

**EXPLORING FOURTH-YEAR SOL PLAATJE UNIVERSITY  
STUDENT TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL IDENTITIES  
DEVELOPMENT DURING TEACHING PRACTICE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Professional identities are important because they guide teachers' perceptions, decisions, and actions. Most initial teacher education research focuses on student teachers' acquisition of subject and pedagogical knowledge. During teaching practice (TP), student teachers reflect on experiences in authentic schooling contexts to develop their professional identities. Most research focuses on South African student teachers' experiences at schools instead of their development of professional identities during TP. This study contributes to the research by exploring how eight fourth-year student teachers developed their professional identities during TP. The theoretical lenses for the study were Community of Practice Theory and Positioning Theory while the research design was narrative inquiry. The participants told their stories in different journals during TP and during one-on-one follow-up interviews. The findings showed that student teachers developed two main professional identities during TP: relational and collegial. The participants developed their relational and collegial professional identities through the rapport that they built with learners, and staff members, mostly their assigned mentor teachers. They developed these identities through reflection on prior teaching and learning experiences, and participation in the school communities through mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoires. The factors that influenced their professional identities development were personal, social, and temporal conditions. It is recommended that teacher trainers and teacher educators assist student teachers to surface and reflect as individuals and in groups on their relational and collegial professional identities prior to and during TP. These reflections could include student teachers' motivations for choosing teaching as a career, past teacher role models, and classroom management, including the regulation of emotions. Through their professional identities development during school visits, the student teachers developed and enhanced their professional skills, including, classroom management, learner-centred teaching and 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching skills, and provision of care through pedagogies associated with love, freedom, and hope.

### **Keywords**

Initial teacher education; Professional identities; Professional identities' development; Teaching practice

## DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. Ethical clearance for the study was granted by the Human Research Ethics Committee (non-medical), and the protocol number is H19/07/04. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other University.



Laura Jane Arnold

15<sup>th</sup> March 2024

## **PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS EMANATING FROM THIS RESEARCH**

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

B.Ed. - Bachelor of Education  
CAPS - Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement  
CoP - Community/Communities of Practice  
CoPT - Community of Practice Theory  
DBE - Department of Basic Education  
DHET - Department of Higher Education and Training  
FAL - First Additional Language  
FET - Further Education and Training  
ITE - Initial Teacher Education  
LLL - Life-Long Learning  
LoTL - Language of Teaching and Learning ‘  
LPP - Legitimate Peripheral Participation  
NC - Northern Cape  
PT - Positioning Theory  
RD&M - Research, Design and Methodology  
SACE - South African Council for Educators  
SP - Senior Phase  
SPU - Sol Plaatje University  
ST - Student Teachers  
TP - Teaching Practice  
WiL - Work-integrated Learning

## **ACT ONE**

### **In the beginning/Once upon a time**

#### **1.1 Chapter outline and PhD overview**

I have called each chapter in the PhD an act, so that each chapter can be read like a play where each act represents a separate part of the narrative that is this PhD thesis. In this first act, I introduced and situated the study in the context of the current research on teaching practice and teacher professional identities development. I provided a brief overview of the TP model at SPU (Sol Plaatje University) before I reflect on my own interest in the study and my identity as an emerging teacher educator and researcher. I then explained the problem statement, rationale, aims, objectives, research questions, and significance of the study.

In the second act, I reviewed the literature, and in the third act, I presented the theoretical framework for the study. In Acts Four and Five I discussed the research, design, and methodology (RD&M) of the study. There are two parts to the RD&M instead of one, because in Act Four, I described the data collection methods, and in Act Five, I explained the narrative analysis of the data in detail. In Act Six, I presented the findings for each participant as a narrative. I discussed the findings using the theoretical framework and literature review in Act Seven, before I presented the conclusion to the study, which was the summary of the main findings and the recommendations for future studies, in the final act, Act Eight.

#### **1.2 Introduction and background of the study**

Research on initial teacher education focuses on how student teachers learn specific content knowledge, situational knowledge, and teaching strategies to teach learners (Romylos, 2018). Most of this research focuses on how student teachers learn to teach in the classroom during teaching practice (TP) (Goodson, 2014). From the reviewed literature, little research has focused on student teachers' growing understandings of themselves as people who are in the process of becoming teachers (Day, Stobart, Sammons, Kington, Gu, Smees & Mujtaba, 2006; Lortie, 2002; Goodson 1991; Goodson, 2014; Gravett, 2012). This research explored

how student teachers develop their professional identities, which are the multiple understandings student teachers have of the kinds of teachers they would like to become (Hsieh, 2016; Romylos, 2018; Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2010).

Professional identities are important because they are the individual lenses through which teachers understand their thoughts and feelings that guide their decisions and actions (Beijaard, Verloop & Vermunt, 2000; Bullough, 1997; Makovec, 2018). Research that focuses on teacher practice has ignored how student teachers and teachers use their identities to make choices about what and how to teach (Hsieh, 2016; Loughran, 2013; Romylos, 2018; Sachs, 2005). The identities of teachers including their backgrounds, beliefs, and values, influences which content, media and teaching strategies they selected (Morgan, 2004; Romylos, 2018). Thus, becoming a teacher entails developing distinct professional identities during initial teacher education (ITE) that guide how one thinks, feels, and acts as a teacher (Beijaard et al., 2000; Bullough, 1997; Ivanova & Skara- Mincane, 2016).

Research into teacher education showed that ITE influences student teachers' professional identities by helping them feel more prepared to teach, thereby increasing their motivation to teach and commitment to the profession (Chong, Ling & Chuan, 2011; Darling-Hammond, Chung & Fewlow, 2002; Flores, 2020). While student teachers have opportunities to revise, renegotiate, and re-interpret their fluid professional identities during university lectures and tutorials, dramatic shifts in professional identities are more likely to occur during TP (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Lamote & Engels 2010; Makovec, 2018). As TP provides student teachers with opportunities to teach and relate to learners and teachers in authentic school and classroom environments it is often the first time that students consider who they are or would like to be as teachers (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Hascher, Cocard & Moser, 2004; Ivanova & Skara- Mincane, 2016; Kakazu & Kobayashi, 2023; Schultz & Ravitch, 2012). During TP, the assigned mentor teachers may help student teachers with the development of their professional identities by helping them to reflect on and make sense of the different experiences they encounter in the school context (Cross & Ndofirepi, 2015; Izadinia, 2016; Izadinia, 2017). Since TP is a critical time for reflecting on, constructing, deconstructing, and reconstructing professional identities, this study intends to explore the development of fourth-year Sol Plaatje student teachers' professional identities during TP.

### **1.3 The nature and importance of Teaching Practice**

Teaching Practice, also referred to as Work-integrated Learning (WiL), is an important component of any ITE programme because it allows student teachers to develop their professional competencies in authentic environments (Djawamara & Listyani, 2021; Ivanova & Skara-Mincane, 2016; Robinson & Rusznyak, 2020). The Department of Higher Education and Training (2015, p. 18), expects higher education institutions to arrange formal school-based placements in varied and contrasting schooling contexts where “supervision, mentoring and assessment” take place. The minimum requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications document states that student teacher must conduct TP in schools for a minimum of 20 weeks over a four-year Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2015). It is important the universities design TP programmes that produce suitably qualified, motivated, and skilled teachers to prepare learners for workplaces where 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, including, communication, collaboration, critical thinking and problem solving, and creativity are valued (Astuti, Aziz, Sumarti & Bharati, 2019; McLeskey & Brownell, 2015). While student teachers develop professional values, attitudes, ethics, and competencies during school visits, under the guidance and supervision of assigned teachers who act as mentors, they also develop their professional identities (Cross & Ndofirepi, 2015; Izadinia, 2016; Izadinia, 2017; Uysal & Savaş, 2021).

