HOW SUCCESSFUL TEACHERS SEE THEIR ROLE AND WORK IN SCHOOLS WITH POOR CULTURES OF TEACHING AND LEARNING.

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By

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Declaration

I, Masanabo Nontokozo Precious, declare that this thesis has not been previously used or submitted for a degree. Nor has it been submitted as part of the requirements for a degree. I also certify that this written report has been written by me and any help which was received has been acknowledged in accordance with the APA referencing style. I certify that all the sources and literature used are indicated in this written report.

Signature of candidate Date: 18 September 2020

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Abstract

In education by far, the only way managerialism can tell whether the teachers are successful is through marks and results from high stakes testing. And at the moment, that is the only measure of testing teachers' successes in their work that exists. This study was conducted on the premise that there is more to teachers' work and roles for it to only be measured as successful, by the testing results of learners alone. In South Africa, it is a widely held belief that matric results are an indicator of the schools' functionality. On the contrary, the assumption that matric results suggest that a school has a healthy culture of teaching and learning, does not recognize the nature of work that successful teaches do in the difficult climates in which they work.

Available research on schooling in many South African township schools reports on numerous challenges faced by schools and how school leaders struggle to maintain a positive culture of teaching and learning amid issues such as school violence, drug abuse, managerial issues, school politics, etc. With this said, the teachers involved in this study are still recognized as successful teachers in their schools, districts, and even provinces. This study was conducted to understand how successful teachers understand their role and work in schools with poor cultures of learning and teaching. This study involved four teachers from two Sowetan schools. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews to understand teachers' experiences of working in schools with a poor culture of teaching and learning. It explored how they continue to promote effective cultures of learning and teaching in their classrooms. This study found that teacher agency and the teacher's ability to engage in some sort of emotional labour created opportunities for teachers to create relationships with their learners that enables them to work despite the threatening nature of their work environment and organizational culture. These relationships negatively impacted on by the class sizes, and the resources available for the teachers and the learners to be able to carry out their duties successfully.

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Abbreviations

- GDE – Gauteng Department of Education
- SIMS – Subject Information Sharing Meetings
- CoP- Communities of Practice
- PCK – Pedagogical Content Knowledge
- DBE – Department of Basic Education
- NSC – National Senior Certificate
- ELRC – Education Labour Relations Counsel
- ATP – Annual Teaching Plan
- MEMO – Memorandum

Chapter 1

1. 1. Introduction

There is growing research and articles in education all discussing what Christie (1998) coined the "breakdown of the culture of learning and teaching" [1]in South African schools. Different scholars such as Christie, Butler and Potterton (2007), Hosken (2009) and Xaba (2006) have, in their works, detailed the different challenges facing schooling in South Africa today. Their respective findings report many similar challenges such as; managerial issues in schools, the power teacher unions' bear in schools, the challenges with discipline and the bureaucratic nature of accountability processes of the department of education, which they all argue in agreement to have a significant impact on the culture of teaching and learning in our schools.

The South African Department of Education together with the Provincial Departments of Education, annually presents the National Senior Certificate (NSC) results in which they report on the performance of grade twelve pupils in the national examinations. These results are often used by different parties to help form conclusions and ideas of the school's functionality or lack thereof (Prew, 2009). Research (see Msila, 2009) indicates that a good matric pass rate is a prioritized factor even for parents especially when considering schools for their children over other factors such as good school discipline and culture, class sizes, and good managerial qualities (Msila, 2009; Chisholm, Volmink, Ndhlovu, Potenza, Mohamed, Muller and Mphahlele, 2005) have found that "Matric results provide an indicator, albeit imperfect, of the functioning of the senior schooling system, its schools and individual learners (p.8)". By far, the only way managerialism can tell whether the teachers are successful is through marks and results from high stakes testing. And at the moment, that is the only measure of testing teachers' successes in their work that exists. This research argues that there is more to teachers' work and roles for it to only be measured as successful, just by the testing results of learners. It is a widely held belief that matric results are a strong indicator of the schools' functionality. On the contrary, the assumption that good matric results indicate a healthy culture of

[1] Although Christie (1998) focused on learning, this study focused on teaching hence the use of teaching and learning except where quoting the literature directly.

teaching and learning, does not recognize the difficult work that successful teachers in difficult contexts engage in, to meet the set pass rate projections such as the Matric results.

Available research (see Xaba, 2006., Chisholm, Ndhlovu, Potenza, Mohamed, Muller & Mphahlele,2005) on schooling in many South African township schools report on numerous challenges faced by schools and how school leaders struggle to maintain a positive culture of teaching and learning amid issues such as school violence, drug abuse, managerial issues, school politics, etc. With this said, many teachers in these schools work to promote quality teaching and learning in their classrooms despite the challenges. This study looks towards Communities of Practice as a frame to understand how teachers rely on each other and share experiences in efforts to better their practices and understand their role and work as teachers in challenging environments. Teachers are learning from each other and having shared experiences that they can use as learning tools to better understand their work; there's a reflective and social learning process happening, even though not formally defined, is a sense of community practice. These are the groups of teachers, some who are nearing retirement from teaching, have experiences that have worked successfully and effectively over the years and I believe the research community can look to them for knowledge about what has been working so we can capitalize on the knowledge which is often tacit.

There is then a need for a rich, qualitative understanding of the nature of work teachers undertake to achieve good results within difficult contexts. And even more so, there is a greater need for researchers to work with teachers to include authentic teacher experiences and voices into academic research, and potentially inform different policies and teacher development programs. The hope for this research further down the line is to acquaint pre-service and novice teachers of the researched realities of being a teacher in a school with a challenging culture of teaching and learning.

This study came about after I observed several colleagues, successful teachers, leave the country for the United Emirates and China to teach English as a foreign language, with promises of tax-free income, better working environments, and smaller classes. Studies such as these can help novice teachers better prepare for the realities that await

them should they be employed in schools which have challenging cultures of teaching and learning.

Similarly, there's still a need for research within education that involves teachers in research endeavors that seek to share the good practices, despite the many challenges teachers face in their practice. Currently, there is ample data available which seems to be directed towards understanding the impact different challenges have on learners and how they learn, and limited studies geared towards researching the impact the poor culture of teaching and learning has on the teachers' practice or finding out the practices of successful teachers in challenging school environments.

And lastly, that although there are workshops to promote a positive culture of teaching and learning in schools, there tends to be a mismatch between their ideal and the experiences of successful teachers as the challenges are still very much there and seem to have gained momentum. Accordingly, it is therefore important to research the practices of those teachers who promote an effective culture of teaching and learning or of those who simply succeed despite its absence of one in their schools.

1.2. Problem statement

Many schools, often located in townships, have poor cultures of teaching and learning. Although the problem needs to be addressed at the school level, there are nevertheless teachers who are still successful despite their difficult working conditions. There is not enough research directed towards researching how teachers working in such schools continue to teach effectively in their classrooms.

1.2.1. Purpose Statement and rationale

The key purpose of this study is to understand how successful teachers work despite breakdown of the culture of teaching and learning in the schools in which they work. It seeks to unearth the experiences of successful teachers in order to identify features of their work that may inform classroom level improvement in poorly functioning schools.

1.2.2. Research Questions

This study will be guided by the following research questions:

Main question:

How do successful teachers understand their role and work in schools with poor cultures of teaching and learning?

Sub questions

(i) How does a poor culture of teaching and learning in schools affect the individual teachers' classroom practices?

(ii) What are the practices of "successful" teachers in schools with a poor culture of teaching and learning?

Chapter 2: Conceptual framework/ literature review

2.1. Introduction

This chapter looks at Communities of practice as a possible way of understanding the development of effective cultures of teaching and learning in township schools, it also explores some of the available literature regarding this study. It discusses the history of schooling in South African townships as most literature argues that the legacy of apartheid schooling still haunts most township schools almost two decades into the new dispensation. Despite this, in the same challenged schools, teachers who have worked successfully to promote an effective culture of teaching and learning despite the poor cultures of teaching and learning present in their schools.

2.2. History of schooling in the township

In apartheid South Africa, before it being a democratic state, schooling did not ensure quality for township learners. And for over fifty years, apartheid education was designed to privilege 'whites', from the training of teachers to the building of the schools and resources allocated to schools (Badat & Sayed, 2014). To date, many schools, especially township and rural schools, are yet to level the plain field and transition into effective and successful schools, especially schools which are solely reliant on the government for funding terms of the available resources in schools (Badat & Sayed, 2014). This is still the case with the schools participating in this study.

After twenty-five years of democratic rule, the legacies of apartheid identified by Christie (1998), still hound many schools, especially township schools, often catering for previously disadvantaged people in the country. A more recent study by Spaull (2015, p.34) also recognized that although schools are no longer racially segregated, "schools which served predominantly White learners under apartheid remain functional (although now racially mixed), while the vast majority of those which served Black learners remain dysfunctional and unable to impart the necessary numeracy and literacy to learners".Spaull's (2015) research claims are in support of earlier works by Xaba (2006), Masitsa (2011) who's work emphasized that the problems faced by schools that serve majority Black learners (e.g. township schools and rural schools) have intensified in these schools rather than improve.

Additionally, numerous teachers working in these schools have expressed the same challenges during district and cluster meetings as the ones identified by Christie's (1998), although later publications such as Xaba (2006), Masitsa (2011) claim similar challenges still exist, although they have intensified. These teachers have since resorted to seeking solutions around their respective challenges from other teachers working in similar contexts with efforts to better their work environments and practice. And although a lot has changed in policies and laws post-1994, they did not eradicate challenges, nor overcome cultures such as vandalism of schools by both learners and the community, ill-discipline in schools, and organizational problems.

In South Africa, like in many new democratic states, policymakers overhauled curriculum, and looked abroad for curriculum approaches (Young, 2008). New policies and ministerial task teams such as the Culture of Learning and Teaching Study (Christie, Butler & Potterton, 2007) on dysfunctional schools in Gauteng, and studies on resilient schools, (Christie & Potterton, 1999), were tasked with identifying and finding solutions for the new dispensation education. Their studies identified key features of resilient and effective schools; features included a sense of responsibility and agency, leadership, the centrality of teaching and learning, safety and organization, authority and discipline, and culture of concern. The three anticipated sources of resilience that were not strongly present were, governance and community relationships, parental involvement, relationships with education departments (Chisholm et al. 2005, p.27)

Research on resilient schools, schools that work and effective schools have yet to explore what happens in schools where one or more of the features mentioned above are absent in a school.

2.3. Successful Schools and the Culture of teaching and learning

Hopkins (2002), conceptualizes successful schooling as schooling that "seeks to promote a caring learning environment where learners feel accepted and secure (p.35)". This an understanding of schooling which places upon the teacher the responsibility to create contexts of learning which encourage the whole class to engage in the 'active construction of meaning' (Akyeampong, Pryor & Ampiah, 2006). Lynch (2006), identifies leadership, high expectations, ongoing evaluation, goals and direction, and security and organization

as attributes of successful schools. Across the literature, there is a consensus that for a positive and effective culture of teaching and learning to exist, safety and security need to be one of the many ingredients evident in the schools. Additionally, research (Prinsloo, 2005.p10) even proceeded to state that “a safe school is a *sine qua non* for effective teaching and learning”, meaning that good discipline is one of the most important characteristics of an effective school (Masitsa,2011). The hostility of highest school environments may render Hopkins (2003) conception of schooling in many township schools challenging to achieve as it places responsibility upon teachers to create an environment which is secure and accepting for their learners. This responsibility doesn’t account for the possibility of teachers not being capable of providing such while they also do not feel secure and accepted in their work environment. This supports Masitsa’s statement that “the teacher cannot provide adequate safety and security for the learner if he/she is not safe at school (Masitsa,2011, p.5)”.

Scholars such as Oosthuizen (2001, p53) regard safe schools as “schools as schools that are physically and psychology safe, schools that allow educators, learners and non-educators to work without fearing for their lives”. For a school to be successful or effective, it is fundamental that there be good order, discipline, safety, harmony, and mutual respect. Furthermore, studies show that good discipline, a culture of teaching and learning, professional teacher conduct, good governance and management practices are also part of the basket that makes a school deemed as safe and provide the opportunity for an effective and successful school that cultivates the culture of teaching and learning (Xaba, 2006).

Maslow’s (1943) theory of human motivation classifies human needs into five categories, prioritizing meeting a biological and physiological need for survival- the physiological needs and the consummatory behavior involved with them serve as channels for all sorts of other needs as well (Maslow, 1943, p.373).

This is closely followed by a requirement for a safe environment; once the physiological needs have been reasonably fulfilled, the need for safety amongst other needs emerges. This need for safety is much more complex in adults as they are now more aware and can regulate different senses and emotions than it is in young children as they were seen

to exhibit a more direct reaction to flashing lights, loud noises or other general sensory stimulations (Maslow, 1943, p.376).

Maslow's (1943) conception and understanding of human needs theory has since gone on to inspire a lot of policies and curriculums, South Africa being no different- thus, the phenomenon of safety in this study is understood as per Maslow's (1943) theory of human needs. This study concurs with authors such as Masitsa (2011) which recognize that education, of any kind, cannot occur in the absence of safety. Meaning that unless teachers feel safe in the school, they will not be able to fulfill and exercise their duties to their fullest potential (Shalem & Hoadley, 2009).

Shalem and Hoadley (2009), identified several structural factors underlying the significant inequalities which most teachers in majority township schools in South Africa work under. These inequalities are experienced in terms of access to; i) learners who are cognitively well- prepared for schooling, are physically healthy and whose home function as a second site for acquisition; ii) meaningful learning opportunities in the past and the present and a reservoir of cognitive resources at the level of school; iii) a well-specified and guiding curriculum; and lastly, iv) functional school management that mediates the bureaucratic demands on teacher time (Shalem & Hoadley,2009,p.127)".

This study explored how teachers continued to maintain and promote effective cultures of teaching and learning in their classrooms, especially in instances where all if not most of the earlier mentioned significant inequalities prevail and where their (teachers') need for environmental and emotional safety is not recognized nor realized.

As more and more research continues to indicate low teacher morale, frustration, anger and a growing desire for teachers to leave the profession (Chisholm et al, 2005., Shalem & Hoadley,2009) it becomes pressing, to investigate and document the practices that have been successful amidst the apparent chaos, to be able to share knowledge on effective schooling and how it can still happen even in schools with a poor culture of teaching and learning (Vettenburg,2002).

Vettenburg (2002) argues that when teachers do not feel safe while doing their work, it reduces the commitment to their educational task and may also affect negatively the

learners' performance. Behavioural challenges and feelings unsafety are connected to learners' antisocial behaviour.

Additionally, Vettenburg (2002) suggests that the measures aimed at reducing teachers' feelings of unsafety should not focus directly on learners' behaviour but rather the conditions and situations in which the teacher has to work (Vettenburg, 2002). Meaning that the resources should not be directed at fixing the learners, but rather the environment and the different conditions which lead to feelings of unsafety.

2.4. Successful teachers

Trying to put essential qualities and characteristics of a good teacher is a challenging and demanding task, thus, in efforts to capture the essence of a good teacher, many attempts have utilized a list of competencies (Korthagen,2004). "However, doubts have been raised about the validity, reliability, and practicality of such lists and many researchers question whether it is possible to describe the qualities of good teachers in terms of competencies (Korthagen, 2004, p.78-79)". The undertaking becomes even greater when trying to pinpoint what a successful teacher is and what constitutes one a successful teacher. For this study, a successful teacher is defined as the teacher who gets positive results despite the challenges they come across during teaching and learning and in their environment. In efforts to understand "successful" and what a successful teacher looks like in different contexts, we adopt Korthagen's (2004, p.80) use of the onion model to depict the number of levels in people that can be influenced.

These levels can be also be understood as various perspectives from which we can look at how teachers function and from each perspective, rests a different answer to the question of the critical qualities of a successful teacher, namely: i) The *environment* which may refer to the class, students and the school, ii) the *behavior*- which are the furthermost of the levels and the only two which can be directly observed by others. iii) *Competencies*, which are highly influenced by the level of behavior and the environment. Competencies are generally considered an integrated body of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The model brings forth with it an assumption that the outward levels can impact the inner levels. However, the reverse is also true of these perspectives. iv) *Beliefs* – teachers' beliefs often influence or determine their competencies and have the potential to even

extend to their practice. “the beliefs teachers hold with regard to learning and teaching determine their actions (Korthagen, 2004, p.81)”, v) *Identity* – (summarized lightly and solely focusing on the professional identity of teachers) considers the professional identity of teachers as the result of temporary meanings related to themselves and their profession which is constructed during their interaction with the environment and through self-understanding teachers can make decisions and choices that are more cognizant. And lastly, vi) the level of mission- “this level is with highly personal questions as to what end the teacher wants to their work, or even what they (the teacher) recognizes as their personal calling in the world, as a result, the mission can be summarized as the question that is deep inside us that moves to do what we do (Korthagen, 2004, p.85)”.

