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Investigating identity experiences of Wits student teachers in Acornhoek rural schools, Mpumalanga province

By

KIRUMIRA Hassan

(Student number: 531002)

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<u>Supervisors</u>

Dr Alfred Masinire

Dr Thabisile Nkambule

Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own work, except as indicated in the acknowledgements, the text and the references. It is being submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Education in the Faculty of Humanities, Curriculum Studies at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other institution.

_____ _____

Signature Date

Hassan Kirumira

Abstract

This is a qualitative research project that draws on Gee's (2005) and Wenger's (1999) conceptions on identity, to understand how teaching practice in rural Acornhoek schools of Bushbuckridge municipality (Mpumalanga province) impacted on the identity of student teachers. The study involved ten student teachers in their second and third year of Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) studies at Wits School of Education ((WSoE). The research adopted a case study approach. Data in this study was collected using semi structured interviews with student teachers before and during the teaching practice period and the researchers' field notes. The most outstanding findings were that, student teachers negotiating their identity in the categories of IDL1, IDL2 and IDL3. IDL1 is when the identity of student teachers shifted as they carried out their teaching practice. IDL2 is when teaching in rural schools could not shift the identity of student teachers and IDL3 is when teaching practice resulted into student teachers compromising their identities. On the basis of these findings, recommendations were made. Student teachers should have a deeper and informed understanding of what to expect in rural schools in order to prepare them for the identity negotiations in rural schools contexts. In the findings it was established that if teacher training institutions prepare student teachers with view of teaching in rural schools, it would minimize identity challenges by student teachers in the rural schools teaching practice because they will have prior knowledge about teaching in rural schools.

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Dedication

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Abbreviations

RSTEP:	Rural Schools Teaching Experience Project
WSoE:	Wits School of Education
STREP:	Student Teacher Rural Experience Program (Australia**)**
UKZN:	University of KwaZulu Natal
WRF	Wits Rural Facility
IDL1:	Identity level one
IDL2:	Identity level two
IDL3:	Identity level three
TE:	Teaching experience

Chapter One

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter I describe the background of the study, the research problem of the study, the rationale of the study and the research questions that guided the study.

1.2 Background of the study

This research is premised on the assumption that rural contexts presents a number of challenges to student teachers intending to conduct their teaching experience in rural schools. Among other challenges, rural areas do not have the best schools in terms of resources and infrastructure (Schafft and Jackson, 2010). Local and international studies have shown that rural schools have challenges in attracting and retaining qualified teachers (White and Reid, 2008; Sharplin, 2002; Emerging Voices, 2005; Masinire, 2015). Consequently, this compromises education standards in rural schools such as pedagogical practices, assessment and learners' achievement. Considering that 60% of the world's population is rural (in the case of South Africa 80%) it becomes a social justice issue to ensure that rural schools recruit qualified teachers who can raise the quality of education (Malassis, 1966).

The main goal with regard to rural education should always be to provide basic education to improve the lives of people in rural areas (Malassis, 1966). This is however challenged by the anti-rural bias of teacher training institutions through their teacher training programs. Schafft and Jackson (2010) posit that rural education never emerges as a topic for teachers in training which limits teachers from understanding challenges that are patent with rural schools. This same view is echoed by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission of Australia (2000), this report claims that teaching courses do not equip students with skills and knowledge to teach in rural and remote location areas, for instance, training institutions do not explicitly prepare student teachers to manage with the inadequate resources in rural schools. The Common Wealth schools Commission (1988) on schooling in rural Australia also concluded that university preparation for trainee teachers was insufficient for teachers to teach effectively in rural schools, because teacher trainees need to be equipped with knowledge and experience to face special

challenges during their teaching practice in rural schools. According to Lock (2008), teacher training makes student teachers do 'guess work' on the real issues of rural education context. This results in student teachers developing negative perceptions about rural context, which may negatively impact on their teaching experience in rural schools. On this basis, Lock (2008) and Sharplin (2002) share the same views on the notion of tailoring teaching courses to meet the needs of rural and remote communities. This could explicitly present student teachers with the opportunity to experience what it means to work in rural areas, which may facilitate them to negotiate their student teacher identity in relation to the rural schools context.

1.3 The context of Rural Education at Wits school of Education

In May 2013, a group of Wits school of Education (WSoE) student teachers were taken for a rural teaching experience (RTE) in Mpumalanga with the aim of exposing them to conditions of teaching in rural contexts. This project serves to offers support to student teachers who intend to practice in the rural schools of Mpumalanga. This student teacher support project by Wits school of Education is similar to the Student Teacher Rural Experience Program (STREP), developed by Western Australian Department of Education and Training (DET), to supports student teachers who wish to do their teaching practice in rural districts with the view of working in rural areas (Lock, 2008). This background therefore forms a basis for this research in terms of ascertaining the perceptions and teacher identity challenges of student teachers as they prepare to conduct their teaching practice in a rural schools context.

1.4 Research problem statement

Research in rural schools such as Emerging Voices Report (2005) among others, have always aimed at unearthing the challenges of rural education, some of the challenges include negative perceptions about rural schools. For instance, the perceptions that student teachers have about rural schools context is a challenge which may discourage them from teaching in such areas. Student teachers are at a risk of foregoing their personal identities during the process of negotiating their rural identities in relation to rural context. This could happen as they encounter unfamiliar situations in rural schools during the course of their teaching experience, like having to interact with teachers and the learners in rural schools. The connection to rural school contexts helps them to develop a new form of identity which we will refer to as rural student teacher identity, which may be different from their urban or township background. Teacher identity as

defined by Alsup (2006) refers to a discourse of how a teacher communicates meaning through creatively thinking and reflecting on who they are and the teaching practice at large. Alsup (2006) claimed that teachers need to get involved in identity work within the practice. This is significant for student teachers because it helps them to connect with the context in which they conduct their teaching practice. This claim is supported by Palmer (1998) when he links teacher identity to the ability of teachers to make a connection between their personality and the teaching practice. The views of teacher identity by Alsup (2006) and Palmer (1998) are at the heart of Wenger's (1999) view of identity in terms of developing identity through a community of practice. Wenger (1999) also maintains that there is a profound connection between identity and practice and this connection will be discussed in details later.

Rural teacher identity is an instrumental aspect of student teachers in the rural teaching practice. This is because it helps them to appreciate conditions in rural context in order to carry out their teaching practice. Worthy to note is that, in any given school context, teacher identity is paramount. Firstly, in classroom management and building teacher-learner relationships, secondly, in fitting in rural school set ups. When this happens it is likely to make student teachers to be successful in achieving the desired objectives of the teaching practice. This is supported by Palmer's (1998) assertion that, teachers who engage themselves in teacher identity development will survive in the profession longer as compared to those who do not. It is for this reason that student teachers need to work on their identity development in order to teach in rural schools context. Student teacher identity in rural context relates to their innate perception of rurality in general and the rate at which they can adapt to rural conditions. As we noted with Wenger (1999), student teachers need to create a connection between them and the rural schools to function properly in those schools. This implies that if such connection fails, it may cause an identity challenge for student teachers during process of conducting teaching experience in rural schools. According to Sharplin (2002), the rural school environment is likely to inflict further pressure on the student teachers ability to negotiate their identity as they come to terms with what customarily happens in rural schools. In addition, it is significant to note that student teachers have idealized negative preconceptions about rural schools especially those who do their schooling and teacher training in urban areas, this is likely to have a potential negative effect on their experience in rural areas (Sharplin, 2002).

According to Sharplin (2002) and Lock (2008), the underlying factor which hinders student teachers' connection with the conditions in rural schools is little attention that is paid by teacher training institutions in pre-service teacher development with the view of teaching in rural schools context. Sharplin (2002) argues that, teacher preparation programs must explore isolated cases of rural education within the curriculum; provide exposure to students about rural communities when they are preparing experiential teachers to operate in remote schools. Sharplin (2002) further maintains that, student teachers need to be provided with an opportunity to establish connections between themselves on one hand and the teachers, learners and the community members in rural schools context on the other hand. This will enhance student teachers' identity negotiations and possibly take away their fear of social dislocation, which may in turn assist them to adapt to conditions in rural schools. As noted earlier, negotiating teacher identity for student teachers in rural schools is challenged by a number of factors which can be generalized into the following categories, internal factors that are patent with the school environment, the staff and students and external factors that are related to the society where the schools are located (Emerging Voices, 2005).

Recent paradigm on rural education by Lock (2008), Sharplin (2002), Emerging Voices (2005) Masinire, Maringe and Nkambule (2014) and Masinire (2015) outlines the significance of teacher training institutions to train student teachers with the view of rural teaching. They demonstrate the effectiveness of such teacher training programs especially for student teachers that plan to practice in rural schools. It is paramount to note that, curriculum for teacher training institutions tends to emphasize administrative and content conveniences related to the teaching practice, with vested interests in solving practical educational problems at institutional level (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman, 1995). This is done at the expense of practical issues in rural schools such as identity challenges of student teachers. In view of this, it is also important to understand that education in rural areas presents complex challenges that go beyond the teacher training done at institutional level such as teachers' attitude towards work and the discipline of learners in rural schools. This necessitates academic research on such challenges as mechanisms that could help to solve practical educational problems faced by student teachers

intending to practice in rural schools. Considering this, the current study hopes to explore how student teachers negotiate their teacher identity in rural school contexts.

The extent of the challenges faced by student teachers in rural schools is further aggravated by the 'blanket school curriculum' for both urban and rural schools. Implying that, irrespective of whether the teachers are going to teach in urban or rural areas, they acquire the same level of training which in most cases favours the urban bound students at the expense of rural bound students. As noted earlier, recent studies on rural education have shown that curriculum designers need to put in context the educational challenges of rural schools in the process of designing and implementing curriculum paradigms (Emerging Voices, 2005). It is worthy to also note that teacher training in educational institutions is based on curriculum implementation policies and availability of resources in urban schools. This kind of teacher training based on the urban context, may create an impression to student teachers that situations are similar even in the rural context. This preconception possessed by student teachers on rural schools is bound to create anxiety and stress to student teachers as they find situations different when they start practicing in rural schools. This is why Balfour Michell and Moletsane (2008) categorically illustrate the need to generate data on focus groups and conduct individual interviews with student teachers on the view of working in rural schools. Balfour *et al* also calls for projects that support rural teacher education which according to Balfour *et al* (2008), White and Reid (2008) and Sharplin (2002) is a way of developing framework that can be used to obtain teachers with rural school identity.

1.5 Rationale for the study

Rural schools and urban schools are located in different contexts which may make student teachers to be challenged when they move from urban context to conduct teaching experience in rural schools. In most instances, training institutions follow established curriculum in the process of training student teachers which do not always recognize the differences between rural and urban context. For instance, teacher training institutions may need to make explicit the challenges of teaching in both rural and urban context. This implies that, with implicit knowledge about teaching practice contexts, student teachers who are required to conduct teaching practice in rural schools as a requirement for their degrees may face challenges in connecting to the rural context and hence it may influence their identity development.

Consequently, student teachers have always asked to be placed in urban schools for convenience purposes (Islam, 2011). The urban bias of student teachers seeking placement in urban schools at the expense of rural schools is majorly because of their close proximity to social, infrastructural and economic prosperity among other factors which may be coherent to their identity, as most of them may have been born and grew up in urban context. According to Mukeredzi and Mandrona (2013) it is this bias that partly contributed to the Rural Teacher Education Project (RTEP) at the University of KwaZulu Natal. Islam (2011) maintains that RTEP is a pilot rural school-university partnership project for teacher preparation, which emerged out of the identified need to address challenges in rural education. This project was undertaken by the University of KwaZulu Natal (UKZN) Faculty of Education in collaboration with rural schools in Vulindlela sub county of KwaZulu Natal province. The argument was that the RTEP will prepare student teachers to work in the rural contexts because it may help to eliminate pre-conceptions that student teachers may have about rurality.

With explicit knowledge about teaching in rural schools through the rural schools-university partnership, research studies on rural education such as Mukeredzi and Mandrona (2013) and Masinire, Maringe and Nkambule (2014) argued that the partnership will enhance student teachers' knowledge about rurality because rural schools issues will be exposed to student teachers, which may help them to develop their individual identity, a factor that can positively influence their performance during teaching practice. In addition, knowledge about rurality through rural schools-university partnership might influence student teachers to work on their negative perceptions about rurality, which are common among student teachers conducting their teaching experience in rural schools for the very first time. In general perspective, knowledge about rurality may positively influence student teachers to take up job opportunities in rural schools after their teaching qualifications and help to address the general challenge of attracting qualified teachers in rural schools.

1.6 The purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to investigate student teacher identity experiences in the rural schools context and how the rural schools context may influence them to negotiate their individual identity. For student teachers to be successful in their practice, they are expected to connect to

the conditions that are prevalent in the rural areas (Emerging Voices report, 2005). This study therefore intends to examine possible factors that hinder and/or enhance student teachers' connection to rural schools context.

1.7 Objectives of the study

- To explore student teachers' identity in rural schools given their urban schooling background
- To examine how student teachers negotiate their identities and connect with rural schools context.
- To establish the importance of creating a partnership between teacher training institution and rural schools.

1.8 Research questions

The purpose and the objectives of the study resulted to the identification of research questions the study intends to engage with.

1.7.1 Main research questions:

What are the identity experiences faced by Wits student teachers in Acornhoek rural schools Mpumalanga province?

1.7.2 Critical Questions

i) What perceptions do the student teachers have on rural schools context?

ii) What are the experiences that student teachers face while on teaching practice in rural schools?

iii) How do student teachers interact with the teachers and learners in rural schools

iv) Would student teachers experience identity shifts during teaching experience in rural schools?

1.9 Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented the problem statement that led to my research study, where student teachers need to be involved in identity negotiation in order to successfully conduct teaching practice in the rural schools context. I have also stated the aim, purpose and objectives of the study which resulted to the research questions that guided the study. In other words, this

chapter has highlighted how I came up with the idea of conducting the study on how rural schools may influence the identity of student teachers. In the next chapter I present the theoretical framework that informed the study and the literature that was reviewed in relation to identity challenges of student teachers in rural schools.

Chapter Two

Conceptual Frameworks and Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss Gee's (2005) and Wenger's (1999) conceptions of identity as the conceptual framework that informed the study, and also engage with the literature on rural education particularly student teachers experiences in rural schools contexts and how it impacts on their identity.

2.2. Conceptual Framework - Conversation with Gee and Wenger

The notion of identity for student teachers conducting teaching practice in rural schools in this study is informed by Gee (2005), who discusses the idea of social language in order to show that spoken language alone is not sufficient for one to participate in a given discourse. Social languages are "what we learn" and "what we speak" (Gee, 2005, p.38) in a given social setting. For every setting that an individual finds himself in, there is a different social language that one has to use in order to participate in that particular setting, and be welcome by that particular society. This means that, for student teachers to be welcomed in the rural schools they have to participate and adapt to the rural schools context. Gee (2005) argues that, there is a formal and informal setting where learning takes place. Whereas in the formal setting there is strict adherence to the requirements of the context, under the informal setting there is a degree of flexibility in the context. Therefore, if a person is in either formal or informal setting, he/she is expected to use a different social language (Gee, 2005). For example, when student teachers are communicating with learners in rural schools, they might be expected to use a different social language that is not the same as the one used at home or in their schooling background which could influence their identity development.

Gee's (2000-2001) discussion of identity further informs this study as he posits that identity is viewed when one is seen as a certain type of a person. This means that identity is a person's individuality, uniqueness or personal traits which may distinguish an individual from others.

This identity analytic lens for research in education by Gee (2000-2001) provides a framework for this study. He further defined identity in relation to what kind of a person one is by considering four ways of viewing identity, which are, the nature or N-identity, the institutional identity or the I-identity, Discourse identity or D- identity and affinity identity or A- identity. The nature or N-identity implies that, who we are depends on natural perspectives over which we have no control. For this study, it implies that the student teachers were born in particular regions or home and consequently attended schools in that background, which could have an implication on their identity development when they are placed to conduct teaching practice rural schools contexts. For example, because student teachers are born in certain background particularly urban, this may create certain pre-conceptions about rurality and rural schooling. Therefore, because the student teachers' urban background shapes their original identity, this could influence the type of identity they develop as they conduct their teaching practice in the rural context. The institutional identity or the I-identity, relates to the position the student teachers may have in the new society i.e. rural schools. For instance, being a student teacher is an institutional identity as teachers are governed by the principles of the university, the Department of Education and the school itself as they all represent institutions. The discourse or D-identity is about various issues such as what one has achieved in life in relation to how we relate with other people and also how we are perceived by other people depends on how we relate with them. Considering that student teachers attend university education, this could be perceived as an achievement in rural society by some teachers who never attended university education. This may result into different perceptions, behaviours and hence influencing interactions between student teachers, rural teachers and learners. The last view is affinity or A-identity, which relates to our affiliation and how we identify ourselves with a particular group of people (Gee, 2000-2001). Gee's four concepts of identity are instrumental in this research and will be used as analytical tools in examining student teachers' conception of identity and other aspects that play a role in constructing a student teacher identity in the rural schools context.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, this study is also informed by Wenger's (1999) argument that, teaching is a community of practice that shapes teachers' identities which will be used alongside Gee's concepts. A community of practice is defined as a group that coheres through sustained mutual engagement on an indigenous enterprise and creating common repertoire.

Teaching is therefore a community of practice because it involves social participation and learning where teachers share common interests and collaborate over an extended period to share ideas, values, beliefs, languages and ways of doing things (Wenger, 1999). In Wenger's view, teaching as a community of practice shapes teachers identity because through teacher's mutual engagements, teachers have a tendency to come up with certain interpretations, to engage in certain actions, to make certain choices and to value certain experiences, all by virtue of participating in teaching enterprises (Wenger, 1999). Student teachers therefore join such established teaching community of practice and those aspects become part and parcel of their life as they embark on their journey of teaching practice in rural schools which may also shape their identity. According to Wenger, there are four different ways that identity develops and he refers to them as four notions of identity. First is the negotiated experience, which means we define who we are by the way we experience ourselves through participation as well as by the ways we and others reify ourselves, this is related to Gee's (2000-2001) nature or N- Identity. According to Wenger (1999), when we reify ourselves, this is when we negotiate meaning and become part of what we do, thus our identity is formed by what we do on the daily basis. Consequently, the way that we perform in our community of practice gives us a sense of belonging, which could make students teachers to behave in a particular way because of the context they are in. For example, when student teachers go to rural schools for the first time, it may be a difficult experience because the rural school contexts differ from the urban context in terms of management, teachers, learners, environment and resources. But as they interact with rural school learners, teachers and the environment, they make meaning of the rural schools context through identity negotiation and hence influencing their individual identity. The work of identity negotiation and meaning making may presumably make student teachers feel part of the new rural school community, a factor which may be paramount in their school experience.

The second notion of identity according to Wenger (1999) is community membership. He argues that a community is defined through three dimensions such as 'Mutual engagement', 'a joint enterprise' and 'a shared repertoire'. Identity in this case is an experience and a display of competence that requires neither an explicit self-image nor self-identification with an ostensible community (Wenger, 1999, p.152). The assumption is that, as student teachers begin conducting their teaching experience in rural schools context, they come to know what to do and how to do

it in rural school context. They therefore come to terms with the requirements to be members of the rural schools community, as rural school life becomes part of their life. The dimension of mutuality of engagement is based on how one works and interacts with others within the community of practice (Wenger, 1999). The implication of this dimension is that although student teachers become part of the community of practice, their individuality plays a role within the rural school community. For instance, in terms of accountability to the enterprise, it could mean that, although student teachers are part of the rural school community, it does not necessarily mean that they must view things in the same way like other members of the community. In Wenger's opinion, student teachers can develop their own perspective about how they view things in a rural school context as they conduct their school experience in rural schools. This is because student teachers are participants in the rural school community and it is paramount for them to know the history of that rural community as they strive to identify what they can accommodate from the rural school life and what they cannot accommodate. Wenger (1999) refers to this as 'negotiability of a repertoire.