### **1.4 Teaching practice at SPU**

Before I discuss the problem statement, I briefly describe the current structure of the TP programme at Sol Plaatje University (SPU) to understand how it provides student teachers with opportunities for identities development. For a better understanding of how the SPU degree encourages students to deepen their reflection and praxis concerning their professional identities over the four-year degree, see the diagram on the next page.

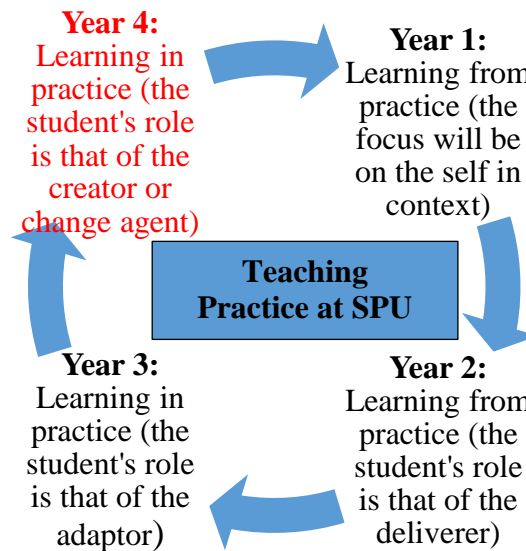


Figure 1. The four stages of reflection present in the SPU B.Ed. curriculum.<sup>1</sup>

During the first and second years, students learn-from-practice through reflection and analysis of recorded lessons, written case studies, and lessons observed during school visits (Sol Plaatje University, n.d.). In the first year of the degree, the students are asked to reflect on the ‘self in context’ or their pre-teacher identity that was formed in primary and high school consciously or unconsciously. The second year focuses on students’ role as deliverers where they critique lessons. These lessons are taught by in-service teachers to the learners who are transported from <sup>2</sup>Kimberley schools to SPU by bus, and by peers under the guidance of SPU lecturers (Sol Plaatje University, n.d.).

The third- and fourth-year student teachers learn by teaching in schools under the guidance of mentor teachers who are assigned by the school principals. The third-year students are expected to adapt their lessons to the teaching classroom contexts, while third-year students conduct TP in schools for approximately nine weeks, and they receive formative feedback on their teaching from the lecturers. The emphasis on learning in practice is stronger for the fourth-year student teachers, because when they spend three <sup>3</sup>blocks of 12 weeks teaching in

<sup>1</sup> The teaching practice programme at SPU and the cycle shown above are based upon a University of KwaZulu-Natal certificate programme that is designed to enhance in-service teachers’ ability to use reflection to design and deliver contextually appropriate lessons (Ebrahim, Verbeek, & Mashiya, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Kimberley is the capital city of the Northern Cape Province in South Africa, and it is the city where Sol Plaatje University is based.

<sup>3</sup> Each block of TP is a dedicated period where student teachers go to schools each day for teaching practice for a set timeframe. During this time, the students do not attend classes or write tests and exams on campus or

schools, they have their lessons assessed summatively for the first time. Fourth-year students are encouraged to be change agents who can deliver quality education to learners in all school contexts. For an explanation of the term change agent refer to section 2.4 of the thesis. The University expects that by the fourth year, the student teachers will draw from the ITE programme and previous TP experiences to make a difference in the lives of learners.

For the fourth-year cohort of student teachers invited to take part in the study, the first teaching block began two weeks before the term began on 29 March 2021. The student teachers used a <sup>4</sup>letter from the TP Office to arrange with the principal or vice-principal of a school to conduct teaching practice in their hometowns. During the second teaching block, students typically spend time teaching in schools in Kimberley, where the University is based. However, due to COVID-19 the fourth-year students were unable to complete TP at schools and had to prepare <sup>5</sup>virtual lessons for three weeks, from 7 to 25 June 2021. The third and final TP block was seven weeks long and took place from 16 August to 1 October in Kimberley primary and secondary schools. During the school visit, students appointed as coordinators provided communication and administrative support for the TP Office, as they communicated with lecturers when student teachers had lessons to be assessed and took attendance daily. Usually, student teachers spend half of the TP block in Kimberley and the other half in their hometowns, which for many of the students are outside of Kimberley, to relieve pressure on the small number of schools in the city. Since the student teachers had to conduct the first teaching practice block online due to COVID-19, there was less pressure on the local schools, and the TP Office decided they could remain in Kimberley for the entire seven weeks. This also meant that their lecturers, who were only able to assess their virtual lessons in the first teaching block, had enough time to assess the learners during their second TP block.

I chose to focus on the professional identities of the fourth-year student teachers for three reasons. Firstly, the final-year students have had more time to develop their identities and

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online. Apart from assignments conducted as part of the school visit, SPU lecturers are also encouraged not to provide student teachers with homework during TP blocks.

<sup>4</sup> The TP Office provided letters to the students explaining that they had to arrange a school visit before the start of the first term at Sol Plaatje University.

<sup>5</sup>The university had a strict policy to prevent the spread of the virus and the planned school visit to schools in Kimberley was postponed while students conducted TP during this time online. Instead of going to schools for the school visit the student teachers uploaded 18 recorded lessons that they had taught to an imaginary class on OneDrive.

could reflect in detail about their developing professional identities. Secondly, fourth-year students spend seven weeks in TP, which is the longest of all the B.Ed. students. With a longer time spent teaching, the students would have more time to engage with others in a social context and develop their professional identities. The third reason is that the University expects fourth-year students to achieve more than 50% for their assessed lessons to complete the final-year TP module and graduate from the degree. The first- and second-year students only complete observations during TP, and the third-year students only receive summative feedback. Third-year students receive an indication of their mark, which is not recorded, nor are they required to achieve more than 50% as a mark to enrol in the fourth year of the B.Ed. programme. This could mean that the fourth-year students have an additional incentive to invest their time and energy into their subject teaching, which could also motivate them to further develop their professional identities.

Without overlooking the continuous process of professional identity, according to the four-stage reflection model, it is still expected that the final-year SPU B.Ed. students should be change agents who can deliver quality education to all learners. This study explored whether and to what extent fourth-year students were able to do this, and what other professional identities they developed, which possibly challenge or contradict this ideal of the change agent.

### **1.5 Reflecting on my position as emerging researcher and teacher educator**

Prior to a career as an academic, I had worked overseas for two and a half years in schools, but I had not taught in South African schools. I am from Johannesburg, and I accepted the post of a lecturer at the University of Sol Plaatje in Kimberly, which is in the Northern Cape Province. I was unfamiliar with the Kimberley context-where many of the school visits take place.

While I joined the university in 2017, several colleagues had been teaching on the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) programme since the university's inception in 2013. As the only academic at the School of Education who was appointed through The New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP), this sometimes led to embarrassing incidents. Two that I can recall include colleagues not including me in the organogram displayed during a strategic planning session, and a few senior staff referring to me as a 'student'.

Due to my inexperience and the perspectives of colleagues, I felt positioned as a relative 'outsider' to Kimberley and to the B.Ed. degree. I resisted this positioning by ensuring that my name was added to the organogram and reminding staff members that I was employed as an academic staff member. However, my lack of a teaching degree and experience in academia combined with staff members reactions to my appointment through the nGAP programme left me feeling unsure about the possible contributions that I could make to the university. While some colleagues had developed an identity as educators, I was still unsure of who I was or who I could become as a teacher educator. While drafting my research proposal for my supervisor, comments to the effect of 'this work is still at Master's level' reinforced my feeling that I was an inexperienced researcher.