In an ideal world, there is a complete and thorough alignment of the above-stipulated levels, which will mean that the teacher’s behavior, competencies, beliefs, identity, and mission together make-up one coherent whole that matches the environment (Korthagen, 2004). This study adopted this model as it supports processes of reflection in teachers because it focuses attention on the possible contents of that reflection.

Fried (2011) stresses that emotions affect, and are intertwined with, many of the cognitive processes of learning, classroom motivation, and social interaction. Meaning that over and above defining successful teachers, it is as equally noteworthy to acknowledge that successful and effective teachers are those who are willing to engage in a great deal of emotional work for their students to be successful. Thus, part and parcel of a teacher’s work and role in the classroom are being able to not only teach content and carry out curriculum instruction but also manage and facilitate different emotions of all participating in the process of teaching and learning. Life in the classroom encompasses a stream of emotions and sensations alternating from likes and dislikes, joy, boredom, enthusiasm, and anxiety (Reilly, 2018) - these emotions are not exclusive to learners but occur for teachers as well. Thus, bringing forth the assumption and expectation that any teacher will have to (at some point) manage this flow of emotions and make it productive for the pupils’ learning and survivability for herself or himself, this may be at the classroom level or as they interact with the whole school. Consequently, a teachers’ ability to engage in

emotional work and learning to do this work earlier on in one's teaching career becomes a vital skill and aspect of their identity as successful teachers.

South Africa's endeavors in educational reforms thus have far considered many aspects of schooling, such as revision of content taught in schools, the pacing, social justice, etc. However, this study believes that these reforms thus far have subliminally considered the emotional aspect of a teacher's work or tone down the importance of the emotional work done by teachers in efforts to become the teacher envisioned by the curriculum.

The current Curriculum Statement and Assessment assume that all teachers are successful teachers, and all are generally skilled at facilitating and engaging in the emotional work necessary to facilitate effective teaching and learning. Ideas about what makes a good or a successful teacher are important in thinking about educational reforms and practice.

These "ideas about what makes a successful teacher vary over time, between cultures, and within cultures (Connell, 2009, p.214)". Meaning that Ideas about what makes successful teachers are not fixed, and teachers who have a flexible idea of what a successful teacher is, are more likely to achieve success.

How the participants of this study have been able to work in challenging environments, continue to promote an effective culture of teaching and learning in their classrooms, continue to aspire to be successful teachers, may be evidence of their flexibility as teachers. This study adopts a view that by understanding and researching how these teachers can work with these challenges and hopes to assist novice teachers to exercise their agency in promoting a positive culture of teaching and learning in challenging work environments

2.5. Communities of Practice (CoPs): A Social learning theory

The phenomenon of communities of practice is not new, it can be used to provide an advantageous perception of knowing and learning (Wenger, 2010). The use of the concept of communities of practice originated primarily as a learning theory – Wenger (2010) devised the term while studying apprenticeship as a learning model. Learning within this framework is understood through the lenses of situated learning theory which

describe learning as a social and constructed phenomenon (Lave & Wenger, 1991. Wenger, 1998). This means that learning is understood to "…occur through experience and is influenced by the people (learners and experts), place(s), actions and interactions, resources, and culture of the learning (Davis & Coryell,2016. p.19)

For this study, Communities of practice are defined as "groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something that they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly (Wenger, 2010.p.1).

Communities of practice exist because of three crucial characteristics:

i) The domain -Communities of practice have an identity defined by a shared domain of interest. Membership denotes therefore a pledge to the domain; thus, a shared proficiency makes a distinction between members from other people (Wenger, 2010). Communities of practice are molded by people who take part in a process of communal learning in a mutual domain of human endeavor. (Belenky, Chlinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule,1986).

ii) The community - In pursuit of their interests in the domain, "… members engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other, and share information. They build relationships that enable them to learn from each other (Wenger, 2010.p.2). With this said, however, it is important to understand that a mere group of people with common interests does not form a community of practice- yet unless they interact and learn together, they do not form a community of practice for example; teachers working in the same school and or even department does not make them a community of practice- only interaction with a purpose of learning from each other is what informs a community of practice (Wenger, 2010).

iii) The practice - A community that is merely interested in certain common things is not a community of practice. "Members of a community of practice are practitioners. They develop a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, and ways of addressing recurring problems – in short, a shared practice. This takes time and sustained interaction (Wenger, 2010.p.2)".

The development of these three elements in parallel thus develops a community of practice.

In summary, within situated theory and communities of practice, learning is not considered only an individual activity, but one that takes place in a collaborative environment in which a group of people with a common interest engage in collective learning processes (Lave &Wenger, 1991., Wenger, 1998., Davis & Coryell ,2016). Thus, this is a perspective that locates learning not in the head, or outside it, but in the relationships between the person and the world, which for human beings in a social person in a social world (Wenger, 2010. p1).

Conclusion

The legacies of apartheid still prevail in a majority schools of which cater predominantly for township communities. And although the schools are no longer separated by a racial divide, the social equalities prevalent in many South African schools, especially those further away from affluent communities still make working in those schools challenging as they are often under-resourced. To date, many of the schools in township communities continue to be largely characterized by poor cultures of teaching and learning. However, in the same schools, are successful teachers who continue to work under unpleasant school cultures and manage to foster a positive culture of teaching and learning for their learners.

This study does not take for granted that notions surrounding school culture and ideas about successful teachers are constantly evolving (Connell, 2009). However, in the ever-changing world of ways of understanding, it is equally important to understand the various ways in which teachers function and excel especially in challenging situations that require flexibility to successfully do their work. Korthagen's onion model (2004) provides researchers with a reflective way to answer questions about successful teachers. Understanding, of course, that answers to the questions about what makes a successful teacher vary depending on what layer of the model or level one is interested in.

Lastly, in efforts to understand how teachers evolve, become successful teachers and practitioners in the field, this study utilized Wenger's (1998) literature on communities of

practice. As a framework, it accepts that learning is pivotal to human identity, and it occurs as a result social participation. Meaning that the individual is an active participant in the practices of communities and constructing their identities through these communities. This study believes that there is still room for research that is geared towards richer understanding of the current notions, ideas and practices of successful teachers working in schools with a poor culture of teaching and learning, studies which will unearth the different practices, beliefs, ideologies of successful teachers in hopes to enhance practice and ways of understanding practices of and qualities of successful teachers in such contexts.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses how this study falls under the qualitative research banner, the researcher discusses also how a case study approach aided in the materialization of the study and lastly, it also discusses the selection of sites, participants, and ethical considerations of this study.

3.2. Qualitative Research: Case Study

This study is qualitative. Qualitative research is a system of inquiry that seeks to build a holistic, largely narrative, description to inform the researcher's understanding of a social phenomenon (Cohen., Manion., & Morrison., 2013). This study best fits qualitative criterion as it seeks to unearth, describe, understand, and form a holistic view of how successful teachers working in schools with a poor culture of teaching and learning support effective learning despite their challenges. Van Zyl (2011) asserts that the purpose of undergoing qualitative research is to "describe, understand, and explain human perceptions, behavior, actions, and values."

The researchers' role in a qualitative study is to describe and interpret human behavior based on the words selected by individuals. Therefore, the researchers' role is to primarily record fully, accurately, and objectively what is observed (Cohen et al.,2013). The role of the researcher in this study is to discover how successful teachers working in schools with a poor culture of teaching and learning continue to promote positive cultures of teaching and learning in their microenvironments- the classrooms.

This project utilized a case study approach. A case study is "a systematic and in-depth investigation of *a particular instance in its context* to generate knowledge" (Rule & John, 2011, p4). As it is the case of this study, the researcher in this study investigated the experiences, beliefs, and understanding of practices of successful teachers working in schools with poor cultures of learning and teaching, and lastly, how these challenges impacted or informed their practice. The researcher employed the case study approach because a "case can provide rich insights into particular situations, events, organisations, classrooms or even persons (Rule & John, 2011.p4)"; for these reasons that a case study

approach best suits the endeavors of this study as it concerns an exploration of the personal and professional practices of successful teachers' in two schools experiencing poor cultures of learning and teaching.

3.3. Research Site

The research sites for this study were selected purposefully and conveniently by the researcher. This research was conducted with two Soweto township public schools which, over the years, have experienced a deteriorating culture of teaching and learning, have had issues such as (but not limited to) managerial issues, vandalism of school property, and the interference of union politics in the management and processes of the schools (Xaba, 2006). The schools were also selected based on their consistent good matric results. With each of the schools recording a pass percentage above seventy percent in the NCS results, they have had district accolades for both teachers and the schools in recognition of excellent work. The schools participating in this study have reported good matric pass rates for the past five years; however, the schools have not been immune to the plight of many township schools; school violence, vandalism, late coming, large classes, and poor discipline of learners. This study sought to discover how the teachers in these schools continued to foster positive, effective cultures of teaching and learning in their classrooms despite the challenges their schools have, and how the conditions of the work environment may have changed or shaped their understanding of their roles and if at all, influenced their practice as teachers working in these schools.

3.4. Participants

The selection of participants for this study is purposeful and convenient for the researcher. Rule and John (2011) assert, "It is often impossible for a case study researcher to consult everyone involved in the case. The researcher therefore has to choose people who can shed most light, or different lights on the case" (Rule and John, 2011. p. 63- 64).

Thus, the participants in this study were deliberately selected because of their suitability in advancing the purpose of this research which is, to explore how successful teachers

working in schools with a poor culture of teaching and learning, achieve good results despite the poor cultures in their schools.

The schools and participants were also chosen because of their good results in matric. The participants of this research study were teachers who, for the past three years or more, have managed to successfully meet the district and National pass rate targets for schools. Teachers who are recognized within their clusters and schools as successful teachers by their peers and the district. The researcher of this study was also a teacher in the same district (but a different school) for five years, is well acquainted with the schools and participants through Subject Information Sharing Meetings (SIMS) and the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) teacher development workshops.

3.5. Data collection

The process of data collection can be lengthy and extensive, and for this reason, the researcher enlisted the use of a table-like tool to help organize and monitor the process (Rule & John, 2011). The table is useful for researchers who enlist the help of audio-recording tapes to record the interviews and focus group sessions "as it provides an organizing and monitoring tool for the data collection, preparation and storage" (Rule and John, 2011.p 76.) See **Appendix B.**

Data collected from this study during individual semi-structured interviews were then transcribed into text to enable the researcher to start the process of coding the data.

Rule and John (2011, p.77) define coding as

> *"A process of choosing labels and assigning them to different parts of data… as the researcher works through the data and detects a portion of text which holds significance or meaning in terms of the focus of the study a suitable label is assigned to the text".*

Lastly, this study concerned itself with people's experiences and perceptions- making it a qualitative study; and for a study of this nature, a process of coding assists researchers to get close to the data which allows for an even better understanding of the data.

Additionally, the researcher will use codes to identify how the participants in this study are continuously able to practice successfully in schools with a poor culture of teaching and learning, achieve good results, and foster an effective culture of teaching and learning

in their classrooms despite challenges in their respective schools. Through coding the researcher was also able to identify recurring themes in the data to enable a thematic analysis of the data collected. Thematic analysis is a comprehensive process where researchers can identify numerous cross-references between the data and the research's evolving themes (Alhojailan, 2012); and for this reason, it best serves the needs of this study.

3.5.1. Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted by the researcher in preparation for the individual semi-structured interviews. A pilot study is a preliminary trial of research that is essential to the development of an extensive research project (Cohen et al, 2011). Which can also be explained as a trial run done in preparation of the complete study as it is the pre-testing of the research instruments which the researcher intends to employ during the actual study, this process often helps the researcher to identify, refine and modify questions which may be inappropriate or too complicated for the study. This process also allowed the researcher to think through the questions to refine them to best suit the purpose of this study.

3.5.2. Semi-structured interviews

The researcher conducted individual semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews can be understood as predetermined questions, whose order can be modified based upon the interviewer's perception of what seems most appropriate (Van Teijlingen, 2014). Meaning that they allow the researcher to ask follow-up questions for clarity or to gain deeper insight into the issues raised in the interview. A semi-structured interview also aids in getting the participants' individual views, experiences, and insight into their understanding of their work as teachers in township schools, their practice, and how the challenging environment has impacted on their practice through the years as successful teachers (Van Teijlingen, 2014). Additionally, they afford the researcher opportunities to modify the questions to best answer the research questions based on the participant's answers, which allow for the collection of quality data, especially for a case study approach.

3.6. Data analysis

Data analysis can be understood as the process of trying to apprehend and interpret data to make meaningful conclusions about a social phenomenon (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). The researcher is then able to use the primary data collected to identify patterns and themes within the imitative from qualitative data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), the process of data analysis involves three concurrent flow activities; data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction is a practice of cautiously picking-out, streamlining and coding primary data collected. Data display refers to the way which data is organized and sorted allowing the researcher to formulate conclusions, and lastly conclusion drawing and verification refers to the discovery of patterns and themes that help draw a parallel in the study and can be substantiated through challenging its validity and reliability (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

This means that the researcher codes the data in such a way that themes are sorted in such a way that helps narrow the ideas about the study's main research question which in this case is 1) how successful teachers see their role and work in schools with poor cultures of learning and teaching? And its sub-questions a) how do poor cultures of learning and teaching affect effective teaching? b) What are the practices of successful teachers in schools with a poor culture of learning and teaching?

3.7. Ethical considerations

Research that involves humans as participants requires that the researcher takes ethical considerations into account. It entails consideration of respect for persons, justice, and beneficence and that participants should be treated as autonomous agents during this process (Lo, 2009). Meaning that the researcher has a task to ensure that participants have full knowledge of the purpose of the study and that they can withdraw from the study at any given time with no penalty or punishment. It rests upon the researcher to always be transparent with the participants no matter the contents of their study (Babbie,2004. Fritz, 2008).

3.8. Consent

Participation in this study was voluntary and with informed consent. Informed consent means that the participants in the study confirmed that their participation was voluntary and they have been informed of the nature of this research study, that there are no monetary benefits or benefits in kind for their participation, the risks of participating in this study – although very minimal (Manti & Licari, 2018). Furthermore, the participants were also made aware of their right to decline to answer questions which they were uncomfortable with or the right to withdraw from the study without fear of negative consequences or any consequences (Manti & Licari, 2018).

Additionally, the participants were informed about the storage of data and assured that their personal information will only be known to the researcher and the supervisor of this study.

And lastly, the purpose of the study was explained to participants and they could enquire further if they had any clarity seeking questions or misunderstandings. They were also given consent forms to fill in and by filling them, they agreed to participate in the semi-structured interview sessions and to be audio recorded. The participants were also reassured that they may retract their participation at any point in time. (See **Appendix C**)

3.9 Anonymity and confidentiality

The participants were assured anonymity and confidentiality through the allocation of pseudonyms, this applied to the instances where the names of their schools were mentioned during the interviews. The identities of the participants were only privileged to the researcher and their supervisor; however, precautions were taken in ensuring that their identities were unknown to others and that data collected was also treated with utmost confidentiality (Scott & Morrison, 2007).

Conclusion

This study is qualitative. It was conducted in two Soweto schools and the participants were conveniently and purposefully selected as the researcher believed they best suit the interests of this study.

The researcher utilized semi- semi-structured interviews as a means to collect data from the participants. Data collected were analyzed through the process of thematic analyses where codes were used to help identify emerging from the primary data collected.

Additionally, the researcher made ethical considerations such as protecting the dignity of the participants and was careful to engage with the participants respectfully and with dignity during their participation.

Lastly, the participants made use of pseudonyms for both the individual participants and the instances the names of their schools were mentioned in efforts to assure anonymity and confidentiality. The researcher also acquired informed consent from the participants, meaning that the participants were well informed of their rights and given sufficient information about the study.

The researcher was also granted ethical clearance by the Wits School of Education for this study. The Gauteng Department of Education granted the researcher permission to carry the study in their schools. Clearance letter and Permission letter included in **Appendix D** and **Appendix E**.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and interpretation

4.1. Introduction

The teachers participating in this study were allocated pseudonyms. All the teachers participating in this study are female and African. For this study, the researcher conducted four semi-structured interviews to gain insightful and rich information or their understanding, experiences of their role, and work (Brown, A., & Danaher, P. A., 2019) as teachers working in township schools that have poor cultures of teaching and learning. This was aided by the research questions (i) How do poor cultures of learning and teaching affect the effective teaching practices? (ii)What are the practices of “successful” teachers in schools with a poor culture of learning and teaching?

4.2. Emerging themes

Five major themes emerged during the data analysis and coding process which is 1) class sizes, 2) teacher identity, 3) organizational structure, 4) discipline, and lastly 5) support and relationships. With these themes, the researcher was also able to identify several sub-themes for each theme and will be discussed below in no particular order and some concurrently as several of the themes were found to be connected and cannot be discussed in isolation nor divorced from other themes completely.