Worthy to note is that, as student teachers go through succession forms of participation in rural school life, their teacher identity is influenced as they face the challenge of making a connection between their inner selves, their training and the rural school community of practice. This argument is premised on the fact that, identity work is an on-going process and does not change overnight. Wenger (1999) maintains that developing identity is a trajectory in people's lives and it connects to their past, present and their future, which may happen through participation in a community of practice. It therefore follows that, people go through a journey of discovery to build their own identity. It is because of this that Wenger (1999) defined five different trajectories, which include peripheral, inbound, insider, boundary and the outbound trajectories. While the peripheral trajectory does not lead to one being a full member of a given community of practice but allows one to learn about the history of the group, the inbound trajectory is when people join a given community of practice with the intentions of becoming full members. Inbound trajectory therefore implies full integration into rural life. Although student teachers intentions might not be to become full members in the rural schools communities, but it addresses their idea of opting to conduct their school practice in rural schools. However, it is worth to note that the student teachers stayed in the rural schools for only four weeks, this short

period may not have given them enough time to fully integrate in the rural schools community and hence could not have influenced them to fully learn the histories and practices of the rural school community. Learning about the history and practices of a context also depends on the individual's intentions and eagerness to learn, thus the study acknowledges that learning might depend on the student teachers intentions. Third, is the insider trajectory and according to Wenger (1999), identity does not end with joining the membership. This implies that student teachers need to continue learning about rural schools after joining them to do their teaching practice at the same time make sense of the rural education historically. This is in conformity with Wengers' (1999) notion of identity as an ongoing practice and also because identity negotiations happen all the time which in turn may influence student teachers identity.

The fourth trajectory by Wenger is boundary trajectory and it entails one being engaged with many groups at the same time. However, it is important to note that this is a challenge because different groups have different practices. For instance, with acknowledgement of the possibility to be a member of urban and rural context, it might also be difficult for a student teacher to be a member of rural context because of the long staying period in an urban context as compared to a rural context. Without overlooking the differences that exist in the practices of the two contexts, the rural context might require a student to be familiar and engage with different community and school practices, something that might take time as compared to urban familiar context. It is worth noting that students can engage with teachers as one group within the school context and engage with them out of school context as another group considering the different identities in different contexts. Also to note is that, teachers may not be given a chance to conduct their teaching experience in both rural and urban context at the same time due to time constraints. Finally Wenger explains the outbound trajectory that involves conditions of people leaving the community of practice. This implies that after periods of engagement with the practice, some members leave the practice. It is therefore interesting to establish whether or not their subsequent engagement with the community of practice led to identity change. For example, when student teachers finish their school practices in rural schools they are expected to leave the rural areas, hence the need to check on whether their teaching practices in rural schools had an influence on their individual identities. Nevertheless, the few aspects that student teachers may have possibly

learned from the rural school communities in the short period of time maybe a contribution towards their individual identity.

In his characterisation of identity development, Wenger (1999) also looks at the notion of identity as 'nexus of multi-membership'. He argues for the significance of developing identity and defining how identity is viewed. With respect to this argument, it is important to note that student teachers join the rural teaching practice with their 'inborn identities', 'family identities' that they come with to rural schools, which is also argued by Gee (2000-2001) with her definition of N- identity. Such background and student teachers pre-conception about rurality are likely to create a challenge for them in the process of connecting between their individual life identities and the institutional identities of rural schools. In Wenger's view reconciling these aspects of competence demands more than just learning the rules of the community of practice. It requires the construction of an identity that can include these different meanings and forms of participation in the nexus (Wenger, 1999). This stand point is linked to Gee's (2000-2001) claim that identity should be viewed when one is seen as a certain type of person. In Wenger's (1999) view therefore, there has to be reconciliation between the different contexts. The student teacher need to reconcile his home and schooling background (urban) with the context in rural areas. It is this reconciliation which shows that there is an effort by the student teachers to connect with rural schools context in order to make things to work well and hence influencing their individual identity.

The identity views of Gee (2005) and Wenger (1999) are useful in understanding identity experiences of student teachers while on teaching practice in rural schools. I used their approach on identity as constructs in the process of analysing data on student teachers' experiences in Acornhoek schools, Bushbuckridge, Mpumalanga province. This is discussed in depth in the following section.

2.3. Literature review

2.3.1 Introduction

In this section I review research that has been conducted on rural education particularly teaching practice in rural schools context. The main focus is on how student teachers negotiate their individual identity and how their perceptions on rural education influence their identity while in the teaching field.

2.3.2. Teaching practice in the region of Africa and its purpose

According to Marias and Meier (2004) in Komba and Kira (2013) teaching practice refers to a range of experiences to which student teachers are exposed to when they work in class-rooms and schools during their teacher training courses. Teaching practice is part and parcel of the teacher training course because it helps aspiring teachers to adapt their teaching skills to the conditions of specific contexts. In Komba and Kira's (2013) view, the overall purpose of teaching practice is to expose student teachers to the actual teaching and learning environment. This implies that, in the process of conducting their teaching practice, student teachers interact with learners, experienced teachers and parents from different social backgrounds which help them to conduct self-reflection, work with variety of approaches and skills so as to adapt to any teaching context they find themselves in.

In the case of rural schools, the situation may even be complex and possibly require student teachers to adapt to the new context through identity negotiation in order to facilitate their connection to the rural schools context. It is on this basis that teacher training institutions should prepare student teachers to adapt to new situations they may encounter in the rural schools context. This may be done through special training for student teachers who intend to work in rural areas. The rationale behind this is to close the gap that may exist between teacher training institutions and situations in the rural schools context. The argument is that if knowledge about rural schools context is made explicit to the student teachers, it can demonstrate required teaching skills and hence make student teachers adapt and become effective in the rural classrooms.

Komba and Kira (2013) posit that student teachers go through a whole range of experiences during the process of school practice. This implies that the identity of student teachers may be influenced as they encounter new environments, especially in the rural schools context. For instance, in circumstances where student teachers' perceptions do not reflect on rural conditions, they may encounter serious challenges when they are posted in rural schools to carry out their teaching experience there. In this case, the practical component of their programme will be very different from the theoretical studies done in a teaching institution. It is on this basis of lack of connectivity between what is taught in training institutions and rural schools context that Islam (2011) and Balfour *et al* (2008) call for a partnership between rural schools and teacher training institutions, in order to facilitate student teachers intending to operate in rural areas. For Komba and Kira (2013) the teaching practice ought to include class observations, preparation of lesson plans, actual classroom teaching, and discussions with a supervisor and documentation of the teaching experience. In addition, it is envisaged that the student teachers should conduct mini researches on the teaching and the surrounding environment (Komba and Kira, 2013). This implies that in the process of adapting to such new requirements in their life, there is a likelihood that student teachers will face identity issues which may impact positively or negatively on the teaching practice. If the impact is positive, they will be able to adapt to the new rural schools context which may make their teaching practicum effective. But if negative, student teachers may fail to negotiate the change to rural school life and hence being ineffective in their teaching practicum.

According to Komba and Kira's (2013) research on teaching practice in Tanzania, student teachers are obliged to attend teaching practice blocks as part of teacher training for a minimum of 4 weeks and maximum of 8 weeks depending on the nature of the teaching program. This is in line with exposing student teachers to rural school communities, schools and classroom conditions. In Komba and Kira's (2013) view, the purpose of teaching practice is to expose student teachers to the real educational environment in schools and apply theories and skills learnt during different education courses to the actual realities of school life. The underlying factor is that teaching practice is meant to inculcate a sense of awareness of what it means to teach in a broad sense among student teachers, especially in the rural schools context. This is in consideration that some of the student teachers have never taught in the classroom environment,

let alone in the rural schools context (Komba and Kira, 2013). Thus in Tanzania, the evaluation of the teaching practice is measured in terms of preparation of lesson plans, the ability to teach the subject matter including appropriateness of teaching methods, effective use of teaching and learning resources, and the promotion of full preparation for all student teachers including their confidence amongst other criterion. The ability of the student teachers to satisfy the above evaluation criteria rests largely on their understanding of the teaching and learning context. It becomes paramount to investigate the student teachers' ability to adapt to the new context they find themselves in, especially rural communities and schools, as they may be relatively new to some student teachers. It is this dimension which makes the teaching practice particularly important as it provides an opportunity to investigate the extent to which beginner teachers become socialized into the general aspects of the profession and the environment where they operate. Tabot and Mottanya (2012) maintain that teachers' training, specifically through teaching practice forms the backbone of any successful educational system. They join Komba and Kira (2013) in arguing that the purpose of teaching practice is to equip student teachers with field experience to enable them to put theory into practice and also familiarize themselves with the conditions under which they will work as trained professionals.

Tabot and Mottanya (2012) further posit that in all cases of teaching practice, schools differ in terms of pupil-teacher relationship. For instance, they differ in school activities, academic orientation, learners' discipline, learning facilities / resources and school administration. It is on this basis that we need to appreciate the differences in context between schools especially between rural and urban schools. As noted earlier, teacher education has not paid enough attention to the relationship between different schools context in their preparation of student teachers for diverse classroom contexts. The theme in the current research is to investigate identity issues of student teachers and how they operate in rural schools context, an environment which is likely to be new to some student teachers. They are expected to adjust their social life and align it with the existing lifestyles of teachers they find in rural schools so as to be in position to successfully conduct their teaching practice in rural schools. Musvosvi (1998) states that, in a school there is a concept of socialization whereby new teachers are initiated into the school culture by the old teachers. For example, student teachers are initiated into the daily routines of the schools where they are practicing so that they comply with the schools timetable.

This has implications on the identity of the student teachers because they will be required to adapt to the daily routine of the rural schools. This socialisation may assume different trajectories as suggested by Wenger (1999). Musvosvi (1998) further maintains that the student teachers may rethink what they have learned in the previous courses as a result of the new situation they find themselves in, and consequently they may start adapting to the new environment and hence identity change.

2.3.3. Teaching practice in South Africa

Mukeredzi and Mandrona (2013) define teaching practice (TP) as a period when student teachers go into the field to gain practical and professional experience, under the supervision of experienced professional teachers. Teaching practice is an instrumental tradition in the education practice and is considered fundamental to the development of teachers (Grisham, Ferguson and Brink, 2004). Although teaching practice has various tensions regarding the location where it's going to take place (Bloomfield, 2010), in developing countries such as South Africa, teaching practice issues and challenges can be severe, particularly in rural schools where lack of support and guidance may influence student teachers identity (Mukeredzi and Mandrona, 2013). In addition, Mukeredzi and Mandrona (2013) maintain that, although there is emphasis on the quality of teaching practice as a universal concern among stakeholders in teacher education, as mentioned earlier, the current South African teacher education framework does not significantly prepare student teachers for teaching practice in rural schools. This may lead to individual and professional identity challenges for student teachers who eventually conduct their teaching practice in rural schools.

Studies on rurality (Balfour, Mitchell and Moletsane, 2008; Moletsane, 2012, Maringe, Masinire and Nkambule, 2015) and the experiences of student teachers especially in rural schools context by (Islam, 2011; Mukeredzi and Mandrona, 2013; Masinire 2015) among others provide an understanding of how students teachers may negotiate their identities while on teaching practice in rural schools. Such studies might help with contextualizing student teachers' perceptions of rural schools and provide them with insights of what it means to teach in rural schools context. In addition, they can also assist with illuminating some of the challenges that are patent with teaching practice in rural schools, a factor that can mitigate against the positive outcomes of teaching practice (Mukeredzi and Mandrona, 2013). Research insights particularly on student

teacher experiences in rural schools context can be used by teacher training institutions to review their approaches to teaching practice which can help student teachers to adapt their teaching to the rural schools. This same view is echoed by Islam (2011), with his argument that teacher development is pivotal to the transformation of the education system in South Africa.

The challenges affecting rural schools, for instance lack of qualified teachers and reduced access to resources as mentioned by Moletsane (2012), have been partially contributed by the teacher education programs. This is because teacher training institutions have not addressed the challenges of rural schools context in their curriculum rollout (Buthelezi, 2004). This therefore points to the fact that teacher development with the view of rural context is pivotal to the transformation of the education system in South Africa (Islam, 2011). It is on this basis that Samuel (1998) in Mukeredzi and Mandrona (2013) asserts that, pre-service teacher education is necessary and should focus on wider collaboration between the teacher training institution and learning sites. Samuel's (1998) argument is that there is a need for collaboration between teacher educational institutions with rural schools systems. Wits School of Education undertakes a program that encourages student teachers to conduct their teaching experiences in rural schools of Mpumalanga province. In the process, identity challenges associated with rural teaching experience will be identified and hence generate knowledge that can be used to deal with such identity challenges faced by student teachers. This may ultimately encourage student teachers to remain and operate in rural schools context.

In relation to the above, Mukeredzi and Mandrona (2013) maintain that, although government policy acknowledges the priority of rural education, there continues to be issues of implementation and connections between rural realities and government response. Therefore, research on rural education, for example by Balfour Mitchell and Moletsane (2008), Islam (2011) among others is significant to identify the gaps between rural realities and policy relating to rural education. The central argument among researchers on rural education which can be used as a model to narrow the gap between rural education and educational policies is that, there should be development of university-rural schools partnership, which can be used as framework of making rural teaching attractive and compelling for new teachers. Such partnerships should be used in preparing student teachers particularly for rural schools (Mukeredzi and Mandrona,

2013). Islam (2011) points out that, this partnership will support teachers, learners and communities and above all it will help to develop a path for young people who choose teaching in rural schools as a career. The general agreement of researchers is that, this context based rural schools-university partnership, driven and controlled by participants is a possible solution to addressing issues of teacher shortage in rural schools. This is because such an approach can make teacher education more responsive to the needs of rural education (Islam, 2011). Also, because some student teachers have urban schooling background, this partnership may help them to shape realistic perceptions and attitudes which may positively influence their connection to rural schools context. This implies rural and urban schools could have contextual differences which are examined in the following discussion.

2.3.4. Differences between rural and urban schools context

Mukeredzi (2013) states that, devising a clear and objective definition of 'rural' presents a conceptual problem. She supports this argument with views of Coladarci (2007) who points out that there is no singular or multi-faceted definition of 'rural' that will suffice to satisfy the research programmatic and policy communities that employ the concept. Further, Mukeredzi (2013) suggests that the conceptual problem results from the ambiguity of the term and the arbitrary nature of both rural and urban contexts. She further claims that the definition of rurality in education circles is further complicated as scholars and researchers often overlook contextual differences between rural and urban contexts because school curriculum and practices look remarkably similar (Howley, 1997). However, what is remarkably common in most South African rural schools is that they lack instructional resources, basic services and facilities to implement the curriculum design unlike in the urban schools (Mukeredzi, 2013). In addition, in cases where rural schools have materials available, it appears like some educators do not have the necessary skills to use them. Mukeredzi (2013) further maintains that rural schools also experience increased class sizes, multi-grade teaching and pressures of performance in terms of student's achievements. Other challenges identified by Hugo, Jack, Wedekind and Wilson *(*2010) are that rural secondary schools are 40km to 55km apart, they lack toilet facilities on site or each toilet is allocated to more than 50 learners. To add on this, Mukeredzi (2013) state that rural communities and schools relies on borehole or rain water harvesting and they have limited or no electricity supply (Mukeredzi, 2013), making it challenging to leave in such context.

Other notable challenges identified by Mukeredzi (2013) are that rural areas have poor physical infrastructure, public transport is limited and expensive, which forces students to walk long distances to the nearest school. Knowledge of such conditions in rural areas by student teachers will help to prepare them to be ready to adopt or negotiate their identities as they are placed to conduct their teaching experience in rural schools.

It is paramount to investigate whether or not practical experiences provided to student teachers between rural and urban schools context provide them with similar opportunities and challenges in terms of them acquiring the necessary skills required from a professional teacher. In their study, Tabot and Mottanya (2012, p. 248) established that different school contexts influence student teachers to perform differently. Teacher education institutions therefore need to adopt a non-discriminatory approach towards rural schools when placing student teachers for their teaching experience. For instance Mukeredzi and Mandrona (2013, p. 142) assert that the University of KwaZulu-Natal teacher education programs have special interest in both resourced and under resourced schools and expect student teachers to experience practicum in both contexts. They further maintain that, it is the urban bias which contributed to the birth of the Rural Teacher Educational Project (RTEP). It is this kind of strategies which can enable student teachers to familiarize themselves with the conditions in the rural schools.

Worthy to note is that, one of the goals of the teaching and learning process is to enable epistemological access. In order to achieve this, a teacher plays a significant role for instance through implementation of educational policies and contribution to the upgrading of the quality of educational services (Al Busaidi and Bashir, 1997). This implies that it is the responsibility of the teacher to organize the learning experience and manage the learning environment for the benefit of the learners who must experience the curriculum (Tabot and Mottanya, 2012). It therefore follows that, for effectiveness and to fulfil the above responsibility, a teacher needs to be accustomed to the context where he/she operates. The fact that most teacher training institutions are based in the urban areas, student teachers intending to conduct their teaching experience in rural schools need to be oriented on what happens in the rural context during their teaching courses. This will go a long way in reducing the anxiety of student teachers as they start operating in rural schools and hence, influencing their identity.

In a report of the Kenyan Education Commission cited by Makau (1986) it is indicated that the most important contribution that the government can make to the rural schools of Kenya is the provision of a well-educated, keen, competent, respected and contented teaching force. However in South Africa and in many parts of Africa, this group of teachers is influenced by life in urban context. This is because most urban schools are well resourced compared to their rural counterparts. In South Africa the government needs to strengthen its focus on rural education, increase support for projects involved in rural education, join and promote initiatives by teaching institutions for example by University of KwaZulu-Natal and Wits university of taking student teachers to rural schools to conduct their teaching practice. It is such initiatives that can make student teachers appreciate the idea that they can work in rural schools because during the teaching practice period, they can connect to the rural context through identity negotiations. This might make them keen and competent to offer their educational services in rural schools.

The above argument is in agreement with Awuor (1982) who posits that in order to maintain quality and relevance in education, the teacher entrusted with the curriculum content must be suitably and adequately trained. Commonly, according to Lock (2008), White and Reid (2008) among others, the teachers working in rural schools lack the teacher training background, mostly they are appointed in desperate circumstances. However, one of the key elements in raising the quality of education according to Awuor (1982) is the teacher himself, in terms of him being properly trained in order to work in any school system (Tabot and Mottanya, 2012). Important to note is that, the performance and attainment of the learners in any school context is informed by the quality of the teacher and their professional ability to translate educational objectives, curriculum content and instructional materials.

Related to the above, in Kenya, specific national goals of teacher education are laid down in various government documents as outlined by the ministry of education. Such national goals include developing the teachers' ability to communicate effectively, developing professional attitudes and values, equipping teachers with knowledge and ability to identify and developing educational needs of the learners and enabling the teachers to adapt to the environment and society (Tabot and Mottanya, 2012). The later national goal of teachers' education significantly

informs this research as it ponders to explore identity issues as student teachers experience various issues in rural schools and communities while on teaching practice. Such identity issues and negative perceptions can be addressed by teacher education courses at teacher training institutions if they are designed with a view of rural context.

Along the same line of discussion, Tabot and Mottanya (2012) make reference to Patel (1996) in support of their view of training teachers with rural school identity. Patel specifically outlines some of the competencies expected of teachers, most importantly is contextual competencies; where the teachers are expected to be fully familiar with their working environment. This is because if a student teacher appreciates the challenges of rural schools and communities and is ready to work with them, then he/she is likely to take up teaching opportunities in rural schools after their training programs. The contextual competencies if instilled successfully, they may make student teachers adapt quickly to the pedagogical, child development, development of instruction materials and evaluation competencies which are common in rural schools.

From the above discussion, it can be noted that, the development of contextual competencies among student teachers might help them to negotiate their individual and professional identity in relation to rural schools context. This is likely to influence their effectiveness in the process of conducting teaching practice in rural schools contexts. This is supported by Awuor (1982) in Tabot and Mottanya (2012) who claims that although poor performance is generally attributed to the poor teaching practice exercise itself, 20% is a result of student teachers' failure to co-operate in their respective practice schools. This point to the fact that good grades for student teachers may result from improved experience about rural schools. For instance, the teaching practice results of 4^{th} year students may be better than that of their 2^{nd}year counterparts, because the 4^{th} year students are building on their previous experience in the rural schools context. Related to this, different schools have different routines which must be adhered to by the student teachers. Rural schools in particular have routine contexts that are different from those of their urban counterparts, where most of the student teachers attained their education. This is likely to pose identity challenges to the student teachers as they have to adapt to such cultural contexts they encounter in the rural schools. Tabot and Mottanya (2012) acknowledge that school routines should be strictly adhered to in the teaching practice schools. It is this contextual competencies

which will give a chance to student teachers to mingle with the rural schools learners and teachers which may support them in terms of their identity negotiation. However, these routines may cause specific challenges to student teachers as shown in the following discussion.