While working at the university and studying towards the PhD, I began to see that being an outsider to the schools and the university could be to my advantage. I reasoned that I had fewer prior assumptions about the schools and the university than colleagues from the town or those who had taught at the university for longer. Being employed in a department and not in the teaching practice office, and joining the university after the B.Ed. degree and teaching practice programme had been established meant that I could examine both from the position of a relative outsider. I could critique the degree and offer recommendations without feeling like I was betraying something that I had helped create. I only teach education and pedagogy modules at the university, while most of my colleagues are subject experts.

I continued to develop myself as a researcher and teacher educator through teaching, reading, and reflection on my own teaching and that of my colleagues, and discussions with others about the teaching practice programme at the university. As a coordinator of some of the teaching practice modules, I decided that I wanted to better understand the student teachers' experiences, and how to support their identities development during teaching practice. I wanted to complete a PhD in the field of teaching practice to make significant contributions to the university. The practical contributions would include improving my own teaching and contributing to the teaching practice programme at the university. The theoretical contribution would be publishing in the field and expanding the knowledge of how teacher educators can support student teachers' professional identities development during teaching practice.

I realised that I had moved from the periphery of the field of teaching practice towards the centre when I made the final changes to the thesis. I began to disagree with some of the recommendations made by my supervisor, and while in some cases she was correct, in others I was able to convince her of my point of view. I certainly feel more prepared to publish in this field.

During the degree I gained more knowledge and confidence in my position as a researcher in the field of teacher and student teacher professional identities. I recognised that I am now a better researcher when I could more quickly write a draft based on my PhD data. I also feel more confident that this paper would be of interest to a higher-level national journal than I have previously published in. Though I sometimes still feel unsure of myself as a teacher educator, I hope that the knowledge that I have gained will enable me to continue to strengthen my teaching.

## **1.6 Problem statement**

Teacher professional identities help shape how teachers think, make decisions and act throughout their careers (Beijaard et al., 2000; Bullough, 1997; Makovec, 2018). This means that these identities influence how likely teachers are to invest in lifelong learning, be effective within the classroom, and remain in the profession. (Hong, 2010; Romylos, 2018; Selcuk, Aydin & Cakmak, 2018). Despite the importance of professional identities development most studies on student teachers focus on the acquisition of knowledge during ITE and not on professional identities development (Hsieh, 2016; Loughran, 2013; Romylos, 2018; Sachs, 2005).

When student teachers are exposed to real-life school contexts they undergo rapid development of their professional identities, particularly if they are aware of and able to reflect on these identities (Ivanova & Skara-Mincane, 2016; Lamote & Engels, 2010; Makovec, 2018; Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2010; Wahyuni & Putra, 2021). Unfortunately most research in South Africa focuses on student teachers experience of the practicum, and not on their development of professional identities during this time (du Plessis & Marais, 2013; Foncha, Abongdia & Adu, 2015; Izadinia, 2012; Jita & Munje, 2022; Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2009; Marais & Meier, 2004; Moosa & Rembach, 2020; Mukeredzi, 2017; Nkambule, 2017; Nkambule & Mukeredzi, 2017; Romylos, 2018). This study adds to the literature by

interrogating how SPU fourth-year student teachers constructed their professional identities during teaching practice, and to what extent they are aware of these constructions.

## **1.7 Rationale**

After guiding the first-year student teachers to reflect on and write about their pre-teaching practice identities during lectures, I began to wonder how actual experiences teaching in classrooms contribute to student teachers' understandings of themselves as teachers.

According to Cohen, Hoz and Kaplan (2013), and Cross and Ndofirepi (2015), one of the purposes of TP is to provide student teachers with opportunities to negotiate and develop their professional identities. Considering that fourth-year students spend an extended time teaching in schools, and few studies interrogate the professional identities development of South African student teachers, I wondered how these TP experiences would shape the final-year student teachers' professional identities. While reading for the PhD, I discovered that previous research tends to focus on the acquisition of knowledge and the delivery of good practice rather than explore teacher identities, despite how central these identities are to teachers' work lives (Lortie, 2002; Goodson 1991; Goodson, 2014; Romylos, 2018). This research gap influenced this study, and I became curious about our fourth-year student teachers' awareness of and development of their professional development identities during the teaching practicum.

While education research mentions identities, far fewer studies focus on how individual teachers develop their identities and most of this research discusses student teachers' identities development in other countries rather than in South Africa (Day et al., 2006; Izadinia, 2012). To enhance the research in the field of student-teacher identities' development, this study explores how student teachers from SPU with unique backgrounds, experiences, beliefs, values, and dispositions develop their professional identities in different school contexts. By exploring how fourth-year student teachers at a South African university construct their identities during TP, this study will contribute to the existing knowledge on student-teacher professional identities' development.

## **1.8 Aims**

The aim of this study is twofold: to the 4<sup>th</sup> year SPU student teachers' construction of their professional identities, and to interrogate 4<sup>th</sup> year SPU student teachers' awareness of the development of their professional identities during teaching practice.

## **1.9 Objectives**

To achieve the aim of the study, the four objectives of the study are:

1.9.1 To describe what the 4<sup>th</sup> year SPU student teachers' understandings of their professional identities are during teaching practice.

1.9.2 To present a critical analysis of how the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers' construct their professional identities during teaching practice.

1.9.3 To reveal new insights into how aware the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers are of their professional identities' development during teaching practice.

1.9.4 To discuss the factors that influence the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers' development of particular professional identities during teaching practice.

## **1.10 Research questions**

The main research question for the study is:

***How do fourth year SPU student teachers construct their professional identities during teaching practice?***

The sub-research questions are:

- 1. What are the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers' understandings of their professional identity during teaching practice?*
- 2. How do the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers further develop these understandings during teaching practice?*
- 3. To what extent are the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers aware of their developing professional identities during teaching practice?*
- 4. What factors influence the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers' professional identities development during teaching practice?*

### **1.11 Significance**

By exploring how fourth-year student teachers at a South African University construct their professional identities during TP, this study will add to the literature on professional identities development. This study will contribute to the existing knowledge on South African student teachers' professional identities development by establishing how SPU fourth-year student teachers construct and develop their professional identities during TP. The findings from this research will provide more information to teacher educators and institutions about how final-year student teachers develop their professional identities during TP. As part of the findings, the study will examine student teachers' reflective processes in relation to the development of their professional identities' development, which might include reflections on previous years' TP experiences. It is not clear whether student teachers are aware that professional identities influence what and how they teach, and how much they invest in professional development. This study will contribute to the body of knowledge by exploring how aware Sol Plaatje's fourth-year students are of their developing professional identities during TP. The findings from the study could suggest ways in which institutions and teacher educators can further support reflection and development of student-teacher professional identities during TP.

### **1.12 Chapter conclusion**

Research on student teachers tends to focus on the development of professional competencies rather than the development of professional identities during TP. Teaching practice is an important time for the development of professional identities as student teachers reflect and develop their understandings of who they are as teachers in real-life contexts. It is therefore important for ITE to have well designed TP programmes. At Sol Plaatje University (SPU), students learn from practice through observations during school visits in the first and second year and learn-in-practice from teaching during school visits in their third and fourth year. This research contributes to the research on professional identities development by exploring how fourth-year student teachers at SPU develop their professional identities during TP.