4.2.1 Class sizes

In 1995, the ELRC made Resolution 4 of 1995 which provided guidelines for the learner-teacher ratios for public schools in South Africa (Venter, 2004), in this document, it is stipulated that for public/ordinary primary schools, the ratio ought to be 40 learners is to 1 teacher and in a public/ordinary secondary school, the ratio is 35 learners is to 1 teacher (Venter, 2004). Which was later amended to 30 learners is to 1 teacher irrespective of whether it is a primary school or a high school. Subsequently, the Government Notice 1676 of 1998 was released for post provisioning norms in public schools and was established as a representation of the country’s attempt at applying an equitable policy.

This study found that almost two-decade later, these ratios are still far from realization especially for teachers in majority township schools as it is the case with the teachers in this study:

> "*I got 60 kids in a class and I knew it was not going to work. It was not feasible*"
>
> - Phumzile

> "*I have like 60… 65 kids in one class*"
>
> - Candice

> "*They combined two already big classes into one… I have about 60 to 65 in a class at most*"
>
> - Isabelle

> *"so 52 learners in grade nine multiply that by 3, so it's 170 for grade nine only… but grade ten is better because the numbers are around 37"*
>
> - Nozuko

This study found that overcrowded classes are still a huge challenge and that affects other spheres of the teachers' work-life and experience. The abnormally large classes posed other problems such as the teachers' ability to manage the classroom and the flow of unavoidable emotions in the classroom.

The government gazette (2010) on national policy on an equitable provision on an enabling school physical teaching and learning environment discussed the impact of the physical environment on teaching and learning and in the document acknowledges that poor learning environments contribute to i) irregular attendance and dropping-out ii) teacher absenteeism, attrition and turnover and iii) a poor state of learners and a poor ability of teachers to engage them in learning. The age and physical appearance of school buildings was found to influence learner achievement, and the attitudes of teachers towards the school. Almost a decade after the publication, the two schools participating in this study were still struggling with the same issues in their physical environment.

> "*ensuring that schools are properly furnished, teaching resources and the classroom furniture is very important*"

-Phumzile

In Phumzile's case, she expressed that she believed that the most minimum the government can do in the quest to provide quality and effective education in township schools is to provide adequate furnishing of the classrooms and provision of the various resources such as printing and photocopying machines and learner textbooks. The lack of these resources has impacted how she can do her work as a teacher in the school.

"*I have 60 kids in one class… but I am sitting with 40 plus desks*"

- Candice

Candice shared similar frustrations with regards to the resources available to her and her learners, she also alluded to the limited ways she can improvise and teach. She is not able to engage the learners in the way she believed was best because there are limited resources and overcrowding in her classroom.

"*if the history teacher arrives first, then we will have to make it after school to make up for the lesson*"

- Isabelle

Out of the four teachers, although all are experiencing challenges with regards to furnishing and the teaching resources available to them, Isabelle at times found herself without a teaching venue and she would have to ask her learners to meet her after school, in order to cover the lesson they had missed during the day- she reported that the amount of content she needs to cover makes every lesson very critical and thus they had to find a way to work around the classroom shortages, which is to work after school.

"… *Let all classes have resources, let all classes have desks and chairs… I cannot teach them when they do not have desks to write on or even chairs to sit*"

- Nozuko

Nozuko mentioned that her teaching is compromised by the learners not having furniture to sit or desks to write on. And that she feels inadequately prepared for this teaching context. The large class sizes in both schools, lack of furnishing, and provision of

resources were found to play a significant and impactful role in the type of relationships the teachers were able to foster with their learners, their classroom management skills, and their practice.

4.2.2. Support and relationships

The participants in this study, a bulk of them being out- of field practitioners (they are not teaching a major or subject which they are trained and educated to teach as per their qualifications) received support mostly from sources which were outside of their immediate teaching environment e.g. colleagues or schools. However, they did receive support from the learners which they worked with about the content they were meant to be teaching and even managing the behavior and managing fellow learners. This, however, was found to be highly dependent on the types of relationships the teachers had fostered with the learners, this relationship was highly dependent on whether the teacher was honest with the learners about what content they know and where their limitations lied with regards to teaching that subject.

Consequently, the learners were able to help each other with the parts of the curriculum they did not understand thoroughly, but also helped their teacher understand content they had learned in their previous grades. The learners actively participated in helping their teacher to succeed.

The support which was provided by the school in terms of helping these teachers adapt, conform and accept their new identities as out of field practitioners were found to be very minimal and, in most cases, non-existent. The teachers however who were able to succeed in their respective subjects (even out of field teachers) had to take it upon themselves to connect with different communities and seek out teacher professional development initiatives which helped them to reconcile their different identities. This speaks to teacher agency and willingness to be adaptive and flexible in one's roles as a teacher in general. Thus, Teachers who embodied and exercised agency sought out new ways of learning to teach and were willing to invest time and effort in learning the new content were the ones who were able to re-establish themselves as successful teachers. However, half of the teachers alluded to acquiring support from less immediate structures such as the cluster meetings, district workshops – which also allowed them to form

relationships with people who are members of the community, people who shared repertoires, resources, experiences, stories, and ways of improving their practices as new teachers in the domain and community and at times, this community is virtual (Facebook groups and subject WhatsApp groups born out of the cluster meetings).

The opposite also occurred of teachers who were not actively seeking connections and ways to adapt to their new realities, these teachers became despondent and in turn dissociated themselves from the schools they worked in and in some instances from the learners themselves.

This is true of in the case of Candice, who referred to the school as “that school” when referring to her place of employment,

> *“That school needs more than Jesus. It is more dysfunctional than it is a school… The biggest problem here is that it is not functioning from the national level, you know, then it filters down through to the district level then school level. There’s no unity… amongst the teachers themselves, you know amongst the environment, which make it difficult for there to be progress, for there to be a flow of a functioning school”*

This showed a desire to distance herself from the organization and its connections to her as a teacher in the school. The betterment of the environment she is working in is thought to come from interventions from outside structures and she is not part of the people who need assistance. It is also important to note that Candice is an out of field teacher who did not feel she was given enough support by the school, the head of department or the colleagues within the same department who have knowledge in the field, subject and school in order to fulfil this new role successfully. The data revealed the offered managerial support did not feel like support, rather the teachers felt they were being policed and micro-management rather than being supported to improve their experience of teaching in the school.

This study also found that for three of the four teachers participating in this study, refer to teaching is an act of love (Phumzile, Candicen Isabelle and Nozuko)

> “*Perseverance and patience with the kids and with everyone in general*”

> "And *I will always maintain caring about my learners as individuals before them being learners that are doing economics in my class*"
>
> "*I teach with heart*"
>
> "*So be patient with them (the learners), and do it with love, it will make you successful in your teaching"*

The teachers required of their learners more than just a "minimum pass", they required them to do better not only in their academics but as young adults who have the capabilities to be responsible citizens, they assumed a very pastoral and parental role before they assumed a teacher role in their learners' lives. There exists an almost very tacit agreement between the teachers and the learners that they (the learner) support the teacher in doing their job so long as they benefit and gain a parental figure and someone who cares for them as a person in the exchange. This tallies with Day et al (2006) who, assert that effective teaching requires emotional and intellectual investment from teachers which draws upon personal and professional capacities and experiences, knowledge, and skills (Day et al, 2006). This then becomes an issue of identity, the kind of self the teacher is willing to open up to the learners and what each teacher can bring into their classroom as an individual, rather it being a whole school experience.

In short, in a school with a poor culture of teaching and learning, the assumed collegial and management support is either threatening, absent, or weak, and in the midst of that, the support that is there is from the learners and sources further out of their immediate working environment. Additionally, the teachers who are deemed successful in these schools are teachers who can participate in some sort of emotional labour (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006), they were willing to do work outside their job description and this often led to a mutually invested relationship between the learners and the teachers. How these teachers were able to continue to do the work that they do, at the level of excellence they do it at, it's through the support of their learners, colleagues from other schools within their cluster and other clusters who have had similar challenges in their schools, and understanding from families and loved ones. And lastly, although they found support, it was further out from their immediate environment.

4.2.3. Teacher identity

A very simplistic understanding of Pedagogical Content Knowledge (Shulman, 1987) would be “the ability of the teachers to transform the content knowledge and subject knowledge into knowledge which resonates with the learners they teach, and the ability to select appropriate teaching methods and examples which best suit the needs of the curriculum and the learners (Rollnick & Mavhunga, 2015). At different points of teaching, the teachers in this study confessed to “borrowing” from their other identities scenarios, examples and stories from their everyday lives to make the content they are teaching more relatable and understandable for their learners in hopes of maximizing opportunities of learning and teaching. This suggests that there exists an intricately woven relationship between all their other identities at given times with their teacher identity.

The development of practice requires the establishment of a community of practice whose members can engage and acknowledge the importance of each member in making the community alive. Meaning that practice can also be understood as ways of being a person in a specific context. Wenger (1999) characterizes identity into the following categories;

i) *Identity as negotiated experience*, this speaks to how we define ourselves and come to terms with our experiences through active participation. This means that the only way people can truly argue for who they are is through reflection on not only the past but also on their experiences and seek out how they influence both the present and the possible future.

   The teachers in this study had to not only reflect on their past experiences of teaching and learning, but also on their current experiences and in all of it, negotiate an identity which will yield best possible results for them to emerge a successful teacher, especially for those teachers who are out-of-field practitioners and have had to reinvest their identities of “subject specialist”.

ii) *Identity as a community of membership* looks at the identity one assumes in their community because of shared values, principles and ideas endorsed by that community

iii) *Identity as a learning trajectory* alludes to how identities are bordered by past experiences which aid in framing current experiences. For the teachers in this

study, they used their past experiences of working with learners in their other subject offerings to frame the identities they assumed as first-time teachers in the new subject.

iv) *Identity as a nexus of membership* refers to the multiple identities an individual might have and how they endeavor to pull all these identities together and organize them to form one identity.

In Phumzile's case, she is a mother of two boys, teacher, SBST coordinator, she was raised by her grandmother, she grew up in KwaZulu Natal, sister, aunt, and friend, etc. She used these identities to inform her teacher identity which comes across in her relationships with the learners in her class as she often refers to them as "my kids". And lastly

v) *Identity concerning the local and the global* –we settle for who we are by looking at both our local and international communities as weak seek validation and approval from society (Wenger,1999).

Thus, as it is this study, the researcher found that communities of practice, be it the ones in their microenvironment (classrooms), which were forged by the teachers and the learners in that particular subject, acted as a system of support for the teacher and gave them ways to refine their practice in such a way that maximized teaching and learning opportunities in their classrooms because they were able to collaborate with the learners on matters not limited to the content, but also how to best handle their challenges within the classrooms. The teachers were also able to use experiences from their other relationships which enabled them to perform more parental roles in their learners' lives, making their investment in relationships mutual. At the macro- level, teachers belonged to communities of practice and in school community networks with people outside their schools. They were often involved in practice refining activities and engagements with colleagues outside their immediate schools; support and development of their professional identities were largely aided by the agency they undertook to belong to those CoP's- especially when those systems of support and development weren't present in their schools. This aided the development of teachers' identities, which influences the practice itself. The formation of communities of practice encompasses the acknowledgment of who the teacher is, their character, what they know, and lastly their

strengths and weaknesses. The teachers' believed that they learned and grew more from the knowledge and acknowledgment they gained from cluster engagements and the subject information-sharing meetings than from their schools' and subject departments within the schools.

Additionally, Wenger's (1999) conception of communities of practice assumes active involvement and agency on behalf of the teacher with their colleagues, general staff, and other stakeholders within education. Consequentially the teachers' willingness to cooperate and take part in these communities of practice had the impact of their identity development. Meaning that as teachers do their work, their identity becomes objectified. Palmer (1998) asserts that identity is a social construct, thus, it is immensely influenced by our experiences. Meaning that a teacher's identity is more than just a sum of how they see themselves but also the expectations of the profession itself, the community in which they practice in, and the implications that come with being a member in that community.

The ideal would be for teachers' immediate workspaces to be harbors of communities of practice. In this study, the researcher found that although communities of practice exist at the classroom levels amongst the teachers, the learners and with other communities outside the school, it will be much rather prudent for schools to rebuild the culture of shared practices, which will allow all willing participants to learn from all stakeholders in the community with a vested interest in the success of the schools e.g. the learners, colleagues, district officials, etc. This means that as schools, we look at the areas teachers find challenging as an opportunity to mentor and support them as members of the community.

4.2.4. Organizational Culture

Daniels (2012) asserts that the management of a school has significant power and control over how the teachers fulfill their practices and pedagogical reasoning within a school. Hence, the organizational culture of the school has the power to either positively or negatively impact a school's functions which can in turn influence an individual's commitment, beliefs, attitudes, and professionalism (Long et al., 2017). Meaning that the

managers' ability to plan, manage, and control professionally the activities of the school or lack thereof, has a direct impact on how teachers can practice and exercise their pedagogical reasoning. The seeming lack of an effective plan on behalf of the school managerial teams also impacted on how effectively the teachers' planned and executed their tasks in the classroom effectively – especially given the time constraints and density of the curriculum, this was echoed in Phumzile's sentiments:

> *"And then by next week you should be done and then marks are due, and then there's an ATP. There's syllabi completion and then in the midst of all that, there is a Memo that is going to be circulated saying "can you please say "can you please submit the books of the learners together with your ATP". They want to see how far you are with content. When did I teach because half the time school is dismissed early so that teachers can go to subject meetings that we are never told about timeously, then sometimes schools are dismissed because there is no water or even because unions have called a meeting with their members during teaching and learning times – it's all too much to keep up with"*

As acknowledged in chapter two, schools' cultures differ significantly, they are not fixed hence they change over time depending on numerous factors within the environment such as the appointment of managers, the implementation of policies, the fostering of positive collegial relations, etc.

4.2.5. Discipline

In chapter two, the researcher identified four sub-themes which she believes are interrelated; i) learner discipline, ii) school policies, iii) school policies iv) and contextual factors.

The two schools in the study lacked the policies and systems of managing and regulating different activities which take place in the school environment e.g. learner code of conducts which are devised by the school governing body, which is meant to speak to the vision of the school, their academics, what is the expectation of the learners with things such as gadgets, uniforms, their interaction with the members of the school community and with the world outside as the representatives of the school. The absence of such policies which act as guidelines which help foster a positive culture of teaching and learning; while at the same time providing teachers with an element of support when it

comes to issues of discipline and management of learners. This was expressed in Candice, Isabelle, and Nozuko's cases - that the school does have such policies.

> "*The level of discipline and disciplinary measures that are put in place (sighs) I'm not sure if it is the district's fault or the school's fault. They are just a joke."*
>
> *"We cannot do that because of time pressures, marks, syllabus completion, etc. all that makes it a bit hard for teachers to wear all the caps best. Sometimes some behavioral issues are beyond our scope of expertise as teachers"*
>
> *"Remember, if a learner does anything wrong in the class, the learner is not wrong, you are wrong as a teacher"*

However, not all the teachers in the school are active in implementing and monitoring the adherence to the code of conduct. This in turn, over time, coupled with strained organizational relationships, created a culture of defiance and insubordination within the organization – this is both at the level of the staff and of the learners. This was Nozuko's case:

> *"… and now you don't have the urge of waking up early in the morning. As for me, these days, I'm always late. Always late. And if you ask me why, I tell myself that it is better for me to look pretty and feel good about myself than going to school, whereby I'm going to feel underappreciated and demoralized. Learners, like customers – are always right"*

The organizational culture also influences the cooperation or the absence of cooperation from its members (learners, teachers, even parents).

Conclusion

South Africa's endeavors for social equity, its efforts to level the playing field when it comes to numerous issues especially within the ministry of education has achieved greatly, amongst other the implementation of compulsory school for learners from age seven to eighteen years (RSA, 1996); this gave rise an overwhelmingly large number of children that were now able to access formal education (institutional access), especially amongst the disadvantaged groups, however, this access does not always guarantee epistemological access; epistemological access being the knowledge which the institutions provide (Du Plooy & Zilindile,2014).

Pendlebury (2008) asserts that ‘access is meaningful only when schools ensure epistemological access, and support children’s systematic learning of basic skills, knowledge, values, and practices, and do so in a manner that respects children’s dignity and background. This study found that even with the new policies, teachers in many township schools are still struggling with abnormally large class sizes, which affects several issues such as the resources available for them and their learners to carry out duties such efficient and effective teaching and learning practices, large class sizes also mean a heavier workload for the teachers. Classroom management and management of the flow of different tacit but impactful emotions that affect the running of the classrooms becomes also a challenge when considering the numbers, they are working with per class.