2.3.5 Specific challenges that affect student teachers' identity in rural schools

In any given school context, schools have activities and these activities need to be carried out by the student teachers at the expense of their own interests. For instance activities like sports, assembly may be compulsory in some schools and not compulsory in other schools. Some student teachers may be coming from the background where schools do not involve teachers in co-curricular activities which may be different from the rural context where sports activities may be compulsory. Also in urban schools there are staff who are specialists in particular sports activities which implies that the rest of the teachers may not be required to participate unless they are interested. This may however be different in rural schools, sports activities may be deemed compulsory to all teachers in rural schools because of the inadequate resources to employ sports specialists in rural schools. Such routines and compulsory activities may pose a challenge to student teachers because it may be inconsistent with their identity backgrounds.

The attitudes of learners towards school also differ from context to context. In particular, learners' response to time depends on the nature of the schools. In rural schools learners may not strictly adhere to the time schedule because of lack of urgency from the school management team and the teachers. Although this is likely to be similar to urban and township schools, in the rural schools it worsened by the proximity of schools to the residences of learners. Tabot and Mottanya (2012) in their findings established that student teachers cited poor response to bells and lateness when coming to school by learners especially in day schools as one of the challenges they experienced in their practice. These sentiments are also echoed by Taylor (2008) in his research about township schools and learners. Against this backdrop, Taylor (2008) argues that it is crucial that principals as curriculum managers secure monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure effective delivery of the curriculum. This framework if established in rural schools by principals would therefore make student teachers to be effective in their teaching practice.

In addition to the above, in their earlier educational background, some of WSoE student teachers may have gone to schools where the school management had proper organisational structures

and learners adhered to school policies. For instance, learners in these schools could have responded quickly to school time schedules. This may imply that conducting schools practice in schools where there is poor response to times may be a challenge for the student teachers. The implication of this is that, learners coming to classes late may impact on student teachers effectiveness during the teaching practice.

Furthermore, according to the findings of Tabot and Mottanya (2012), the issue of learner discipline in rural or urban schools is also central to the challenges faced by student teachers, which may also influence their individual identity. In some schools whether urban or rural the enforcement of discipline is rarely or poorly done (Taylor, 2008). This suggests that student teachers need to be prepared to address such issues of indiscipline for the success of their teaching practice. This is because if learners are ill-disciplined, they may not participate actively in class and it may impact negatively for student teachers in terms of implementing their instruction methods which is one of the criteria for measuring their performance. Furthermore, the issue of discipline is significant for student teachers because it informs on whether or not the learner will be able to understand the lesson content, which is also one of the yardsticks upon which the performance of a student teacher is measured.

Tabot and Mottanya (2012) further posit that one of the major challenges to student teachers during the course of the teaching practice is the unavailability of textbooks. In some rural schools, the fact that learning resources are generally inadequate may cause identity problems for student teachers. In their findings Tabot and Mottanya (2012) established that when student teachers were asked to list learning materials and resources for the specific learning areas and indicate their adequacy, several were listed. Among other things listed, materials were not available for science laboratory, for both science subjects and home science. This implies that if such teaching and learning materials are not available for student teachers to use, the effectiveness of their teaching practice might be significantly affected. The conclusion made by Tabot and Mottanya (2012) is that teaching institutions need to put in context the nature of facilities in the different schools where student teachers are posted to conduct teaching practice.

The major theme in this study is that irrespective of such challenges, student teachers are expected to adapt to such a rural context so as to gain valuable outcomes in their teaching experience. However, adapting to the complexities of rural schools context may require student teachers to negotiate their identities. For instance Mukeredzi (2013) notes that most South African rural schools lack in terms of material and infrastructural resources, basic services and facilities. This could possibly be in contrast to the backgrounds of some student teachers who may have attained education in urban context. Besides, it is worth noting that there is increased global demand for education, with the notion of 'Education For All' which makes schools in rural areas experience increased class sizes and multi-grade teaching. The implication of this is that, it creates awareness to the student teachers about new realities or limitations in rural schools. Consequently, this may cause student teachers to creatively think and devise strategies with effective ways to mediate in rural schools context. In support of this, Mukeredzi (2013) argues that, it is within this make-do frame of mind and identity negotiation that provides an inherent theoretical possibility that makes teachers do with limited resources and address constraints which leads to professional learning and hence enhancing student teachers' teaching practice in rural context.

In Mukeredzi's (2009) view, Zimbabwean rural schools are not any different, which means that student teachers practicing in rural schools experience similar challenges. Mukeredzi (2009) maintains that economic levels around rural schools are low which undermines the rural schools' possibilities to obtain all the necessary resources. Also, some rural secondary schools are far apart without communication facilities such as telephone, cell phone network, broad band internet etc. which limits student teachers' youthful modern trend of social network. Rural schools also have limited electricity and piped water supply and transportation, and the latter is affected by poor roads which make it inaccessible. It is such issues which shape a student teacher's identity in the rural schools context. This therefore implies that working in rural schools context presents unique challenges and few student teachers may be willing to take on rural teaching experience, thus the few who are ready to do so need to deveop their identities, so that they connect to the realities of rural schools context.

Mukeredzi (2013) sums up by maintaining that geographical isolation, social economic conditions, cultural differences and the dominant discourse of deficiency that conceptualize teaching in rural schools as inferior and undesirable are the major factors that make teachers shun working in rural schools. This therefore calls for teaching institutions and governments to focus on rural education, for example by implementing programs that can increase student teachers interested in doing their teaching practice in rural schools. This will position the student teachers to adapt to rural schools and community context, which may eventually influence them to be retained in such schools. It is on this basis that McEwan (1999) in Mukeredzi (2013) reveals that a variety of incentives for rural teacher recruitment is a prominent feature in developing a country's education system. He further pointed out that governments should adopt a vast array of recruitment strategies, including wages premium, subsidized rural housing and special in-service training to attract qualified teachers to work in rural schools.

Rural education studies such as Emerging Voices Report (2005) have indicated that the political, cultural and social set up of rurality is different from the urban background where most of the student teachers come from. This therefore necessitates the development of a theoretical framework that can be used to help student teachers to develop their identity in relation to rural context. It is on this basis that Balfour (2012) maintains that, rural studies are not without theoretical precedent or development. The state and the educational institutions therefore need to champion the notion of research on rural education as a mechanism that can be used to identify identity issues in rural South African schools so as to attract student teachers with view of retaining them to work in rural schools. This can be shown in the discussion below.

2.3.6. Rural Schools teaching and strategies to improve teaching in rural schools

According to Cloke (2006), there remains a critical need to theorize the education project within the differentiated and dynamic understanding of rurality. Therefore, because of the need to focus on rural education, in 2007, Balfour, Moletsane and Mitchell launched a project entitled the Rural Teacher Education Project (RTEP) in the faculty of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. One of the objectives of the RTEP was to develop a cohort model for partnerships between higher education institutions and rural schools that would equip student teachers, their mentors and managers to act as agents for development and social change in

relation to issues affecting rural education (Balfour, 2012). RTEP also aimed at yielding a careful orientation of teacher education within the faculty of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal so that rural schools were recognized as primary community learning sites for pre service teachers. Wits school of Education also initiated a project of taking student teachers to Acornhoek rural schools, Bushbuckridge, Mpumalanga province for teaching practice. This strategic approach can go a long way in improving teaching in rural schools.

As noted, this study is informed by Wenger's (1999) definition of identity as an ongoing practice. From this definition it can follow that educational institution need to focus on the formulation of strategies to develop and integrate rural education in teaching programs with the view of influencing student teachers perception and identity when they practice in rural schools this strategy of tailoring of rural education in educational institutions is echoed by Islam (2011). The central claim of researchers on rural education is that, the rural schools- university partnership initiative, where student teachers practice in rural schools is an innovative addition to the professional requirements of teacher education as a whole. The argument is that, rather than assuming student teachers generic assumption and background about rural education, knowledge about rural education should be made explicit to student teachers at training institutions which may significantly work on their identity negotiation as they prepare to work in rural schools.

It is paramount to point out that the RTEP was driven by the desire to assist student teachers in terms of understanding the dynamics of working as teachers in rural Vulindlela- KwaZulu-Natal (Balfour, 2012). To help new student teachers, the researchers were in anticipation that the core group of student teachers with previous teaching experience in rural schools would be familiar with issues, questions and challenges associated with rural education. This background would rub-off on the novice student teachers during the process of engagement. This assumption is supported by Balfour (2012) who claims that the RTEP was a success with every successive year owing to the fact that experienced student teachers expressed interest in further participation in the rural education initiative by adopting the role of both mentors to new student teachers and as more experienced researchers (Balfour, 2012).

International rural education researches by Malassis, (1966), Schafft and Jackson (2010) Lock, (2008) and Sharplin, (2002) posit that, rural education presents a number of challenges to student teachers who conduct their teaching experiences in rural schools contexts. Schafft and Jackson (2010) in particular argue that rural teaching challenges are as a result of rural areas not having the best schools in relation to unavailability of infrastructure and resources. This undermines the progress of teaching and learning in rural areas especially in consideration that 60% of the world inhabitants are peasants in rural areas, many are illiterates and for most of them given their background, their basic education does not and might not go beyond primary level (Malassis, 1966).

Strategic plans with regard to improvement in the quality of Education in to rural schools should always be attracting quality teachers to take up teaching opportunities in rural schools. This is however undermined by the anti-rural bias of teacher training institutions through their teacher training programs. It is on this basis that Schafft and Jackson (2010) and Mukeredzi and Mandrona (2013) maintains that rural education should always emerge as a topic in teacher training programs as a way of attracting student teachers to the rural schools context. This same view is echoed by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (2000) with their arguments that teacher training institutions need to equip student teachers with skills and knowledge to teach in rural and remote locations. The Common Wealth Commission on schooling in rural Australia (1988) according to Lock (2008) concluded that university preparation for trainee teachers was insufficient for teachers to teach effectively in rural schools. This may bring in identity challenges if they are to teach in rural schools after their teaching degrees.

This literature therefore serves to underpin the argument that implicit teacher training at institutions, especially in view of rural education, makes student teachers idealize rural contexts and rural schools. This might make them develop negative perceptions about rural education, which could negatively influence their rural schools teaching experiences. It is on this basis that different studies such Lock (2008), Sharplin (2002), Mukeredzi and Mandrona (2013), Islam (2011) and Balfour, Moletsane and Michell (2008) have a central argument on the notion of tailoring teaching courses to meet the needs of rural communities. This is because it will

explicitly allow student teachers the opportunity of experiencing what it means to work in rural schools. This may facilitate the process of student teachers negotiating their identities in order to connect with the rural schools context.

In view of the above, Lock (2008) maintains that the student teacher rural experience program (RTEP), was an initiative by the Western Australia Department of Education and Training (DET). It was established to offer support to student teachers who wish to do their teaching practices in the rural districts of Australia, with the view of taking on teaching opportunities in rural schools. This initiate in addition to other local initiatives by the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal is a good reference to WSoE in terms of taking students to Acornhoek rural schools, Bushbuckridge in Mpumalanga province. This background therefore forms the basis for my research in terms of ascertaining identity experiences of student teachers while conducting their teaching practices in Mpumalanga rural schools.

Komba and Kira (2013) conducted a qualitative research to establish whether teaching practice strategy was effective in improving student teachers' teaching skills especially in the rural schools of Tanzania. They established that student teachers need to conduct mini researches while on rural teaching practice as this will enhance them to connect to the new context. In view of this research it is interesting to see the reaction of WSoE student teachers when they find themselves in the rural schools context. The assumption is that, with the strategy of rural schools – university partnership, their identity may be negotiated and henceforth facilitating their effectiveness while on teaching practice rural schools. The central focus of their research was in Iringa, Morogoro, Dares salaam, and Kilimanjaro religions of Tanzania. A sample of 191 student teachers were chosen to participate in the study and the researchers established that the time period set for the teaching practice was too short to have a long lasting impact on the student teachers and their teaching skills and therefore recommended for a longer session of teaching practice especially for final year students (Komba and Kira, 2013)

2.3.7. **Student teachers perceptions about rural schools**

Brown (2004) in Mukeredzi (2013) defines conception as more generally mental structures encompassing beliefs, meanings, concepts, propositions, and rules. In this research, conceptions represent different categories of ideas which student teachers may hold when describing rural

schools context. Such conceptions are generated prior to actual teaching practice, for example the conception of the teaching and learning environment in rural schools. Worthy to point out is that these may influence student teachers' practice, especially when they find different and challenging realities in rural schools.

This therefore calls for student teachers to re-conceptualize their ideas about rural schools to determine their pedagogic approaches, choice of teaching and learning materials, content, and learning activities (Mukeredzi, 2013). Brown (2004) further posits that the most resilient student teachers' conceptions of teaching emanates from memories of their own schooling and observations of their own teachers. This implies that teaching as a profession emerges from our early learning experiences. It is such experiences which pre-occupies the minds of the student teachers as they prepare to conduct teaching practices in rural schools. It is significant to remember that teacher professional development courses at teaching institutions may not erase such early perceptions, in particular as students face new circumstances in rural schools their identity is likely to be influenced by their perception of rurality.

According to Cochran-Smith, and Lytle (1999) in Mukeredzi (2013), there are three conceptions of teacher learning that inform initial teacher education programs. They include knowledge of practice, which includes firstly knowledge of more formal and professional content, educational knowledge and pedagogic knowledge. Mukeredzi (2013) assumes that there is a knowledge base for teaching that must be learned by new teachers and subsequently used in their teaching practice. The second conception is knowledge in practice, which involves teachers' knowledge that is constructed by teachers in their everyday practice. Thirdly is knowledge of practice, this constructs teachers as agents where teacher knowledge is connected to a larger political and social agenda (Bertram, 2011). These conceptions of teacher learning are significant in the preparation of the student teachers for their teaching experiences because it gives them the fundamentals of teaching in any context.

Similarly, Shulman (1987) addressed what teachers need to know through four main domains of teacher knowledge. They include content knowledge, which is knowledge of content to be taught, general pedagogic knowledge, which is the knowledge of different teaching strategies,

context knowledge, which is knowledge about the background of the learners and the organizational culture of the schools. Finally the pedagogic content knowledge (PCK), which implies content specific pedagogy responsible for addressing how teachers make their specific subject content knowledge accessible to learners.

Whereas the above mentioned four domains are paramount in the teaching practice and form part of curriculum in the educational institution, this study is premised by the domain of context knowledge. Context knowledge is a reality to the student teachers that has no bearing on what was learned in educational institutions. They therefore have to adopt and negotiate their identity, connect to the rural schools context so as to be successful during their teaching experience. This therefore conforms to the argument that identity negotiation may be an ongoing practice for student teachers as they continue to conduct their teaching experience in rural schools context. This is because knowledge about rural school support challenges student teachers into thinking and assists them in becoming effective professionals capable of handling and experiencing real world complexities involved in rural education (Du Plessis et al, 2010).

According to UNESCO (2010:8), teacher training should be designed to achieve four basic objectives. These include improving the general education background of student teachers, increasing their knowledge and understanding of the subject they are to teach, understanding the pedagogy of child learning and finally teacher training should help to develop practical skills and competencies. These objectives of teacher training are manifested during the teaching practice process, and this relates to Marais (2004) definition of teaching practice as a process which represents a range of experiences to which student teachers are exposed when they work in real classrooms and schools. The basis of this research is that student teachers need to negotiate their identities as they conduct their teaching experience in the rural schools context. This is because student teachers may not be familiar with challenges that are patent with rural schools (Marais, 2004).

2.3.8. Identity issues in rural schools context

According to Marais (2004), teachers are expected to prepare students for the dynamic society. In South Africa, after 1994, the demands of a new curriculum were aimed at creating a good

society which would improve the quality of life for all people unlike in the apartheid curriculum set up. Specifically, the new curriculum required all teachers to develop knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that will enhance them to work effectively irrespective of their life experiences, gender, language background, race or social economic status (Marais, 2004). However, as a result of South African segregated history, student teachers perception, attitudes and personal experiences may differ from those of the learners who come from different background to that of student teachers (Rios, 1996). This can therefore become a challenge that may influence the student teachers approach towards their teaching experience. For instance, teaching practice of student teachers may be complicated if conflicts arises between the student teachers' own moral values, religious preferences, discipline styles and those of the learners they are supposed to teach (Marais, 2004).

In addition, Pohan (1996) points out that among the beliefs of student teachers is that, their teacher training program filters all the teaching and learning requirements necessary to counter teaching practice challenges. However, as I have noted, rurality presents challenges that require progressive teacher education which may help student teachers to react progressively as they encounter such issues in rural schools context. Research by Pohan (1996) further indicates that, what pre-occupies the student teachers' minds as they prepare themselves for teaching practice is the maintenance of discipline and learner control in classrooms, quality of their professional relationship with their supervisors, level of their knowledge of the curriculum content and the ability to understand the learners. It is only when they approach teaching practice in rural schools context that the student teachers experience all the realities of being a teacher in rural schools. Worth emphasizing is that the complex roles of teachers in rural schools have to be mastered by the student teachers. However, the complexity of these roles commonly cause considerable stress and anxiety and hence influences student teachers identity. This further serves to re-affirm the notion that, discrepancies between theory and practice can cause confusion and disorientation for student teachers and hence influence the nature of their individual identity.

Furthermore, it is paramount to note that, teaching experience in rural schools context will never leave the student teachers the same, their identity might be shaped in some way. According to

Marais (2004), student teachers in the process of teaching practice develop new skills and approach to maneuver in the teaching field. He noted that, student teachers gained enormous knowledge and experience ranging from rural schools, learners, teaching, schools routines, teaching practice, staff meetings, and most importantly the nature of the rural child. This point to the possibility of student teachers having identity conflicts as they conduct their teaching experiences in rural schools context.

2.3.9. Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented the theoretical framework that informed the study, and the literature was reviewed in relation to the topic of the study. The theoretical framework highlights an important factor of how the identity of student teachers may be influenced by the rural schools context. The reviewed literature highlighted numerous aspects that can influence student teachers identity while on school practice. Most importantly, the rural school-university partnership strategy can positively influence student teachers perceptions about rurality. The strategy also can be used to investigate challenges that may influence student teachers identity while on teaching practice in rural schools. This is because of the significant difference between rural and urban schools as discussed in the literature. Therefore, knowledge on the experiences of student teachers especially in rural schools context can be used to help student teachers to negotiate their identities in rural schools. In addition, they can also assist with eliminating some of the challenges that are patent with teaching practice in rural schools, a factor that can mitigate against the positive outcomes of teaching practice (Mukeredzi and Mandrona, 2013) and hence transform the education system in South Africa (Islam, 2011).

Chapter Three:

Research Design and Methodology

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the research design, the data collection methods and the analytical framework that guided the process of data analysis. I also describe my sample and what informed the choice of the sample, and the methods of data collection in relation to research questions.

3.1.1 Main research questions:

What are the identity experiences of Wits student teachers in Acornhoek rural schools, Bushbuckridge, Mpumalanga province?

3.1.2 Critical Questions

i) What perceptions do the student teachers have on rural schools context?

ii) What are the experiences that student teachers face while on teaching practice in rural schools?

iii) How do student teachers interact with the teachers and learners in rural schools?

iv) What are the identity shifts of student teachers after going through teaching experience in rural schools?

3.2. Research Approach

This study is informed by Gee's (2005, 2000) and Wenger's (1999) notion of identity, in particular their claim that identity is not static but is an on-going process. Hence student teachers identity is bound to be influenced over time as they start conducting their teaching experience in different urban and township schools, particularly in rural schools context. Therefore, a study on the identity experiences of student teachers in context where they conduct their teaching practice is relevant in order to investigate how they may negotiate their identity in the rural school life. I selected a qualitative approach for my study. This research approach enabled me to investigate the phenomenon in a context-specific setting. Schumacher and McMillan (2010) define a

qualitative study as "naturalistic inquiry." It is a data collection strategy which can help understand the formation of particular identities from the participants' perspective

Schumacher and McMillan (2010) argue that a qualitative research views reality as a multi-layered, interactive, and shared social experience interpreted by individuals. The mutual engagement between student teachers and the rural schools context allows such interactive and shared social experience. For instance for the duration of the teaching practice, the student teachers share experiences with the rural schools teachers and learners which may influences their identity.