## **ACT TWO**

### **A story of student teachers' professional identities development**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The reviewed literature suggests that the mentee-mentor relationship and the school context, including its history and leadership, are important factors that influence student teachers' professional identities development (Beijaard et al., 2000; Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004; Doran, 2020; Flores & Day, 2006; Lai, 2005; Robinson, 2001). In this chapter, I consider whether teaching can be classified as a profession, describe six components of student teachers' professional identities, and show how managerialism influences student teachers and teachers' professional identities. I also explore how subject specialisation, support from the University and the mentor teachers, and experiences in different school contexts shape student teachers' professional identities.

#### **2.2 Teaching as a profession**

If, according to Merriam-Webster (2018), professions are set apart by “the conduct, aims, or qualities that characterise or mark a profession”, then what distinguishes professions from other kinds of jobs? Carr (2000) explains that professions should meet the following five criteria: (a) provision of a valuable public service based on a human right, (b) significant theoretical and practical expertise, (c) ethical standards as expressed in a code of conduct, d) acceptance of external regulation, and e) professionals who are able to make autonomous decisions.

Using these criteria, it is possible to judge whether or not occupations should be regarded as professions, and accordingly medicine, law and accountancy are recognised as professions (Burnham, 1996; Hoyle, 2008; Carr, 2000; Murray, 2014; Teleshaliyev, 2013). If teaching is a profession, it should meet all the five criteria necessary for professional status.

Teaching fulfils the first criterion, provision of a public service, because teachers provide basic education, a constitutionally protected right (Carr, 2000; Gerald, 1994; Kimathi &

Rusznyak, 2018; SAHRC, 2012). Teaching should also meet the second criteria, significant theoretical and practical expertise, to be a profession. In the early 19th Century, teaching was not viewed as an intellectually challenging job that required specific expertise (Hargreaves, 2000). Since Shulman's ground-breaking research in the late 1980s, teaching was seen as requiring specialised expertise as teachers who understand subject matter must be able to teach this knowledge to learners in particular grades from particular <sup>6</sup>contexts (Verloop, Driel & Meijer, 2001; Shulman, 1986; Shulman, 1987). In South Africa, the Minimum Standards for Teacher Education Qualifications outlines which theoretical and practical knowledge teachers should possess, and states that teachers should obtain a four-year Bachelor of Education degree or a primary degree and a one-year Postgraduate Certificate in Education (Carrim, 2019; Department of Higher Education and Training, 2015). There have also been efforts on the part of universities to upgrade the qualifications of teachers who completed two-year college diplomas prior to 2001 (Gardiner, 2008; Mashau, Mutshaeni & Kone, 2016; Wolhuter, 2006). Universities and the Department of Education also offer short courses and workshops to increase the knowledge of in-service teachers (Mashau et al., 2016; Wolhuter, 2006)

At first glance, teaching also meets the third and fourth requirements for professional recognition: high professional standards and acceptance of external regulation; qualified South African teachers register with a professional body, the South African Council for Educators (SACE), and should uphold the SACE Code of Conduct (Carr, 2000; Carrim, 2019; SACE, n.d.). Unfortunately, the poor conduct of many teachers, which includes physical and sexual violence against learners, substance abuse, and absenteeism of 10 percent, challenges notions of professional standards (Moodley, 2019; Msibi & Mchunu, 2013). In addition, there is a lack of professional oversight; even though provinces under-report abuse by teachers, SACE has had backlogs of cases to be processed, and of the thousands of complaints received, few teachers were removed from the register (van Onselen, 2012; Fengu, 2017; News24, 2014).

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<sup>6</sup> While student teachers should be able to teach in different contexts, most initial teacher education programmes in South Africa prepare student teachers to teach in urban schools (Nkambule, 2017). Though an increasing number of South African universities have placements in rural and farm schools, more needs to be done to equip student teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to teach in rural contexts (Masinire, Maringe, & Nkambule, 2014; Nkambule, 2017).

Thus, teaching as a profession meets two of the criteria, provision of a public service based on a human right and practitioners with theoretical expertise, for recognition as a profession. Unfortunately, the professional may not meet the third and fourth criteria, as many teachers do not uphold the ethical standards expressed in the code of conduct, and the external regulation provided by SACE is weak. Despite the current debate over whether teaching meets the status of a profession in South Africa, it is important to note that the teachers refer to all four of these criteria when discussing their professional identities. For example, teachers refer to the first and second criteria, provision of a public service and theoretical and practice expertise, when they discuss their duty to educate children well (Burke, 2004; Evans, 2008; Kimanzi, 2021). Teachers, teacher educators and the public, also refer to the third and fourth criteria, high professional standards and acceptance of external regulation, when they discuss the need for teachers to behave ethically (Burke, 2004; Evans, 2008; Maphosa, Bhebhe & Dziva, 2015).

The fifth criterion, ability to act autonomously, or independently, is necessary as professionals deal with ambiguous, uncertain, and unexpected situations and must use knowledge and expertise to make difficult decisions on their own in the interests of their clients (Hoyle, 2008; Kimathi & Rusznyak, 2018). There is some debate about whether teaching provides teachers with enough autonomy to make decisions to be termed a profession (Carr, 2000; Frostenson, 2015; Singh, 2015). Since the 1970s, increasing government regulation over public-school education has threatened the autonomy of teachers all over the world (Kimathi & Rusznyak, 2018; Whitty, 2000). Previous <sup>7</sup>curricula in South Africa gave teachers and learners more freedom over teaching and learning to address the inequalities of the past (du Plessis, 2013; Gumede & Biyase, 2016; Harley & Wedekind, 2004). Due to the low scores of learners on international tests in 2012, with limited input from teachers, the South African government implemented a highly prescriptive curriculum, known as the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) (Ramatlapana & Makonye, 2012; Singh, 2015). Carrim (2019) argues that teachers' autonomy in many public schools is threatened, because they do not have the necessary material resources to meet the demands of the CAPS curriculum.

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<sup>7</sup> The first revised curricula, Curriculum 2005, was so named because all schools should have been using the curriculum by 2005 (Stoffels, 2008). Due to low tests-scores and difficulty implementing the curriculum, Curriculum 2005 was replaced by National Curriculum Statement, and the Revised National Curriculum (Ramatlapana & Makonye, 2012).

There is debate about whether South African teachers who teach using the CAPS curriculum have enough autonomy for teaching to be considered profession. Singh (2015) argues that the CAPS curriculum actively de-professionalises teachers by restricting their autonomy, and Msibi and Mchunu (2013, p.25) liken teachers' work to that of "technicians" who implement rather than develop curriculum and policies. CAPS limits teacher autonomy by prescribing the pacing, sequencing, and assessments for each subject for primary and secondary school teachers (du Plessis & Marais, 2013; Mlambo, 2015; Singh, 2015). While CAPS is prescriptive, Mlambo argues that teachers still have enough freedom to choose their own examples to illustrate certain points, the resources they use to prepare the lesson and refer students to, and the teaching styles they use.

Frostenson (2015) also disagrees with the view that increased governmental regulation over education and the increased decision-making power of the principals in schools automatically de-professionalises teachers. He (2015) argues that the amount of professional autonomy that teachers have differs widely depending on how the work of teachers is managed in different schools. While some principals may seek to restrict teachers' ability to make decisions, collectively and individually, about their practice, other principals may create conditions that support professional autonomy (Frostenson, 2015). Thus, teachers in different schools retain varying amounts of freedom over the teaching and learning decisions within their classrooms. For example, private schools have more freedom to decide the curriculum than public schools and may grant teachers more autonomy over teaching and learning in the classroom (Hofmeyr, McCarthy, Oliphant, Schirmer, & Bernstein, 2013).

