resolve those problems or challenges that we had, maybe such things… and you will find that if you are seated with some of the experienced teachers they might actually give you something that you don't actually know and you will actually get ideas because some of them have learned them through the years. Hence someone says wisdom actually is not something that you can get through books but sometimes you can actually get so much information when we are seated with someone who is wiser. So if I'm seated to a teacher who's wiser, I can get something that certain books cannot actually teach me because that person has not just read–that person has lived in such situations.

Nandipha

Yes, i agree with that neh and i think it would maybe function better if the HoD would hold subject meetings with us per week so that we can raise all of the issues and concerns to the HoD and hopefully our issues would be attended to and we will get better advice on how to deal with some of the matters. But i honestly …because i feel like at the moment, my HoD, she is just policing us. 'Submit the books, how many activities, marksheet this' neh but the actual support of you know like i know i have someone i can go to when i struggle with this. Like I feel like I don't have that. The HoD is just there to police my work.nothing else, so i feel like the HoD it would be so much better if we would meet in this fashion (focus group style) and then we could just raise all of the challenges that we have experienced. And then find better ways on how to deal with them. That would work so much better. Unlike just. I feel like at the moment that's the only responsibility that the HoD has–to police us.

In what ways do you think being supported will help you?

Success

I think it will minimise some of the challenges. Cos with support, comes solutions to the problem. So now the fact that we have support, means we can deal with the problems and challenges that we have

Matshaya

And it creates a healthy working environment. Feeling free at your work is something that is nice. When you are free, you can be able to think out of the box.

How do you think your mentoring experiences have shaped the way you see the teaching profession?

Morena

I think normally when we actually got into this field, we had this particular hunger that we had. We all like, i want my kids (learners) to have 100%. I want them to do well but you get here and you feel like most of them are ill-disciplined and when most kids are ill-disciplined, it means the performance becomes very low and then you become so depressed then you think what is wrong with me that i cannot actually achieve certain results. It's actually demotivating you quite a lot.

Matshaya

Finding out you did not expect. Because we come from different backgrounds. Different schools whereby most of us (we) come from the school whereby there was discipline. You wanted to become the teacher whereby you teach in a school whereby there's discipline. Then you come here, you find this. Now you get dis(de)motivated. It's a completely different situation.

Success

You have to dig deep. You have to be creative. With some of the challenges, and with some of the learners, we have challenges where a learner cannot write well, suffering from dyslexia, you know, the institution (varsity) did not prepare us for that. It's a lot of..it's a mess.

Nandipha

I do have a similar situation and i tried to escalate it to the principal and to the department and it turned out that nothing could be done for that learner because number he was over-age, he's in grade 10 but he's 19, so he could only have been assisted if he was under 16 because they would then take him to the special school. So he attends everyday and he's just there. Like i don't know how to, so i just leave him to maybe he wants to be in class he cannot read, he cannot write. So again, it's another problem. What should be done for learners who are over 16

In what ways do you wish you were supported?

Success

I won't say mentorship programs but just the support. You know just to be asked what do you need? How can we help you? That's all we need. Assist us. We don't need mentorship that much but we need assistance with some of the challenges we come across. You know, not being able to deal with a problem is a problem itself. That's what we need–assistance to the challenges that we complain about. If we can get help with that, i think we can have a better working environment.

Appendix C: Reflective Journal Schedule

Dear participant,

Please take the time to answer the questions below in which you reflect daily on your perceptions and experiences of mentorship at your school.

Since joining this school, including recently, what are some of the experiences would you like to share that affected you as a new teacher?

What kind of support and guidance did you receive from your colleagues in relation to these experiences you had?