The institutions managers’ ability to plan and efficiently allocate the often very limited resources in a way that allows the different stakeholders to be able to do their tasks plays a huge role in the kinds of cultures schools end up developing. Managerial qualities and capabilities of the school management team become crucial in providing standards of engagement for colleagues, parents, learners and their entire school community; How they cultivate a culture of interdependence and positive school relations, in turn, creates a culture in the institution which can either hinder or foster opportunities of growth for all participating in the process of quality teaching and learning.

Thus, this study concludes that in schools with poor cultures of learning and teaching, the success of the teacher depends mostly on their agency and willingness to constantly reinvent themselves; growth on behalf of both the teachers and learners is not a linear process, in the process of teaching and learning, learners and teachers can become a community of practice, offer each other solutions to improve practice and learning experience. Successful teachers in the context of this study, are teachers who can offer more than what their job description entails, they get the desired results despite their conditions. And lastly, they are willing to engage emotionally laborious processes that come with being a successful teacher.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Reflections

This chapter encompasses the important take-aways from the study, the researchers' reflections, and recommendations for further studies. What they have learned from conducting the study and the limitations of the study.

5.1. Conclusions and Reflections

This study was a result of the researcher noticing the gap between the kind and type of schools envisioned in our many documents about schooling as a young democratic state and the actual schools' realities in many of the schools were far from the ideal. However, despite the challenging and more often threatening work environments, there are teachers within these schools that literature barely makes mention of, these are the teachers who labour in love and with utmost passion to see their learners be successful. These teachers are often the glimmer of hope and a sense of belonging for many of the learners in their classrooms. These are the teachers' researchers who ought to be looking to help the teaching fraternity better understand what it means to be successful in those contexts and situations.

But over and above, learning about the agency and the type of identities of the teachers in these contexts can expose pre-service teachers to the power of individual agency and individual zeal to succeed despite the contexts, situations, and environments you find yourself employed in. case studies dedicated to documenting different experiences of teachers and how they can form systems of support in difficult environments can also help other teachers facing demoralization and teacher burn- out revive their morale towards their profession.

Through conducting this study, the researcher realized the importance for the different stakeholders within and outside of education to invest even more into the environments, situations, and contexts that teachers find themselves working in and under. Schools are the backbones of civilizations and thus, schools as organisms and organizations' should not harbor within them feelings of unsafety; people cannot learn nor work when their basic need for physical and psychological safety is not met.

5.2. Limitations of this study & Recommendations for further studies.

This study was only a small sample size of two Soweto schools, six teachers were invited to participate in the study, however, two teachers opted out of the study and thus, it was only conducted with four teachers. Although the researcher believes that the teachers were forthcoming in their interviews, she also understands that these experiences cannot be deemed to be blanket experiences for all teachers working in schools with poor

cultures of learning and teaching. Additionally, the researcher recognizes there is room to consider in future studies regarding how Communities of practice in micro-environments such as the classroom can aid in fostering effective cultures of teaching and learning, which can in turn contribute positively to the whole school culture and general outlook.

The researcher recommends that other researchers can investigate how teachers best we can support teachers working in schools with poor cultures of teaching and learning for them to best execute their duties to improve quality teaching and learning. Furthermore, researchers can look into how schools as organizations can use communities of practice to foster positive organizational cultures, while at the same time fostering relationships of collegial support amongst members of staff, the learners and the teaching community at large. The study also found that in schools with poor cultures of teaching and learning, collegial relationships are often strained, this creates a rather difficult climate to manage nor work under for all parties. These relationships are very complex and not easy to facilitate.

Lastly, this study found that communities of practice are a reliable way of promoting shared practice, growth, and professionalism within a school context. Communities of Practice become even more effective if they were available in teachers' immediate work environments. The opportunity to grow and continuously refine teaching and learning practices would be almost immediate and effective when implemented.

As a researcher, I took away from this study great lessons about practice, the importance of belonging to a community of practice as a teacher, but above all else the power of teacher and agency. Research is a very emotionally taxing process, but within the process, lies great opportunities for reflection and growth.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Individual semi-structured interview questions

1. What is your educational background?
2. How long have you been working as a professional teacher?
3. In those years, how have you experienced the world of teaching?
4. Have you had the opportunity to teach in different schools? What has been your experience in each?
5. Would you consider your current place of employment to have a positive culture of teaching and learning? Explain please.
6. Would you classify yourself as a successful teacher? Please elaborate why.
7. What practices/ rituals do you practice as a teacher which you believe have been influenced by where you teach?
8. Given the environment you work in, what have you identified to be characteristics needed to be successful?
9. What experiences/ events in your teaching career do you believe have shaped you as a successful teacher?

APPENDIX B: Data organizing and Preparation Table

Interview	Interview	Transcript of data recorded	Checked	Coding	Analysis
Phumzile	29 July-01 aug 2019	September 2019	Jan/ Feb	Done	Feb/March
Candice	4 -8 August 2019	November.019	Jan/Feb	Done	Feb/ March
Isabelle	2-6 September 2019	November 2019	Jan/ Feb	Done	Feb/ March
Nozuko	16-20 September 2019	December 2019	Jan/ Feb	Done	Feb/ March

(Rule& John, 2011.p.76)

APPENDIX C: Interview Transcripts

	1. Nozuko's transcript
researcher	So I'm going to start off with a very simple question - your educational background and what do you teach and all that.
Nozuko	Okay, obtain my highest qualification at the University of Pretoria (UP), I majored in geography, mathematics and a language. And here, I am currently teaching social sciences and geography. And I have teaching ...this is my second year of teaching as a professional Teacher, I started last year February.
researcher	So, how are you finding it so far ... I know at UP, you go for like practicals for like a good three months before you guys graduate or is it six months? How has been your experience? Like what was your experience? What were your thoughts as you were going through the process- is it what you thought it would be?
Nozuko	It is not hey, it's not.
Nozuko	Because when I did my practical, I was in this private school. And then I wanted to test the private and the public schools. So in a private school you see that things are done differently. But the public school is far way better, because there, they portray something that is not there okay. Also, like the matric results. they will tell that " we are a hundred percent matric pass rate school". ~~—B~~ut when learners are writing a test,. ~~—.~~and now I'm working full time,
Nozuko	I don't have time to prepare the lesson all the time.
researcher	Why Is it because of the admin?
Nozuko	I don't have time to prepare the lesson all the time.
researcher	How many classes?

Nozuko	I teach three classes in grade nine. So 52 learners in grade nine multiply that by 3..so its 170 something Learners for grade nine only And I also teach ten, I have three classes but grade ten is better because the numbers are around 37, the biggest class I have in grade ten is 37, So now if you in grade nine trying to manage the classes, and you are also teaching geography, remember I am a geography major also, and in grade nine, I teach Social Sciences.
Nozuko	SS is a combination of history and geography and I am not comfortable with it..nd then when I have to explain to the learners, it's a problem. Remember, I didn't even know anything about history myself. How am I going to teach it?
Nozuko	Can't even get there because the class is so packed.
Nozuko	So last year, I was pregnant and I tried to separate these two kids who are fighting. And then I ended up with a sprained hand and that was it for me, I was like I cannot deal with this, because it's too much for us.
Nozuko	But when it comes to grade ten (chuckles), Here they cannot start, most of them I have taught before and they cannot just do as they please, they know how we work. They understand my system now.
Nozuko	The problem also is that when you reach the schools, You don't necessarily get what you were trained for in varsity.
Nozuko	But grade ten is amazing, they are passing and all is well.
Nozuko	The classes are laid back because the numbers are smaller, so it's more practical to manage them. And then You get to work with different strategies and not just lecturing all the time.
researcher	Wow. That's a mouthful, thank you. My next question is- would you consider your current place of employment, to have a positive culture of teaching and learning?
Nozuko	Yeah, I'd like to think so. In our school, everything starts from the admin, I think everything is good.
Nozuko	It depends on how you work with people. Because the way you communicate with people, it's how you are going to get feedback and how you're going to work. If you have good communication skills, there is no problem.

Nozuko	The only problem I see it comes in discipline, because when you have this huge number of learners,
Nozuko	There are those who are on the disciplinary committee. And then they don't actually discipline the learners. A learner can hit you now or swear at you now in class, offends you now in class, and tomorrow the learner is back in class - so there are repercussions.
Nozuko	So what do you do as a teacher?. So that's the only problem. The rest, teaching and learning is taking place, as usual. And there is commitment, teachers are as committed just as much as learners are equally committed into their work. Remember, we as teachers are stationed in our classes, so I cannot comment much on my other teachers, just know what I do. So If a person is in his or her class, we expect you to be working.
Nozuko	But of course that might not be the case because you will hear learners in the corridors protesting that teacher so and so is always on their phone anyway so we are not going to rush to their class. But I don't trust them either because they tend to do a lot of deviant behaviors when teachers are trying to do their work so some of my colleagues end up sitting down and letting them be.
Nozuko	there's so many of them and then you end up wasting your time screaming at them half the time
Nozuko	You would prepare a lesson overnight, You know, how to deliver it, the introduction is going to be like this. And when you get to the class, it is not the things that you were preparing for.
Nozuko	Now you have to wait for maybe five to ten minutes begging them to settle down and so forth. Telling them to Put that phone away.
Nozuko	And then yesterday I was teaching. And then this learner stood up in the class. And then the phone was ringing. And he answered the call outside my class, at the door actually..nd then remember the school Code of Conduct is saying cell phones are not allowed in the school,
Nozuko	But what is happening some teachers are implementing the code of conduct in and some are not, So do you see that's where the problem comes? It is not that we are all consistent in what we do. Some are implementing policies and rules and some are not. Which makes things difficult for the rest of us. There is no consistency in the school. This is difficult for us young teachers.
researcher	Yeah, I see how it can be very difficult.
Nozuko	and it has me questioning why I chose this , but the thing is, for me, I know. I wanted to be a teacher, because I saw the teachers who are teaching us. But now it's not the same anymore.
Nozuko	Yep. They talk back at you. You try to instill discipline, and then they disrespect you even more.
Nozuko	So today, a learner went out, we have this thing of "pass outs" in our school to help control all the commotion..I had refused him to go outside. And then he went out by force. And I kept quiet. And then he came back. And I was like you are not allowed in my class. Do you know how he said, `` This is not your property. So you are not going to tell me anything. I just kept quiet. Because there's nothing you can do.
Nozuko	How do you think your previous school teachers have influenced the kind of teacher that you are? Do you think the kind of teacher that you are is a combination of all your other experiences or this culture has influenced it in a different and significant type of way?

Nozuko	If you take the learner to the staff room for discipline, No one is going to help, the learner will come to class, immediately even. And remember, corporal punishment is no longer allowed. And then if you reprimand the child, it is a problem again. Very hard being a teacher.
	In varsity you don't have a lot on your plate. You focus on the grade and the subjects that we were given or assigned to teach.
	And then right now I'm focusing on different subjects, so I'm everywhere, So discipline is not strong in the school.
Nozuko	So now, I ended up telling myself that I decided to be happy for the rest of my life. So whatever learners do, I don't care. I used to care before. that's with the lower grades But when we go to the grade tens ,.We make sure Is it works I guess
researcher	Is it the same sentiments with other grades or they differ because classes are much smaller and more personal When you go to be with grade tens?
Nozuko	Yes!!! Also because I'm teaching something I love. Are you aware that If I'm teaching geography, something that I love...?
Nozuko	I love the subject in such a way even I go the extra.mile to try make my learners understand the content
researcher	I can tell you love geography more than you do history
Nozuko	And my learners can also notice the difference, they have seen and taught before, so they know when you are not comfortable with the subject.
Nozuko	And then in history, I try my best because we have other teachers who are doing history in the school, I try to have my own interpretation like for preparing and I'll even go to the teacher. But it is not the same way. Explaining it to the learners like the teacher explained it to me is not the same per se because also, you have to find a way to personalize what they said.
Nozuko	And I think delivering is the problem.
Nozuko	And now everything is more learner centered and not teacher centered.
Nozuko	Remember, if a learner Does anything wrong in the class, the learner is not wrong, You are wrong as a teacher. So that's the problem. How are you going to manage a class of 53 when and where you are always wrong? It's not possible.
researcher	So given the environment that you work in and your experience talking, What Have you identified the characteristics needed to be a successful teacher?
Nozuko	To be a successful teacher? I would Say you need discipline, discipline, Yes.
Nozuko	And Another thing you have to be developed, All the time, Like you go for the workshops, implement what other teachers are telling you,.The good things because for me, I have my mentor, my geography teacher, She's the best, By the way.
researcher	So you have a community of practice where you refer to and with professionally?
Nozuko	Yes. And she actually helps a lot. When they heard me for the first time , I remember I was fresh from varsity,. literally didn't know anything about teaching, I only practiced for six months.
researcher	Do you have somebody coaching you for history?

Nozuko	For history, I cannot say I have someone like that, because I'm a geography major remember, so history, not really. I honestly Don't even get interested, I just ask there and there but not all the time, is the matter of you loving the subject and being comfortable with your subject.
researcher	So it's very important for the teacher to know the content?
Nozuko	Very important, because learners will ask you things. And I think they can sense it. When You don't know, but when you don't know don't show them that you don't know.
Nozuko	So discipline, I can I guess time management Also. You can talk about time management, because remember, in a school like this, the learners move or rotate. So If you do not finish your lesson on time, you are disadvantaged by the next teacher. So time management also is needed and then the teaching strategies, so you must have a vast set,
Nozuko	Yes. Assuming that one needs to know what they are talking about for them to know which teaching strategy is most appropriate. So you need to know what you're talking about.
researcher	Okay, now I'm asking what experiences or events in your teaching career, Be it practicals And now Do you believe have shaped you into a successful teacher? What is that thing that stands out in you like, you know what, this is why I'm the kind of teacher that I am.
Nozuko	For me, when I teach, and the learners pass, the moment passes, and they come to me and say, Ma'am, you've helped us get that courage, I want to teach more learners. I want to transform more lives. So even delivering the lesson of mathematics, I was good at it. So the learners will be celebrating their achievements and appreciating your efforts with them, it refuels me. So be patient with them, and do it with love, It will make you be successful in your teaching.
researcher	Okay, second last question. What Do you believe can be done to enable you to do your work better? Like What be it's a school level, atmosphere wise, district level or national wise? What do you think would literally make or enable you to do your work even better?
Nozuko	The first thing I'll talk about is policing. They have to make sure that they don't restrict us on what they teach us when we must complete it. Because remember, when you use different strategies, and you are running on your own pace,
Nozuko	And number two, the thing that they have to come and check if you are on par every two seconds leaves us teaching to assess and not to learn. Respect teachers- teachers have rights.
Nozuko	And I am aware that learners have rights. If a teacher offends a learner or learners, it is treated with haste as though it's a criminal offence. But nothing ever happens if a learner offends a teacher.. We are not actually protected. We need to be protected as teachers.
Nozuko	And then when it comes to resources, I've seen one thing in our school - there are smart boards only in two classes , I used to teach four classes, I was able to show learners visuals. And if they see the visuals, they understand, then let all classes have the resources, Let all the classes have chairs and desks because we were once in a situation where we didn't have furniture in our school. And it was chaos because now the learners are standing. Now you cannot even say why you are making noise .I cannot teach them when they don't have desks to write on or even a chair to sit on. I don't know how to manage that kind of classroom setup. Problems.
researcher	And in terms of the atmosphere at school level, do you feel you are supported enough?

Nozuko	No, I don't. I don't really, because if anything happened in our school, we don't even have a security guard. If anything happened right now. For instance, there was a learner that was carrying a gun from another school at our gates. And I was afraid to go out, Usually I'm the first one to go out by the way. But that day I was almost the last person because I was afraid. Even in schools, there's no security.
researcher	And If you are aggrieved as a teacher, do you have channels to address that out? When things don't sit well with you?
Nozuko	No we don't, I am generally very street smart and I tell you in front of everyone. But now when I look at other teachers, Maybe the principal can talk anyhow to a teacher. And What does a teacher do? You can do nothing?
Nozuko	Because right now Maybe you are not even permanent as yet, and they are the manager isn't it? And You are afraid of losing your job, so someone can offend and i'll-treat you. They know you're desperate for a job, you're desperate for a job, you don't have those channels.
	We don't have that mental support, I cannot say we have it, we don't. So if you're a teacher, and you're not deciding to go to therapy, there is no outlet, which I can go to for help. unless you have your own clique or colleagues that you are close with that you can vent to, so I do belong to a community, my other colleagues from other schools are very supportive as well. Self-made support system, but it helps.
Nozuko	Because remember, this coming into the school someone is angry at you doesn't even know what you did. And then that person is looking at you somehow, Who are you going to talk to? So it is if you have your friends, it's better.
Nozuko	But now as the government let's do something about that also, because we are losing a lot of teachers, we are losing teachers, and this year, most of my friends left to go teach abroad. Where am I going to let these things out? Because as a school, we don't have a structure anywhere, where are you going to let everything out? And then now you still are still alone and stressed? What are you going to do? Who are you going to tell? Because Another thing is a matter of confidentiality amongst colleagues.
researcher	Our conversations just made me realize how much of work we have to do as teachers and sometimes it feels like we own our own. Not sometimes all the time actually.
Nozuko	we are hey, because If anything happens in this school,.a learner gets hurt, everyone will be up in arms, but a teacher can even die, and people will barely say anything
Nozuko	That is so disheartening, And we are not protected. We're not safe. That is so disheartening,
Nozuko	Yeah, and you are already thinking, you still have to do this tomorrow. Yeah. And now you don't have the urge of waking up early in the morning. As for me, These days, I'm always late. Always late. And If you ask me why? I tell myself, it is better for me to look pretty and feel good about myself. Then going to a school, whereby I'm going to feel underappreciated and demoralized. learners, Like the customer's always right
researcher	Ma'am, Thank you. Let me do the last interview with the ladies, Thank you.