The amount of autonomy that teachers have in schools differs, but there should still be some way of considering whether teaching is a profession. It is difficult to make a judgement about whether or not teaching is a profession, because the amount of autonomy necessary for an occupation to be a profession remains unclear (Carr, 2000). While in the past professionals, such as doctors, lawyers, and accountants were independent agents charging fees for their services, an increasing number of professionals work in government and for non-governmental organisations (Burns, 2007; Carrim, 2019). Since governments ensure that public servants are accountable for the services that they provide, it may be unreasonable to expect them to have the same level of autonomy as private practitioners (Carr, 2000). In addition, the government increasingly regulates state entities and monitors and controls the

work of the professionals who work for the state (Burns, 2007; Hargreaves, 2000). Therefore, as early as 1999, Kritzer argued that government employees, including doctors and lawyers working for the state, are entering a post-professional age where they no longer have as much autonomy over their work. Hence, teachers, especially in South Africa where the curriculum dictates the sequencing and pacing of lessons (Carrim, 2019; du Plessis & Marais, 2013; Mlambo, 2015; Singh, 2015; Ramatlapana & Makonye, 2012), also have less autonomy than was traditional for professionals. The next section of the literature review considers the ways in which working under increasing government control affects teacher professional identities.

### **2.3 Teachers as professionals**

In everyday conversation, people use the term professional to indicate that a person completes a job on time and does it well (Carr, 2000). However, in occupational research the word professional has a particular meaning. Donaldson (2000, pg. 87) explained the term well when he said that “A professional is someone who professes skills and knowledge derived from an ongoing institution dedicated to a broader good that defines both expertise and service”. According to this definition, professionals use their knowledge and skills gained by working in an institution that provides a common or social good. Education is as a social good as it should provide opportunities for children to acquire skills and knowledge necessary for future success and teach them the values necessary for participation in a democratic society (Spiel, 2018). Teachers are therefore professionals, because they use their skills and knowledge gained through working in an institution, in this case education, to deliver the social good of education.

According to Donaldson’s (2000) definition, teachers are professionals, but scholars are still debating whether teaching is a profession. Due to the high status afforded to members of a profession, it has been argued that professionalisation of teaching would raise the public’s regard for teachers, and thereby increase teachers’<sup>8</sup> job satisfaction (Hargreaves, 2000; OECD, 2016). The next section of the literature addresses the status of the teaching profession in South Africa.

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<sup>8</sup> Job satisfaction occurs when a pleasant emotional occurs for a person because of how they evaluate their work (Locke, 1969).

## 2.4 Exploring the concept of professional identities

At present, there is no consensus about which components comprise the professional identities of teachers and student teachers (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2004; Izadinia, 2012). It would be difficult to review in sufficient depth all the possible components that comprise student-teacher professional identities; fortunately, it is possible to briefly discuss some of the most common components identified in the literature. Some of the most discussed components in the literature on student-teacher professional identities development are change agents; agency; emotions; motivation and commitment to teaching; past schooling experiences and teacher role models; ITE; beliefs; and reflection (Alvariñas-Villaverde, Domínguez-Alonso, Pumares-Lavandeira & Portela-Pino, 2022; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2004; Gershenson & Jacinto, 2019; Izadinia, 2012; Rodrigues, de Pietria, Sanchez & Kuchah, 2018; Richards, 2022; Taxer & Frenzel, 2015). Each of these components is discussed in this section.

Schools have been critiqued for educating learners in ways that reinforce and reproduce social inequalities (Butera, Batruch, Autin, Mugny, Quiamzade & Pulfrey, 2021). In South Africa learners in township and rural areas tend to attend under-resourced schools, and to have fewer opportunities to learn the expected cannon at home (Madondo, 2019; Spaul, 2013; Spaul & Pretorius, 2019). While learners from middle and upper class families in urban areas have more opportunities at home to acquire knowledge found in the school curriculum (Spaul, 2013; Spaul & Pretorius, 2019 ). These learners also tend to attend well-resourced Ex-Model C schools that were reserved for White learners during Apartheid (Christie & McKinney, 2017; Spaul, 2013; Spaul & Pretorius, 2019). Unfortunately, despite these schools accepting learners of all races today, Black teachers are in the minority, and Black teachers and learners at these schools have experienced racism from white staff members (Davids, 2023; Dreyer & Singh, 2016).

Instead of reproducing inequalities, teachers who are change agents act to visibly improve the lives of all of their learners (Pantić & Florian, 2015). At the classroom level, teachers need address barriers to learning that diverse learners face (Pantić & Florian, 2015). At school level, teachers can work with others to create schools that are more accessible and welcoming to families from diverse religions, races, languages, sexualities, and classes (Bourn, 2016). These others include colleagues, school management, learners, parents, communities and

other professionals outside the immediate school context (Biesta & Robinson, 2013; Pantić & Florian, 2015). Principals should support teachers as change agents by providing them with sufficient autonomy and opportunities to revise and implement curriculum reforms (Bonner, Diehl & Trachtman, 2020; Brown, White & Kelly, 2021). To enact change teachers need to exercise their agency.

Calhoun (2002, p.7) defines agency as the “capacity for autonomous social action”. In this definition, agency is the power to act (Calhoun, 2002). A different view of agency, the ecological view, understands agency not as the power to act in an environment, but as the actions of people “by means of their environment” (Biesta & Tedder, 2006; Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p.137; Priestley, Biesta & Robinson, 2015). Agency is not a thing to be possessed, but a thing that people achieve with others because of “individual efforts, available resources and contextual and structural factors” (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p.137). Priestley et al. (2015, p.136) explain that according to the ecological perspective, teacher agency is “an emergent phenomenon, something that occurs or is achieved within continually shifting contexts over time, and with orientations towards past, future and present which differ within each and every instance of agency achieved”. In other words, teacher agency is the achievement of action in the present, which is based on an individual’s past experiences, current contexts, and future desires (Priestley et al., 2015). The individual’s contexts and circumstances make certain actions and decisions easier or harder to enact individually or collectively. This view of agency is compatible with the study, as it acknowledges the complex contexts in which teachers continually re-create their professional identities based on their past, present, and future selves.

Agency is important to teacher identity, because as student teachers choose to act in school contexts, they develop their professional identities (Beijaard et al., 2004). As agents, teachers and student teachers often use agency to maintain their professional identities despite restrictive structures or cultures cultivated by teachers, who may want them to replicate certain practices in class (Teng, 2017; Yuan & Lee, 2016). Agency is also tied to emotions as student teachers as agents must constantly regulate their emotions and behave in a way that their mentors, learners, and other stakeholders perceive to be appropriate for future teachers working in a particular school environment (Loughran, 2013).

Emotions are important to the understanding teachers' work and identities because teachers are emotionally invested in their work, and this investment contributes to how they view themselves as people and as teachers (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006; Nias, 1999). Teacher emotions, like identities, are not fixed. Teachers who were formerly satisfied with their work and perception of their competency at work, can feel increasingly vulnerable if they experience threats to their sense of self. These threats are often from external forces, including, bad behaviour from children, new government policies, queries from parents, or criticism from management (Day, 2013; Moremi, 2016; Nias, 1996; Stillman & Anderson, 2015). Student teachers also feel multiple and strong emotions, including stress, anxiety, doubt and disappointment or disillusionment, during TP, which makes it hard for them to maintain their motivation and commitment towards the profession (Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2009; Ngidi & Sibaya, 2003; Richards, 2022). Since teachers with high levels of motivation and commitment invest more time at work and are more likely to want to remain in the profession, universities should consider helping students maintain their initial motivation and commitment to teaching during TP (Day et al., 2006; Richards, 2022).