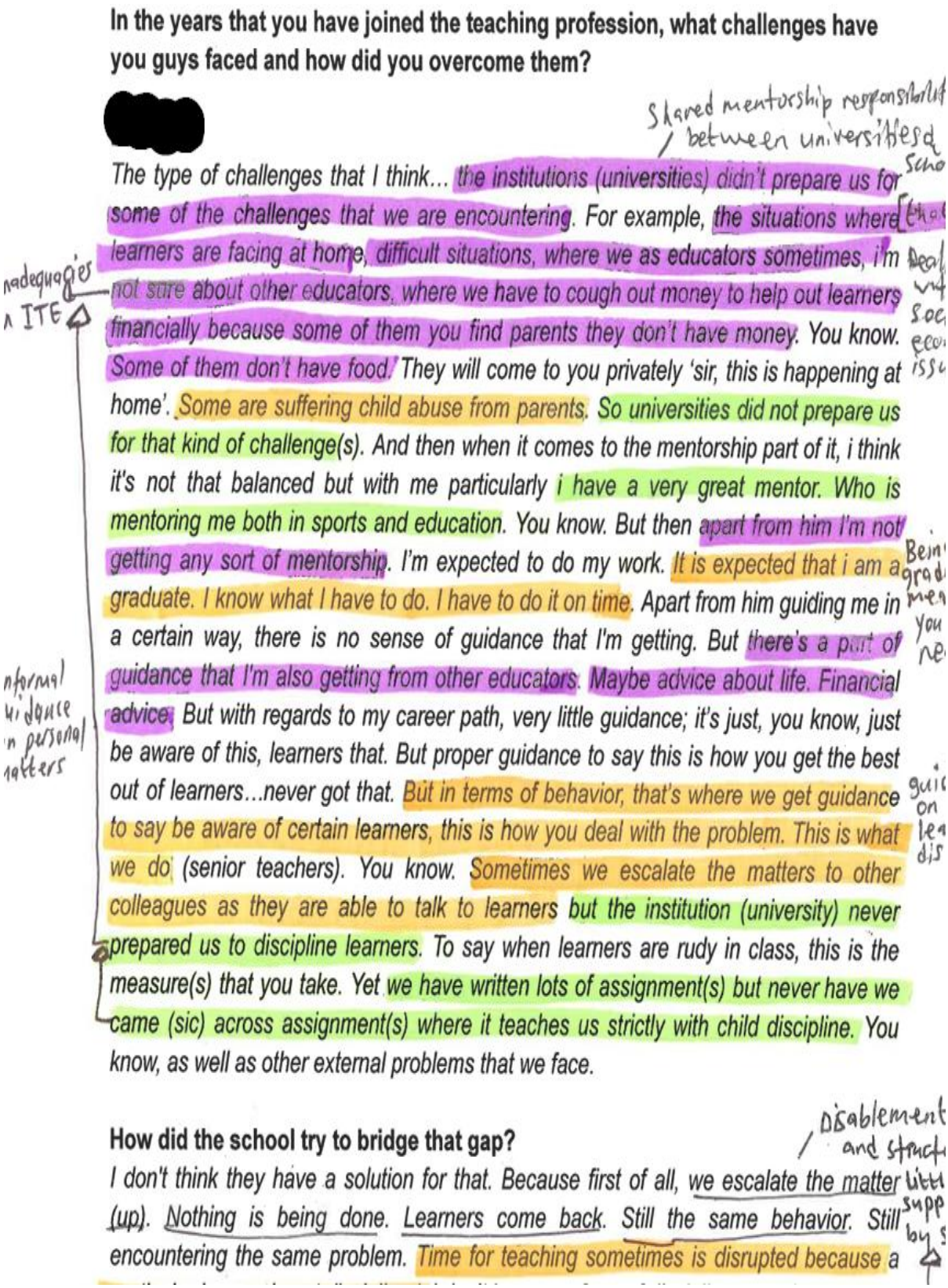
How were the support and guidance helpful to you?

Yours sincerely,

Lehlohonolo Mofokeng

Student number: 929221

Appendix D1: FGI with memos on the margins



In the years that you have joined the teaching profession, what challenges have you guys faced and how did you overcome them?

[redacted]

Shared mentorship responsibility between universities and

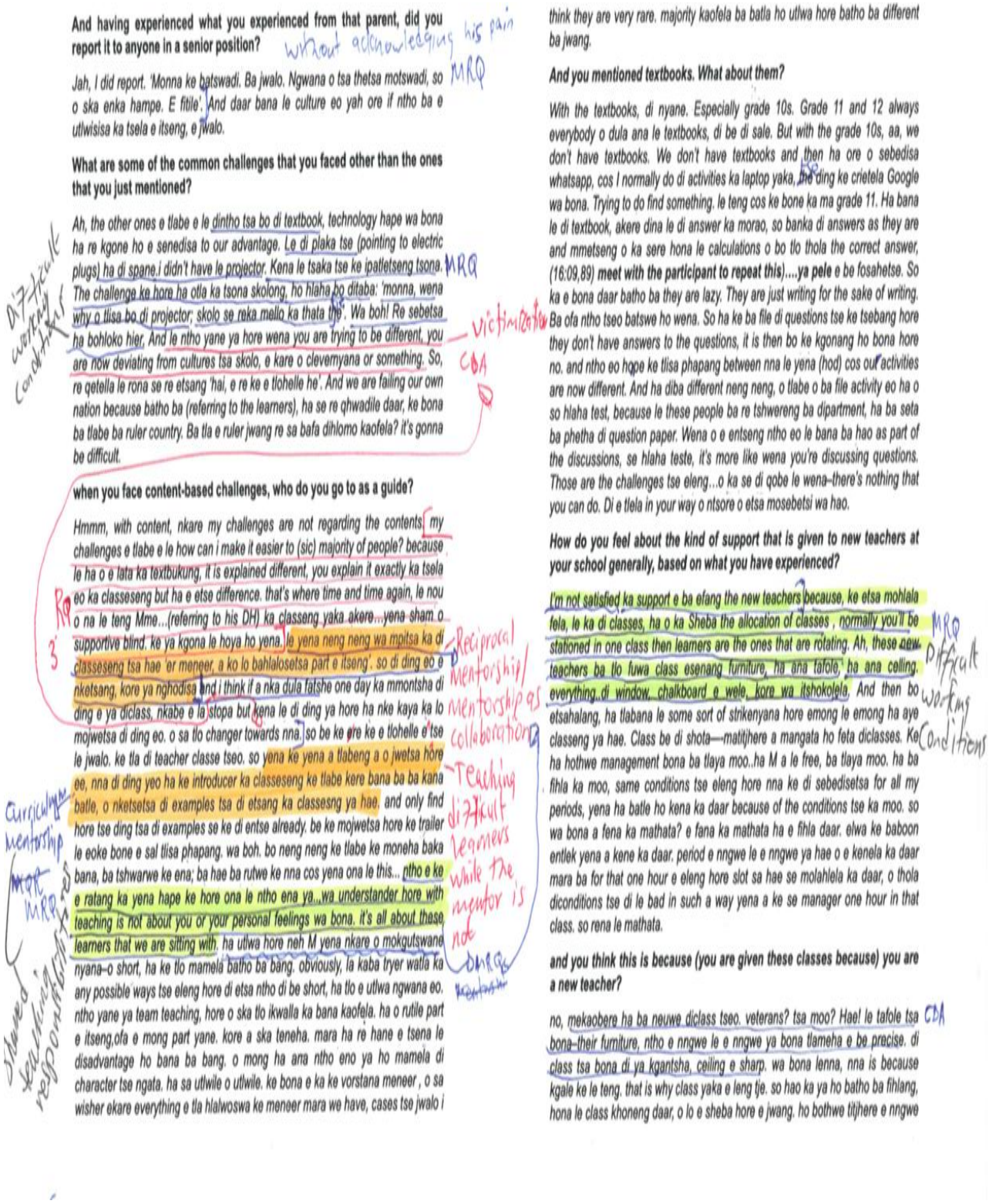
The type of challenges that I think... the institutions (universities) didn't prepare us for some of the challenges that we are encountering. For example, the situations where learners are facing at home, difficult situations, where we as educators sometimes, i'm not sure about other educators, where we have to cough out money to help out learners financially because some of them you find parents they don't have money. You know. Some of them don't have food. They will come to you privately 'sir, this is happening at home'. Some are suffering child abuse from parents. So universities did not prepare us for that kind of challenge(s). And then when it comes to the mentorship part of it, i think it's not that balanced but with me particularly i have a very great mentor. Who is mentoring me both in sports and education. You know. But then apart from him I'm not getting any sort of mentorship. I'm expected to do my work. It is expected that i am a graduate. I know what I have to do. I have to do it on time. Apart from him guiding me in a certain way, there is no sense of guidance that I'm getting. But there's a part of guidance that I'm also getting from other educators. Maybe advice about life. Financial advice. But with regards to my career path, very little guidance; it's just, you know, just be aware of this, learners that. But proper guidance to say this is how you get the best out of learners...never got that. But in terms of behavior, that's where we get guidance to say be aware of certain learners, this is how you deal with the problem. This is what we do (senior teachers). You know. Sometimes we escalate the matters to other colleagues as they are able to talk to learners but the institution (university) never prepared us to discipline learners. To say when learners are rudy in class, this is the measure(s) that you take. Yet we have written lots of assignment(s) but never have we came (sic) across assignment(s) where it teaches us strictly with child discipline. You know, as well as other external problems that we face.