	2. Candice's transcript
researcher	So hi Candice, thank you for allowing me to do the interview with you.
researcher	Do you mind telling me more about your educational background, and how long you've been working as a professional teacher?
Candice	So I qualified in 2017 I did my undergrad at the University of Witwatersrand specializing in economics and Social Sciences FET phase and senior phase.
researcher	And how long I've been working?
Candice	I've been working for three years now. Yeah, this is my third year working.
researcher	And in those years of working, what has been your experience of the teaching world.
Candice	Um,
Candice	It's, it's challenging. It's emotionally draining, but it's rewarding, you know it's …it's… it's… it's the world in which you work with the different people that you work with. It can make it... from learners to district level, and parents, everything it's ...it's challenging, but seeing my learners and watching them grow, that's the most rewarding thing of teaching, I could say,
researcher	And have you had an opportunity to work in different environments. And how has it been if you have.
Candice	I was privileged enough to work at a primary school in... It was in an urban area in Johannesburg. And I will not lie about that area, or that school rather has its issues. But if there's one thing that you always knew you had, it was support. It might not be from the management itself but it could be from everyone, including your peers, your teachers, even the learners themselves.
	Whereas, the current school where I'm working now...There's no... The only motivation I would say I would have is my passion, and my reason for starting this degree or this profession, and my learners. Those at my current school because it's, it's a mess. Basically, it's a mess, and there's nothing Anyone is willing to do, or even if to help you put together what needs to be done you know it's from management, through to subject heads HOD'S.. There's nothing, it's every man for himself in that environment.
researcher	And would you consider your current place of employment to have a positive culture of teaching and learning.
Candice	Overall, I don't think so. But in some instances with some teachers, I think there is that culture, and with some learners,
Candice	because you get the different teachers, and how they... they, so I don't know if dispassionate is a word but I'll use that for now they so they're not motivated they're not passionate about what they do, or maybe it's because they older I don't know, but they, they do not love what they do anymore, most of them don't really care anymore.

Candice	Whereas with the younger teachers, you find yourself. There's excitement this drive there is motivation. Sometimes it's misdirected, but there's that energy. So overall, to answer your question, I don't think there's a positive culture of teaching and learning within the school, but I think it's embodied in different individuals, different classrooms in different classrooms, yeah.
researcher	Would you consider yourself a successful teacher? Like if they had to have an epitome of a team to be successful, it do you think you're a successful teacher
Candice	I think I am a successful teacher because my teaching philosophy is if a child is emotionally well developed, and if they are taken, if the EQ is well taken care of. They will be able, there's a bigger opportunity for them to learn and to love what they do. And I feel that I allow that opportunity for my learners to feel that they are coming into my classroom into a safe space. They are acknowledged, they are understood, they are heard, you know, and once that happens. I see with their behavior, with other teachers they really don't care. But with me it's…There's so much respect and there's so much understanding, there's so much mutual.... yeah mutual respect, and they understand ... with me they understand what they are here to do and what I am here to do.
researcher	And what practices or rituals, as a teacher, do you believe have influenced how you teach a new your teaching philosophy when it comes to how you relate to your learners and how you do your work.
Candice	I teach with heart. You know, I teach. I'm a teacher, naturally not by profession but as an individual. I am a teacher, and because of my caring nature. I am always the person that will make sure that you are heard, you know you, you will always be. You're not just a number or a learner but you, you are recognized and you are understood in your own individual way and I think the one thing that I constantly do, in my,
Candice	In my career I always try to reflect. To what am I here for? What's happening here with this learner? So maybe what's happening outside external factors and stuff. And I will always maintain caring about my learners, as individuals before them being learners that are doing economics in the class.
researcher	And given the environment that you work in, what have you identified, to be the characteristics needed or the qualities needed to be a successful teacher.
Candice	Passion
Candice	Pck.
researcher	What is pck
Candice	Pedagogical content knowledge you need to be. You need to know. First of all you need to know your content, you know, these, these kids lose so much respect for you if you don't know what you're talking about, you know, you become like a fool. And some test you.
Candice	But others learn and are inquisitive and they become critical of what you are teaching. Now if you are not certain and you are not sure, or you are you are not briefed up with that knowledge. You become such a waste of their time and that that loses their respect for you.
Candice	And I feel another thing, honesty and integrity. You need to be honest with yourself, with your superiors, with the learners, and you need to always maintain a certain standard of integrity.

Candice	Be a professional, you know, and according to me, I'll say be a professional as in not only guided by sace, or the educators policy or anything like that but I'm saying be a professional in the way you carry yourself within the profession, yes it's teaching and you know some might argue that it's not really a profession but carry yourself with the same guidelines that any other profession would like doctors are bounded by confidentiality between them and their patient,
Candice	you know, and you are tasked with ensuring that you make the most of a classroom situation and you complete maybe the CAPS or whatever syllabus you using, you need to always bear in mind that there are standards that you need to keep up to and, even if it means you going sometimes above and beyond what your job description entails. It's best if you make sure that everything you do you do with love. And so that the learners could also grow not just because of what you are teaching them but because they are growing as individuals and can be strong independent people.
researcher	Okay, and what experiences or events in your teaching career do believe they've shaped you to be a successful teacher?
Candice	When learners come back and they when they come back to you and they like "yahoo ma'am you were right"
Candice	You know it's.... I don't want to laugh but I always make sure that I laugh, because I told you that it's rough out there. And I always say to them that just because you hear me ranting like I'm crazy but I'm actually not and you're going to remember this in the future that what we are trying to do is, you know, you try to encourage your learners you try to make them aware of the reality that is outside of being in a school uniform. And then coming back and acknowledging that you know what these are the mistakes I made this is what I'm doing now this is how I'm moving forward, or just even a learner that will just come to check on you and see how you doing, I think for me, that is the highlight of my professional development process.
researcher	And what if given the chance to change anything in terms of the support , do you feel you are given enough support from different stakeholders within education, its learners, Parents, SMT, the district, or even the national department, what would be the things that could change to make you do your job, even better.
Candice	They could increase my salary.(laughs)
Candice	On a serious note, first of all, being a teacher is demanding. I can never tell you the amount of hours that I spend in my deputy principal's office dealing with cases that could range from things that happened at school, to things that happened at home to things that happened outside of the schooling sphere. What I can say though is the government. There's no support from anyone, you get here and there but even if the support of the parent is the learner mostly there is not supporting you. If the learner supporting you doing the work doing everything that they supposed to the parents are not supporting you know you never and the government is always on the side of the learners, and you know, they feel so sorry for them I don't know what the government is doing with these kids, but they just... everything is just being jumbled up with so much selfishness and there's no working together, so I wouldn't say even at my current school SMT. The only time that they offer support is support that not even you can use as a teacher, you know, I do what I can. As I'm guided by policy. And it goes through all the correct channels.

Candice	But in terms of support, and I think there is none, especially at my workplace and I really think that the one thing that the government could do... even if it's just a district has certain social workers that are active in handling situations, at the school because what is happening now, because I teach at a township school. Right. And there are a lot of things that are happening, you know, going from child-headed households to being abused you know in any form of way. Both the girls and the boys, it is an amount of crime and the negative influence that they are surrounded by. It's hard for them to stay motivated. It's hard for them to carry all of that emotional baggage, just by themselves. And also, we are employed to teach you know we have a job description at the end of the day, and we can't omit that because now we are doing a social workers work, job, or a psychologist job anything as much as we want to, but we are only limited because we didn't major in psychology. We did a little bit... just an introduction.... so that you know how people work or how people think, but that's why they are psychologists and social workers because my hands are tied to a point, because of policy, and the government keeps on forgetting that and it is expected that teachers are miracle workers.
researcher	Is this easy to do? You said you work in a township school. So, it doesn't matter the number of kids you have in your class, how you are able to do your job, and the resources available to you. Is there a township school that is functional or a township school that needs additional help in terms of running as a functional school? So how are you juggling that with being the best version of a, of a teacher that you can possibly be. Because you mentioned social workers and psychologists. So, is what is overwhelming Is it the functioning of the school, the workload, or something else
Candice	That school needs more than Jesus. It's more than, it being a dysfunctional school. But I'm not saying that that's like that's one of the issues here that's actually one of the biggest problems but the biggest problem here is. It's not functioning from a national level, you know, and then it filters through to district level school level. You know, it's, it's. There's no unity ...amongst the teachers themselves you know amongst the environment. There's no unity. You know, which makes it difficult for, for there to be progress for there to be, you know, a flow of a functioning school, basically, you know, it's functional in the terms of we teach and the salaries that are paid , there's a register, there's, you know, it's functional in that part,
Candice	But I don't think it's functional in terms of its culture, the organizational culture at that school is horrendous.
Candice	It's… it's horrible bad, that it's and also it being under resourced and it being. I mean, I have like 60... 60 kids in one class, but I'm sitting with 40 plus desks, which means learners can come in stand where they have to shake desks and already that's… that's disruptive.
Candice	You have kids that are not even regulated and they are not disciplined to anything they will just show up rock up at nine o'clock when school started at half past seven, you know, and the level of discipline and disciplinary measures that are put in I'm not sure if it's the school's faults or the district's fault. They just. It's a joke. You know, but I think all of that boils down to who you are and what, how, as I said, how far you willing to go over and above your job description,
Candice	With resources yes you don't have resources but nothing stops you from buying a textbook or getting it from somewhere else and photocopying making notes and wherever you know, yes it's tiring and it's a pain to prep, and you know, but it's much easier that way, knowing that I'm at least doing something right.
researcher	Okay. My last question. What would be your advice for a novice teacher, or incoming service teachers in terms of being prepared for their context Realistically, in terms of the challenges that they might face coming into the profession.

candice	The one thing I think we could.... So student teachers go right and they see a small view of it. You know they see a snippet of what the real world is about, and telling you now no amount of practicals will ever change. The fact that you are not. You will never know what the real teaching world is about until you're in it.
candice	And the one thing that I would advise novice teachers to do is, first of all, stand your ground. Don't be bullied, you know, don't be bullied by other teachers or your management. You know you there for a reason because you qualified, you didn't just, you know, you went picked up from a random box and you now put it into the post. And it would be advisable. If you start speaking if you're not happy. If you can't change it, then don't complain about it, work with it. But if you're able to change it instead of complaining, then you change. Do what you can to make sure that your working environment is successful and pleasing, you know, don't worry about who said what and what happened where. If your classroom, your learners are successful in whatever you deem to be successful, then that means you're doing a great job and just always remember that.
researcher	And I said that was my last question, but I really have a last time.
researcher	So where do you get your support, like if things aren't as pleasing in the workplace and you are struggling. Where do you get your support? Do you have people be at all the structures that you go to that enable you to revive that passion that you spoke of, the love that you spoke of to continue doing what you're doing for the kids to keep on coming back, even when most of you doesn't want to go back or doesn't want to go to work.
Candice	Adding external support you know you have friends you have family that it doesn't matter how tough it gets and even other kids. It doesn't matter how tough it gets but they will always say something or do something or remind you of something and you like ...this was, this is what this is about you know you . You get so happy when you see them grow and you see them learn and you see them laugh, even when they have no reason to laugh..That for me just reignites my fire, and it regrows my passion. Sometimes it's emotionally draining as I said, but once you have a group of people that understand what you are going through and you know ... you have colleagues, you have friends, you have family. You know you relay the story to them and they are able to be like,.kay you know What, I get you, and having that support structure for me is, I think, much more conducive for me then a support system of the management team.
researcher	Do you think there's anything they can do better,
Candice	That they can work together, they can unite, they can stop fighting against each other you know. They need to understand that we have one goal. You know, it's not about who's better and who's not in at the end of the day, what's better is going to show, according to our stats of our school, but they so busy fighting against each other that nothing is going right because they all want to prove points, and they don't understand that that is infiltrating on the staff's attitudes and the learners, also catch up on that. And what happens, what happens is they tend to put each other against each other.
Candice	And that is detrimental for a positive culture of teaching and learning in the school because now kids don't want to respect this one because this one said that about that one like they fight petty fights that is unnecessary. Which damages the culture of the school.

researcher	And if you could change one thing for teachers, what would you do if you had the power and infinite power over the way things are happening, what would be the one thing you change to make a teacher's job is if we make it accessible for many teachers to say, I am a successful teacher because I'm able to do 1, 2, 3.
Candice	There's nothing I would do. Honestly, because teaching is something that I can't say I want teachers to feel the way I'm feeling, you know, I would rather them experience it. The one thing I would wish is that if we could have maybe a passion test, you know, if there was a test you could test teachers' passion because the passion, everything will work out. You know, and a positive attitude ...okay I want this to happen, I want that to happen if teachers or if all the teachers had that ...despite the dysfunctional environment that you work in, you would flourish, which would create a positive environment for the school.
researcher	And thank you,
Candice	The pleasure. Thank you. Thank you so much.

	3. Phumzile transcript
researcher	Okay, So My first question is, tell me more about your educational background for your degree.
Phumzile	Before I got the degree? The process of getting it? (laughs)
researcher	No, I mean where you studied and so forth...
Phumzile	Uhm, UKZN (University of KwaZulu Natal), from 2011 until 2015 ...ooh Sorry, until 2014 graduated in 2015. And I started working in 2015.
researcher	Oh! So, immediately after?
Phumzile	Yes, immediately after, it was a different setting from this. It was a private school, just for a year, my contract with them was for a year. Then after that ...I got a contract for four months towards the end of 2016 and then 2017 I started working here.
researcher	Okay, So, you've been working as a professional teacher since 2015. so that makes it five years,
Phumzile	Almost five years, yes.
researcher	So, in those years, combining your experiences , How has your teaching experience been, as a professional teacher, Don't come to the experiences as a student teacher, As a professional of in this
Phumzile	Uhm... two very, very, different experiences at the private school. I would say it was much better
researcher	How so?
Phumzile	We....Okay, compared to here, And now our rights as educators have been taken away from us.
Phumzile	There, You had a certain level of respect from kids, (Ms. Biggs is coming would say one the kids) and they would pack up, Sit down, You know, listen in class, do her work, and everything else.
	We were not encouraged to use any form of corporal punishment, but any other forms of discipline were always welcomed.
	Especially by the parents. And secondly, parents' involvement in their children's education, you find that , mostly here,. ~~k~~ids are as much as they come to school every day. When you call the parents when you have any concerns, or for parents to come and fetch the reports and stuff like that. They never come. But there (private school), it was a different story.

Phumzile	If you had a called teacher-parent evenings and what not, parent -teacher evening , parents took those seriously and attend
	Parents were very much involved all the time. Even When you call a parent to a child, even if the child is in boarding school, the parents did not mind coming to school, and finding out what is really happening. So we were even able to try and do intervention exercises with learners. Okay, you this is a bit hard for you, Let's try this and then because you have parents helping you.
	You have a good working environment, which is supportive. Yes, there were challenges, but the support system was much greater and there was creativity, So it was much better. Every day before you conduct a lesson, Before we go to the first break - we prayed and the second break and after school
Phumzile	All those things were in play.
researcher	So that created a sense of structure and discipline and in the learners, do you think?
Phumzile	Exactly! And learners even if they not they were not Catholics, they respected the Catholic faith because they knew that the school is Catholic, so whatever is done there, they did it. Here!? ".I'm not a Christian so participating", that time it's just on Mondays and Fridays -You know, there's a lot... I can write a book...
researcher	ok, I guess that actually answers my question where I was asking whether Have you had a different opportunity to work in different schools and how has been your experience? So I'm guessing you prefer the private school experience? And how is comparing the school cultures in terms of emotional safety or positive culture of teaching and learning in both schools?
Phumzile	Okay, In the previous schools that have worked at, I worked with people who are very supportive. I worked Gabi Gabi in 2016 and there- I had the best time of my life. And as much as you had different kids from different backgrounds You never found…
Phumzile	a time where Okay, we did have differences but those differences will not be made to be open to everyone that.... okay, There are camps and people do as they please when they want to do and there is unity ....When we say we are working on a certain project,. ~~e~~veryone's hands on. If you want to be left behind, you would've let yourself be left behind no one was going to close the door on you.
Phumzile	Everyone was part of the school life, kids would be part of the life. .
	Time boundaries were respected, there was time for everything and everyone knew the things they were expected to be doing by a certain period or timeframe.