To understand professional identities development, researchers should consider how teaching and administrative staff at schools endorse or forbid teachers from expressing certain emotions. Studies show that teachers who expressed more positive emotions, including, happiness, pride, enthusiasm and liking, had better relationships with learners, efficiency, job satisfaction and mental health, and less burnout (Taxer & Frenzel, 2015). However, teachers who expressed more negative emotions, including anger, boredom, disliking and disappointment, generally had low self-efficacy and job satisfaction, poorer mental and physical health, and high levels of burnout (Taxer & Frenzel, 2015).

Staff in some schools encourage the expression of positive emotions and discourage the expression of negative emotions (Song, 2016; Zembylas, 2003a, 2003b). This includes in cases where teachers, administrators, and school management encourage incoming educators to only demonstrate positive emotions towards certain teaching approaches (Zembylas, 2003a, 2003b). Unfortunately, the emotional labour hiding or faking one's positive or negative emotions is associated with poorer physical and mental health and higher levels of burnout (Taxer & Frenzel, 2015). Teachers can resist pressures to conform to these expectations by recognising how the staff at a school restricts their emotional expressions and developing avenues to express emotions that are not the norm (Zembylas, 2003b). As this

involves taking risks by challenging the current beliefs of staff in a school, some student teachers and novice teachers as junior staff members may be unwilling or unable to do so.

Though beliefs inform student teacher and teacher practice, the concept is not always clearly defined and has been equated with terms such as: worldviews, theories, orientations, assumptions, pre-conceptions, viewpoints, and perspectives (Blake, 2002; Kagan, 1992; Kramer & Engeström, 2019; Pajares, 1992). Richardson (1996, p.103) offers a clearer definition of beliefs as “psychologically-held understandings, premises or propositions about the world that are felt to be true”. Studies show that the student teachers’ beliefs have a direct influence on their professional identities as they influence teachers’ extrinsic and intrinsic motivations and feelings about what and how they should teach (Jennifer & Mbato, 2020; Namrata, 2011; Vandeyar, 2008). Student teachers hold multiple beliefs about themselves as people and as teachers. Of particular importance for teachers is their self-efficacy, or belief in their own ability to be effective (Barni et al., 2019). Teachers with a moderate to high levels of self-efficacy see challenges as temporary setbacks to overcome and can often sustain their commitment to the profession in the face of challenges (Barni et al., 2019; Day et al., 2006). The beliefs that teachers hold about the nature of teaching, their own role as teachers and learners also influence the kinds of teachers they want to become. One belief that many teachers hold, which could hinder teacher effectiveness, is that they should always know the answer and that they must always know more than their learners do (Song, 2016).

Most English teachers in Korea speak the language as an additional language. Some Korean teachers felt that learners who had lived abroad knew more English than them and limited whole-class discussions to maintain an illusion of superior knowledge (Song, 2016). However, when Korean English teachers learnt from teaching abroad that it was okay for a teacher to not know the answer and to look things up, they were more willing to include learners who had lived abroad in discussions and create opportunities to learn from them (Song, 2016). While this exact scenario may not apply to South African student teachers, they may still feel pressure to know the answer and to know more than their learners do. If student teachers and teachers are unable to change this mind-set, they may limit opportunities for conversation in class and hamper their learners’ ability to develop speaking skills in the target language and to develop bonds with their learners. On the other hand, those who acknowledge that they do not know everything may learn from their students, create

opportunities for learners to learn from each other, and develop closer relationships with learners.

When the theory and practices student teachers learn aligns with what they believe to be good teaching, they are more willing to absorb these new ideas into their own practice (Korthagen, 2017; Korthagen & Kessels, 1999; Vandeyar, 2008). However, student teachers are more resistant to new knowledge that challenges their pre-existing beliefs (Korthagen, 2017; Korthagen & Kessels, 1999; Vandeyar, 2008). If student teachers have negative beliefs about learners from lower socio-economic circumstances, they lower their expectations and limit their learners' potential through focus on content rather than on the development of higher-order thinking skills (Namrata, 2011; Rubie-Davies et al., 2020). Meaningful interactions with supportive lecturers, former teachers, and mentors can help student teachers to reflect, discuss, and revise their beliefs (Jennifer & Mbato, 2020; Karavas & Drossou, 2010; Namrata, 2011). Student teachers who have experienced TP in school contexts that are different to ones they were educated in also encountered new experiences and perspectives first hand (Leland & Haarste, 2005; Rusznyak & Walton, 2017; Whitaker, 2019). For example, in a study by Leland and Haarste (2005), the middle-class students who taught in an urban primary school were encouraged by their lecturers to use a curriculum relevant to the learners' lives and to reflect on their identities, upbringing and biases. This experience helped the student teachers to become aware of the limits of standardised tests and more interested in making a difference in learners' lives (Leland & Haarste, 2005).

Another important aspect related to teacher professional identities is initial motivation to become a teacher. Common motivations for entering the teaching profession are wanting to work with children and to make a difference in the lives of children (Alvariñas-Villaverde et al., 2022; Manuel & Hughes, 2006). Other common reasons for wanting to be a teacher are past positive or negative experiences at school or with their teachers (Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Rodrigues et al., 2018). Student teachers with positive experiences of one or more teachers may be inspired to become a teacher because of the interactions they had with positive role models. The student teachers with negative experiences may strive to become a different and better teacher than the one they had themselves. Student teachers who have family members who are teachers are also more likely to become teachers themselves (Gershenson & Jacinto, 2019; Lamote & Engels, 2010; Manuel & Hughes, 2006). This could be due to socialisation where student teachers are more familiar with the career and its

possible benefits due to their association with their family member or members. Thus, student teachers' have common motivations for wanting to become teachers informed by their past schooling experiences and families that continue to influence how they interpret and develop their professional identities during ITE.

Reflection can be defined as purposeful thinking about experiences, thoughts, and actions (Fullan, 2006). Reflection is important for professional identities development, as student teachers use reflection to make sense of their experiences, including during TP, and draw conclusions about the kinds of teachers they would like to become (Doran, 2020; Rodrigues et al., 2018; Steenekamp, van der Merwe & Mehmedova, 2018). Research indicates that the many student teachers reflect quite shallowly during TP on their own learning instead of considering how they should use these experiences to develop their practice and professional identities (Ivanova & Skara-Mincane, 2016; Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2010; Wahyuni & Putra, 2021). Reflection on learning is one of the ways that student teachers can use to integrate theory learned on campus with development of practice during school visits (Gravett Petersen & Petker, 2014; Henning, Petker & Petersen 2015; Phillips & Condy, 2023). Teacher educators and mentor teachers can help student teachers to reflect more deeply on their TP experiences, developing practice, and professional identities' development (Cross & Ndofirepi, 2015; Ezati, Ocheng, Ssentamu & Sikoyo, 2010; Izadinia, 2016; Izadinia, 2017; McGee, 2019; Swinkels, Koopman & Beijgaard, 2013; Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2010). This support from mentors and teacher educators could assist student teachers to deepen their reflections to integrate theory and practice and more mindfully construct their professional identities during TP.

## **2.5 Effect of managerialism on teacher caring and collaboration**

Managerialism where governments run public entities as corporations to reduce spending and increase employee efficiency has been increasing since the 1970s (Burns, 2007; Ferlie, 2017; Hughes, 1998; Klikauer, 2015; Mutereko, 2018). Since the end goal of managerialism is to reduce ambiguity while increasing efficiency, performance is usually based on one measure of success, which in South Africa is the <sup>9</sup>matric marks (Jansen, 2004; Mutereko, 2018).