How did the school try to bridge that gap?

Disablement and structu

I don't think they have a solution for that. Because first of all, we escalate the matter (up). Nothing is being done. Learners come back. Still the same behavior. Still encountering the same problem. Time for teaching sometimes is disrupted because a

Appendix D2: Individual interview with memos on the margins



And having experienced what you experienced from that parent, did you report it to anyone in a senior position?

Jah, I did report. 'Monna ke batswadi. Ba jwalo. Ngwana o tsa thetsa motswadi, so o ska enka hampe. E fitile'. And daar bana le culture eo yah ore if ntho ba e utlwisisa ka tsela e itseng, e jwalo.

What are some of the common challenges that you faced other than the ones that you just mentioned?

Ah, the other ones e tlabe e le dintho tsa bo di textbook, technology hape wa bona ha re kgone ho e senedisa to our advantage. Le di plaka tse (pointing to electric plugs) ha di spane.i didn't have le projector. Kena le tsaka tse ke ipatletseng tsona. The challenge ke hore ha otla ka tsona skolong, ho hlaha bo ditaba: 'monna, wena why o tlisa bo di projector; skolo se reka mello ka thata tjo'. Wa boh! Re sebetsa ha bohloko hier. And le ntho yane ya hore wena you are trying to be different, you are now deviating from cultures tsa skolo, e kare o clevernyana or something. So, re qetella le rona se re etsang 'hai, e re ke e tlohelle he'. And we are failing our own nation because batho ba (referring to the learners), ha se re qhwadile daar, ke bona ba tlabe ba ruler country. Ba tla e ruler jwang re sa bafa dihlomo kaofela? it's gonna be difficult.

when you face content-based challenges, who do you go to as a guide?

Hmmm, with content, nkare my challenges are not regarding the contents[my challenges e tlabe e le how can i make it easier to (sic) majority of people? because le ha o e lata ka textbukung, it is explained different, you explain it exactly ka tsela eo ka classeseng but ha e etse difference. that's where time and time again, le nou o na le teng Mme...(referring to his DH) ka classeng yaka akere...yena sham o supportive blind. ke ya kgona le hoya ho yena. le yena neng neng wa mpitsa ka di classeseng tsa hae 'er meneer, a ko lo bahlalosetsa part e itseng'. so di ding eo e nketsang, kore ya nghodisa and i think if a nka dula fatshe one day ka mmontsha di ding e ya diclass, nkabe e la stopa but kena le di ding ya hore ha nke kaya ka lo mojwetsa di ding eo. o sa tlo changer towards nna. so be ke ere ke e tlohelle e tse le jwalo. ke tla di teacher classe tseo. so yena ke yena a tlabeng a o jwetsa hore ee, nna di ding yeo ha ke introducer ka classeseng ke tlabe kere bana ba ba kana batle, o nketsetsa di examples tsa di etsang ka classesng ya hae. and only find hore tse ding tsa di examples se ke di entse already. be ke mojwetsa hore ke trailer le eoke bone e sal tlisa phapang. wa boh. bo neng neng ke tlabe ke moneha baka bana, ba tshwarwe ke ena; ba hae ba rutwe ke nna cos yena ona le this... ntho e ke e ratang ka yena hape ke hore ona le ntho ena ya...wa understander hore with teaching is not about you or your personal feelings wa bona. it's all about these learners that we are sitting with. ha utlwa hore neh M yena nkare o mokgutswane nyana–o short, ha ke tlo mamela batho ba bang. obviously, la kaba tryer watla ka any possible ways tse eleng hore di etsa ntho di be short, ha tlo e utlwa ngwana eo. ntho yane ya team teaching, hore o ska tlo ikwalla ka bana kaofela. ha o rutile part e itseng,ofa e mong part yane. kore a ska teneha. mara ha re hane e tsena le disadvantage ho bana ba bang. o mong ha ana ntho eno ya ho mamela di character tse ngata. ha sa utlwile o utlwile. ke bona e ka ke vorstana meneer, o sa wisher ekare everything e tla hlalwoswa ke meneer mara we have, cases tse jwalo i think they are very rare. majority kaofela ba batla ho utlwa hore batho ba different ba jwang.