Therefore, the main goal of qualitative study is to understand the social phenomenon from the view of the participants. Understanding is acquired by analysing the main context of the participants and by narrating the situations and events, and in this study the situations and the events include the student teachers approach towards teaching in rural schools, and how it works on their individual identity. Therefore, student teachers beliefs, ideas and thoughts before, during and after teaching experience in rural schools, should be captured in order to gain an understanding of their experiences in rural schools. In other words a qualitative study seeks to understand people in their real setting and the reality with changes in peoples' perception. This study therefore intends to understand student teachers' experiences in rural schools, whether and how it shapes their identity and their perceptions of rurality. Also the research intends to investigate identity challenges experienced by WSoE student teachers in rural schools and how student teachers engage and connect with the rural schools context especially when they encounter unfamiliar rural schools circumstances.

3.3. Research Methodology

The research was conducted in the rural schools context, an environment that is unfamiliar with some of the student teachers. The research methodology deemed sufficient for this study is a case study. A case study was appropriate for this research because it is an in-depth investigation of a real situation with real people (Opie, 2004). The real situation implied in this study are the rural schools in Acornhoek, Bushbuckridge in Mpumalanga province and the real people investigated are the WSoE student teachers who were conducting teaching practices in these rural schools.

The case study approach helped to explore the phenomenon of student teachers negotiation of identity in rural schools context.

The case study presents an opportunity to study this particular aspect in-depth within a limited time scale (Bell, 1999). The empirical inquiry investigated was how student teachers merged their individual identities with the requirements of teaching in rural schools context, and whether the rural schools context shaped student teachers' identity. This will help the researcher to provide a detailed description and analysis of the processes voiced by the participants in the situation being studied (Schumacher and MacMillan, 1993).

3.4. Sampling

The quality of a piece of research, according to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), stands or falls not only on the appropriateness of methodology and instrumentation, but also on the suitability of the sampling strategy that has been adapted. Therefore due to the complexity of following student teachers practicing in rural areas and how they attempt to connect with the rural schools life, I worked with a manageable sample of 10 student teachers to take part in this study, making it a purposeful sampling. According to Schumacher and McMillan (1993), purposeful sampling refers to selecting a case which is rich in information and the aim of this sampling is not for finding generalizations. The main advantage of purposeful sampling is that it increases the utility of data collected from a small sample. According to Merriam (1988), purposive sampling strategy is mainly used when the researcher is interested in discovering, understanding and gaining an insight into a particular phenomenon. Purposive sampling was very important in my study because the sample selected of WSoE student teachers and the rural schools selected provided rich information regarding identity negotiations of student teachers while on teaching practice.

3.5. Selection of sample/ participants

This study used WSoE student teachers that took part in the teaching practice in Acornhoek schools, Bushbuckridge, Mpumalanga province in September 2014. The student teachers were already selected by the project managers for teaching experience and I requested that they become part of my research. A meeting with the student teachers was organised at WSoE were consent was sought from them. However, according to Masinire (2015), their desire to join the

rural teaching experience showed different perceptions about the importance of rural teaching experience. From the meeting conducted at WSoE I noticed that many of the participants who formed part of the group had negative conceptions about rural schools, learners and teachers. The participants comprised of 2nd and 3rd year Bachelor of Education students because they had acquired some experience of teaching practice in their previous years. The first year students were not considered because of their little experience in teaching and the fourth years were also not considered because of their continuous assessment in their final year of study which required them to do their teaching practice in urban schools. Working with this sample was important for my study because I would provide as much data as possible about their experiences in rural schools context. Also, the 10 participants who formed part of the sample would enhance an in depth investigation of their identity experiences while making a connection with rural schools context.

The selection of the participants was made easy because of an established framework of WSoE which takes student teachers on rural teaching experience in rural schools. In keeping with the sampling strategies of a qualitative study, the sample of 10 student teachers was purposeful and provided an opportunity for the researcher (Cohen, *et al*, 2000) to interact with all of them in order to further establish their individual identity and investigate identity experiences while in rural schools. Thus the main consideration was in working with the 10 student teachers who expressed interest in conducting teaching experience in rural schools.

The 10 participants in this study were kept anonymous throughout this study. I used pseudonyms while referring to the participants and the schools where they conducted their teaching practice. The profile of participants can be shown in the following table.

Table 1 Participants Profile

No.	Participants Pseudo name	Participants Gender	Participants Background	Participants Year of study	Participants experience on rural context	Rural school attached to the participants
1	Student teacher A	Male	Urban	Third year	Non	Mashego
2	Student teacher B	Female	Rural	Third	Yes	Mashego
3	Student teacher C	Female	Urban	Third	Non	Mashego
4	Student teacher D	Female	Urban	Second	Non	Mashego
5	Student teacher E	Female	Urban	Third	Non	Mashego
6	Student teacher F	Female	Urban	Third	Non	Mangwa
7	Student teacher G	Male	Urban	Third	Non	Mangwa
8	Student teacher H	Female	Urban	Third	Non	Mangwa
9	Student teacher I	Male	Urban	Second	Non	Mangwa
10	Student teacher J	Female	Urban	Third	Non	Mangwa

3.6. Research context

The researcher was interested in investigating how student teachers experience to the rural schools context, for instance how they interact with the rural school teachers and learners, and how they interpret such interactions to impact on their identity. The participants and the researcher resided at the Wits Rural Facility because of the close proximity with the schools that were used as sites for the student teachers teaching practice. The two schools chosen by the WSoE for student teachers to do their practice were high schools, Mashego secondary school and Mangwa secondary school. The 10 students were divided into two groups of five and each group conduct teaching practice at one of the mentioned schools. The selection of which school the student teacher went to was done by the project supervisors. There was no particular strategy to

select which students go in what school, implying that the first five students on the list went to the first school and the last five students on the list went to the second school.

The student teachers left the Wits Rural Facility in Acornhoek every morning around 6:30 am because schools start at 7: 30, but student teachers were expected to be at schools by 7am – 7:15am to attend staff morning briefings. Considering that there was only one Van that transported all students, it was important that student teachers leave the Wits Rural Facility as early as possible to be dropped off at their respective schools on time. The schools were not in close proximity to each other as they were approximately 15 to 20 minutes from each other due to the morning traffic that is caused by bad road, the cows, and other taxis that tended to delay driving. The supervisor moved to and from both schools to monitor the lessons of the student teachers. The schools ended at 2:30 pm and after school, the students were picked and dropped back to the facility, and in early evenings, they had reflective discussions about the day at school as a group and at this time the researcher managed to interact with the student teachers. Occasionally the researcher travelled together with the participants to their respective schools to take some field notes and to get a sense of the kinds of schools where the student teachers conducted their teaching experience. This process of moving with the participants helped the researcher to contextualise the rural schools and also helped to link the information provided by the student teachers with the two rural schools.

3.7. Data collection and procedure

Data was collected over a period of four weeks, that is, a week before teaching experience and three weeks during teaching experience. The method of data collection for this study was semi-structured focus group interviews which were conducted from a predetermined interview schedule. The interview schedule included prompts and open questions to enable the participants to freely discuss issues relating to their identity experiences (Appendix C).

The researcher collected data using focus group interviews because of its effectiveness as the participants shared the experiences. Babbie and Mouton (1998) points out the usefulness of focus group and argue that it facilitates the researcher to collect information he/she would not otherwise be able to access for instance through individual interviews. During the semi-

structured focus group interviews the participants kept sharing similar and dissimilar experiences they went through and could agree or disagree with their colleagues about some of the issues, for instance, on the issue of whether or not WSoE sufficiently prepared them for teaching practice in rural schools. While in the process of conducting the semi-structured focus group interviews I made sure that the student teachers felt free to give their experiences and perception of rural school contexts and how it influenced their individual identity. I did this by conducting interviews during the information sharing session in the evenings when all the 10 participants had finished their day activities and before each interview session I reminded them about the research ethical principles.

Semi-structured focus group interviews were done both at the WSoE in Johannesburg to determine student teachers perceptions about rurality. Also participants were later interviewed at the Wits Rural Facility (WRF) in Bushbuckridge to determine their actual experiences in rurality and its impact on their individual identities. Conversations were audio recorded to ensure accurate capturing of participants responses, help the researcher to develop transcripts from the audio and it was also significant because it captured all the researchers' questions and probing that resulted from the participants' responses. Field notes were also taken especially when the researcher visited participants at the schools to document other clues such as identity conflicts and body language that were not audio recorded. At the beginning and end of each interview, some time was spent briefing the participants about the ethical considerations, which must be adhered to in academic research. The participants were also encouraged to talk about their identity experiences while in the process of conducting teaching experience in rural schools. The semi structured focus group interview lasted for one hour to one hour thirty minutes, depending on student teachers responses on that particular day.

Although I had limited knowledge of conducting semi-structured focus group interviews, my background as an educator aided the whole process and I was able to obtain informative and detailed data from the participants. However, the significant challenge was that some participants were less active as compared to their counterparts and their response to some of the questions were to some extent limited even with continuous probing by the researcher. When the researcher focused particularly on the inactive participants in the group, they kept on repeating

the same responses given by their colleagues. But none the less with the act of probing I managed to extract data from all the participants.

There were two phases of data collection. The first phase of data collection was interviews with student teachers at Wits school of Education (WSoE) before they went to Bushbuckridge. The first phase was designed to establish the perceptions of student teachers about rural schools. The second phase was interviews when the student teachers were in the field at Bushbuckridge conducting their teaching practice.

3.7.1 Phase 1: pre-teaching practice interviews

These pre-teaching practice interviews were conducted to identify the perceptions of student teachers and their preparedness to teaching practice in rural schools. I organized a meeting with the project supervisor to meet all 10 participants for introductions, and after agreement I met the participants at the WSoE in the project managers' office as a convenient place for both the participants and the researcher. The semi-structured focus group interviews lasted for one hour to one hour and thirty minutes. Cohen *et al* (2000) and Opie (2004) maintains that semi-structured interviews allow both the participants and the researcher more flexibility, as it allows probing deep into the unexpected ideas related to the researcher's questions and hence more detailed response. According to Cohen (2000, p. 146) semi structured interviews help into ordering, expansion of questions and deeper probing of ideas as they surface. I therefore prepared guiding questions which allowed participants to engage freely by raising other ideas or issues about teaching in rural schools on which I probed them further **(**Appendix D).

3.7.2 Phase 2: Field interviews

The field interviews were semi structured and the questions were formulated in such a way that they helped the researcher to investigate some issues discussed in the pre-teaching experience interviews (Appendix D).The purpose of conducting interviews in the field was to collect data from student teachers while they were still in the field, this was paramount to me because the experiences of the participants were still fresh in their minds and would therefore provide reliable experiences. Also, the field interviews were significant because they helped me to link the student teachers' perceptions about rural schools prior to the teaching practice with their field

experiences during the teaching practice. This could help to check on whether the identity of the student teachers was influenced or their identity remained unchanged.

Initially, the researcher interviewed the two focus groups separately. The first group interviewed was that of student teachers who conducted teaching practice at Mangwa secondary school, which was later followed by a focus group interview with student teachers who conducted their teaching practice at Mashego secondary school. This was because the researcher wanted to establish if teaching in the two rural schools would provide the same or different experiences for the two sets of participants. After conducting interviews with student teachers from both schools separately, I then combined the two groups of participants for conclusive remarks to determine if the student teachers were still at the level of perceptions which they had demonstrated in the first interview conducted at the WSoE.

3.8 Transcription

The process of data analysis proceeded both during and after the process of data collection. The first step that was taken was to transcribe the pre-teaching experience data before going for field data collection. The data for teaching experience was transcribed while I was still at the WRF and also when I immediately returned from Bushbuckridge. It was important to transcribe data immediately because I could still relate to the context where the teaching experience was done. I listened to the interviews and I decided on transcribing everything that was captured because student teachers were talking about their general experiences of rural schools teaching and how it influenced their individual identity.

During the process of transcribing, I listened to the audio tape to freshen up my memories of the conditions of student teachers while at the Wits Rural Facility (WRF)and at the rural schools where they did their teaching practice. I also went through the notes I had made on the things I noticed while in the field and during the interview process, these field notes supplemented the audio-taped data collected. The importance of always having a backup copy is that it eliminates issues of disappointment when the original copy is lost.

After the process of transcribing, the transcripts were revisited several times to minimise errors and I listened to the audio tapes while checking the transcripts in hand. The most common errors were omissions or repeated words and grammar. In the process of reviewing the transcripts and listening to the audio tapes over and over again, I was able to capture the participants' experiences accurately.

The process of transcription was done individually, though there were parts where the participants used a language which was not familiar to the researcher. The researcher identified the language used by learners as IsiZulu by asking two people who could speak the language, and then transcription of those parts was done by the first language speakers of the language which the participants were using. IsiZulu was then translated into English by the same people who helped me transcribe those parts. The transcripts were then given to two other people to check whether the language was transcribed correctly hence ensuring validity (Opie, 2004).

3.9. Data analysis

As I discussed earlier, the study is qualitative and hence I analyse the data using qualitative methods. I used the typological analysis method discussed by Hatch (2002) to analyse my data. Typological analysis is where data analysis is started by dividing the collected data into a set of categories that are based on predetermined typologies. The typologies were generated from the conceptual/theoretical framework and objectives of the research as discussed below. Therefore I viewed my data including the transcribed portions of the audio and divided it into elements based on predetermined elements (Hatch, 2002).

In my study I was interested in how student teachers negotiated their individual identity while on rural Acornhoek schools teaching experience in Bushbuckridge in Mpumalanga province. I listened and re-listened to the audio recordings and transcripts to capture each time when student teachers felt that rural schools teaching influenced their identity. I then made connections to other factors (Opie, 2004) such as rural environment and its effect on student teachers identity. I then followed the steps in typological analysis as given by (Hatch, 2002). The typologies were

developed from the theoretical framework. Below is a table showing how the typologies were developed and later used for analysis.

Table 2 Steps in typological analysis

Step	Activity
1	Identify typologies to be analysed e.g. student teachers perceptions, rural school life and student teachers identity.
2	Read the data and take note of entries that relate to my selected typologies
3	Read entries by typology, recording the main ideas in entries on summary sheet
4	Look for patterns, relationships, themes within typologies
5	Read data by coding entries according to patterns identified
6	Decide whether my patterns are supported by the data
7	Then if my patterns cohere with the data then I record the patterns as generalisations on student teachers identity.
8	Then I will select data excerpts from transcribed data that support my generalisations

The process of developing typologies was important because it helped me to concentrate on aspects of student teachers that were patent to the study. It was also necessary that I looked for a relationship between the typologies mentioned to the data collected so as to establish the pattern and relationship between the typologies identified and data collected because this would in terms generating conclusions.

3.10 The Analytical Framework

The data analysis framework was informed by Wengers' (1999) notion of identity as a negotiated experience. Below is the analytical framework that was used to analyse the data in the study.

Table 3 Analytical framework

The analytical framework below was constructed using Wengers' (1999) and Gee's (2005) identity constructs. In order to analyse identity experiences of student teachers on teaching practice in rural schools context, certain aspects had to be considered. The aspects which were considered for analysis in this study included; Perceptions of student teachers before the teaching practice, Identity experiences while in the field, community membership or how they interacted with the people in rural schools and their views after the rural schools teaching practice. The data was analysed based on the pre-determined analytical framework shown above. The analytical framework also reflects the connection between the research questions and the interview questions which was instrumental in guiding the process of data analysis.

Construct	**Definition**	**Why this specific construct**	**Indicator**	**Guiding questions**
Student teachers perceptions	Refers to things that student teachers perceive to be taking place in rural schools	Every student teacher perceives rural schools in his/her own way	Probing student teachers for their views and ideas of rural schools -providing an opportunity for student teachers to talk	What perceptions do you have on rural schools? After your teaching practice do you still possess the same perceptions?
Identity experiences	Aspects of life that student teachers went through while on teaching practice	Change from urban to rural schools context is likely to influence identity of student teachers.	-Negotiation from urban context to rural context -identity changes and if they connected to rural schools context	1. How are you finding teaching practice in rural schools? Has it changed who you are? 2. - Do you think the time duration for teaching practice is significant enough to change who you are?
Community membership; belonging;	Mutual engagement between	Student teachers engagement	The dimension of mutuality of	1. Do you have any problem interacting with the teachers, learners and principals at

outbound and insider, peripheral trajectories	student teachers and the rural schools community	with the rural schools community may inform on their identity	engagement is based on how one works and interacts with others within the community of practice (rural schools)	school? If so what are they? 2. How does the discipline of learners in rural schools differ from that of urban schools
Way forward after teaching experience in rural schools	Defined as life of student teachers after the rural teaching experience.	To establish if student teachers are viewed as a certain type of a person after the teaching practice	-Change in attitude as a result of rural teaching experience -If student teachers can take up job opportunities in rural schools	– Would you take up a teaching job in a rural school? - Has the exercise of teaching practice in rural schools changed who you are? - Did the teaching experience alter your original perceptions about rural schools and your desire to work in rural schools after graduating?
Initial teacher education and its impact on student teacher identity	Defined in terms of the teacher training institutions play in influencing student teachers identity while on teaching practice	Establishing a partnership between rural schools and universities	Whether or not student teachers were explicitly trained to teach in rural schools	1. Do you think the teaching course helped you to prepare for the teaching in rural schools?

3.11 Validity and Reliability Issues

Although the terms reliability and validity are concepts used in quantitative research, Patton (2002) argues that a qualitative researcher should be concerned with reliability and validity while designing a study, analysing the results and also judging the quality of the study. In qualitative studies, the researcher is the main instrument for data collection. Therefore, in qualitative

research, validity and reliability means credibility of the research, and the credibility of a qualitative research depends on the efforts of the researcher (Golafshani, 2003). Although reliability and validity are treated as separate terms in quantitative research, these terms are not viewed separately in qualitative research. Instead terms such as credibility and trustworthiness are used in qualitative research (Opie, 2004; Golafshani, 2003).

3.11.1 Reliability

Reliability is used in a number of different ways; however, there are some commonly occurring terms such as consistency and repetition. Opie (2004) defines reliability as the extent to which a method or tool gives constant results each time it is used in the same context by different researchers. On the other hand, Schumacher and McMillan (2010) defines reliability as the extent to which independent researchers could discover the same phenomenon and to which there is an agreement on the description of the phenomenon between the researcher and the participants. In both definitions, repetition is emphasized. The researcher kept on probing the participants over and over again to establish their identity experiences in the rural schools context and more often they repeated the same experiences during their responses. Opie (2004) argues that reliability should be used to judge data gathering processes and not the product and therefore I focused on the data collection processes to make sure that reliable data was collected. Schumacher and McMillan (2010) argue that reliability in qualitative research refers to consistency of the researcher's interactive style, data recording, data analysis and interpretation of participants' meanings from the data. Reliability is concerned with whether we would obtain the same results if we could observe the same thing twice (Opie, 2004). Therefore, data is said to be trustworthy if the findings are consistent and hence reliable.

In ensuring trustworthiness in the research, the researcher used some of the strategies stated by (Schumacher and McMillan (1993). These strategies can be used to minimize threats to reliability and hence ensuring trustworthiness in a qualitative research. Among others, to ensure that the data collected is trustworthy, recorded data was used (audio taped data), this data was then transcribed. During interviews, the participants used some languages which were not known to the researcher. The language used commonly was IsiZulu. As noted earlier, the researcher gave the data to an individual who was proficient in the language which the participants were using to help with transcribing and translating the language to English. After transcribing, the

transcribed data was given to two other people who are proficient in the IsiZulu language to check whether the transcribed data and translated data were accurate. This was all done by the researcher to ensure reliability, trustworthiness and credibility of the research. Also sampling strategies, data collection strategies and data analysis strategies used in this study were explained in detail by the researcher (Schumacher and McMillan, 1993).