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<sup>9</sup> In South Africa, matric, short for matriculation, is Grade 12 and the final year of high school.

Teachers can find that their beliefs about good teaching conflict with the kinds of teaching and assessment expected and performed by their colleagues at a particular school (Moremi, 2016; Naidoo, 2012; Stillman & Anderson, 2015; Zembylas, 2003b). Teachers who believe in meeting learners' social, emotional, and cognitive needs may have to resist pressure from management to use direct teaching to cover the curriculum (Buchanan, 2015; Naidoo, 2012; Zembylas, 2003b). There is evidence to suggest that younger teachers who are used to a standardised curriculum teach by incorporating aspects that they believe in, including quality-control measures, and rejecting what they do not believe in, including, spending too much time teaching to tests (Stone-Johnson, 2014). Hence, previous work experiences shapes teachers' beliefs and how they respond to the pressures to internalise a narrow view of themselves as professionals responsible only for producing learners with high-test scores (Hoyle, 2008; Buchanan, 2015).

Appel (2020) argues that managerialism is a threat to teacher agency, creativity, and job satisfaction. When under-performing schools in South Africa implement the government's prescribed lessons, teachers felt they had less autonomy and time for collaboration, which demotivated the previous previously confident and passionate teachers (Stillman & Anderson, 2015). When schools are classified as under-performing, teachers are forced to teach using prescribed lessons that focus on imparting skills and knowledge by rote learning (Stillman & Anderson, 2015). This was shown to reduce autonomy and decrease collaboration which demotivated previously passionate teachers. (Jakhelln, 2011). Teachers' beliefs about themselves and their teaching may be threatened when they feel forced to conform to external demands that harm their existing professional identities (Nichols, Schutz, Rodgers & Bilica, 2017).

A narrow view of teacher professionalism focused on grades or particular teaching practices neglects the teacher-learner relationship and the teachers' role in the learners' broader cognitive and social development (Jansen, 2004; Mutereko, 2018). It also alters the traditional way in which teachers have viewed themselves as caring about or for learners and their academic, social, and emotional needs (Johnston, 2015; Moran, 2011; Murray, 2006; O'Connor, 2008). Caring for learners is linked to morality, as once teachers make the decision to care certain moral obligations follow, such as, treating learners of different races, backgrounds, and beliefs with kindness, dignity, and respect (Elbaz, 1983/2019; Beets, 2012; O'Connor, 2008).

Caring is a reciprocal relationship, and one of the ways teachers care is to align their teaching with the learners' academic needs and interests, in other words, teachers provide care to the learners and learners ask for and accept this care (Noddings, 2005; Kim, 2007; Platz, 2021). Learners perform better when they feel that they have good relationships with teachers who listen interact with learners in ways that show they care for their social and emotional well-being (Abrantes, Seabra & Lages, 2007; Grobler, 2018; Noddings, 2012; Stronge, Ward & Grant, 2011). Caring teachers are committed to supporting learners to succeed through maintaining and supporting them to achieve high standards through teaching and assessment practices, which includes formative assessment and feedback (Äärelä, Määttä & Uusiautti, 2016; Beets, 2012; Msila, 2015; Noddings, 2012; Stronge et al., 2011; Vogt, 2002). Caring teachers also assist learners socially by modelling and teaching the learners who may not have the social skills how to respond appropriately in class (Äärelä et al., 2016).

Some studies suggest that South African teachers and principals could provide appropriate care to learners by drawing from the African philosophy of Ubuntu, which focuses on building community through values such as, cooperation and respect (Beets, 2012; Khathi, Govender & Ajani, 2021; Msila, 2015; Thaba, Kanjere, Malatji & Wadesango, 2016). In the South African context, care based on the principles of Ubuntu has been proposed as a means of creating: resilient and professional teachers; quality teaching; and safe schools free from violence (Beets, 2012; Grobler, 2018; Msila, 2015). Unfortunately, as the pressure from governments to achieve good test scores increases it becomes harder for teachers to sustain caring professional identities (Buchanan, 2015; Hoyle, 2008).

Caring is an important part of teachers' work as it can have a positive impact on learners and their learning. While all teachers care for learners, there is an expectation that female teachers will care for learners through mothering, which entails treating the learners like a mother would (Vogt, 2002). Though some female teachers assume a mothering role due to internalised societal expectations of women as caring and nurturing, others are proud to declare that as women they are more capable than men of looking after children (Murray, 2006; Moosa, 2024).

When teachers compete against each other according to learners' marks, measured on individual performance monitoring systems, this leads to less time and incentive for

<sup>10</sup>collaboration (Geldenhuys & Oosthuizen, 2015; Hargreaves, 2000; Moremi, 2016; Msibi & Mchunu, 2013). This could lead South African teachers to adopt what Sachs (2001) has termed an “entrepreneurial identity” which she described as “individualistic, competitive, controlling and regulative, and externally defined” (pg. 155 & 157).

Collaboration is beneficial, because it can help teachers to increase their effectiveness, and job satisfaction through emotional regulation and intellectual stimulation (Mora-Ruano et al., 2018). Collaborative practices may support teachers to manage job related stress from educational reforms and working in high-poverty schools, and prevent <sup>11</sup>burnout and turnover (Allensworth, Ponisciak & Mazzeo, 2009; Datnow, 2018). Teachers in schools who collaborate with one another feel jointly responsible for learners and that this helps them to derive satisfaction from their work and increase their emotional attachment and commitment to their school (Kelchtermans, 2006; Meredith et al., 2023). Research shows that collaboration can increase satisfaction and commitment, and reduce burnout and turnover amongst teachers (Abdallah, 2009; Allensworth, Ponisciak & Mazzeo, 2009; Datnow, 2018; Heider, 2005; Huang, Wang & Teng, 2021; Kelchtermans, 2006; Meredith et al., 2023; Schlichte, Yssel & Merble, 2005; vila de Lima, 2003). Teachers who identify and work together to address high need areas can help improve learners’ outcomes in particular areas (Arends et al., 2017; Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990; Mora-Ruano, Heine & Wittmann, 2019).

Collaboration between mentor teachers and student teachers generally occurs through co-teaching. Co-teaching occurs when multiple teachers are jointly responsible for student teaching and learning, and can learn from one another (Tobin, 2006). Co-teachers can act as assistants for another, share the teaching time, divide the class into two and teach the different parts consecutively, teach the class at different work <sup>12</sup>stations, or to have one person teach the class while the other works with a <sup>13</sup>smaller group of learners (Baeten &

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<sup>10</sup> Mora-Ruano, Gebhardt & Wittmann (2018) define collaboration as,

A voluntary activity between two or more teachers who, based on relational trust and respect, through collaborative leadership and school administration, coordinate efforts, reconcile different approaches and exchange ideas and materials to increase teaching effectiveness as well as affective and cognitive job satisfaction (“Definitions” section, para. 8).

<sup>11</sup> Burnout is classified as feelings of emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and inadequacy brought about by long periods of stress and inadequate rewards or resources to cope with stressors (Chang, 2009).

<sup>12</sup>For station teaching, learners receive separate instructions and complete specific activities at different stations, which can be managed by the co-teachers or the learners.

<sup>13</sup> Usually, the one co-teacher will work with a smaller group of learners who are academically ahead or behind the rest of the class.