And you mentioned textbooks. What about them?

With the textbooks, di nyane. Especially grade 10s. Grade 11 and 12 always everybody o dula ana le textbooks, di be di sale. But with the grade 10s, aa, we don't have textbooks. We don't have textbooks and then ha ore o sebedisa whatsapp, cos I normally do di activities ka laptop yaka, the ding ke crietela Google wa bona. Trying to do find something. le teng cos ke bone ka ma grade 11. Ha bana le di textbook, akere dina le di answer ka morao, so banka di answers as they are and mmetseng o ka sere hona le calculations o bo tlo thola the correct answer, (16:09,89) **meet with the participant to repeat this)....ya pele** e be fosahetse. So ka e bona daar batho ba they are lazy. They are just writing for the sake of writing. Ba ofa ntho tseo batswe ho wena. So ha ke ba file di questions tse ke tsebang hore they don't have answers to the questions, it is then bo ke kgonang ho bona hore no. and ntho eo hape ke tlisa phapang between nna le yena (hod) cos our activities are now different. And ha diba different neng neng, o tlabe o ba file activity eo ha o so hlaha test, because le these people ba re tshwereng ba dipartment, ha ba seta ba phetha di question paper. Wena o e entseng ntho eo le bana ba hao as part of the discussions, se hlaha teste, it's more like wena you're discussing questions. Those are the challenges tse eleng...o ka se di qobe le wena–there's nothing that you can do. Di e tlela in your way o ntsore o etsa mosebetsi wa hao.

How do you feel about the kind of support that is given to new teachers at your school generally, based on what you have experienced?

I'm not satisfied ka support e ba efang the new teachers because, ke etsa mohlala fela, le ka di classes, ha o ka Sheba the allocation of classes , normally you'll be stationed in one class then learners are the ones that are rotating. Ah, these new teachers ba tlo fuwa class esenang furniture, ha ana tafole, ha ana celling. everything..di window, chalkboard e wele, kore wa itshokolela. And then bo etsahalang, ha tlabana le some sort of strikenyana hore emong le emong ha aye classeng ya hae. Class be di shota—matitjhere a mangata ho feta diclasses. Ke ha hothwe management bona ba tlaya moo..ha M a le free, ba tlaya moo. ha ba fihla ka moo, same conditions tse eleng hore nna ke di sebedisetsa for all my periods, yena ha batle ho kena ka daar because of the conditions tse ka moo. so wa bona a fena ka mathata? e fana ka mathata ha e fihla daar. elwa ke baboon entlek yena a kene ka daar. period e nngwe le e nngwe ya hae o e kenela ka daar mara ba for that one hour e eleng hore slot sa hae se molahlela ka daar, o thola diconditions tse di le bad in such a way yena a ke se manager one hour in that class. so rena le mathata.

and you think this is because (you are given these classes because) you are a new teacher?

no, mekaobere ha ba neuwe diclass tseo. veterans? tsa moo? Hae! le tafole tsa bona–their furniture, ntho e nngwe le e nngwe ya bona tlameha e be precise. di class tsa bona di ya kgantsha, ceiling e sharp. wa bona lenna, nna is because kgale ke le teng. that is why class yaka e leng tje. so hao ka ya ho batho ba fihlang, hona le class khoneng daar, o lo e sheba hore e jwang. ho bothwe titjhere e nngwe

Appendix E: The display of final themes and sub-themes

Participants pseudonym names	Pseudonym school names
Success	Manankwe
Nandipha	Baobab
Nhlakanipho	Manankwe
Morena	Manankwe
Matshaya	Manankwe

Themes
BTs' experiences of professional support and strengthening the subject content knowledge
The principals' orientation intervention to support BTs
Lack of collegiality and school community support

Themes	Sub-themes
Mentorship is a shared responsibility	Under preparedness in Initial Teacher Education Programme
Navigating a cocktail of challenges	Challenges in managing ill-disciplined learners
	Confronted by learners' socio-economic issues
	The absence of a platform to brainstorm ideas
	Inadequate senior colleagues' support
BTs' agency to cope with professional challenges	Confronting classroom management constraints
	Demonstrating creativity to make up for insufficient instructional materials and improve classroom practice

Appendix F: FSDoE Approval Letter

Enquiries: KK Motshumi, 079 503 4943
Ref: Research Permission: LI Mofokeng
Email: K.Motshumi@fseducation.gov.za

education
Department of Education
FREE STATE PROVINCE

Mr. LI Mofokeng
[redacted]

Dear Mr. Mofokeng

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION: MOTHEO DISTRICT.

This letter serves to inform you that you have been granted permission to conduct research in the Free State Department of Education within the Motheo Education District. The details in relation to your research project with the University of the Witwatersrand are as follows:

Topic: Beginner Teachers' Perceptions and Experiences of Mentorship Programme(s): A Case Study of Three Secondary Schools Facing Multiple Deprivation in the Free State Province.