3.11.2 Validity

Validity is defined by Schumacher and McMillan (1993) as the appropriateness of the conclusions that are made from the data collected from the study. There are different types of validity but not all of them were applicable to this study.

3.11.2.1 Internal Validity (Credibility)

Internal validity refers to the extent to which the explanations of the phenomenon being studied suits the reality of the world. For internal validity to be achieved in qualitative study, the researcher and the participants must have mutual meaning of the interpretations of the phenomenon being studied. Internal validity is also referred to as the credibility criterion and it involves establishing that the results of qualitative research are believable from the perspective of the participants in the research. It should be emphasised that the purpose of qualitative research is to understand the phenomenon of interest from the participant's eyes. Therefore, the participants are the only ones who can truly judge the credibility of the results (Golafshani, 2003).

Schumacher and McMillan (1993) posit that credibility in the study can be achieved through lengthy data collection periods, carrying out field research and disciplined subjectivity on the part of the researcher. In order to minimize threats to credibility, I recorded accurately and worked on the recorded data during rather than after data gathering sessions. I also made a rough draft of the study before going into the field to collect the data, so that the data gathering process focused on the information that met the specific needs of the study (Wolcott, 1990). I also carried out field research by staying with participants at the same residence facility and travelled with them to their respective schools where they conducted teaching practice in the same van and I

kept on interacting with participants by asking questions on how they are connecting in the new rural school environment informally.

3.12. Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations require sensitivity on the part of the researcher in order to show respect to the participants in the research. The participants should not be forced to take part in the study which implies that before the researcher can interview the participants and audio tape them, permission should be sought from them. If they are not willing they should not be forced (Opie, 2004). Therefore, it is imperative that throughout the research process the researcher follows and abides by ethical guidelines (Wolcott, 1990). It is also advisable and important that the researcher gains access into the research field before conducting the study.

In this respect, when a group of participants was identified as discussed earlier in this chapter, permission was sought from the Head of the Wits school of Education and the Human Research Ethics Committee. A letter of clearance with protocol number 2014ECE046M was granted to me. Upon clearance I went to the field where the data was to be collected. Written information and consent inviting the student teachers to take part in the research were handed out. The consent forms included a section explaining the research as well as what would be expected from the student teachers during the process of data collection. Permission to audio tape was also sought from the student teachers. The consent forms stated clearly that the participation was voluntary and that they were not compelled to take part in the research. Also that if they decide half way through that they prefer to stop, it is completely their choice and that they will not be disadvantaged in anyway (Appendix A).

Before the process of data collection began, I collected the consent forms from the student teachers and I went through all of them to establish whether any of the student teachers were not interested to take part in the study. All the 10 participants were interested in the study because they signed the forms and agreed to be part of the study and to be audio taped as well.

The researcher then briefly discussed the issues of confidentiality and anonymity with the student teachers. These issues were clearly stated on the information sheet which was handed out to them. The participants were informed that their names would not be used during the

presentation of the findings (appendix A). All the participants were referred to using pseudonyms for purposes of confidentiality.

3.13 Limitations

The data used in this research was collected in two phases. Firstly, before teaching practice in order to establish the perceptions of student teachers and secondly during teaching in the Bushbuckridge rural schools in Mpumalanga province. The significant limitation was the duration of the teaching practice. The four weeks period may not have been enough to determine identity shifts among the student teachers.

Another limitation emerged from time constraints. The researcher was involved in other study projects with the Department of Education that aims at improving teaching and learning in accounting which were equally demanding. The researcher is also a full time educator at an underperforming public school and is required to have intervention strategies to improve learners' performance, for instance organizing extra classes and weekend classes which hampered the progress of the research work.

The data that was collected had to be transcribed. Some of the participants were using IsiZulu to respond to interview questions, this was a challenge to the researcher because the researcher was not familiar with IsiZulu and therefore had to seek help during the process of transcribing from people that knew IsiZulu.

The findings from this study cannot be generalized because I used only WSoE student teachers conducting teaching practice in two rural schools. Therefore, the sample is not sufficient to generalize for all the other contexts. However, the purpose of my study was not to come up with generalizations but to get to learn how the identity of student teachers maybe influenced with teaching experience in rural schools contexts.

3.13 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explained the research design and justified all the research processes. I have described the requirements that were paramount in this research firstly at personal level and

secondly as a researcher. For credibility of the research, it was necessary for the researcher to grapple with those requirements before, during and after the process of data collection. In the next chapter, I will present the analysis of the data that I collected using the methodologies discussed in this chapter.

Chapter Four:

Data Presentation and Analysis

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter the data is analysed and presented. I describe, classify and interpret the data and the findings that emerged from the study. According to Cohen et al (2007), the analysis of data can be described as a process of making sense of data in terms of participants' definition of the situation. The data presented in this chapter emerged from exploring student teachers identity experiences during teaching practice in Acornhoek schools, Bushbuckridge, Mpumalanga Province.

As indicated in chapter 3, Cohen (2007) explains that qualitative researchers analyse data by organising it into categories on the basis of their themes. In this chapter I present the themes which were drawn from patterns that emerged from raw data. Using the mentioned research instruments, the responses from the student teachers who took part in this study are presented and some references to the relevant literature are made to discuss the findings in relation to other studies.

4.2 Description of identity shifts among student teachers

As mentioned in chapter two, the notion of identity which is central in this study is informed by Wenger (1999) and Gee (2005). Their approaches on identity is used as constructs in the process of analysing data in this chapter so as to determine the level at which student teachers identity was influenced.

For instance, Wenger's (1999) argument that identity manifests as a tendency to come up with certain interpretations, to engage in certain actions, to make certain choices, to value certain experiences, informed student teachers perceptions about rurality rural schools and the different field experiences they went through while carrying out their teaching practice in rural schools

context. In this study I was therefore interested in finding out what interpretation, action, choices and values student teachers held about the experiences in rural schools.

In this study, three levels of identity shifts emerged across the student teachers' responses during the semi-structured focus group interviews as indicated in the table below

Table 4 Levels of identity shifts

The table below describes the levels of identity shifts that I used in analyzing the identity of student teachers on teaching practice. They were used in connection with the research and the interview questions. I classified the themes based on the participants' responses to discuss the findings.

Levels	Description
IDL1	The student teachers' responses are classified as IDL1 if they conformed to rural identity and hence their identity changed as they carried out their teaching practice.
IDL2	The student teachers' responses are classified as IDL2 if they resisted and retained their urban identity, implying that teaching in rural schools could not make them shift their identity.
IDL3	The student teachers' responses are classified as IDL3 if they compromised with the context in rural schools in order to achieve the goals of their teaching practice.

Although the rural schools context presented numerous identity trends, data analysis revealed that student teachers were mostly influenced by the above identity levels CDL1, CDL2 and CDL3. The research questions and Gee's and Wengers' ideas of identity were used as a framework for presenting and analysing the data.

After conducting semi-structured focus group interviews and transcription of data, I analyzed the transcripts manually to establish coherence with research questions. I used the typological analysis method discussed by Hatch (2002) to analyze my data. Typological analysis is where

data analysis is started by dividing the collected data into a set of categories that are based on predetermined typologies i.e. Identity levels 1, 2 and 3. The typologies are generated from the theoretical framework and are guided by the data collected. I constructed an analytical framework from the theoretical framework as discussed in chapter three. The data analysis was conducted within the generated typological groupings (Hatch, 2002).

Wenger (1999) maintains that identity is a negotiated experience. This argument was significant throughout the analysis as it helped me to analyse how student teachers negotiated their identity throughout the teaching practice. This analysis therefore helped me to establish the various identity positions they exhibited and inhabited during the teaching practice. I analysed the student teachers' perceptions of their understanding of rurality and rural schools before the teaching practice process. Later, I analysed the transcripts of the student teachers' experiences within the rural schools context.

4.3. Student teachers' perceptions of rural schools before teaching practice

This section presents participants' responses about how they perceived rural schools prior to the teaching practice especially with regards to their individual identity. With reference to Gee's (2000-2001) nature or N- identity, which means who we are depends on where we come from, it was interesting to see if the student teachers background and urban experience influenced their identity while on teaching practice in rural schools. Data reveals that the background of student teachers influenced their perception about rural schools. Most of the participants' background was that of caring about learners, being hardworking, using English as a medium of instruction while teaching, using modern technology during teaching, living in urban or semi urban homes and being used to efficient transport network to ease their movements among other factors. This background was therefore influential in influencing student teachers identity

Data revealed that some student teachers had vague perceptions about teaching in rural schools. For instance, student teachers perceived rural schools to have overcrowded classes, rural teachers as not being hardworking, rural schools as not having teaching materials among other issues. These perceptional responses were likely to inform participants' individual identity shifts. The excerpts below indicate some of the student teachers perception about rural schools.

Student teacher B: *Rural schools are under developed in terms of access to teaching resources, and water. Perhaps water is available but maybe it is not accessible within the yard or schools. One would have to go a long distance to access water and electricity.*

Student teacher A: *From an economical perspective, parents struggle to take their kids to schools or even to afford school requirements for their kids which may influence their education. Some students in rural schools may not have shoes.*

Student teacher J: *Rural schools experience overcrowding*

Student teacher B: *Also, rural schools have learners walking a long distance to go to school*

The responses suggest that student teachers perceived rural schools to have various challenges. These perceptions existed before the student teachers left for teaching practice in rural schools. Nine out of the ten participants had some knowledge about rural context but it was not knowledge based on their experience of living in the rural areas. This could have played a role in their perceptional understanding of rurality. The purpose of exploring participants' perception was to establish whether or not the experience of teaching in the rural schools will have an impact on their individual identity. This also links to the findings of Pohan (1996) who established that mindset of student teachers is always preoccupied by the challenges they expect to experience while on teaching practice.

With the responses on the student teachers perceptions, the researcher was motivated to establish if there is a relationship between the student teachers perception about rural schools and their individual identity. For example, how would the underdeveloped schools according to student teacher B's perception affect her individual identity or how would the overcrowded classes influence the identities of the participant A.

When the student teachers were asked to what extent they think their perceptions on rural schools teaching, for example, the medium of instruction, unavailability of teaching aids and overcrowded classes would affect their individual identity, they said;

Student teacher J: *In terms of medium of instruction, I'm expecting to teach differently in a rural school than I would teach in a school around here (Johannesburg). This is because of language barrier, I think language barrier is the number one challenge because you could be teaching an amazing subject but then learners can't understand you, so you may be forced to change your method of teaching in English into code switching…*

Student teacher J: *Also, if they speak a specific language there and I can't code switch into that language, it makes it two times harder to teach. Like for someone if we could perhaps sohlangana nabantu aba'khuluma isiSwati (we meet people who speak Swati) and I can't code switch in isiSwati (in Swati) that influences your identity.*

From the above response, it maybe concluded that the student teachers perceived rural schools to have different languages such as isiZulu, Tsonga etc. This institutional identity (Gee, 2000-2001) of rural schools could have shaped their individual identity (IDL1) in terms of code swiching so as to make learners access the intended knowledge. It seems that some of the participants were concerned with this possible shift from using English as a medium of instruction to using local language during teaching, this is because they do not know how to do it. The concerns of their ability to code switch relates to the lack of preparedness from the university. While it might be true that Wits University cannot teach all Africa languages that are spoken in South Africa, it possibly addresses a strategic choice of rural schools and township schools to send their student teachers for teaching experience. However, this lack of preparedness could be attributed to the absence of relationships with some rural communities and courses that present rurality and rural education, so that they explicitly equip student teachers with language diversity to teach in rural communities. Although it could be argued that township schools might have similar challenges, it will be interesting to know whether universities prepare students for such contexts for instance where they have to code switch.

However, some student teachers did not expect that their perceptions on teaching experience in rural schools would influence their identity (IDL2). When the researcher probed this category on the effect of their perception on their individual identity, their response was that, teaching in

rural schools might not influence who they are (IDL2). This could be attributed to the fact that they have acquired professional skills from their teaching courses, respected the notion that teaching should take place even in the most difficult contexts. This would probably make them not to allow rural contexts to have an influence on how they would teach. The excerpt below is illustrative.

Student teacher D: *Rural school practice won't influence me, I think it is going to be a learning curve… We are going to see how these people live, and how their present circumstances are, and will try to work around that how to improve their present situation I don't think it's going to change our identity* .

From the response it seems that this participant perceived teaching experience to be 'just another experience' with less significance on influencing their identity. This particular participant stressed that rural schools teaching is going to be 'a learning curve', implying that the teaching practice was more of a acquiring knowledge about teaching in rural schools context than influencing her individual identity. Once their knowledge about the rural contexts was acquired, it would make them think about how they should think about teaching in rural communities. It appears that the above participant had no fears that she is at a risk of foregoing her individual identity or unconsciously adapt rural identity as she encountered unfamiliar situations in rural schools during teaching practice. Considering the lack of fear by this participant, the data further revealed that the teaching practice had no impact on the identity change of some student teachers in this category. The reason is because "*it depends as it comes back to loving yourself enough to see what's best for you"*.

This possibly implies that the identity of some of the student teachers was not to be influenced by their perceptions of rural schools but for some participants it was notably clear that their individual identity was paramount even with the overwhelming perceptions on rural schools. On the basis of student teachers' perceptions for example rural schools having overcrowded classes and inadequate teaching resources, it implied that student teachers with such perceptions would struggle to be effective while conducting teaching practice because of the conditions in the rural schools. This is because for identity shift to happen student teachers need to make an effort to

connect their identity and the rural schools context during their teaching practice (Palmer, 1998; Wenger, 1999). This therefore suggests that some student teachers did not perceive rural schools teaching practice to have a significant influence on their individual identity (IDL2).

Of interest however is that student teachers who had perceptions on unavailability of teaching materials were likely to have their identities influenced by the rural schools context (IDL1) because they started planning how they will handle the situations as the following excerpt demonstrate.

Student teacher A: *I have heard a lot of stories about teaching in rural schools but what stands out mostly is that rural schools don't have teaching materials so I assume I will have to adapt to what they have and use the available materials so as to make my teaching effective.*

From the response above, the choice of words by the participant that "… will have to adapt…" seems to strongly suggest a shift on identity to ensure that teaching is much more effective using the available resources. The fact that student teachers perceived rural schools in such a way appears to suggest they were ready to of think about rural schools and what they may need to be effective while on teaching practice. It can therefore be said that they were looking forward to face the challenges in rural schools positively, which might also have influenced their individual identity (IDL1). In particular, this student teachers' perception about rurality was in agreement with Schafft and Jackson (2010) who claim that rural areas are perceived as not having the best schools in terms of resources.

4.4 Student teachers identities during rural teaching experience

Some student teachers maintained that they were not influenced by the institutional identity (Gee, 2000-2001) while on rural schools teaching practice, which legitimizes identity level (ID2). For instance, when asked on how school management influenced their individual identity, the students teachers in the category of IDL2 did not believe that the school management system would impact on their identity. On the other hand the category of student teachers in identity level 1(IDL1) blamed the dysfunctional rural school systems to have had a negative impact on their teaching practice, the response below illustrates the point;

Student teacher I: *Now I'm starting to feel like maybe most of the teachers are like that (not serious with their duties), but I blame the principal for not being strict with them. Because the teachers are slow at their duties, it somehow influences our identity because sometimes we follow suit.*

Student teacher H had a different opinion as indicated the following response.

Student teacher H: *Although I think that the principal is the leader in the school, every teacher makes his/her own conscious decisions of doing his/her professional duties. In life we have a lot of people who don't lead by example but yet we succeed and it doesn't have to do with being professional or not…I decided to fill that form and say I'm going to Wits to study it was my decision and I do my course whole heartedly. So if we apply the same motivation, the same ambition at these rural schools and keep our identity of hard work, the school can have some benefits.*

Although the principals' management style contributed to the dysfunctional nature in both rural schools, but it seems that some student teachers were not ready to abandon their identity of being hard workers. They still believed that irrespective of the principals not leading by example, i.e. by not providing proper guidelines as required in the management of the school, they were still willing to put in their effort of hard work and achieve their goals. They therefore resisted adapting the 'lazy' elements that were common with their principals, rural schools teachers and the learners. Without overlooking the possibility of student teachers' energy to participate in schools activities, as compared to the teachers in the schools that have been teaching for a long time and appears to have low morale, the point of making conscious decision seems valid. This does not mean that principals should not lead by example, especially considering the importance of leadership in the performance of a school. It is worrying that some schools don't have proper leadership because it informs directly on the general functioning of the school. Having said this, this discussion serves to maintain that the IDL2 level was paramount throughout among some student teachers.

The lack of proper leadership and guidance on the side of the principal influenced negative work ethics among senior managers, the teachers and learners in the school. For instance some teachers always stay in the staffroom during teaching time and the principal did not seem to speak with them enquiring the reason for always being in the staffroom. This influenced identity change (IDL1) for some of the student teachers. The student teachers in this category of IDL1 blamed the lack of leadership from school management and the lack of teachers' urgency for influencing their individual attributes of being hard working. Some student teachers indicated that they became demotivated at their teaching responsibilities as a result. This follows from Wenger's argument (1999) that teaching as a community of practice can shape teachers' identities.

According to Wenger (1999) teaching on its own can be viewed as a community of practice, where teachers do their jobs, and when this happen it influences the new entrants in the community of teaching. However if teaching as a community of practice is turned into a community of people who are not practicing in accordance with the requirements of the practice, it is likely to negatively influence the new entrants in the practice who may follow the work ethics of the teachers thy join in the practice. For instance, as noted above, the 'lack of urgency' among rural schools teachers influenced the student teachers. Therefore, the student teachers as new entrants in the rural schools teaching practice adapted to the 'lack of urgency' behaviour of the teachers in the rural schools which partially influenced some of the student teachers individual identity (IDL1). This is because at some stage, student teachers could not even attend to their classes on time, and this new identity was not part of them before they went to rural schools, which implies that they were partially influenced by rural teachers while they were on teaching practice.

In view of the above, I deemed the interactions between the student teacher (the new entrants in the teaching practice), with the principal, teachers and the learners (the existing members in the teaching practice) to have a significant influence on their identity of the new entrants. When the researcher probed the student teachers about whether or not they interacted or communicated with the principal and how the interactions influenced them, they responded in the following way.

Student teacher C: *The principal is the problem. He has got this no care attitude, it's like he doesn't care. Apparently when the teachers close the gates he opens them for late comers so I feel as though because he doesn't instill that discipline then everyone just becomes relaxed because no one is on their backs to keep working.*

Student teacher E: *Sir in my second year I did my teaching practice at Sunday Park and there were no such issues. The teachers had gate duties and parents whose children came late to schools were summoned. The principal and the teachers were pulling in the same direction and had meetings to discuss such issues…*

Some student teachers kept comparing the rural schools context with schools in their urban backgrounds, especially how urban schools are managed so as to make sense of their experiences in a new context. This is because while on teaching practice in urban schools, student teacher A mentioned that "*the principal interacted with the teachers to influence the working ethics of the teachers"*. The comparison of rural context with urban schools context implies that the student teachers had adapted to the identity of how things are done in urban schools and looked at the principal as a source of direction in school management. They therefore expected to find a similar arrangement in rural schools which tend to be totally different in rural schools as the principal did not promote or encourage the desirable work ethics among the teachers. This influenced student teachers to lose their identity of hard work and hence followed habits of rural teachers for instance not attending to their classes on time. Therefore, even though school curriculum and practices looks remarkably similar between rural and urban schools as per (Hawley, 1997), it is important for researchers to establish contextual differences between the two contexts so as to make knowledge about the two contexts explicit to student teachers which may make them to make fair comparisons between rural and urban contexts.

In addition to the above, student teachers individual and professional identity of hard work was further negatively affected by the teaching practice in the sense that, some of the student teachers indicated that they felt so guilty that they have become 'lazy' like the rural schools teachers. They had started to contemplate whether or not they should go to class to teach, which not part of what their individual identity was. Their argument was that their observation of no urgency for

attending classes, which was common in both schools, somehow influenced them to behave like the rural school teachers. This implies that the practical experiences provided to student teachers may shape their identity, this links to Tabot and Mottanya (2012) assertion that different schools contexts influence student teachers to perform differently. It can therefore be argued that the attitude of the two rural schools teachers towards work, informed on student teachers' individual identity change from being hardworking educators into 'lazy' educators, this was coherent with the identity category IDL1 as shown in the excerpt below.