	We had The full support of the principal , The full support of SMT (school management team)....it made life much easier. I don't know whether it's because I was the substitute teacher....you know how everyone loves substitute educators.but yeah, it was better
researcher	So, based on numbers and compared to your current place of employment how's the culture of teaching and learning here?
Phumzile	There's too much pressure.
researcher	Would you say you have a positive culture of teaching and learning?
Phumzile	When you know it's very hard to work where someone is always on your back at all times. And "do this" and " do that"... and micromanagement ....you can't exercise your own ways of teaching efficiently because the someone following you wants to know... How and what are you doing about this? You know, sometimes you'll find that in as much as they know that mostly for grade 8's, It is very hard to have intervention lessons .....You are expected to do that and they know that things like.... assembly-
Phumzile	As my manager you can't sit in the office with me - and share coffee with me in the morning when other teachers are busy minding your kids. Actually treating us as slaves .... Because that means you are saying okay, it's fine you sit, sit with me - lets have coffee ..let's talk about anything under the sky while others work
researcher	So personal relations cloud professional relations?
Phumzile	Exactly. And sometimes in as much as we have our differences we should never ever show that in front of kids or sacrifice our professional integrity for personal relationships. Because now you are taking the friendship you're putting it at the forefront of work which means this person is... even if the person is wrong at times you will never be able to tell them that "you are wrong" because you are friends with that person. And it puts a strain on the rest of the colleagues and staff.
Phumzile	And undermining other educators! And if I am conducting assembly, and it is my turn to conduct it...let me know if you have any announcements that need to be passed to the learners.... But let me do it. Because the moment while I'm standing there, in the moments the kids stopped singing and then you start talking Just because- Excuse me You are my superior....That means you are undermining me just because I am your junior .But also, at this point in time I am in charge of this assembly therefore whatever you may want to say ... it needs to be via me.

researcher	Wow. Anything else you'd like to add?
Phumzile	And understanding that keeping a child in class for seven days straight does not guarantee an A. and they are tired, it actually is counterproductive, the mind is not set up like that, and they need to rest as well..There's no time to rest.
Phumzile	Now what happens, The teachers... your teachers are exhausted, your learners are exhausted, Everyone else is exhausted. And They have to do this again Monday again. Because while I am busy teaching the grade twelves during my grade eight periods, someone else now has to make sure that my grade eights are taught.
Phumzile	the pressure that comes with matrices, I mean the other grades suffer, And at the end of the year, At the start of the year will be come back and listen to the analysis of results will be for grade twelve, We are always told that us as GET educators, even grade ten and eleven educators ...We do not do that match for learners. that is why when they get to grade twelve, they do not know anything
researcher	But how do they mean? Weren't those same teachers being the ones that are tasked with giving grade twelves extra classes, and everything else?
Phumzile	Well, some of them yes. Some of them no. I do not teach matrices according to my workload, but I do teach history grade ten, What I can or what I've taught them, they go with it to grade eleven. Then the teacher in grade 11, We'll carry on where I left off until matric.
Phumzile	Now, How Was it my fault that a child who has learning barriers… fails to attain satisfactory marks?
researcher	So, is this a child that everybody in the school is aware of that they have learning barriers?
Phumzile	Yes, whom they insisted that they be taken to the next grade. How do we work under an environment where you try to come up with SBST? We work with kids, We try to find out.... that, Okay, is experiencing this challenge/ problem. And how can we assist them and continue further? How do we work with such cases when, every year, we have told the department of the challenges and cases which are beyond school level of expertise, The department doesn't do anything they never intervene. How? How do we help these kids- having large numbers of kids in one class?
researcher	What's the minimum number in a class and what is your maximum?
Phumzile	well my minimum is 10 , and it is my favorite class
researcher	What do you teach them- history?
Phumzile	No Home language - IsiZulu. They are the best. My biggest class has 64 I think, in one grade a class.
researcher	64 in one grade eight class?
Phumzile	Yes, plus/minus around those numbers.

researcher	You know what I've noticed when I ask teachers about the different class sizes, you get many teachers light up when they talk about the... they have.... well it seems somehow ... The class size impacts the nature of the relationship they have with the kids. So.... you light up the best class, even the adjectives you use to describe them "they are the best class, my beautiful class". And then when you start talking about the large class, It's like literally the exhaustion is on your face.
Phumzile	Whenever you think about grade eights you become exhausted, immediately. just from the thought of it you know,
	And I'm all for grade eleven.. I even use gel pens to mark them. I never use gel pens for grade eights. These are my kids. I have enough time to mark for them and go through everything.
Phumzile	Now grade eight, Here, you have a deadline. By next week you should be done. And they are a lot.
Phumzile	And then by next week you should be done And then marks and then there's ATP. There's syllabi completion. And then in the midst of all that, there is a Memo that is going to be circulated saying "can you please submit the books of the learners together with your ATP" they want to see how far you are with the content. What do you call that? And then I ask a question, “who do these requirements for them as they are demanding all of this from all of us?" have they submitted their learner's books and ATP’S? To whom?
researcher	And do you ever get an answer?
Phumzile	No. my GOD said, well, they're supposed to give them to deputies as they submit and check the rest of the team's work. That’s the procedure. As to whether or not it happens in the whole school, I cannot say. That was the response.
researcher	So in looking at your experience so far, and working with different learners and different backgrounds, would you classify yourself or identify yourself as a successful teacher?
Phumzile	I told myself that I did not do this course for a quick job, the holidays, and everything else. I did this because I loved it. The kids, a lot of the kids do not love me actually (laughs) but I love kids. The only kids that love me are the older ones because we understand each other better, especially the boys. I got into this profession to change lives, to give hope to the kids who have lost it especially in themselves. Yes, I have come to that point, but not the way that I want or wanted. I wanted to do that regularly. I do not want recognition. It’s not about that. But I want every child who has gone through my hands to have felt and known love and security. To have that experience and say "I'll never forget that moment with miss S**”. We may have fought, even my female learners accuse me of having a soft spot for male learners, I have two boys, and I am a boy mom. And I have a soft spot for them. Because I want the boys to grow up and be proper Responsible men, The young girls to grow up and be proud of themselves because they know how to be confident and work and be independent in everything that they do. And that, at a certain point I have achieved but I think I still have 10 to 20 more years to go,
researcher	Oh, wow. We want people like you.
Phumzile	They may piss me off, sometimes. Sometimes I'm angry. Sometimes I leave them and lock the door when they are late. Or leave them a few minutes and come back of course, refreshed. And pep talk to myself and then "let's do this, Let's do this".. I can chase you out today for tomorrow to like a child. I always tell them that. At the end of the day, I'm a mother, you are like my kids, you are under my care the whole day. So you are my kids. So I have to ensure that we may fight his fight, yes. You get what is due to you.

researcher	What practices or rituals, or what informs your practice as a teacher? Like what... What are the principles that govern you, to say “as for me to be this teacher? Is this what I do? That makes me successful?”
Phumzile	I wouldn't say I have Principles per se. It's just that I talk a lot. So it's an open policies type of situation. Yes. I usually tell kids that I may shout at you from time to time. But they can come to me whenever they need help. Besides the kids, my grandmother taught me one thing. When I started working for the first time, She said Whatever happens, learn to talk when it is only necessary for you to. Ask questions when you don’t understand- don’t assume, Anything else besides that, I should try to contain myself and find a better platform to address whatever issues that I have. Even though sometimes I do get a bit crazy and speak as I feel and not think. Or ask things in meetings that make people uncomfortable, and have people looking at me in a weird way. But most of the time, I remember that I have been using those words, Ever since 2015, in the professional space with colleagues and the classroom.
Phumzile	Unfortunately this year, It doesn't seem to be working. It's been hard. It's been a rough year. It's been a rough year. I think the time where I told myself that I Ok, I will not talk as much ....and then there was a time when I told myself that now I have to start talking and standing up for myself because no one is defending me on.anything. This was evident when I had a problem with my contract. That is when I was like " no sc*** this. Now is the time to start talking and asking questions"
researcher	Do you think, because for a very long time you had to work on a contract basis? Did that impact on the quality of your work? And how well you or how not well you were able to do your work as a teacher?
Phumzile	No, it didn't.. In as much as at the back of my mind, I always had that thing that Towards The End of 2017. And towards the end of 2018.that thing that.maybe I might lose my job. But losing my job doesn't mean I have to put other kids’ future in jeopardy. It’s their future we are talking about.. ~~T~~their family's future. Sometimes finishing school well and earning a salary is very important, on occasions in our communities, we're not just talking about a salary one day, and we’re talking about a breadwinner one day. So whatever differences that we have with my seniors, Whether my contractors are renewed or not, I need to be there for the kids. And this year, someone.... Okay, I went home with the markings. Finished. And I almost said this to my principal, "look at your permanent teachers, then. Here I am. And I haven’t been paid for three months but I finished and marks are in". Because -it is work. For me at that time it wasn't because work puts food on the table. It was just- just do this for these for these kids. And I would catch me saying this to myself - “I am doing this for the kids- it's for the learners”. When I had my marking, I knew that, besides thinking about the contract issue, I had Other things to focus on. Like marking and feeding my own family.
researcher	How is the culture of the school, the way they do things, be it the rituals like assembly, respecting periods and times and all those things. How has that impacted on your ability to do your work as a successful teacher?

Phumzile	When I first came here, I learnt a lot of things. Teachers here taught me how to follow the ATP, and I still struggle but they taught me. How to do administrative tasks- as you can see by the mess (points to a heap of papers). I have learned a lot of things but as time went on ai...Okay, Well, firstly, I've learned to respect time. If it is your period, go to class. Kids are waiting. I have to also keep time to make sure that I get to class on time, Use my time efficiently, so that I can deliver all lessons.
Phumzile	That's something that you, you barely get exposed to as a student teacher though. Time management with big classes, Like because you assign that one class every two minutes, like we have an hour break in between. There is a full time teacher you move from one class to the next class to the next class. Sometimes there's no free period between you work throughout
Phumzile	And then you have kids during lunch coming to you. Another thing that I do is sacrifice, Sacrificing my time to a point where you are supposed to sacrifice your lunch for kids whom you know that they need it. Now I have my own child and I know that on Mondays, I have to bring her lunch. She doesn't eat fish. The fish makes her swell up and causes her an allergic reaction..Now I know that every Monday. must. Bring food for her .
researcher	So you bring food for your kids- you go the extra mile?
Phumzile	I go the extra mile sometimes the office doesn't understand because Someone once asked me, "Why don't you just let her eat at the kitchen?", And she does eat at the kitchen on other days ....Other days, she's going to get that from me. Especially when they are cooking food that she's allergic to. And also, we have formed a very special relationship with her, And whenever, even today she came and reported to me the situation at home with her father and so forth. I got so heartbroken. Sometimes I feel like requesting and going to that house and asking to adopt that child. And if it were that easy, I would have done it even last year. If only it was that easy.
Phumzile	Carrying people's problems is very hard. Especially when you're young too. And you have to carry all these problems for these kids.
Phumzile	Every time the child has a problem they come to you. At a certain point I asked myself why these kids don't go to other teachers. There's 20 of us, but they choose to come to me. And then I told myself one thing...
researcher	I'm sorry to interject, what makes you think is the reason they want to come to you?
Phumzile	I Listen, I listen to them without judging And I listen about What the situation they are going through. It stays between the two of us. It will never be a subject of discussion on any other platform, or even in the classroom to a point that other kids will see that you're talking about this person. You go to class, maybe to a class where the other teachers use their stories and experiences as the topic of discussion.
Phumzile	I only tell other members of the SBST when a need to involve them, with an intention to seek more help for the learner. So that we, as professionals, can try and work with her or him. Even though I involve other teachers they (the learners) know that some things are just between you and the child.
researcher	So given this kind of environment, where you are working concurrently, What Have you identified to be characteristics needed for one to be a successful teacher as per your understanding?

Phumzile	One, persevere and patience. Perseverance and patience with the kids or with everyone in general They are both adults and learners. Two, Tolerance.50% on tolerance. The reason why I'm saying 50% is that we do not want to find ourselves abiding by everything and just saying yes to everything because you are being tolerant. Kids. Unfortunately, it is not easy.
researcher	So a successful teacher will be one that is tolerant and can persevere with these kids and be patient with them?
Phumzile	Yes, and above all else is empathy. Empathy is very crucial to have as a teacher.
researcher	The ability to see other people's experiences and feel for them without you necessarily being in them?
Phumzile	Exactly! And being able to just work and identify kids...I once wondered what or how I am able to identify the kids with problems without them telling me that they have any. that I am able to identify a child with a problem but then I remembered, with experience and you pay attention and paying attention
	Sometimes you'll find that the child is going to go to the office and say I have a problem with this person... And then the response will be "go to Miss S***".
Phumzile	This other time it was one of the boys in my class. Shame man. Last year, he swore at me. Well he got an award at the prize giving and he swore at everyone after receiving it.
researcher	What?
Phumzile	Yes, pulled out his middle finger at me.
Phumzile	Well, last year he was fine, a good student with straight A's. Last year he was you're A student and this year, he started dropping,.He's doing your Math literacy, but he had said that he is not a Physics person , so he went to a humanities stream, meaning I now teach him History so, I firstly saw that there was a pattern of absenteeism.
Phumzile	The mother always wrote letters for different reasons why he is not at school. And then I also saw that he was now more withdrawn , he wouldn't even participate during lessons and he was a very active child before . You know that child that will want to share everything, now he just keeps to himself? Yes. Not that he was a challenging me as an educator but the child that was always trying to get to know more .
Phumzile	Yeah, And give you their opinion on things, I love kids who will give opinions. It makes it easier to identify misconceptions during lessons.

	So When he had a problem, our SBST Coordinator asked us, as teachers, to reach out to him. He was asked to select someone he would be comfortable with, that's when They told us that he would prefer that he speaks to a male teacher. So, as a teacher, you go to the office to tell them that the child is going to wait at the reception area for the male teacher, so please call him and tell him to come and talk to him. And everyone in the office was like, "nooo that one is a rude boy so no"..and because these are my kids, this is my class, I found myself saying, “whatever it is that you guys are saying, I do not care - he needs help. It's either you call the male. teacher, If you have a problem with the fact that is misbehaving, That is ok but right now, i want to sort out this issue. And the male teacher, who is ....who we have referred to him to, is the one who wanted to talk to him if he wanted to talk to him. So there's nothing that I'm going to listen to". I took my phone, called the teacher and told him to come. The child was waiting. He didn't take long, they spoke. And wasn't the child having problems? He was! These kids go through a lot . And people want to use previous year's incidents of rebellion as an excuse not to help him now. We cannot do that.
researcher	So what experiences or events in your teaching career, all of it combined to not just here, In your teaching career, you believe have shaped you to be the successful teacher that you are?
Phumzile	A while back when I started, I taught a boy who was two to three years older than I was. From that guy, I learnt at least one thing, even though we always quarreled about work, it was actually an age power struggle because he was older and stuff but he would always be humble about his mistakes so we always had those conversations with him about life. So, sometimes, in life, there's certain things that we look at, compare them to that of our peers, we feel like failures. If we look at them as individuals, we may have this notion about ourselves as failures. He said he would feel like that, he was 26yrs old and hadn't finished matric. And other kids who came after me have either completed or are now in grade ten with me. people who are my age, stand in front of me and teach , people younger than me even,
Phumzile	It taught me that whatever problems they may be, whatever situation whatever you may be going through. Never ever see yourself as a failure, we stumble and fall in life. But that doesn't give up, rather, it.means you need to summon the courage to get up
researcher	oooh yes, the courage to get up and try again and again must be applauded.
Phumzile	Then he didn't come to school for a long time, no one ever came to the school to explain his absence from school..he never sent anyone to come in and explain what was happening. But then he came in December to fetch his report. he told me that He was accepted at some college to do a course on safety and security
Phumzile	And he told himself that not everyone is academically gifted, keep trying to find what works for you. But Most of all, never, ever see yourself as a failure.
researcher	That's Beautiful.
Phumzile	because...we, we know well that in front of people, we are fine but behind closed doors,
Phumzile	We know the things that are obstacles in our lives, We will never walk around with boards saying, "I am a single mother and I live with my kids, no one is supporting financially, you cannot have those. Because, already, that is you adding on to the burden that you are already carrying..but showing or having a positive front is much better than showing that we have failed, You now have to see that.... you now have to think that you will never succeed in life.