1. List of schools involved: [redacted]

2. Target population: 12 male and female beginner teachers teaching grade 8 to 12.

3. Period of research: From the date of signature of this letter until 30 September 2022. Please note that the department does not allow any research to be conducted during the fourth term (quarter) of the academic year. Should you fall behind your schedule by three months to complete your research project within the approved period, you will be required to apply for an extension. The researcher is also expected to request permission from the school principals to conduct research at schools.

4.Conditions: Please note that the permission granted is subject to the following conditions:

- The collection of data must not interfere with the normal tuition time or teaching process.
- A bound copy of the research document must be submitted to the Free State Department of Education, Room 101, 1st Floor, Thuto House, St. Andrew Street, Bloemfontein.
- You will be expected, on completion of your research study to make a presentation to the relevant stakeholders in the Department.
- The ethics documents must be adhered to in the discourse of your study in our department.

5. Financial implications: Please note that costs relating to all the conditions mentioned above are your own responsibility.

The Department wish you all the best with your research project.

Yours in education

Mr. MZAMO W. JACOBS
DIRECTOR: QUALITY ASSURANCE, M&E AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

DATE: 04/04/2022

Appendix G: Ethical Clearance

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

Research Office

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)
R14/49 Mofokeng

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: H22/04/21**
PROJECT TITLE	Beginner teachers' perceptions and experiences of mentorship programme: A case study of three secondary schools facing multiple deprivation in the Free State Province
INVESTIGATOR(S)	Mr L Mofokeng
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	Wits School of Education/
DATE CONSIDERED	22 April 2022
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved Risk Level: Low
EXPIRY DATE	21 July 2025
DATE 22 July 2022	**CHAIRPERSON** _____ (Professor J Watermeyer)

cc: Supervisor : Dr T Nkambule and Dr Emure Kadenge

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10004, 10th Floor, Senate House, University. Unreported changes to the application may invalidate the clearance given by the HREC (Non-Medical)

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to submit an amendment of the protocol to the Committee. **I agree to completion of a regular progress report. For Minimal and Low studies, this is due annually on 31 December. For Medium and High Risk studies, this is due twice annually on 30 June and 31 December.**

Appendix H: Information Sheet for the Principal

Dear Principal,

I am Lehlohonolo Mofokeng, a PhD student in Education Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. As part of my studies, I must undertake a research project, and I am investigating 'Beginner teachers' experiences and perceptions of mentorship in two Free State province public secondary schools' under the supervision of Professor Thabisile Nkambule and Dr Kadenge Emure. The study aims to explore the beginner teachers' perceptions and experiences of a mentorship and examine the existing mentorship programmes in the Free State secondary schools, if at all.

As part of this research study, I would like to invite your teachers to take part in a semi-structured individual interview and focus group interviews which will not take more than 1,5 hours of their time each. I will also ask them to complete a reflective journal documenting their perceptions and experiences of mentorship as they unfold daily. In the semi-structured and focus group interviews, I will ask about their perceptions and experiences of mentorship at your school. Please note that there are no personal costs or direct benefits that they will get from agreeing to participate in this study.

I would also like to audio record the interviews using a digital device. These recordings will be stored in a password-protected folder on my password-protected laptop. If they decide to participate in this research, they will be able to withdraw their participation at any point in the research, and they can also choose not to answer any interview questions that they do not want to. Their identity will not be divulged to anyone out of the study. All the focus group participants will be requested not to share identities of other participants with anyone, including any discussed information. To protect their identity, I will use pseudonyms (false names) when I mention them. Their data will be deleted after five years.

If you have any questions about this research, feel free to contact me on the details listed below. This study will be written up as a thesis, which will be available online through the university library website. If you wish to receive a summary of this thesis, I will be happy to send it to you. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za. If you have any questions about the research, please feel free to contact me on 071 580 6067 or lehlohonolom316@gmail.com. My supervisors are Professor Thabisile Nkambule (main supervisor) (011 717 3049 or thabisle.nkambule@wits.ac.za) and Kadenge Emure (emure.kadenge@wits.ac.za) whom you can freely contact should you need any clarity.

Yours Sincerely,
Lehlohonolo Mofokeng (929221)

Appendix I: Participant Information Sheet (Individual Interviews)

Dear Sir/ Madam

I am Lehlohonolo Mofokeng, a PhD student in Education Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. As part of my studies, I must undertake a research project, and I am investigating 'Beginner teachers' experiences and perceptions of mentorship in two Free State province public secondary schools' under the supervision of Professor Thabisile Nkambule and Dr Kadenge Emure. The study aims to explore the beginner teachers' perceptions and experiences of a mentorship and examine the existing mentorship programmes in the Free State secondary schools, if at all.

As part of this research study, I would like to invite you to take part in a semi-structured individual face to face interview to be held at your school after working hours which will last approximately 45 minutes. I will also kindly ask you to complete a reflective journal at least twice a week documenting your perceptions and experiences of mentorship as they unfold daily. I will collect your entries on the day of the FGI session.

With your permission, I would also like to audio record the interviews using a digital device. These recordings will be stored in a password-protected folder on my password-protected laptop.

If you decide to participate in this research, you will be able to withdraw your participation at any point in the research, and you can also choose not to answer any interview questions that you do not want to. Your identity will not be divulged to anyone out of the study. To protect your identity, I will use pseudonyms (false names) when I mention you. Your data will be deleted after five years.

Please note that there are no personal costs or direct benefits attached to agreeing to participate in this study. You will also not be penalised if you choose to withdraw your participation at any stage of the data collection process.