Student teacher A: *sadly, I've become so relaxed it's not funny. Like I don't put so much effort in a lesson plan like I used to before, so when I came here last week for instance I was energized when I wake up in the morning but now I'm like but why must I prepare for classes.*

This particular student teacher seemed to be influenced by the rural schools context especially the attitude of the rural schools teachers. Besides his responses, I observed during the interview especially when he said 'sadly' that he was very emotional about how he had lost his identity of class preparation as a professional educator. This serves to re-affirm that some student teachers' individual identity was changed by the new context, and seemed to be shaped in a negative way as the university does not prepare them for such practices but to be responsible teachers. Although Schafft and Jackson (2010), Lock (2008) and Sharplin (2002) concluded that rural teaching presents such challenges to student teachers, local researchers such as Bulfor (2007) posit that projects like the RTEP would assist student teachers in terms of understanding the dynamics of working as teachers in rural schools. The argument is that the core group of student teachers with previous teaching experience in rural schools, would be familiar with issues, questions and challenges associated with rural schools and they would positively support the new student teachers on the rural schools project.

When I further probed the student teachers about whether doing teaching experience in rural schools had changed them from being good teachers in terms of fulfilling the professional requirements of the teaching practice into a bad teacher who neglected their teaching responsibilities, one of them responded in the following way.

Student teacher E: *yes of course teaching here is influencing us especially with the low work rate from our mentors. They made us lazier also which changed our identity of hard work*

Such responses serve to indicate that as the student teachers engaged with the rural school community of practice (Wenger, 1999), their identity was changed to be the same as that of the teachers they found in the rural schools (IDL1). However what remained to be seen was whether this new 'lazy' identity was to remain permanent with them or bound to change as they went back into the urban schools context which can be seen in the discussion below.

Interesting to note is that although some student teachers acknowledged that their identity was influenced by the rural schools teaching experience (IDL1), it was not foregone conclusion that they would work in such conditions. When probed on the idea of taking up teaching opportunities in rural schools, they maintained that they were comfortable but also stressed that the teaching practice exercise would not influence them to make such a big decision of teaching in rural schools. This can be evidenced in the following except.

Student teacher J: *I wouldn't teach here because after four weeks of being here I became too comfortable that I became lazy, I got into a comfort zone and I think it's imperative that one doesn't fall into that comfort zone, that is when one tends to get drowned and change into one of those lazy teachers which is a huge problem with rural schools.*

This response serves to confirm that some student teachers preserved their individual identity of not being 'lazy' like what they have experienced in the school. As noted earlier, the 'lazy' identity they demonstrated while on teaching practice because of their association with rural schools teachers and principal did not mean that they were completely assimilated into the idea of becoming 'lazy' educators. This implies that they did not get affiliated to the 'lazy' identity of rural schools teachers and therefore did not identify themselves with the group of rural teachers; hence they still valued and maintained the notion of hard work which defines the teaching practice.

While on teaching practice in rural schools some student teachers compromised with the contexts in rural schools (IDL3) in order to achieve the desired objective for example achieving a pass mark from their teaching practice. They neither adapted the identity of rural schools context nor retained their individual identity. Such students when probed on whether or not they would take up teaching employment in rural schools were divided as per the following excerpt.

Student teacher F: *yes I would stay, I'm not sure why but I would just stay not because I enjoy being lazy. Like now I make sure I follow things here to make sure that I go through my teaching experience.*

This serves to indicate that in the interest of teaching practice, this participant was ready to compromise the context in rural schools (IDL3). What she could have meant is that, teaching in rural school was not about her own individual identity but rather it was a responsibility. This student teacher acknowledged the challenges she faced with rural teaching but such challenges would not stop her from teaching in rural schools context. This implies that the identity of an individual or the rural schools context cannot be a sufficient condition to draw conclusion on whether someone will teach or not teach in the rural schools context. It is a combination of factors that informs on the decisions of whether or not teachers take up teaching jobs in rural schools context. Among such factors that inform on the student teachers decision is their beliefs. Pohan (1996) notes that it is such beliefs of student teachers which are filtered by the teacher training programs and hence inform on decisions on whether student teachers may or may not teach in rural schools context.

Student teachers also established a distinction between hard working teachers and lazy teachers. This partially informed on their individual identity in the sense that it made some of them copy the 'lazy' identities of the rural schools teachers. One of the student teachers claimed that her head of department (Mentor) is lazy because the student teacher always took over her classes ever since they arrived at the school. The student teacher further claimed that the teacher who is supposed to be her mentor delegated all her work to her and the learners were so behind in syllabi coverage which caused a lot of pressure on the student teacher. Also that the learners did

not have the foundation they were supposed to have in English. This illustrated by the following response:

Student teacher G: *it makes me work ten times harder that someone who speaks the language; because maybe I'd repeat myself more I would speak slower, demonstrate more and that may change who I am.*

This implies that the rural schools learners' poor foundation in English was a challenge to student teachers which may have influenced their identity in terms of adapting to the slow nature identity of rural students to allow them access to knowledge. Although this is the student teachers professional obligation, the fact that they come from a background where learners get strong foundation in English as a medium of instruction could have been an identity challenge for some of them as they were required to break down their content to the level of learners' abilities. This is because student teachers are taught the importance of always being aware of the nature of learners in class regarding the content. For the other participants in the study, language was not an identity challenge; to them it was a matter of continuity. They found out that in their classes, there was an established language structure and the learners were speaking fluent English and understood the student teachers communication in English. This can be evidenced in the following excerpt;

Student teacher H: *I was impressed that some learners can speak English eloquently. I don't want to lie sir, language is not a barrier to me because if ever I could communicate with them and they could hear me and do what I was telling them to do, it means language is not a barrier.*

Analyzing the responses of student teacher G and student teacher H, it can be established that the process of advancing English as a medium of instruction in rural classes is a little bit delayed. In lower grades there is more explanation of concepts in the learners' home language and little emphasis on English as a medium of instruction. This influenced the identity of student teacher G as she was teaching grade 8 and 9. While in upper classes, there is more emphasis on English as a medium of instruction and hence student teacher H had little challenges with her grade 10 and 11 class as they were used to English language as a medium of instruction. The medium of

instruction is one of the important goals of the teaching and learning process as it helps to enable epistemological access. According to Al Busaidi and Bashir (1997), teachers have to play a significant role in the process of teaching and learning so as to contribute to the upgrading of the quality of educational services. This links to the flexibility in terms of code switching which is required from the student teachers while on teaching practice so as to enable learners to access knowledge.

While in the field the participants reported that the learners' inability to read or poor foundation in English could have been aided by the rural schools. When probed why participant E thought like that, she said;

***Student teacher E**: Worst case was that the rural schools teachers were even lazy to give textbooks to learners, the textbooks were packed in plastics in the library, yet if learners had textbooks it could make a difference to their learning*.

This response serves to indicate that rural schools have teaching materials, only that they are not optimally used. Although putting these resources to use could have been a challenge, it is interesting to know the extent to which this influenced the participants' original perception that rural schools don't have teaching materials, or whether they shifted their perception to the fact that teaching materials are available but rather they are not being utilized efficiently. According to some participants, it was this lack of effort on the side of the rural teachers for example failing to issue textbooks, which made the student teachers to brand them as 'lazy'. I acknowledged that during their numerous interactions with the rural schools teachers, this 'lazy' attitude partly influenced some of the student teachers' individual identity. When asked whether the laziness of rural teachers influenced their individual identity, one of the student teachers responded;

***Student teacher I**: Yes of course it did influence our identity because they made us lazy. We are no longer hardworking and effective like we used to be in urban schools, this is mainly because in urban schools we find all systems in place, learners have textbooks, educators mentor you properly not merely delegating all their work to you.*

With this kind of response, the researcher established that the individual identity of student teachers was influenced during interactions with the rural teachers (IDL1). However, I wondered why these student teachers would allow the 'lazy attitude' of rural teachers to influence them. Student teachers were expected to make their professional work be paramount because their teaching courses provides them with the necessary skills required for teaching practice, but instead they allowed themselves to be influenced by the 'lazy attitude' of rural teachers.

In addition to the above, the teaching experience was conducted for a period of four weeks. If this short period was enough to influence the identity of student teachers, I wondered what would happened if these same student teachers were to stay in the same rural schools for a long period of time just like in Tanzania. In Tanzania according to Komba and Kira's (2013), student teachers are obliged to attend teaching practice blocks as part of teacher training for a minimum of 4 weeks and maximum of 8 weeks depending on the nature of the teaching program so as to expose them to rural school communities, schools and classroom conditions. This implies that longer the student teachers last in rural schools, the more the chances that their identity will be influenced. This links to Wengers' (1999) ideas that identity is an ongoing practice.

Also, the other factor which would influence identity shift of student teachers was the extent to which they socialized with teachers they found in rural schools. The assumption is that student teachers are expected to negotiate their social life to try and work with the teachers they find in rural schools which informs on the category of IDL3. Musvosvi (1998) notes that, in a school there is concept of socialization whereby new teachers are initiated in to the school culture by the old teachers. This also links to Wengers' (1999) notion of identity as a community of practice. In this study, student teachers were expecting to get support from the experienced teachers in rural schools and the assumption was that during socializations the student teachers would get a chance to be informed how the rural schools teachers manage in the rural context.

Although some of the student teachers had a chance to socialize with the rural teachers for instance at a gathering which was out of school context, such a gathering was not professionally educative to the student teachers and was less beneficial in terms of supporting them on how they should manage to work as teachers in the rural schools context. When the researcher probed

them on whether the party gathering where they were invited by the rural teachers helped them to connect with the identity of rural teachers, Student teacher A responded as per the following excerpt;

Student teacher A: *Sir that party was a social gathering with less significance on our professional requirements and that's why some of our colleagues did not attend.*

It is important to establish that, professionally educative social interactions between rural schools teachers and student teachers would help student teachers to appreciate rural schools teaching and re-think about their negative perception on rural schools teaching. This would consequently help the student teachers to negotiate their identity by starting to adapt to the ways in which rural teachers manage to teach with the challenges in the rural schools (IDL1). This also links to Wengers' (1999) notion of teaching as a community of practice where the new entrants learn from the old members of the practice.

The data also indicates that the inadequate teaching material in rural schools was also instrumental in influencing student teachers identity. Worth to note is that nine out of the ten participants were born and grew up in urban context. They went to primary and high schools in urban or semi urban areas and are currently studying at one of the well-resourced universities in South Africa. This implies that cases of unavailability of teaching aids may have been minimal or non-existent in their educational history. On this basis the unavailability of basic teaching aids in rural schools, a context in which they found themselves in while on teaching experience may have caused a change in their individual identity hence informing category IDL1.

The assumption of student teachers prior to the rural schools teaching practice was that rural schools lacked teaching materials. However, during their teaching practice they established that resources were available but insufficient and in other cases, some resources available were inefficiently used. This can be seen in the following excerpts.

Student teacher F: *In my life orientation classes we rarely have teaching materials to do physical training and only selected classrooms have teaching materials. In the whole school, half*

of the classes have nothing just the chalk board. This therefore influences my individual identity because sometimes you have to struggle to even get a chalk by the time you get chalk 15 minutes have passed.

Similarly student teacher D also, said that;

Student teacher D: *When it comes to having to go to class, you already have that negative attitude. You think of where to get chalk or duster, so why bother even going to class because the first 30 minutes is spent on trying to find something and then you left with 30 minutes to try and organize the class as learners don't have enough chairs.*

It is interesting to see how the participants were putting blame on the inadequate teaching resources to have influenced their individual identity, for instance the identity of them attending to their classes on time. Preparing teaching materials before the class is one of the criterion of class preparedness, this makes the student teachers to be partially blamed for their identity influences because they are expected to organize teaching resources before the classes commence. The fact that they don't prepare their teaching materials on time for classes is inconsistent with what they are taught at training institutions and hence the argument that their individual identity changes is as a result of not following the established teaching methodologies given to them at training institutions.

4.5 Interactions of rural schools teachers, learners, and principals with student teachers

Participants also indicated that the attitude of learners within the rural schools context was also significant in informing on the individual identity of student teachers. In particular learners' response to time was crucial in terms of enabling student teachers achieve their goals during the teaching practice. The earlier the learners responded to schools times and classes would allow student teachers to deliver their planned work for that particular class. The poor response to school times caused a lot of frustrations and anxiety among student teachers which influenced their individual identity (IDL1). This can be evidenced in the following response.

Student teacher D: *My biggest problem has been the poor attendance of learners. They come late to school and some of them don't attend classes, which means that the next time you go back to the class, you would find different learners. This means that you have to repeat the work again because some learners were absent in the previous period…*

Student teacher I: *I do think there is some lack of effort; I don't know maybe it could be because we arrived when students are busy with exams……..*

In view of the above, student teachers should have known that learners in rural schools may not strictly adhere to the school time. This is because of a number of factors, for instance having to walk long distance to get to school and the unavailability of efficient transport. However, the student teachers had less influence on the fact that their teaching practice coincided with the exams at the schools they attended and this somehow affected the attendance of learners. But above all, the rural schools and the project manager expected the student teachers to plan on how to handle such a situation in order to achieve their goals during teaching practice. They went to rural schools with the mentality of some of the urban schools where there is always order in terms of learners' attendance. In circumstances where learners did not respond on time it really influenced their individual identity. This poor attendance by learners is also cited in the findings of Tabot and Mottanya (2012) who established that student teachers identified poor response to bells and lateness when coming to school by learners especially in a day school as one of the challenges they experienced in their practice.

The poor attendance of learners coupled with inadequate teaching resources such as textbooks, charts, boards, chalk, duster, furniture among others significantly impacted on the individual identity of student teachers (IDL1) as they became disoriented with the context and lost their identity of hard work. Although they had an idea of what happens in rural schools before they went there as part of their perceptions, the field context in rural schools was overwhelming to some of them which influenced their individual identity as noted earlier that some of them became lazy with their teaching responsibilities. Within the unfamiliar rural schools context, the student teachers had to adapt quickly through identity negotiation to enable them fit within the rural schools context and carry out their teaching practice and hence explaining the category of

IDL1. This links to Tabot and Mottanya (2012) and (Komba and Kira, (2013) who concluded that, the purpose of teaching practice is to equip student teachers with field experience to enable them to put theory in to practice and familiarize themselves with the conditions under which they will work as trained professionals. The process of student teachers getting familiar with the rural schools context is one which informs on the shift in their individual identity (IDL1).

For effectiveness in their teaching practice, the rural schools context dictated that student teachers quickly adjust their individual identity. For instance they had to creatively think of how to manage with inadequate teaching materials in rural schools. Consequently, some student teachers had to make use of the available resources in preparation for their classes. The fact that they were used to schools that had resources readily available, having to create teaching materials to inform their teaching somehow influenced their identity (IDL1). Patel (1996) refers to this kind of creativity as competencies expected of a teacher. The student teachers that managed to connect to rural schools context can be regarded to have acquired contextual competencies, because they were willing to adapt to the context and that opens possibilities to learn. This is also because they became fully familiar with their working environment and used it to support their teaching, hence effective teaching within the challenging context. They drew examples within the rural schools context, designed teaching aids with the existing materials in rural schools. The data below reveals how some student teachers showed elements of contextual competencies by using the rural schools environment to aid their teaching and learning process.

Student teacher H: *I knew rural schools have limited teaching aids, everything available must be used. You must teach the learners according to the environment that they stay in. So in terms of teaching aids I knew they were limited in rural schools and I had to use whatever is available.*

Student teacher B*: I was born in rural areas and went to primary school in rural schools. So I knew what to expect here in terms of teaching resources. Many rural schools are like this but the teacher has to teach……*

In this regard, we can note that to some extent student teachers adapted to the rural schools context during their teaching practice. It is paramount to note that student teachers' ability to

creatively connect their individual identity to the rural schools context may influence how they perform in the teaching practice. Therefore, student teachers who negotiated their individual identity in relation to the rural schools context realized greater success as compared to those that were resistant to adapt to the rural schools context. This can be linked to the findings of Schafft and Jackson (2010), Lock (2008) and Sharplin (2002) who established that rural teaching is a challenge because rural schools do not have the best schools in relation to unavailability of infrastructures and teaching resources.

The other ground of identity change was the ability of student teachers to tolerate conditions in the rural schools context. Worth to note is that from the whole group, with the exception of few student teachers who attended in township schools with some conditions of rurality, only one student teacher had experienced the real circumstances in the rural contexts, as he was born in rural areas and attended schools in rural schools. Generally speaking, the fact that student teachers connected to the rural schools context especially managing to teach with challenges such as indiscipline of learners and limited teaching materials is an indication in the shift within their individual identity. In relation to this, it is interesting to note that some student teachers demonstrated their willingness to teach in rural schools. They maintained that the teaching experience they went through had given them some impetus and made them to consider teaching in rural schools in a positive perspective. This can be seen in the following excerpt.

Student teacher H: *I think it's the love I have for rural schools now and yes I have adopted a rural identity because for me it's a passion to work with such underprivileged schools, I feel like I got a lot to offer.*

Student teacher B*: Some of us were born and lived in the rural areas for example Limpopo, so we will go back there and teach because we have that identity of rural areas like it won't be a problem to adapt to teaching there.*

Based on these responses therefore, it can be argued that some student teachers were influenced by conducting teaching experience in rural schools which impacted on their individual identities (IDL1). However the data also suggest that for some student teachers, conducting teaching practice in rural schools would not in any way influence them to take up teaching employment in

rural schools. When I probed them on teaching in rural schools after their teaching, they were totally negative on the idea. This may suggests that the individual identity of some student teachers was not influenced with the teaching experience in rural schools (IDL2). This can be seen in the following excerpt.

Student teacher A*: I've been spoilt by the urban areas that going to the rural area would be complete step up; I wouldn't accept the challenge for now because I am still comfortable in the urban areas. I love life in urban areas I will not lie to you.*

Before going for teaching practice, the researcher noted that this particular student teacher perceived rural teaching negatively. While on teaching practice, he found out most of his perceptions to be true. This therefore makes the researcher wonder if this may have negatively influenced him not to negotiate his individual identity to be consistent with the rural schools context and hence explaining why he was not interested in teaching in rural schools.

The contentious argument based on the data responses was the aspect of time duration of the teaching practice. As earlier noted, I probed the student teacher on whether the time duration of the teaching practice is significant enough to cause an impact on their individual identity. It should be pointed out that the WSoE rural teaching experience takes student teachers for a period of four weeks similar to other universities in South Africa for example the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Balfour, 2007). In this research, I established that some student teachers confessed that within the first week of their teaching practice their identity was greatly influenced (IDL1) whereas others were reluctant and indicated that they were there for a short period of time which would have less significance on their identity change (IDL2). IDL2 Student teachers argued that the time of the teaching experience was less significant in terms of influencing their identity and that there are certain things that you cannot change in a period of four weeks.

As earlier noted from the findings of Komba and Kira (2013), I was prompted to investigate from the participants the likely effects of the longevity of the teaching practice period on their individual identity. Whether or not their individual identity classified as IDL2 would eventually

shift into the category of IDL1 if the teaching practice period was prolonged by the WSoE project supervisors. For instance if they would become 'lazy' teachers like some of the educators they talked about in their earlier responses. On this student teacher J responded in the following way.