Phumzile	for instance there's two kids I taught in grade ten, met them again in grade eleven after they failed the grade and their friends went on to matric, When I started teaching them in grade eleven, I told the whole class actually, that I have taught these two and the One thing that makes me look up to them is that They dusted themselves off the ground. And worked so hard. They did not progress but passed the grade all by themselves, they had to do it , all the work all over again, but it paid off. Facing the crowd after maybe rejection because you failed or deemed a failure of some sorts is not easy. It's not easy. But they did it.
researcher	So I'm hearing you talk about taking care of the kids and loving them and ... where do you get your support system? Like, where do you get all this energy for the work that you do? And in the sacrifices that make and what not? Do you have that kind of support system here at school? Is it a formal support system where teachers are able to go and then access like a psychologist, whatever? Or is like an informal group where you guys are together and bouncing teaching strategies and what not together? How do you stay sane? How do you not go crazy? Basically that's what I'm asking?
Phumzile	Well, I'd like to think...especially with the group of ladies here at work that I have grown to have good relationships with. We ... During lunch, even in the morning, we always check up on each other. Who's late? Who's here first, Let's have coffee together, especially when you have not been assigned to register classes or periods .During lunch time, that is the chance that we get to actually talk about the first half of the day, and just talk about whatever challenge that you had experienced. And that is when we are able to get really good strategies on how to handle grade eights best, or.how to handle the grade nines, how to handle the admin, the admin stuff. Or even handling your SMT, you know, how to handle all these things we vent to each other as well as we build up to each other. You know, they did this to me today. And they did it to me today. But we always come up with solutions and strategies. And then I have this one educator who's older than me. But oooh (sighs) she is retiring three years unfortunately. She has been there from day one when I got to this school. She's like a mentor. But mostly, more of a mother. Sometimes it happens, especially when she was still using this class, it would happen that whenever I come here to teach grade ten, I would go to her first and then by the time I get to class my period is almost over. But whenever I felt that it was getting too much, I would go to her, I felt that I wanted to vent out so badly. I would go to her. This other time it was too bad. I had to take kids to an oral presentation external examination, I even told them that I did not know anything about this exam for the kids or how to prepare them. Besides the fact that I was only told about it on the day of the competition. She calmly said she understands my position but urged me to look at it as an opportunity to gain more experience and exposure to the different programs of the department. At that time I even questioned her loyalty a bit. I have never been there. I didn't even know what to bring as I was told on the day..and she was like "I understand that you do not know anything. But for your own sanity, And for growth purposes and so you will not be labeled as the teacher who does not want to do things when asked, just go, you will come back better and more knowledgeable". And then there's my kids, my boys at home. When I get fed up with the kids that I teach, I always tell them "you know what, I'll come to work. And I will work for my kids only. Whether I am done with you guys, I've given you word it will be none of my business. At the end of the month. I'll take the kids have lunch and then drink the rest of the money of course" (laughs)

Phumzile	But my kids...Siphokuhle has this thing that “mommy, when am I going to come and be a learner at your school?"He's 6 yrs old and I work in a high school. Like when is he going to be part of the learners I teach, it excites them and that cheers me up..and I'll be like "No, grade one is in another school”. As much as being a single mother is not easy and sometimes I oversleep and all, they are now used to my time schedule and times which I fetch them from after care, and they are always excited and happy to see me. But I'm better now, and wake up before the alarm goes off and make sure that by the time they wake up, everything is ready. Or I'm done with a lot of things or I am awake planning what I am going to do today? What is my plan for the day they keep me sane. Because they remind me that as much as I'm here, These kids I teach, I'm also here for them.
researcher	So last question. What Do you believe can be done? Be it by the school, by the district or even by the entire education department-that can be done to enable you to do your work better. What do you need to enable you to be the best version? You See? Earlier on you said, if you don't mind us going back a bit, said, "You're not where you want to yet". So What can be done to enable you to do your job exceptionally well or better than what you are doing now?
Phumzile	If they can untie our hands, that would be really helpful.
researcher	What do you mean by that? Untie your hands?
Phumzile	I feel that the laws that have been passed so far, act as a very big wall between us and the children we teach. It’s like someone declared war and we don't even understand the war between teachers and learners. But there is one and we are in it. the laws have,
Phumzile	For me, okay, Firstly, for me, a child who is disciplined is much easier to teach. Everything else falls into place. If most parents, parented, teachers can be able to teach
Phumzile	We do away with cellphones at school please..if we want a paperless classroom, then it's fine. We can have paperless classrooms And kids can use tablets, which has been provided by the department and they have restrictions on them.
	The cell phones that they use in class are a distraction but you cannot even stop using a phone in class because they'll even tell you of the rights they have which you are violating or that you are teaching them not the phone. They defy authority and there is nothing you can do about it. We once had a child tell us that we have a problem with him because his phone is more valuable than most of the teacher's phones here because he had an IPhone.
researcher	No way?!
Phumzile	Telling us that the reason we are on his case is because we cannot afford iPhones. And he has an iPhone. And another thing before I forget,
Phumzile	Ensuring that the schools are properly furnished. Resources and classroom furniture is very important. If we want to move to a paperless classroom, We will not be able to succeed. If you still cannot even adequate books or furniture for all the children. for instance, grade eights here do not have Life Orientation books,
Phumzile	I have to make notes, copies for notes, all the notes and activities. You can imagine how much work we could get done If every child had their own book. Actually policy says every child needs to but that's not happening.
Phumzile	And Lastly, they must stop pointing fingers at teachers all the time when things go wrong. Because certain things go wrong at home. It's just that we see a lot because this is where we spend most of the time. Sometimes they write these things on our workbook assessment scripts so we see these things .So you get to find out things . You See, and then people start pointing fingers and being blamed for everything, it demoralizes us. Like,

	I will be blamed for everything all the time. And no one will ever say no, it is the parents fault. It's hard enough already.
Phumzile	They should be at the forefront and support teachers and say, what's next ? Now that We've made a mess. So How do we fix this to work together with the school to help our children? Or is it the job of the school to fix our children for the mess that we made?
Phumzile	If we still have places like taverns being built near schools, parents not saying anything, Having the owner of the place fix up everything else around the school for the comfort of his customers but not even once checking or investing back in any of the schools he's invading land around, or even in the community itself, it creates a huge problems. Not just for the schools, but for the community itself.
Phumzile	The kids themselves will come to school drunk, they smoke, and parents in the community don't say anything, who am I to?.some kids don't even have to buy, but they're given these substances by adults in their lives. When you ask yourselves what happened in memory, But What should we do in the class? How do I teach when Now I should go crazy calling parents and ambulances, just because you decided to take chances and do drugs. How am I going to succeed as a community when you have people selling drugs to kids during lunch time?
Phumzile	The plight of drugs in schools is devastating. Because there's really nothing much the teachers can do. And unfortunately for many schools, the neighboring....
Phumzile	It's funny because our school is right next to the police station. And we don't see the proactiveness or the involvement thereof parents and the police to safeguard our kids and our schools...
Phumzile	The only time when they are involved is mainly to tell the school what we cannot and cannot do with their child. One of the learners I mean, He was in front of other kids, was waving a gun in front of other kids.
researcher	Do you feel safe here?
Phumzile	No?! How do you do work to the best of your ability When you don't feel safe?
Phumzile	It is very hard. Working and knowing that there's not even even a single security guard physically. Coming to work and knowing that these kids only listen to that male educator, what if he is not at work on day? We fear for our lives while at work.
researcher	Okay, I know I said it's my last question but please allow me to ask this very last question. How do you feel? You said you don't feel safe ...physically for starters. Now it brings me to emotional safety as a work environment house. What do you think emotional, emotional safety? I can go to my superiors and my colleagues when I have a problem and explain to them that I am going through this ...emotional safety? Do you have that at least other than from the group of friends that you mentioned?

Phumzile	I, Whenever I feel like it's getting too much like and my mentor is a busy teacher when I go to him, my deputy principal. Whenever he sees me, closing the door behind me, He knows that something serious is about to be said. Even when I'm sick or Whenever I think about coming to work, because maybe one of my kids is sick, I know this will be a topic of discussion. You know, if I have to leave Early, It's a problem. When you have to go to your superiors to ask, you do now have to plan for it. How am I going to approach this? What do you approach a person who's always angry and tell them you have challenges at home? Even as she enters the exam venue, She walks in like a soldier to sit up, you know, you also change the way you were working out of fear not incompetence. The whole room becomes tense, now, how to approach a person I have a problem with. A leader who lacks the ability to keep people's personal challenges private. I remember that one of my colleagues, He did not come back to the first second third day of the first week of reopening. I was at the office when she was telling us how she went to his house and demanded marked papers and how she even told him that she will record the marks herself if she has to, and.one of the teachers asked her "What if something happened? But because we cannot approach them, He could not tell them the problem?"
Phumzile	Now you're coming into someone else's house and demanding things without knowing the full story. How do you approach people who turn your mistakes into a topic of discussion in the meeting in your presence? You may not mention my name but I will know that you're talking about me
Phumzile	Last year she said, in a meeting, if it were not for physics, we would have gotten a better matric pass percentage ....that time, the same person who was teaching physics was sitting right in front of her. Autocratic leaders are problematic.
Phumzile	Autocratic and bureaucratic leaders are a problem ....Because bureaucracy does not work in the professional environment. Especially in education.
researcher	Thank you so much for your time and sharing your experiences with me.

	Isabelle's transcript
researcher	I hope you are well, can we start? I'll be recording and transcribing whatever we will be saying henceforth.
Isabelle	Okay, akunanginga (no problem)
researcher	may you please tell me a bit about your educational background leading up to this point
Isabelle	I graduated 9 years ago and I have been working at a teacher for 7 and a half year
researcher	izinto zahlangana (things came together after graduation then?)
Isabelle	Yes something like that because right shortly after, that's when I saw a teaching post being shared on Facebook, I sent an email, applied and then the rest is history .
researcher	And how are you finding it so far?
Isabelle	for like, it's different from what we were taught. like when you are in varsity, they just assuming that when you get to the workplace you'll find this like this and so forth but no, it's a really different, very different because right now ... at Wits we had a course on or about becoming a teacher and they required us to use at
Isabelle	different strategies, teaching strategies, and I am able to use just a portion of those because most of them do not work in schools like mine so it's been difficult because it feels like I'm just figuring things out as I go.
	All I know is that when we for instance, I got into the field and then I got 60 kids in a class and I knew that what I knew and wasn't going to work, I knew, it was not feasible.
researcher	How are you finding your teaching experience as a qualified teacher?
Isabelle	As an intern teacher in a private school, everything was nice because you have a supervising teacher helping you through everything.
	And supervising teacher is taking care of the kids for you, the ones that get out of line every now and then
	and your job is just to deliver content because they know that you are going to be there for a limited period of time
	you are going to be there for a limited period of time
	So it's easy even for them, the learners to bear with you.
researcher	And now as a full time teacher?
Isabelle	now as a full time teacher, I got here and , first week it was nice , the learners were better behaved because they were not used to me yet,

	But now, (yahoo) the thing is we are different, we have learners from different backgrounds, they have problems from home. some, they come to class just to sit and do nothing, they just come every day they come to school but they don't do school work,.they don't have exercise books so they are just here physically. So technically they are not here for you. those learners tend to be very disruptive and influence other learners negatively
Researcher	What do you teach them? What subjects do you teach?
Isabelle	I teach English second additional language.
researcher	And how are you finding teaching English in this context, in the township?
Isabelle	some, they come to class just to sit and do nothing, they just come every day they come to school but they don't do school work. they don't have exercise books so they are just here physically. So technically they are not here for you. those learners tend to be very disruptive and influence other learners negatively
Isabelle	Many of my learners are not exposed much to the English language anywhere else other than at school. And many of them grow up speaking at minimum, three languages, so English is not even their second additional language and it also makes things a little more difficult.
Isabelle	But what I am really concerned about is the number of learners in the class. I have about 60 to 65 learners in a class at most
researcher	60?! And how do you cope? And how do you know what they are learning?.do you have a way of knowing that Okay, I think I have done the job today.
Isabelle	60! I have 60 learners in a class on average.
researcher	How do you manage to work with 60 learners if I may ask?
Isabelle	Yeah, I explain, I. explain, and Most of the time I use the question and answer method just so I can try see where they are in understanding the content, or to see whether they misunderstood some things... and then at the end of the lessons I give them activities and walk around , checking their individual work. Sometimes I try to mark the work myself
	But sometimes I just sign the books and that's also an opportunity to see their progress especially because our lessons are an hour long so sometimes the time allows.
	And that is when I get to see this one, every time, they don't have an exercise book every time. When you go around checking this where they start being alive and attempt to work. but when you are standing there trying to teach,
	That's when you can hear the noise all the way from the back, then you know that they are not doing what they are supposed to be doing.
researcher	And then , in terms of the school culture, do you think that culture in your place of employment currently has a positive culture of teaching and learning like, what I mean by that is Everyone knows why they are here and when they hear they do their work and everyone's job comes easier that way?
Isabelle	Yeah. They do those, we have these learners that we all know that are problematic, and it is like that almost everywhere really.

Isabelle	You know what happens right now we have a system of “pass out", just to minimize the number of learners found outside during periods. So you would need a "pass- out" to go outside the classroom, be it toilets, sickbay, the office etc. so if you go out and you do not have it, you will have to explain yourself why you are not where you are supposed to be.
researcher	So the discipline system of the school is the one that helps you out to do the job better?
Isabelle	Yeah, not hundred percent but then no system is ever a hundred percent
researcher	Yeah, it helps minimize a lot I can imagine. Whoa, I never heard of school in the township that uses that system. Nice
Isabelle	Even the learners are complaining, like "ah you are now treating us as if we are in a private school blah bla". Okay, and we also have a register.
researcher	Like a subject attendance register?
Isabelle	Yes, so for your period, a teacher will have a list of the learners in that class , and when the class comes for her period, she or he will need to mark who was there and who was not. In that register, there is even a way of filling it out to indicate that the learner was at school but was not in class that day. and you can even indicate the ones without textbooks, exercise books etc. you write no exercise books
Isabelle	In such instances, I just provide the parent with evidence of the things I am communicating to them: who's your child? What grade are they in? And then I take out my registers and assessment tasks they have written. Most of these records are kept at the admin so it is easy to retrieve them. I would speak to the records, and be like, yes, your child comes to school every day but they do not attend their classes, they miss formal assessments and so forth..sometimes the child is not misbehaving only in my subject or classes, a number of teachers will be complaining about the same learner.
Isabelle	. But if the learner has repeated such an act more than four to five times then you have to notify the parents because you know at the end of the year parents want their learners passing and if they come to us, sometimes angry and violent towards us. This is the same parent who spent the whole year being called to come to the school and they never made it. they never even checked the child's books all along, and those parents are very quick to come to their child's defense and the child knows it
Researcher	Have you found parents to be cooperative though?
Isabelle	No hey, most of them are not. For instance, you call them when they don't come, especially during parents' meetings. I can remember in June they were called for just a brief meeting on learner's performance and ways to improve the school results and then at the end of the meeting, they were meant to be given term reports..their interest, so for me I feel like they don't really care. It’s like they delegated parenting to teachers. but then we have those parents that are very involved and they respond to the school promptly to help us to manage the learners- I remember the was a learner, he came home late one afternoon and he lied that we had afternoon classes, the parent came to the school to inquire about it because the school usually communicates such changes with the parents. so we have such parents who are supportive of our work - we just wish there were more of those kinds of parents

Isabelle	Some reports are still in the office till today, two terms later. We still have a stack of them that are still there- they only collect them at the end of the year. so that thing gives us a negative picture about
researcher	The problem is that majority matters I guess...and how have you found your teaching experience so far? Like as a professional teacher? Is it easy, difficult? What can make it better?. what do you think can be done to make it better-or to make it easy to do your work?
Isabelle	it's a bit difficult you know, we have a lot on our plate never mind the issues of content, I'm not too worried about the content or pacing and the likes ... It is the extra work they push to us on the side that makes things difficult for me, the last minute workshops, the never ending syllabi completion - they are costing us time! Time we could've spent teaching! Only to find that you end up being behind with content because you miss out of lessons when schools knock off early to accommodate these events. This is very problematic when you have big classes.
Isabelle	So maybe they can add more teachers also. For instance I have 214 grade 8's for English FAL. I teach all of them. And for English, there's paper 1, 2 and 3 plus transactional writing and orals and I have to mark all of those papers myself. And then I go to grade 9, I have 1 grade 9 class with the same amount of work. Then I go to grade 10, I have 75 learners in grade 10 Life Sciences.
researcher	75 learners in one class today combined?
Isabelle	Yes they combined two classes because there was no teacher. the performance was poor because the environment doesn't allow for effective learning when in such large groups
researcher	How big is your venue? Your classes can accommodate such a capacity? How is classroom management?
Isabelle	These numbers make managing the classroom very hard.
	So what I would do is, Maybe this week I take this group and sign their books. Then today I take this other class because I have decided to divide them into two groups. Sometimes I just take those who are interested and do the lesson with them, because even the learners themselves would complain that they are trying to work and others are being purposefully disruptive. Sometimes we don't have a venue, so when the History teacher arrives first, then we will have to make it after school to make up for the lesson..
Isabelle	So what I would do is, Maybe this week I take this group and sign their books. Then today I take this other class because I have decided to divide them into two groups. sometimes I just take those who are interested and do the lesson with them,
	Because even the learners themselves would complain that they are trying to work and others are being purposefully disruptive.
Isabelle	Sometimes we don't have a venue, so when the History teacher arrives first, then we will have to make it after school to make up for the lesson .
researcher	So do you think the kind of relationship you have with the learners, does it allow you to or does it make your work just a little bit easier ?
Isabelle	Of course, I have built an open relationship with my learners. I prefer letting them know of things that affect them and us trying to work around that situation together. I discuss school related things with them and they appreciate that we get to solutions together- I don't just take or make decisions on their behalf
researcher	So you have a very negotiator style of dealing with learners?