If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me on the details listed below. This study will be written up as a thesis, which will be available online through the university library website. If you wish to receive a summary of this thesis, I will be happy to send it to you. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za. If you have any questions about the research, please feel free to contact me on 071 580 6067 or lehlohonolom316@gmail.com. My supervisors are Dr Thabisile Nkambule (011 717 3049 or thabisle.nkambule@wits.ac.za) and Dr Kadenge Emure (emure.kadenge@wits.ac.za) whom you can freely contact should you need any clarity.

Yours Sincerely,
Lehlohonolo Mofokeng (929221)

Appendix J: Participant Information Sheet (FGI)

Dear Sir / Madam,

I am Lehlohonolo Mofokeng, a PhD student in Education Studies at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. As part of my studies, I must undertake a research project, and I am investigating 'Beginner teachers' experiences and perceptions of mentorship in two Free State province public secondary schools' under the supervision of Professor Thabisile Nkambule and Dr Kadenge Emure. The study aims to explore the beginner teachers' perceptions and experiences of mentorship and examine the existing mentorship programmes in the Free State secondary schools, if at all.

As part of this research study, I would like to invite you to take part in a focus group interview (FGI) which will take approximately 45 minutes.

I would also ask you to complete a reflective journal at least twice a week documenting your perceptions and experiences of mentorship as they unfold daily. I will collect your entries on the day of the FGI session, which will be the last part of my interactions with you.

With your permission, I would also like to audio record the interviews using a digital device. These recordings will be stored in a password-protected folder on my password-protected laptop.

If you decide to participate in this research, you will be able to withdraw your participation at any point in the research, and you can also choose not to answer any interview questions that you do not want to. Your identity will not be divulged to anyone out of the study. All the focus group participants will be requested to sign a non-disclosure agreement to protect the identities of other participants. To protect your identity, I will use pseudonyms (false names) when I mention you. Your information, including any sensitive issues raised in the journal entries, will not be shared to anyone outside this study. Your data will be deleted after five years.

Please note that there are no personal costs or direct benefits attached to agreeing to participate in this study. You will also not be penalised if you choose to withdraw your participation at any stage of the data collection process. If you have any questions about this research, feel free to contact me on the details listed below. This study will be written up as a thesis, which will be available online through the university library website. If you wish to receive a summary of this thesis, I will be happy to send it to you. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za. If you have any questions about the research, please feel free to contact me on 071 580 6067 or lehlohonolom316@gmail.com. My supervisors are Professor Thabisile Nkambule (main supervisor) (011 717 3049 or thabisle.nkambule@wits.ac.za) and Kadenge Emure (emure.kadenge@wits.ac.za) whom you can freely contact should you need any clarity.

Yours Sincerely,
Lehlohonolo Mofokeng (929221)

Appendix K: Teacher's Consent Form (FGI)

Project: Beginner teachers' experiences and perceptions of mentorship in two Free State province public secondary schools

Name of researcher: Lehlohonolo Mofokeng (929221)

I, …….., agree to participate in this research project.

I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below)

The research study was explained to me. I understand what this study is about.	YES	NO
I understand that I can volunteer to take part in the study	YES	NO
I agree that the focus group interviews may be audio recorded	YES	NO
I agree that direct quotations from my focus group interviews may be used by the researcher in their thesis	YES	NO
I agree that my participation will remain anonymous (my name will not be used by the researcher in their thesis	YES	NO
I agree that other researchers may use the information I provide in my focus groups (depending on their own ethics clearance being obtained) but my name and any personal information will not be used or passed on	YES	NO

Non-Disclosure Statement:

I agree to maintain the confidentiality of the information discussed by all the participants and researcher during the focus group session.

…… (signature)
…… (name of participant)
…… (date)
…… (signature)
…… (name of researcher)
…… (date)

Appendix L: Teacher's Consent Form (Face to face Individual Interview)

Project: Beginner teachers' experiences and perceptions of mentorship in two Free State province public secondary schools

Name of researcher: Lehlohonolo Mofokeng (929221)

I, ……., agree to participate in this research project.