Student teacher J: *But perhaps if I was like there for long time maybe there could've been certain things that I could change about my identity to be like them. Remember I got to see those kids for four weeks only.*

Also student teachers in the category of IDL2 maintained that the more they got time to engage with the learners out of classroom context about both educational and social issues they did realize that learners wanted to learn and hence they forged some kind of connection with them. However they seemed to have been disappointed with the time duration because one of them indicated that;

Student teacher A*: The problem though is that it's not been so much of an experience to change and be like them because it's only been four weeks, going to one class a day and then sitting in the staff room for the rest of the day and less time to socialize with the student and the teachers.*

This response serves to support the category of IDL2. This is because as per field observations, student teachers stayed at the Wits rural facility from the time they went for teaching practice. Also, they were transported to their respective schools to do teaching practice during the day and were picked up and transported back to the facility. In relation to Gee's (2000-2001) identity notion of 'affinity' or A-identity, which relates to our affiliation and how we identify ourselves with a particular group of people, I noted that this disadvantaged the student teachers because they did not get the time to socialize. The implication of this is that there was less time to mingle with the teachers at the schools, learners and even the local communities to have a complete feel of the rural context. This may have hampered the process of identity negotiation of student teachers which explains why some of them remained in the IDL2 category. Relating to the 'Nature' or N-identity by Gee (2000-2001), which states that: who we are depends on where we come from. It was established that the background of student teachers was significant in

influencing their identity especially in the IDL1 category. Data revealed that most of the student teachers have urban backgrounds and this was evident with their perceptions about rurality. This links to the findings of Lock (2008) with the RTEP initiative where student teachers thoughts about rurality led them to perceive rural schools in a certain way. In this research, student teachers perceptions were instrumental in determining the identity category which they belonged to as they carried out their teaching practice in the rural context.

The participant who is born in rural areas had no issues whatsoever and her perceptions were based on the real situations that she had experienced in the past. While on teaching practice in rural schools, the identity of this student teacher was not influenced (IDL2), to her it was a continuation of her past experiences. On the other hand, student teachers that were born in urban areas idealized conditions in rural schools which influenced their identity shifts (IDL1). While on teaching practice, they found out they could accommodate the rural contexts even if it was completely different from their urban background. When the researcher probed them about their perceptions and how they found rural schools, one of them responded in the following way;

Student teacher H*:* *Like I said I have never been exposed to this kind of life, it is my first experience in a rural school, I've never been to a rural area, whenever I hear about rural areas something just crosses my heart, although things are difficult to adjust into when I first got here but all in all, coming here just made me feel like I belong to such schools.*

The feeling of belonging by student teacher H in the above excerpt, "…I feel like I belong to such school…" was a result of such participant mutually engaging with the rural schools context. This links to Wenger's (1999) dimension of 'mutual engagement'. 'Mutual engagement' according to Wenger is 'a joint enterprise' and 'a shared repertoire' which is informed by the interactions the student teachers had with the students, rural teachers and the principals. The interaction between the student teachers and the rural school fraternity was significant in influencing student teachers' individual identity, it changed their negative perceptions about rural schools and changed their individual identify (IDL1) or they became accommodative and compromised with the rural schools context (IDL3). The student teachers engagement within rural schools took place in a number of ways. The student teachers interacted with rural schools

students in classrooms situation and outside and they also interacted with teachers at school. Socially the student teachers were once invited by the rural school teachers of Mangwa secondary school to attend a function outside the school and finally some student teachers happened to interact with the school principals at schools when they were making enquiries.

Whether such interactions rural teachers made student teachers gain professional growth was a point of interest. One of the participants indicated that rural schools teacher attached to her as a mentor did not support her professionally especially in terms of teaching in rural schools contexts. She remarked that:

Student teacher E: *I was not oriented not at all she would just introduce me to the class and leave or just say it's that class over there. If I say I've seen her teach it's a lie. I've never seen her teach she is not open to the idea of having to see me teach, so in terms of support we get it from other teachers. One of them just asked for my lesson plan, my teacher didn't ask for anything she just asked after 'how did it go' after the period.*

This particular student teacher lacked professional support from the rural teacher who was supposed to be her mentor. This kind of support would help student teachers to be nurtured in terms of teaching in rural schools context and hence enhance their identity negotiation. The fact that such support was not provided explains why the individual identity of some student teachers never changed (IDL2). One of the student teachers indicated that she did not develop teaching skills through seeing somebody teaching, that she did not gain any kind of experience through mentorship. It is therefore paramount to argue that if mentorship was provided by the rural schools teachers, it could have had a positive influence on the identity of student teachers and hence the category of IDL1.

4.6 Discipline and behaviour of rural learners on the identity of student teachers

The other element which influenced the identity of student teachers was discipline of learners. Some student teachers had perceptions that learners in rural schools are well disciplined because

of their humble backgrounds. Field experiences indicated that their perceptions were wrong. The student teachers established that some students lacked discipline. They also noted that the lack of discipline on the side of the learners in the two schools where they conducted teaching practice resulted from two schools failing to maintain discipline. The student teachers indicated that the school disciplinary committees were not functional and the principal and the teachers did not promote discipline at the two schools. The lack of discipline by learners as shown in the excerpt below was a basis of influence to the individual identity of student teachers. When the researcher probed them on how the lack of discipline by learners influenced them, one of the student teachers responded as seen in the following excerpt.

Student teacher G: *Yes the discipline of students influences me because it directly influences my teaching experience. I cannot teach like I would have wanted to, I have to waste a lot of time on maintaining order in the classroom instead of teaching.*

This response indicates that, the Identity of this particular student teacher was influenced by the lack of discipline by the learners. He could not follow his professional identity of teaching and therefore had to compromise with the indiscipline of learners by calling them to order, attending to rude learners and accepting late comers in class, in order to achieve his goal of teaching (IDL3). This is because even if he managed to teach, his effectiveness was limited by learners' lack of discipline.

In relation to the above, it is worth noting that among their perceptions, student teachers had mixed views about the discipline of rural learners. Some student teachers expected rural learners to have a lot of respect for teachers given their humble rural backgrounds while others believed that rural learners lack discipline. The later believed so because they come from the backgrounds where learners don't have respect for their teachers. This assumption follows from (Brown, 2004) who posits that the most resilient student teachers conceptions of teaching emanates from memories of their own schooling and observations of their own teachers. Student teachers always keep memories of indiscipline towards their former teachers during their schooling days and therefore the indiscipline of learners in rural schools influenced their individual identity. The indiscipline made student teachers to be frustrated and hence they shifted away from being

caring teachers into teachers who did not care about the learners (IDL1). This kind of frustration can be seen in the following excerpt;

Student teacher B: *I think the indiscipline of learners puts you in a situation that if students are not around there is nothing I'm going to do. But if they are around then I will make a plan to teach them. That kills my identity as a person who prepares for classes.*

This response indicate to the fact that, indiscipline of learners made student teachers frustrated and they were challenged in terms of giving up their core identity of preparing for classes. This further informs on why some student teachers experienced identity changes into the category of IDL1. The frustration was also witnessed when the researcher probed the student teachers of whether indiscipline of learners worries them especially with regards to the fact that it's their duty as teacher to maintain discipline. The student teacher who grew up in rural areas remarked that;

Student teacher B: *The only thing which worries her is the fact that, she has already passed the stage of being affected by challenges in rural areas and for them they are still there and comfortable about leaving in rural areas. So for me, it doesn't change who I am because I've got a lot of things that I have to question for instance why came to a rural school? Or why I need to make a change in their lives through teaching.*

The implication of this according to student teacher B is that, teaching and learning has to start with the learners, they have to show interest in it because it can motivate the teachers to work hard and positively influence their education. The positive or negative attitude of learners therefore can influence hard work and lazy identity among student teachers. Even though this particular student teacher insisted that indiscipline of learners did not influence her identity (IDL2), the fact that she was frustrated with rural schools student and to some extent gave up his lesson preparation was clear testimony that her identity was partly influenced as a result of the way rural learners behaved (IDL1). Skills of how to manage disciplinary cases by the student teachers should be a responsibility of teacher training institutions, the discussion below highlights the role which teacher training institutions play to support the effectiveness of student teachers while on teaching practice

4.7. Initial Teacher Education and the identity of student teachers in rural schools context

Worth to note is that the extents to which student teachers manage to resist the challenges presented by the rural schools context and hence forth preserve their identity maybe linked to whether WSoE sufficiently prepared student teachers through the different educational modules offered. As noted earlier in this research, universities need to plan with regard to rural schools teaching practice, through tailoring the curriculum in the educational institutions to support student teachers to teach in rural schools context. This would enable their effectiveness while on teaching practice and even later when they may opt to take up teaching opportunities in rural schools. This is however undermined by the anti-rural bias of teacher training institutions through their teacher training programs. In view of this, Schafft and Jackson (2010), Mukeredzi and Mandrona (2013), Lock (2008) and the Common Wealth Schools Commission on Schooling in Rural Australia (1988), maintains that rural education should always emerge as a topic in teacher training programs as a way of attracting teachers to teach in rural schools context.

In support of the above views on rural teacher training, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (2000) argue that, the teacher training institutions need to equip student teachers with skills and knowledge to teach in rural and remote locations. Responses from participants in this research indicate that, student teachers had no prior knowledge about rural schools hence they developed perceptions about rural schools teaching which eventually influenced their individual identity when they started conducting their teaching practices in rural schools. The participants in this study indicated that they received limited orientation from WSoE about rural schools teaching practice. This implies that if WSoE could allow student teachers proper orientation through adequate preparation on rural schools teaching practice and its challenges, there is likelihood that the student teachers will develop an identity connection with rural schools even prior to their teaching practice which would positively influence their individual identity. When I probed student teachers on whether WSoE has prepared them for teaching in rural schools, one of the student teachers responded as below;

Student teacher j: *In our lectures we are taught how to be good teachers in an ideal classroom situation. An ideal classroom is a classroom that has 25 to 30 learners, It is a classroom that is*

spacious where you can walk around and interact with learners, it's a classroom that is well resourced for example you may use technology…

During their teaching practice in rural schools the student teachers established that the situation is different. Among other challenges that influenced their identity, rural schools are characterized with big class sizes and they are under resourced. It is in these classrooms where student teachers are expected to meet the requirements of pedagogical practices, learner's educational needs and most importantly meet the standards of teaching practice set up by WSoE. These demands of teaching in rural schools therefore influenced the identities of student teachers.

Knowledge about rural schools is therefore of paramount importance for student teachers intending to conduct their teaching practice in rural schools. Such knowledge will help them understand how to handle rural teaching and hence achieve their desired goals.

The implication of this for sustainability purposes of taking student teachers to Acornhoek schools, Bushbuckridge, in Mpumalanga province for teaching practice, WSoE need to close the knowledge gap of what is taught to student teachers and the reality in the rural schools by including in the teacher training curriculum programs that may orient student teachers on the context where they conduct teaching practice. It can also be done through organising workshops for student teachers about realities in rural schools context. The argument is that if knowledge about rural schools context is made explicit to the student teachers during their programs or workshops, they can exhibit required teaching skills coherent with rural schools context, which may make student teachers to be effective, develop identity with regards to rural teaching, and enhance their adaptability to the rural schools context.

Furthermore, the lack of student teacher training at WSoE institutions, especially in view of rural education, makes student teachers idealize rural education. This is based on the data collected in view of their perceptions, for instance that *"classes in rural schools are overcrowded"* also that *"rural schools don't have teaching and learning resources"*. Programs at WSoE therefore need to integrate these issues while preparing student teachers for teaching practice, specifically those placed to conduct teaching practice in rural schools. Such perceptions mentioned above if they

are not addressed to student teachers, it may make them to develop negativity about rural schools, hence negatively influencing their identity while on rural schools teaching experiences. This is in line with Tabot and Mottanya (2012), who maintain that teachers' training specifically through teaching practice forms the backbone of any successful educational system. This is underpinned by the fact that in all cases of teaching practice, schools differ in terms of pupil-teacher relationship, pupil activities, pupil academic orientation, discipline, learning facilities, resources and administration (Tabot and Mottaya, 2012). As we noted earlier educational institutions tend to roll out their teaching programs based on ideal situations in urban contexts. It is on this basis that WSoE needs to appreciate the differences in context between rural and urban schools and therefore provide knowledge to students to become reflexive practitioners in different contexts.

4.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented and analysed the findings. The findings showed how student teachers negotiate their individual and professional identities in order to adapt and teach in a rural context. The analysis of qualitative data has been presented to show how the participants negotiated identity. From the analysis presented above, student teachers varied in terms of their adaptability to rural context. Some conformed to rural identity (IDL1), others resisted and retained their urban identity (IDL2), while others compromised with the context in rural schools in order to achieve the goals of their teaching practice (IDL3). IDL1 was however the most prominent as student teachers aligned their identity to rurality so as to be effective during their teaching practice.

The findings show that some student teachers had perceptions about teaching in rural schools. These perceptions were influential in determining the level of identity that student teachers were associated with in this discussion. It was therefore worth to investigate the relationship between the perceptions of student teachers and their connection with rural schools context and how that may have influence their identity.

Data also suggests that although student teachers were faced with some challenges in terms of connecting to the rural schools context, through identity negotiations they were well equipped for the task of conducting teaching practice and achieving their goals of conducting teaching practice in rural schools. In achieving their goals, the student teachers needed to make a paradigm shift from having perceptions about rurality into managing to teach in rural schools. This approach was characterised by individual student teachers' identity shifts through identity negotiations, team spirit, pride and accountability to maintain the standard requirements of the teaching practice.

Furthermore, the comparisons between rural schools and urban schools were also a challenge to student teachers in terms of taking charge of their teaching practice. Data revealed that student teachers openly compared the two contexts, reflected on what used to happen during their teaching practice sessions in urban schools which partially influenced effectiveness and performance while on teaching practice in rural schools.

The onus was on the teachers in rural schools (Mentors), to allow student teachers to express themselves in what they teach and support them to settle in rural schools. Although this was the responsibility of the mentors, data revealed that the student teachers did not obtain the required support as they often remarked that rural schools teachers were 'lazy' to carry out their teaching responsibilities and therefore nurturing student teachers by the rural schools teachers was a problem which partly influenced the student teachers individual identity.

While results indicate that some student teachers' identity was not influenced by the rural schools teaching practice, the detailed analysis of data shows that in some instances the same student teachers behaved like rural schools teachers. Of concern is the extent to which the rural schools teachers were capable of guiding the student teachers so as to develop into competent teachers capable of teaching in rural schools context. What is alarming is that WSoE require student teachers to be exposed to conditions in rural schools. This would work as a mechanism to of attracting of attracting qualified teachers to take up teaching posts in rural schools. However, data revealed that the rural schools environment was ineffective in addressing this challenge because it did not enhance the professional growth and effectiveness of student teachers.

In the next chapter, I will present the summary of the findings and the discussion of the results in relation to literature review. The implications and recommendations of the study will also be presented in the next chapter.

Chapter Five:

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss the findings of the study, present the conclusions and implications of the findings. As discussed earlier in chapter one, this research was informed by studies on rural schools teaching and the challenges of teaching in rural schools in Australia by Lock (2008), Sharplin (2002) among others, in Kenya by Tabot anf Mottanya (2012), in Zimbabwe by Mukeredzi (2009) and particularly in South Africa by Mukeredzi and Mandrona (2013), Islam (2011) and Balfour and Moletsane (2008) among others. The central argument in their findings is that, rural schools experience challenges in terms of attracting qualified teachers. This is because rural schools present identity challenges to new teachers that may want to work in rural schools, such as language used, learners' discipline, and attitude of teachers in rural schools among others. Consequently they are proponents to the idea of integrating rural schools teaching into the educational curriculums of teacher training institutions. Balfour, Moletsane and Mitchell (2008) in particular call for the notion of tailoring teaching courses to meet the needs of rural schools communities. This is because it will explicitly allow student teachers the opportunity to understand and appreciate what it means to work in rural schools. This study was on identity of student teachers as they conduct teaching practice in rural schools. The conclusions and recommendations therefore are guided by the identity findings discussed in chapter four.

The participants in this study were WSoE student teachers conducting teaching practice in Bushbuckridge rural schools of Mpumalanga province. The purpose of the study was to investigate how student teachers who practice in rural schools negotiate their identity within that context. There were 10 student teachers in the project and all of them were selected to take part in the study. During the practice, individual and professional identity of these student teachers was investigated and therefore, I established that the identity of the student teachers' was influenced during the process of conducting teaching practice in rural schools as shown in the different categories discussed in chapter four.

5.2. Summary of the findings

The analysis of data in chapter four shows that all student teachers negotiated their identities in order to fulfil the requirements of conducting their teaching practice in rural schools context. The outcomes of their identity negotiations as noted earlier were IDL1, IDL2 and IDL3. The context knowledge domain by Shulman (1987) where he talks about what teachers need to know in terms of learners' background and organisational culture of the schools implies that student teachers should acquire knowledge of rural schools context which influenced their identity. Being in rural schools context provided an opportunity for student teachers to continuously question their previous identities and hence the three levels of identity shift were evident. Although not the focus of this study, it also made student teachers to reflect o the nature of the courses they are offered at University, whether they prepare them for rural context and classrooms.

The perception of student teachers about rural schools teaching prior to teaching practice had both positive and negative influence on their identity, which is similar to the findings of the Common Wealth Commission (1988) on Schooling in Australia. The lack of explicit knowledge by teacher training educational institutions with regard to rural teaching for instance how to handle overcrowded classes or managing to teach with inadequate resources, does not help in terms of preparing student teachers to face identity challenges during their teaching practice. Lock (2008) also concludes that the implicit teacher training makes teachers to idealize and develop negative perceptions on issues about rural schools. In the findings it was evident that the negative or positive perceptions of student teachers influenced their identity.

The School Management Team(s) (SMT) in the schools where the student teachers conducted their teaching practice was also weak in terms of implementing school management plans. This weakness affected the student teachers who were on teaching practice in the two schools. The findings indicated that there was less or no effort from the SMT in terms of ensuring discipline among learners in the schools, as learners were coming late to schools and to attend classes. Even though it appeared like the practice was expected by the student teachers it affected their teaching strategy and hence influenced their identity as they started to forego their lesson preparation which was strongly part of their teacher identity.

The other significant finding was that the four weeks period of teaching practice exercise was too short for some of the student teachers to feel greater identity influences. This explains the category of IDL2 as some student teachers maintained that their identity was not influenced during the period of teaching practice. Komba and Kira (2013) in their study concluded that the teaching practice period for most institutions may not be sufficient for student teachers to achieve the desired objective of the teaching practice. The implication of this short period of teaching practice is that, when student teachers get into rural schools, they may not have the needed time to get used to the whole range of experiences in rural schools context which may have a positive impact on their identity. Longer periods of teaching practice may help the student teachers to get accustomed to the rural schools context, which may have long lasting effect on their individual and professional identity.

In relation to the above, with the longer period of teaching practice, the student teachers will be in position to interact with the rural schools teachers and learners. This may allow greater interactions between rural school teachers and the student teachers. This may positively or negatively influence the student teachers identity in terms of how to teach in rural schools context. This is in agreement with the conclusions made by Komba and Kira (2013) that in the process of conducting teaching practice, the student teachers will conduct mini researches on the teaching and surrounding environment. This can only happen if a long period of teaching practice is given to the student teachers and hence it may have a long lasting impact on the identity of the student teachers.

Worth to remember is that, the major purpose of teaching practice is to equip student teachers with field experiences to enable them to put theory into practice and familiarizing themselves with the conditions under which they will work as trained teachers (Komba and Kira, 3013), (Moletsane, 2008). The participants in this study at WSoE were also under a similar project by Wits to orient them with conditions in rural schools with the assumption that they may get interested in teaching in rural schools. Taking student teachers to rural schools is justified on the grounds that experience will develop among graduate teachers and hence they may get interest to take up job opportunities in rural schools when they finish their training.

Adapting to the identity of rural schools is crucial for student teachers because it helps them to focus on their core role of teaching and learning about the nature of the profession in the context. From the analysed data, it was evident that the participants in the study struggled to get teaching resources in the rural schools. They therefore had to get used to the idea of teaching with minimal resources available at schools and sometimes they had to improvise recourses on their own. Managing to teach without readily available teaching resources was a new idea to them which potentially influenced their identity of teaching in schools where resources are readily available. This teaching experience in rural schools would also make the student teachers to cope with teaching in township schools because they experience similar challenges.

The discipline of learners in rural schools also influenced the student teachers identity, they were disoriented to attend to their classes and they did not mind going an extra mile in preparing for learners. This research also confirms with Tabot and Mottanya (2012) who established that the lack of discipline by learners towards student teachers is among the factors which frustrates student teachers and hence influencing their identity. The findings shows that student teachers had perceived rural schools learners to be disciplined because of their background and discovered that rural learners lack discipline, had no respect and were rude to the student teachers. This disappointment in their perception frustrated the student teachers and some of them changed their identity of caring towards learners (IDL1). They did not care whether learners attended classes or not, their focus shifted to the core reason of attending classes as a compulsory requirement for their teaching courses rather than engaging learners in the teaching and learning process to enable them access knowledge.