Isabelle	I prefer talking to my learners. I talk to them because I believe that if I have a relationship with them, they will feel comfortable communicating with me when they are not well or when they have an input. They can come to me directly. .
	I remember when I attempted to combine the two classes because of time constraints, they were able to voice their concerns that they were coming along fine and now that they are mixed with the other group, they are finding it difficult to work with them so they asked to be split up again and I understood.
Isabelle	But I try to use what I have. and most of the time I work with my learners pace instead of the dictated peace because I would rather have them understand thoroughly than rush through the content and leave them with superficial understanding of broad content
researcher	That's nice. So do you think the way things are being done at this school, Be it the way you discipline kids.the parents' engaged involvement,.he management and everything has an impact on how you teach and work with your kids?
Isabelle	Yeah, it has. It has you know. Our management is very strong and we can sit down, plan and even implement the different projects and ways of doing things to better the school together. So there is that sense of support I guess. we are even able to sit down and help each other identify the loopholes here and there and better ways of doing things
researcher	Would you say you guys participate collaboratively in fostering the culture of the school-even the teaching?
Isabelle	And our learners hate it because we are able to be consistent with them. All the teachers will be requiring them to the same standard meaning they don't even get the opportunities to be disorderly.
researcher	Ooh very nice, I imagine that actually makes the running of the school a bit easier I guess.
Isabelle	It helps with classroom management too because no learner comes to class to just relax and do nothing you see. So teamwork.
researcher	I love that I wish I wish I had that.
researcher	So last question.
researcher	Last two actually, given the environment to work in what have you identified to be the characteristics needed for you to be a successful teacher? Like if you're going to say you know what I am very proud of myself given your context How would you know that a person is a successful teacher? When what happens?
Isabelle	When you get to win over those learners classified as learners at risk start seeing themselves as capable. You keep a close eye on them, inspire them to require of themselves more than what they have been settling for.
Isabelle	So when you create a homely environment... you make them...you make them important to that level they can engage with what is going on. Allow yourself to let you work from their level of understanding.

Isabelle	You checked it ...make sure you check it regularly, it keeps them interested . they even bring their work without being asked to, the enthusiasm is refreshing
researcher	And my last question is because you have so far experienced what it feels to be in this field as a professional educator. What do you think could be done to make your job as an educator easy for you to do your level based What do you need? You see you just told me I need this for me to make my learner's though even those ones I can time for them have this for your plans make
Isabelle	To reduce the number of learners in our classes. I know we won't get teacher assistants but we can get more teachers so we can be able to reduce our class sizes and have them more manageable.
	60 in one and 75 in another - it's a lot
researcher	Do you think there is such a culture of emotional support for the teachers?You see, you just said to me you're that type of teacher that even tries to get even the one level that is addressed to try and get them involved . And said your kids come to you, they talk to you and then you build some form of personal relationship with them?
Isabelle	Sometimes I even manipulate them, when I give them even intervention work, I tell them that it is for marks, I am going to record the tasks. That's the only time a lot of them will give it their all.
researcher	Where do you get your support?
Isabelle	Support?
researcher	Yeah like to be the kind of teacher that you are that makes that one child that is not listening. Listen. Where do you get like...where do you draw the strength from because a lot of teachers are complaining, they are tired and want out.
Isabelle	No, I don't know maybe it's because I'm still new but you know what, like, I love to see everyone seeing everyone succeed ...maybe that is the problem so I mean, I believe in everyone.
Isabelle	It's never okay to just cut out people... we not just cut you off. But I believe in everyone. When you fail, then I'm like Nah, I did my part. I take my time and engage with those at risk.
researcher	as an education system what do you think we can do to lessen the social worker side of the teachers job and but still not fail that child
Isabelle	So I think that social workers should intervene in schools. So they should be school based. Should be school based there and easily accessible to the school and the learners.
	Teachers can't always leave the class of 50 kids in order to take care of one child.
	So we need people who will support us, they trained for that and they know the skills that they need to use. We need social workers at schools. We spoke about asking social work students to come and assist the school and do their practicals in our schools. But I feel we need a more permanent setup.
Isabelle	We cannot do that because of time pressures, marks, syllabus completion etc. all that makes it a bit hard for teachers to wear all these caps best. Sometimes some behavioral issues are beyond our scope of expertise as teachers.

Isabelle	They have problems at home and they run into even more problems at school and if there were residential social workers available, I believe that will help teachers do their work even better.
researcher	thank you so much ma'am for your time, it was very insightful,
Isabelle	It’s a pleasure

APPENDIX D: DATA TABLES

Theme one: class sizes				
Sub Themes				
	Phumzile	Candice	Isabelle	Nozuko
Number of learners	…I got 60 kids in a class and I knew that it was not going to work. It was not feasible	… I have like 60 …65 kids in one class	They combined two(already big) classes into one I have about 60 to 65 learners in a class at most	… so 52 learners in grade nine multiply that by 3. So it's 170 something learners for grade nine only … but grade ten is better because the numbers are around 37
Classroom management		These numbers make managing a classroom very hard		The classes are laid back because the numbers are smaller, so it's more practical to manage them
Resources	Ensuring that schools are properly furnished. Resources and classroom furniture is very important …	I have 60 kids in one class… but I'm sitting with 40 plus desks Learners can come in and stand and where they have to share desks and that's already disruptive	Sometimes we don't even have a venue, so when the History teacher arrives first, then we will have to make it after school to make up for the lesson	…There are smart boards in only two classes, I used to teach four classes, I was able to show learners visuals. And if they see visuals, they understand, then let all classes have the resources, let all classes have chairs and desks … I cannot teach them when they do not have desks to write on or even a chair to sit.
Teacher workload	Whenever you think about the grade eight's you become exhausted, immediately. Just from the thought of it you know	Well my minimum is 10, and it is my favorite	…for instance I have 214 grade 8's for English FAL… and for English, there's paper 1, 2 and 3 plus transactional writing and also	

			orals and I have to mark all of those papers myself . I have 1 grade 9 class with the same amount of work. Then I go to grade 10, I have 75 learners in grade 10 life sciences	

Theme two: teacher identity				
Sub Themes				
	Phumzile	Candice	Isabelle	Nozuko
Teaching identity	And your job is just to deliver content because you know you are going to be there for a limited time	Pedagogical content knowledge. You need to know… first of all you need to know your content, you know these kids lose so much respect for you if you don't know what you are talking about, you know, you become like a fool. And some tests.		…One needs to know what they are talking about (content) for them to know which teaching strategy is most appropriate. So you need to know what you are talking about.
Beliefs and mission	… Showing or having a positive front is much better than showing	… Don't worry about who says what and what happened where. If your	It's never okay to just cut people off…	

	that we have failed … you have to see that…	classroom, your learners are successful, then it means you're doing a great job I teach with heart… I am always that person who will make sure that you are heard… you are not just a number or a learner, you are recognized and you are understood in your own individual way and I think that's one thing I constantly do…	but I believe in everyone …	
Emotion and "good teacher qualities" *(labour of love, care, interest)*	…And above else is to have empathy. Empathy is very crucial to have as a teacher …Perseverance and patience with the kids and with everyone in general	… and I will always main caring about my learners , as individuals before them being learners that are doing Economics in my class Honesty and integrity. You need to be honest with yourself, with your superiors, with the learners , and	I teach with heart.	So be patient with them, and do it with love, it will make you successful in your teaching

		you need to always maintain a certain standard of integrity		

Theme three : organizational culture				
Sub Themes				
	Phumzile	Candice	Isabelle	Nozuko
Management and planning	… Reduce the number of learners in classes, in our classes. I know we won't get teacher assistants but we can get more teachers so we can be able to reduce our class sizes and make them more manageable		Time boundaries were respected, there was time for everything and everyone knew the things they were expected to be doing by a certain period or time	
School culture and practices	…you know it's very hard to work where someone is always on your back at all times and telling you "do this" and "do that"… micromanagement	That school needs more than Jesus. It's more dysfunctional than it is a school. … The biggest problem here is that it is not functioning from the national level, you know, then it filters through to levels then school		….in a school like this, the learners are moving (rotate). So if you do not finish your lesson on time, you are disadvantaged by the next teacher… so time management is needed

		level..here's no unity… amongst the teachers themselves, you know amongst the environment. There's no unity. Which makes it difficult for there to be progress , for there to be a flow of a functioning school.		
Teacher morale	… But what should I do? How do I teach when now I should go crazy, call parents and ambulances, just because you decided to take chances and do drugs? How am I going to succeed in a community when you have people selling drugs to kids during lunch time?	… I don't know if "dispassionate" is a word but I'll use that for now, they are not motivated , they are not passionate about what they do, or maybe it's because they are older I don't know, but they, they do not love what they do anymore, most of them don't really care anymore		…Do you know what he said to me? He said, this is not your property. So you are not going to tell me anything, I just kept quiet. Because there is nothing you can do. … They know you're desperate for a job, you are desperate for a job.

Theme four : discipline				
Sub Themes				
	Phumzile	Candice	Isabelle	Nozuko

Learner discipline	Telling us that the reason we are his case is because we cannot afford iPhones. And he has an IPhone	You have kids that are not even regulated and they are not disciplined to anything. They will just show up at nine o'clock when school starts at half-past seven, you know…	Some, they come to class just to sit and do nothing, they just come every day to school but they don't do school work, they don't have exercise books so they are just there physically. So technically they are not there.	Now you have to wait for maybe five to ten minutes begging them to settle down and so forth. Telling them to put that phone away. And then yesterday I was teaching, and then the learner stood up in class...and the phone was ringing. And he answered the call outside my class, at the door actually.
School policies		… The level of discipline and disciplinary measures that are put in place (sighs) I'm not sure if it is the school's fault or the district's fault. They are just a joke.		Remember, if a learner does anything wrong in the class, the learner is not wrong, you are wrong as a teacher.
Practices/ routines that cultivate or hinder discipline, culture and traditions				… we have this thing of "pass-outs" in our school to help control all the commotion …
Contextual factors	The kids themselves will come to school drunk, they smoke… some kids don't even have to buy, but they are given these		… We have learners from different backgrounds, they have problems from home.	

	substances by adults in their lives…			

Theme five : support and relationships				
Sub Themes				
	Phumzile	Candice	Isabelle	Nozuko
Support and relationships with learners	I listen, I listen to them without judging and I listen to what the situation they are going through. It stays between the two of us .	… You try to encourage your learners, you try and make them aware of the reality that is outside of being in a school uniform. And them coming back ad acknowledging that these are the mistakes they made and this is what they are doing now – I'm moving forward, or just even a learner that will just come to check on you and see how you are doing, I think for me, that is the highlight of my professional development process	… When you get to win over those learners classified as learners at risk, when they start seeing themselves as capable. You keep a close eye on them, inspire them to require of themselves more than what they have been settling for.	But when it comes to grade tens' (chuckles) here they cannot start, most of them I have taught before and they cannot just do as they please, they know we work. They understand my system now … but grade tens' are amazing, they are passing well
Support and relationships at school level (e.g SMT,	And undermining educators!	…They can work together, they can unite, and they can		For history I cannot say I have someone like that, because I'm a geography major

HOD, Colleagues)	And sometimes in as much as we have our differences we should never ever show that in front of the kids or sacrifice professional integrity for personal relationships. Because now you are taking friendships and you are putting it at the forefront of work which means that even if the person is wrong, you will not be able to tell them “you are wrong”.because they are your friend first.	stop fighting against each other you know. They need to understand that we have one goal.		remember, so history, not really. I honestly don’t even get interested, I just ask there and there but not all the time (from the history teachers). it’s a matter of loving the subject and being comfortable on your subject

APPENDIX E: Information sheet and Consent Forms

Dear Sir / Madam

My name is Masanabo Nontokozo Precious and I am a Masters student in Education at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. As part of my studies, I have to undertake a research project, and I am investigating **How successful teachers see their role and work in schools with poor cultures of teaching and learning**. The aim of this research project is to find out: **How does the poor culture of teaching and learning affect the practices of successful teachers and what are the practices of "successful" teachers in schools with poor culture of teaching and learning**.

As part of this project, I would like to invite you to take part in an interview, answering a questionnaire and taking part in a focus group discussion. This activity will involve sharing your insights and perceptions of the teaching world, drawing of course from your experiences, observations and other sources of knowledge available to you as a subject expect and will take around thirty minutes to an Hour (possibly more depending on your availability). With your permission, I would also like to audio record the interviews and discussions for later data analysis and reflections using a digital device.

You will not receive any direct benefits from participating in this research, and there are no disadvantages or penalties for not participating. You may withdraw at any time or not answer any question if you do not want to. The interview, group discussions and questionnaires will be completely confidential and anonymous as I will not be asking for your name or any identifying information, and the information you give to me will be held securely and not disclosed to anyone else. I will be using a pseudonym (false name) to

represent your participation in my final research report. If you experience any distress or discomfort at any point in this process, we will stop the interview or resume another time.

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 research report which will be available online through the university library website. If you wish to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you (optional). 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 Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za

Yours sincerely,

Ms. Masanabo Nontokozo

Masanabonp@gmail.com , +27 71 919 1957

Ms. Wilson-Thompson Bronwen,

Bronwen.Wilson-Thompson@Wits.ac.za , (011) 717 3198

Title of project: **How do successful teachers see their role and work in schools with poor cultures of teaching and learning?**

Name of researcher: Masanabo Nontokozo Precious

I, ……., agree to participate in this research project. The research has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve. Please circle the relevant options below.

I agree that my participation will remain anonymous	YES	NO
I agree that the researcher may use anonymous quotes In his / her research report	YES	NO
I agree that the interview may be audio recorded	YES	NO
I agree to fill an anonymously complete a research questionnaire	YES	NO
I agree that the information I provide may be used anonymously by other researchers following this project	YES	NO

…… (Signature)

…… (Name of participant)

…… (Date)

APPENDIX D: Wits Ethics Clearance Letter

WITS SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND JOHANNESBURG

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION ETHICS COMMITTEE
CONSTITUTED UNDER THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: 2019ECE039M**
PROJECT TITLE	How Do Successful Teachers See Their Role and Work in Schools with Poor Cultures of Teaching and Learning?
INVESTIGATOR	Nontokozo Masanabo
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR	WITS SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
DATE CONSIDERED	12 September 2019
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved unconditionally
EXPIRY DATE	Date of submission of the project report

ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE 13 September 2019 **CHAIRPERSON** (Dr. Paul Goldschagg)

cc: Supervisor: Ms. Bronwen Wilson-Thompson

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** emailed to the Ethics Office: Matsie.Mabeta@wits.ac.za .

I fully understand the conditions under which I am authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

_____ _____/_____/_____
Signature **Date**

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

APPENDIX E: Gauteng Departments of Education Permission letter

GAUTENG PROVINCE
Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

8/4/4/1/2

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	19 August 2019
Validity of Research Approval:	04 February 2019 – 30 September 2019 2019/222
Name of Researcher:	Masanabo N.P
Address of Researcher:	Unit 79 Florida Heights
	15 Fourth Road, Florida
	Roodepoort, 1710
Telephone Number:	011 985 2266/ 071 919 1957
Email address:	masanabonp@gmail.com
Research Topic:	How do successful teachers see their role and work in schools with poor cultures of learning and teaching?
Type of qualification	Masters' in Education
Number and type of schools:	Three Secondary Schools
District/s/HO	Johannesburg North

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

19/08/2019

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management
7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001
Tel: (011) 355 0488
Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za