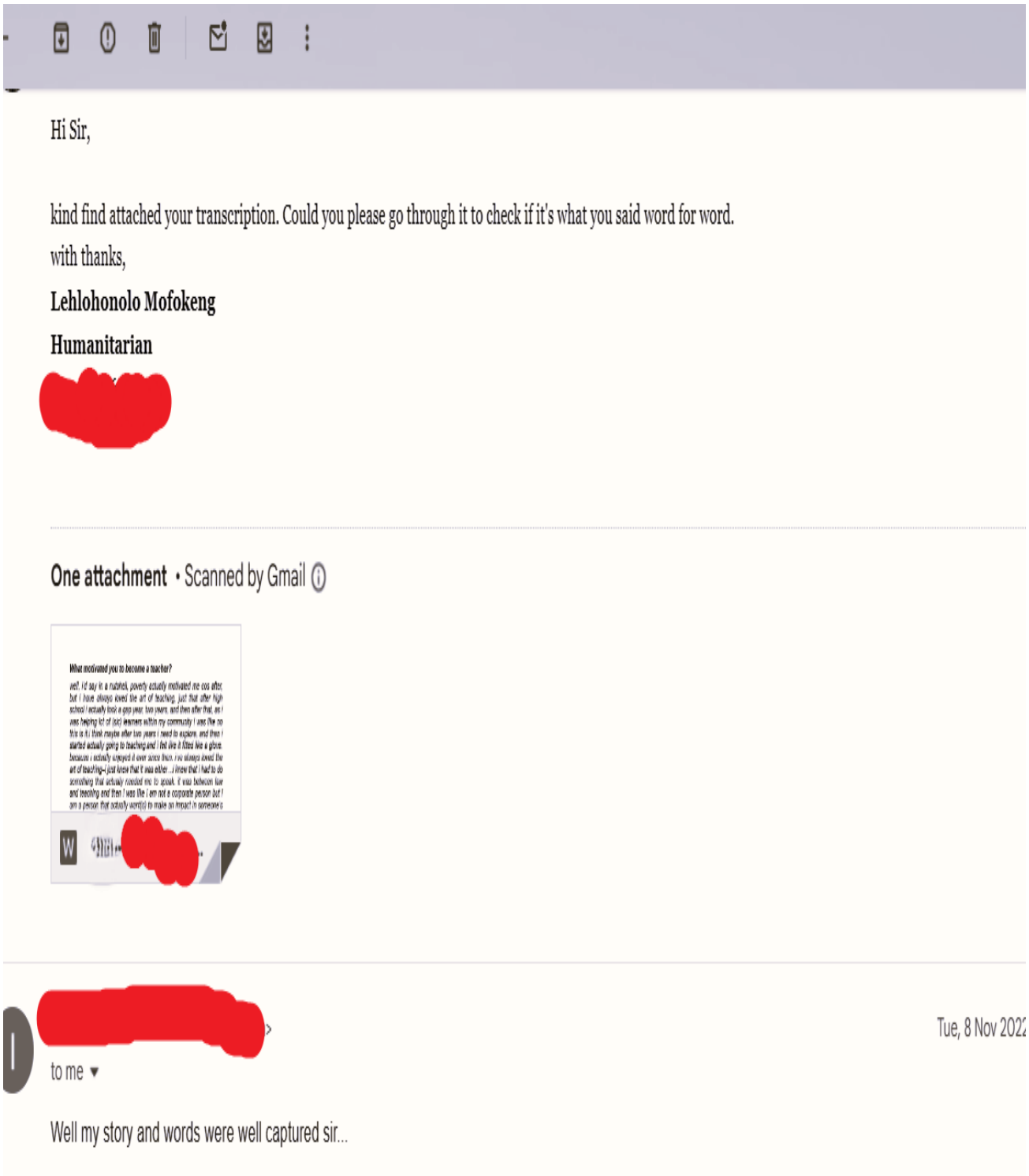
I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below)

The research study was explained to me. I understand what this study is about.	YES	NO
I understand that I can volunteer to take part in the study	YES	NO
I agree that the face-to-face individual interview may be audio recorded	YES	NO
I agree that direct quotations from my individual interview may be used by the researcher in their thesis	YES	NO
I agree that my participation will remain anonymous (my name will not be used by the researcher in their thesis	YES	NO
I agree that other researchers may use the information I provide in my individual interview (depending on their own ethics clearance being obtained) but my name and any personal information will not be used or passed on	YES	NO

…… (signature)
…… (name of participant)
…… (date)
…… (signature)
…… (name of researcher)
…… (date)

Appendix M: Member check by Morena



Hi Sir,

kind find attached your transcription. Could you please go through it to check if it's what you said word for word.

with thanks,

Lehlohonolo Mofokeng

Humanitarian

[redacted]

One attachment • Scanned by Gmail

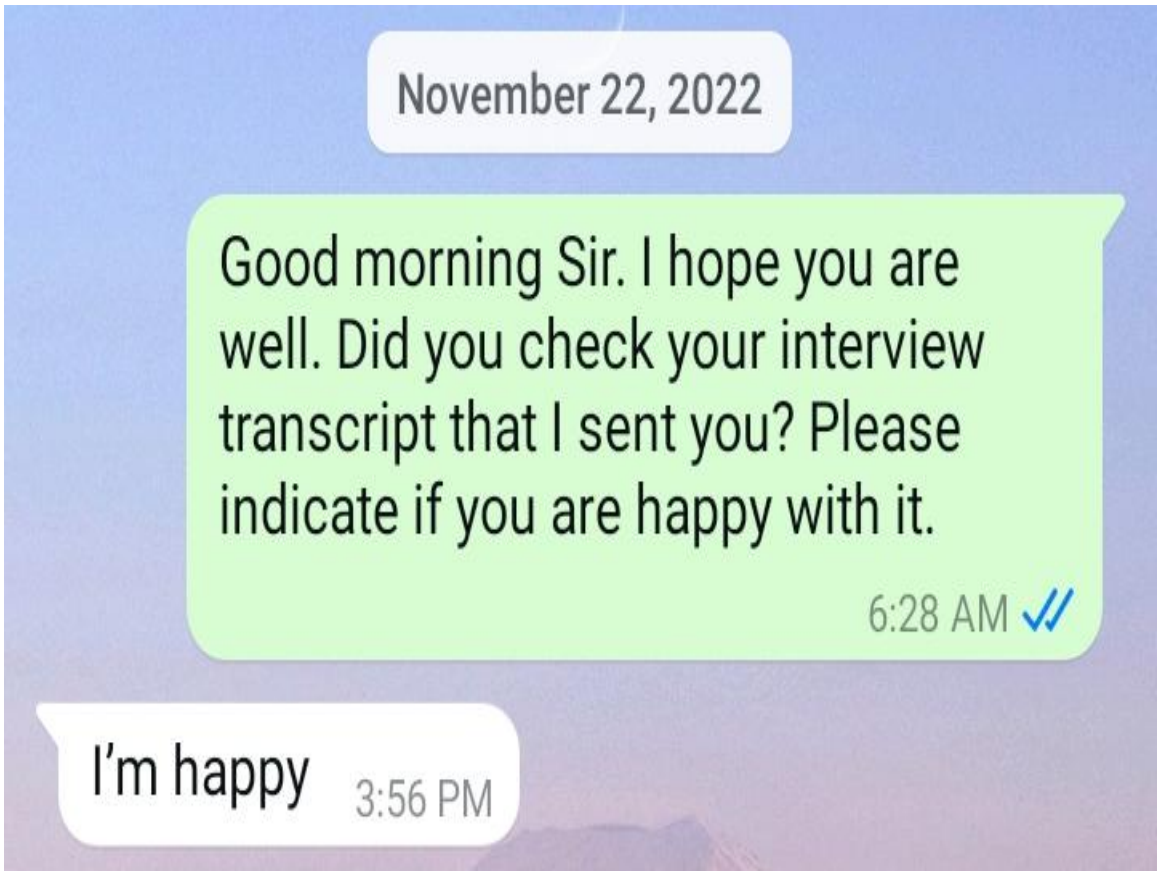
[redacted]