This research report about the WSoE project of teaching practice in rural schools may benefit the future groups of student teachers. They will be equipped with new skills of managing to teach in a rural schools and it may influence them into taking up future teaching careers in rural context. Knowledge of the challenges presented by the rural schools context to the previous student teachers and how it influenced their identity may aid the new entrants in rural schools on teaching practice. The new student teachers intending to teach in rural schools will draw on the positive or negative outcomes of the interactions between the participants in this study on one hand and the principals, teachers and the learners in the respective schools where they practiced

on the other hand. This may positively influence the identity negotiation of the new student teachers in the rural schools compared to their predecessors.

Generally, in all student teachers' responses, it was clear that no student teacher had a quick identity connection with the rural schools context. They were challenged by rural schools context and therefore changed their identity (IDL1). Some student teachers resisted the challenges of the rural schools context and maintained their individual and professional identity. Other student teachers were disturbed by the rural schools situation and did not know whether or not they should change their individual and professional identity. They therefore compromised with the rural schools context in order to fulfill their requirements of the teaching practice (IDL3).

Student teachers in the category of IDL1 conformed to Wengers' (1999) notion of identity as a community of practice. They assimilated the rural schools ways of life and associated themselves with the rural schools context. They associated themselves with life in rural schools and as presented in the findings some of them had no problems with taking over teaching opportunities after their teaching career. However some student teachers did like some characters of the rural teachers for example the lazy character and hence they indicated that working in rural schools may negatively influence their identity of hard work.

5.3 Discussion and conclusion

The findings from the study show that some student teachers believed in their individual identity and were initially challenged with the notion of adapting to the rural schools context. Although they were not expected to adapt to the rural schools context as a requirement for their successful teaching practice, they were expected to be versatile because successful teaching in rural schools require deep knowledge of the context and how to maneuver the complexities of rural life. It is always a challenge for one to come from urban context and succeed in rural context without adjusting to the rural context. Wenger (1999) argues that identity manifests as a tendency to come up with certain interpretations, to engage in certain actions, to make certain choices, to value certain experiences, all by virtue of participating in certain enterprises (Wenger, 1999). The process of teaching in rural schools therefore became part and parcel of the students' life and hence influencing their individual identity.

Rural schools presented identity questions which some student teachers could not answer. For instance, during the field observation, some student teachers appeared to struggle in fulfilling the WSoE teaching practice requirements in rural schools. It is on this basis that the researcher supports the findings of Balfour and Moletsane (2008), who call for integrating knowledge of rural schools into the teacher training curriculum. This as noted will enhance student teachers knowledge before they start practicing in rural schools. This knowledge will help them to be ready and prepared to conduct teaching practice in rural schools. This is supported by Sharplin (2002) who maintains that, student teachers need to be provided with an opportunity to establish connections between them and the staff, the students and the community members in rural areas. Further argument to support this stand point is that, teacher preparation programs must incorporate aspects of rural context within the curriculum, in order to expose student teachers about rural communities. If this is done, it will limit student teachers from having idealized perceptions about rural schools and hence reducing identity conflicts when they are taken to conduct teaching practice in rural schools.

The limited teaching resources in rural schools are procedural, part and parcel of the rural schools context and it is something that student teachers had no control over which influences teacher identity. Teacher identity as defined by Alsup (2006) refers to a discourse of how a teacher communicates meaning through creatively thinking and reflecting on who they are and the teaching practice at large. The implication of Alsup's (2006) claim is that teachers need to get involved within the practice, which means that student teachers needed to creatively think in terms of teaching even in the absence of teaching resources which some of the participants in this study managed to do. In cases where student teachers managed to function even without adequate teaching materials was a clear testimony of their identity shift as they come from a background where in most cases learning materials are readily available.

The teaching practice therefore helped to construct new identities for some student teachers. For instance, dysfunctional management and 'lazy' teachers contributed to this new form of identity (IDL1). This is because some student teachers lost their professional identity of hard work and were disoriented to attend to their classes. This follows from the argument that teaching as a

community of practice can shape teachers' identities (Wenger, 1999). Therefore, as teachers carried out their teaching practice they got influenced by the context within the rural school which affected their identity change (IDL1). The dysfunctional management influenced the identity of teachers in the sense that they come from institutions where school management regulates in terms of when and how to do what. The situation was different as discussed in the findings because the student teachers witnessed the principal not effectively taking on his leadership responsibilities for example management of school timetable and school times which made learners report to school and classes late because they were not properly controlled. This frustrated the student teachers, because it made them not deliver their planned lessons and hence they felt it was useless to continue preparing for learners (lesson preps). This explains the reason some of the student teachers changed their identity into that of lazy educators who were not interested in preparing for learners.

Palmer (1999) explains teacher identity as the ability of teachers to make a connection between their personality and the teaching practice. This explanation by Palmer links to the notion of identity which is central in this study. Some student teachers identity was in conformity with the identity of rural schools teaching as they demonstrated in their interactions with the context by following the routines in the rural schools. This testified to the fact that their identity was changing to that of rurality, as evidenced by some student teachers' responses that shows realisation of connection with rurality, rural schools and rural learners, suggesting adaptation to rural schools identity. The reason could be the passion for teaching which is about working with underprivileged children in rural schools. This connection was derived from their teaching practice and their continuous interactions with the learners and the teachers within the rural schools context.

However, some of the student teachers maintained their individual identity. Their interaction with the learners was only class based and outside the classroom they never felt the need to interact with the learners. Even during the classroom they only maintained English as a medium of instruction and did not feel the necessity to code switch into the local languages. Also as per my observation, the same student teachers did not take up the chance to interact with the teachers within the schools and even when the teachers invited them for an outing, the same category of

student teachers declined to go and opted to be taken back to their residences. This therefore explains identity in the category of IDL2.

The teaching practice was a challenge to the student teachers in all categories of IDL1, IDL2 and IDL3. They neither changed into rural ways of life nor maintained their individual identity. On the basis of their responses, the rural schools teaching practice was overwhelming given their urban background. They had to compromise with contexts in rural schools to see them through their teaching practice. They just followed up events in rural schools and were hesitant to admit whether the identity of rural schools influenced their identity or not.

In relation to Gees' (2005) 'discourse' or D-identity, identity is about various issues such as what one has achieved in life in relation to how we relate with other people and also how we are perceived by other people depends on how we relate with them. Considering that the participants attend at an urban based university, managing to conduct teaching practice in rural schools could be perceived as an achievement for the participants. The whole exercise was new to some of the student teachers who had never experienced life in rural areas which resulted in different perceptions and behaviors as they started conducting teaching practice in rural schools.

It therefore suffices to note that the teaching experience in rural areas did not leave the student teachers unaffected. Findings indicate that most of the participants identity was greatly influenced (IDL1). Some developed new skills and approaches to manage in a rural school. This links to the findings of Marais (2004) who established that student teachers gained enormous experience and knowledge ranging from rural schools, teaching, staff meetings and more particularly the nature of learners in rural schools. This also points to the possibility of rural schools influencing student teachers' identity.

5.4 Recommendations

The findings suggest challenges in rural schools such as inadequate resources, poor infrastructure and negative attitude towards work by some rural teachers may have implications on teacher recruitment in rural schools, especially for qualified teachers who may want to take up teaching jobs in rural schools. This partially contributes to poor educational standards in rural schools as

reported by Malassis (1966). There is therefore a need to bridge the gap between teacher education institutions and rural schools through the following ways;

There is need by teacher training institutions to pay attention to teacher development with the view to make them ready to teach in rural contexts. Knowledge about rural schools, teachers and learners need to be made explicit through numerous research works, to help student teachers have correct ideas about rural schools teaching prior to teaching practice so as to limit on identity challenges of rural schools.

Although there is need for curriculum in teacher training institutions to emphasize administrative and content aspects in the process of teacher training as a way of solving practical educational problems (Pinar et al 1995), this research has shown that this may not be sufficient especially in rural schools context. A framework of teacher training with a view and understanding of rural schools context challenges should be incorporated in teacher training institutions so as to prepare student teachers for the challenges of teaching in rural schools context. This will help to train student teachers with rural schools identity which is significant for their effectiveness.

Partnership between rural schools and teacher training institutions should be emphasised by the government and teacher training institutions in order to address the gap between rural realities and policies relating to rural schools. This research therefore serves to make further recommendation for the University – Rural schools partnership which can be used as a framework of making rural teaching attractive and compelling for student teachers. Therefore, the rural schools – university partnership if implemented, is a possible solution to identity issues that student teachers face while on teaching practice. This is because it will help student teachers to formulate realistic perceptions and attitudes which may influence their identity negotiations as they embark on teaching practice in rural schools.

5.5 Further research

Having found out how rural schools context influences identity of student teachers, further studies need to be conducted to establish other challenges that discourages student teachers from conducting their teaching practice in rural schools. Most importantly, on the issue of the duration

of teaching practice, further research might investigate what would happen if the teaching experience period was prolonged and whether or not the individual identity of student teachers classified as IDL2 in this research would eventually shift into the category of IDL1 and for instance become ‘lazy’ teachers like those they found in rural schools.

Further studies are also necessary to compare different rural context to establish if they give similar challenges to student teachers or teachers who may want to work in such areas. This is because although the challenges of teaching in rural schools might be similar, the student teachers may differ in how they approach such challenges and hence different results may be arrived at.

In addition, research need to be conducted to establish the effect of time duration on the identity of teachers. It is therefore necessary to investigate identity negotiations in the long run, for example whether the teachers who were born in urban schools and eventually worked in rural schools experienced identity changes. This follows from the fact that the four weeks the student teachers spent in rural schools seemed not to have a lasting impact on the identity of the student teachers.

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Appendix A: Permission Letters

INFORMATION SHEET: STUDENT TEACHERS

Dear teachers

My name is **Hassan Kirumira.** I am a Masters of Education student in the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand.

I am doing research on the experiences of student teachers in rural schools during teaching practice. My research Topic is; "***Investigating Identity Experiences Faced By Wits Student Teachers In Acornhoek Rural Schools, Mpumalanga Province.***"

As a student teacher who has participated in rural/ farm teaching Experience project in Mpumalanga, I request that you share your experiences during teaching practice in rural/ farm schools with me.

Your experiences will be used to inform my study and hence maybe used as a framework to support future student teachers who may also do teaching practice in rural/ farm schools.

I request that you agree to participate in this study you will be interviewed for up to 40 minutes during your free time. The interview will be audiotaped.

Remember this is a voluntary exercise and that you don't have to do it. Also if you decide halfway through that you no longer want to participate for any reason, it is completely your choice and it will not affect you negatively in anyway.

Within my research report writing and presentations, your identity will remain anonymous there is no way that your identity will be known to anyone. Collected data will also be stored safely and destroyed after a period of 3 years of completing my research.

It will be my pleasure if you share the rural/farm schools teaching experiences with me

Please feel free to contact me if you have any question about my research.

Thank you

Signature: K. hassan

NAME: Hassan Kirumira

ADDRESS: Flat 3 Hellen Courts, Senator Marks, Vereeniging

EMAIL: hassankirumira@yahoo.com

TELL NUMBERS: 0118525825 or 0795401651

INFORMATION SHEET: UNIVERSITY TUTORS

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is **Hassan Kirumira.** I am a Masters of Education student in the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand.

I am doing research on the experiences of student teachers in rural schools during teaching practice. My research Topic is; **Investigating identity experiences faced by Wits student teachers in Acornhoek rural schools, Mpumalanga province.**

As a University tutor on the rural/ farm teaching Experience project in Mpumalanga, I believe that you are in better position to understand the experiences that student teachers go through. I request that you share with such experiences during teaching practice in rural/ farm schools.

The experiences student teachers go through will be used to inform my study and hence maybe used as a framework to support future student teachers who may also do teaching practice in rural/ farm schools.

I request that you agree to participate in this study you will be interviewed for up to 40 minutes during your free periods. The interview will be audiotaped.

Remember this is a voluntary exercise and that you don't have to do it. Also if you decide halfway through that you want to stop or pull out for any reason, it is completely your choice and it will not affect you negatively in anyway.

Within my research report writing and presentations, your identity will remain anonymous there is no way that your identity will be known to anyone. Collected data will also be stored safely and destroyed after a period of 3 years of completing my research.

It will be my pleasure if you share the rural/farm schools teaching experiences with me

Please feel free to contact me if you have any question about my research.

Thank you

Signature: K. hassan

NAME: Hassan Kirumira

ADDRESS: Flat 3 Hellen Courts, Senator Marks, Vereeniging

EMAIL: hassankirumira@yahoo.com

TELL NUMBERS: 0118525825 or 0795401651

Student Teacher's Consent request Form

Please fill in and return the reply slip below indicating your willingness to be a participant in my voluntary research project called: _____-
_____

I, _____ give my consent for the following:

Permission to be audiotaped

I agree to be audiotaped during the interview	YES/NO
I know that the audiotapes will be used for this research project only	YES/NO

Permission to be interview

I would like to be interviewed for this study.	YES/NO
I know that I can stop the interview at any time and don't have to answer all the questions asked.	YES/NO

Informed Consent

I understand that:

- My name and information will be kept confidential and safe.
- I do not have to answer every question and can withdraw from the study at any time.
- I can ask not to be audiotaped.
- All the data collected during this study will be destroyed within 3-5 years after completion of my project.

Sign_____ Date_____

To the Head of School (HOS)

Faculty of Education

Wits University

Park town

Re: Request to conduct research with student teachers

On the above subject, I kindly request your office to grant me permission to conduct my research with Wits student teachers currently conducting their teaching practice in rural schools in Mpumalanga.

My research topic is "**Investigating Identity Experiences Faced By Wits Student Teachers In Acornhoek Rural Schools, Mpumalanga Province."**

My research is premised by the notion that there is a research gap on rural Education, therefore student teachers may be challenged by the rural/ farm schools context. Such experiences if established will enhance the understanding of rural/farm schools context which is to the benefit of student teachers.

Thank you

NAME: Hassan Kirumira

ADDRESS: Flat 3 Hellen Courts, Senator Marks, Vereeniging

EMAIL: hassankirumira@yahoo.com

TELL NUMBERS: 0118525825 or 0795401651

Appendix B: Interview schedule

WITS SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Interview Schedule

Research topic: Investigating identity challenges experienced by Wits student teachers in Mpumalanga rural schools.

Duration of the interviews: 40 - 45 minutes.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

STUDENT TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON RURAL SCHOOLS

1. Did you have any perceptions about teaching in rural schools? If yes, what were they?
2. Did you have any expectations about teaching in rural schools?
3. How were those expectations met or not met?
4. Prior to embarking on rural schools teaching practice, what were your perceptions about students and teachers in rural schools?
5. Was your teaching experience coherent with your perceptions?
6. Did your perceptions change or not change? Elaborate

TEACHING PRACTICE IN RURAL SCHOOLS

1. Would you recommend student teachers at Wits to embark on a journey of conducting teaching practice in rural schools?
2. What did you enjoy about doing your teaching experience in rural schools and why?
3. What did you not enjoy and why?
4. How did you interact with the teachers, students and principals at rural school?
5. Were the teaching resources and materials readily available? If yes, how useful were they in your teaching practice?
6. Did you participate in other general school's activities e.g. sports, assembly or monitoring late coming? Was the process any different from what you may know in urban schools?

7. How did you ‘socially and professionally connect with the teachers and students in rural schools? Did it help to shape how you envisioned reality?
8. How did the learners back ground in particular influence your teaching activities?
9. Did you have any opportunity to interact with the surrounding community? If yes, do you think it was useful in helping your exercise of teaching practice?
10. Do you think the time duration for teaching practice was significant enough to fulfil your teaching experience requirements?
11. Were the students able to understand the teaching in English as a medium of instruction?
12. Did your methods of instructions help to maintain discipline in classes and control learners?
13. Were teachers in the rural schools scared of the fact that you were from Wits University?

CHALLENGES OF TEACHING PRACTICE IN RURAL SCHOOLS

1. What challenges did you experience in the process of carrying out your teaching experience in the rural schools context?
2. How did you deal with these challenges?

RURAL SCHOOLS IDENTITY

1. Have you ever been exposed to conditions in rural areas? If yes where/ how?
2. Did you feel any sense of belonging in the rural schools context?
3. How did your interaction with students, teachers, principal and parents shape your identity?
4. Did you in anyway miss the urban way of living during the period of school practice? If yes what did you miss?

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RURAL AND URBAN SCHOOLS TEACHING PRACTICE

1. Do you think the teaching course helped you to prepare for the teaching in rural schools?
2. If yes in what ways are the concepts you learned at Wits school of education significant in enhancing your teaching experience?

3. Have you ever conducted teaching practice in urban schools previously?
4. Did you experience identity differences between teaching in urban schools and rural schools?
5. What are the differences if they exist?
6. Is there any difference between being student at Wits school of education and a student teacher in a rural school?
7. Did you experience any difficulty in implementing the curriculum requirements obtained at Wits school of education in rural schools? If so what was the difficulty?
8. How does the discipline of learners in rural schools differ from that of urban schools
9. Do you think the work attitudes of learners and in rural schools and urban schools are similar? If no what could be the source of the differences?

PRIOR PERIOD ON RURAL SCHOOLS PRACTICE

1. Did you get any form of support from the teachers, principal, and supervisors?
2. If yes, in what ways did the support influence on your practice?
3. Did you receive any kind of orientation about rural schools teaching prior to the actual practice? If so did it help you?

FIELD WORK PERIOD

1. Did you find teaching in rural schools rewarding?
2. If so describe how rewarding the whole process was for you.
3. If you were to be offered a job by the school or any other rural school in South Africa upon completion of your degree would you take the offer?
4. If Yes give your reasons
5. If No give your reasons also.
6. Do you think it should be made compulsory for all student teachers to have a session of conducting their teaching experiences in rural areas before completion of their teaching degree/ diploma program?
7. After the practice, did you feel like you never wanted to leave the rural students?

8. Do you think doing your teaching practice in rural schools made a difference in your life? If so how?
9. Did the teaching practice in rural schools changed who you are? If so how?

Appendix C: Pre and field interviews

Pre- Rural schools interviews

1	What perceptions do you have of rural schools?
2	Do you have any expectation for your rural teaching practice? What are they?
3	Do you feel that your teaching course has prepared you for the teaching practice in rural areas?
4	Have the supervisors given you enough support to be in position of conducting teaching practice in a rural school? If yes what kind of support.
5	Have you ever conducted teaching practice in urban schools previously? Any identity experience you have while doing teaching practice in urban schools?
6	Do you think your identity will change because of working in rural school Have the supervisors given you enough support to be in position of conducting teaching practice in a rural school? If yes what kind of support?
7	Do you think that teaching has a separate identity compared to the professions?
8	Do you have any problem working with big classes? What would be your preferred numbers in class?

Field Interview Questions (Session 1)

1	Do you think it should be made compulsory for all student teachers to have a session teaching experiences in rural schools?
2	If you were to be offered a job by the school or any other rural school in South Africa upon completion of your degree would you take the offer? If Yes/no can you give your reasons

3	Do you think that teaching practice in rural schools has influenced on student teachers identity? How so?
4	Have you found teaching in rural schools rewarding? If so how rewarding was the whole process was for you.
5	Do you think that teaching practice in rural schools has an influence on student teachers identity? How so?
6	What message are you taking back to your people in Johannesburg?

Field interviews (Session 2)

1	Do you think the teaching course helped you to prepare for the teaching in rural schools?
2	Did you feel any sense of belonging in the rural schools context?
3	How does the discipline of learners in rural schools differ from that of urban schools
4	Did the teaching practice in rural schools changed who you are? If so how?
5	Have you ever conducted teaching practice in urban schools previously?
6	Do you think the time duration for teaching practice was significant enough to fulfil your teaching experience requirements?

Field interviews (Session 3)

1	Were the students able to understand the teaching in English as a medium of instruction?
2	If you were to be offered a job by the school or any other rural school in South Africa upon completion of your degree would you take the offer?
3	After the practice, did you feel like you never wanted to leave the rural students?

4	Did you get any form of support from the teachers, principal and supervisors?
5	Did the teaching practice in rural schools change who you are? If so how?
6	Did you find teaching in rural schools rewarding?