[redacted] Tue, 8 Nov 2022

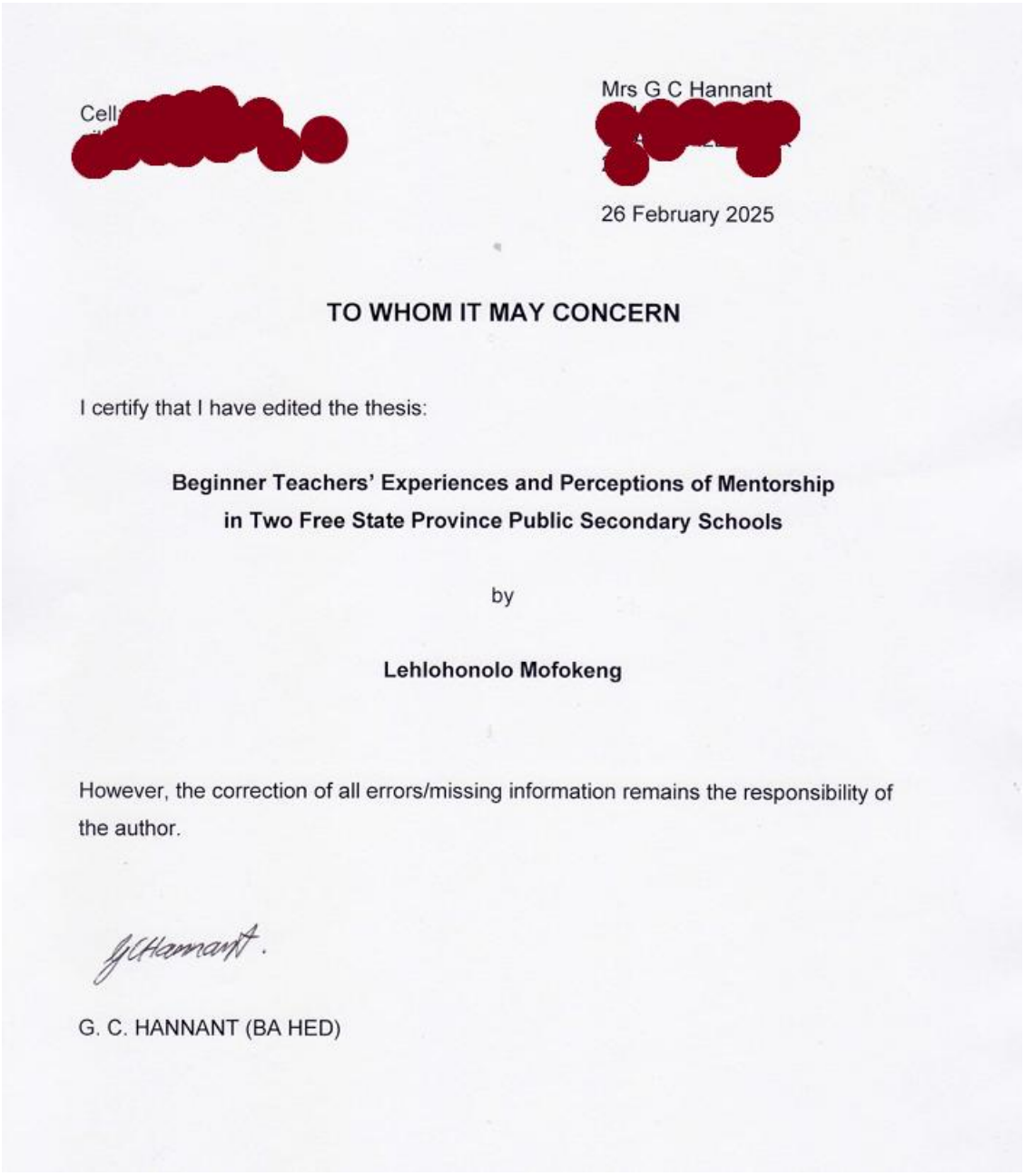
to me ▾

Well my story and words were well captured sir...

Appendix N: Member check by Success



Appendix O: Letter from Professional Editor



Cell [redacted]

Mrs G C Hannant
[redacted]

26 February 2025

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I certify that I have edited the thesis:

Beginner Teachers' Experiences and Perceptions of Mentorship in Two Free State Province Public Secondary Schools

by

Lehlohonolo Mofokeng

However, the correction of all errors/missing information remains the responsibility of the author.

G. C. HANNANT (BA HED)