Simons, 2016; Hartigan, 2014; Hurd & Weilbacher, 2017). Another version of co-teaching is the lesson study approach, where mentors and student teachers assist the learners with a subject-related or general-skills challenge (Cajkler & Wood, 2016). The mentor teaches the initial lesson, after the lesson the mentor and the student teacher evaluate how much the lesson assisted the learners before the student teacher revises and re-teaches the lesson (Cajkler & Wood, 2016).

Co-teaching is beneficial because it provides opportunities for teachers and student teachers to adjust the teaching pace while learners engage in questioning and hands-on learning (Hurd & Weilbacher, 2017). As co-teaching provides opportunities to observe another teacher and to discuss shared lessons, it can improve mentor teachers and student teachers' <sup>14</sup>pedagogical content knowledge (Baeten & Simons, 2016; Hurd & Weilbacher, 2017). Co-teaching may be especially beneficial for student teachers, as they report feeling more confident and being more able to assert their authority in class when the teacher is present (Baeten & Simons, 2016). Despite how beneficial it can be, co-teaching is time consuming as there is a lot of planning beforehand, particularly if mentors and mentees have different teaching styles (Baeten & Simons, 2016). As it is time consuming, co-teaching may be harder to implement in developing countries where class sizes in both universities and schools are larger, and there are fewer faculty members and teachers (Cajkler & Wood, 2016). Collaboration is more difficult in schools where factions create competition, conflict, and poor communication among staff and teachers who compete against one another for power and status (Johnson, 2003; Vangrieken, Dochy, Raes & Kyndt, 2015, 2015; vila de Lima, 2003). When mentor teachers do not work collaboratively, student teachers learn that teaching is an isolated and individual practice, which may mean that they are less likely to collaborate with colleagues in future (vila de Lima, 2003).

Sufficient support from university lecturers and preparation can help mentors and student teachers develop collaborative mentor-mentee practices during teaching practice (Baeten & Simons, 2016; Cajkler & Wood, 2016). While the benefits of collaboration have been well documented, preparing student teachers for collaborative teaching is still an emerging practice in many ITE programmes (Thomas, 2014; vila de Lima, 2003). Most universities do

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<sup>14</sup> According to Shulman (1986), pedagogical content knowledge is the knowledge teachers have regarding how to best teach their subjects and clarify misunderstandings that learners in different grades have about the content.

not prepare students for co-teaching with mentor teachers as lecturers expect student teachers to observe experienced teachers before assuming responsibility for the teaching of one or more classes (Hartigan, 2014). Since teacher collaboration has many benefits, ITE should help student teachers to experiment with collaborative teaching on campus and during TP (Hartigan, 2014; vila de Lima, 2003).

Since English was the one common major of all the student teachers in the study, the next section of the literature shows how teaching English as a subject affects the professional identities of teachers and student teachers.

## **2.6 Influence of work-based learning on professional identities development**

ITE programme through the curriculum, which includes selected courses and knowledge, pedagogical practices, and the TP programme is critical for the development of the student teachers' professional identities (Chen, Sun & Jia, 2022; Flores, 2016). Though professional identities are fluid and in a constant state of re-negotiation, teacher practice provides student teachers with unique opportunities to revise their professional identities in authentic schooling environments that cannot be replicated by modelling lessons in a university classroom (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Lamote & Engels 2010; Makovec, 2018; Quick & Sieborger, 2005; Robinson & Rusznyak, 2020). It is only in practice that student teachers apply pedagogical content knowledge, discover how learners respond to their teaching, reflect on, and discuss lesson observations and feedback with their mentor teachers to find new ways to teach and assess learners (Alves et al., 2012; Gomez Johnson, Schaffer, Nix & Hayden, 2020; McGraw & Davis, 2017). Hence, in this study, the discussion of the university's TP programme in relation to the student teachers' development of professional identities was crucial.

Research shows that WiL or workplace experiences can provide student teacher and teachers with opportunities to re-affirm or revise their beliefs about their own teaching (Beijaard et al., 2000; Haru, 2019; Lamote & Engels, 2010). While TP generally increases student teachers' self-confidence and commitment to learner-centred methods, particularly in schools with good mentor support and high learner achievement, it can cause self-efficacy with regards to classroom management to decrease (Lamote & Engels, 2010; Moulding, Stewart & Dunmeyer, 2014). When student teachers begin their ITE they may view themselves

primarily as subject matter experts, and once they gain <sup>15</sup>experience they are more likely view themselves also as <sup>16</sup>pedagogical and <sup>17</sup>didactical experts (Anspal, Eisenschmidt & Löffström, 2012; Beijaard et al., 2000; Pozas & Letzel, 2021). However, while more teaching experience causes student teachers to concentrate more on how learners learn, they still tend to conceptualise teaching in terms of mastering content or necessary skills rather than improved practice (Anspal et al., 2012; Ezati et al., 2010; Ivanova & Skara-Mincane, 2016; Rogers, 2011; Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2010; Wahyuni & Putra, 2021). This means that student teachers are often unaware of how to transform lesson content in a way that makes learning in a particular discipline easier for learners with different abilities (Rogers, 2011; Grima-Farrell, 2015). In comparison, experienced teachers are more able to draw upon their professional identities, including knowledge, values, and beliefs, to present knowledge in an understandable way for their learners (Findlay, 2010; Romylos, 2018).

Teaching practice provides student teachers with opportunities to revise and re-interpret their multiple, and at times conflicting, understandings of themselves as people and professionals (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Lamote & Engels, 2010; Makovec, 2018). Researchers who focus on the link between the personal and professional aspects of identities examine how a person's aspirations, backgrounds, beliefs, personalities, and attributes affect their professional identities (Makovec, 2018; Pillen, Beijaard & den Brok, 2012). For instance, Nias (1996; 1999) showed that committed teachers enjoy feeling like themselves at work, and as they derive much of their self-esteem and self-image from their occupation, they are willing to invest additional time and money into their work. As professional identities are subject to constant revisions based on personal interpretations, in their study, Lauriala and Kukkon (2005) proposed that pre- and in-service teachers have three multiple and conflicting selves. The ought self, the one that society expects them to be, the actual self, or who they are at present, and the ideal self, which is who they would like to become (Lauriala & Kukkon, 2005). During TP, student teachers must then resolve identity tensions between who they would like to be as a person, and as a teacher, and what kind of teacher the school and their mentor teacher wants them to be (Pillen et al., 2012). Three common tensions student teachers struggle with are: “‘Wanting to care for students, versus being expected to be tough’,

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<sup>15</sup> The 80 teachers in the study had at least four years of experience, with a few teachers who had 4-10 years of experience category, and 51% of the sample with over 20 years of experience (Beijaard et al., 2000).

<sup>16</sup> Beijaard et al., (2000), view pedagogical expertise as showing care for learners, which includes the ethical and moral dimensions of relating to learners as individuals with their own needs and personal problems.

<sup>17</sup> Didactical expertise is the expertise needed to teach the subject (Beijaard et al., 2000).

‘Wanting to invest in a private life versus feeling pressured to spend time and energy on work’ and ‘Experiencing conflicts between one’s own and others’ orientations regarding learning to teach’” (Pillen et al., 2012, pg.13). Student teachers resolve these tensions by balancing how, strict they are, much time they invest in their work, or much they teach like their mentor, so that they remain, approachable to learners, able to balance the demands of the practicum with their life, and true to their own ideas about teaching (Pillen et al., 2012). Teaching practice requires more from student teachers than teaching lessons that meet the requirements of a university, as they also learn in and contribute to a particular school community (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Ambrosetti, Knight, & Dekkers, 2014; Johnston, 2015). During TP most student teachers are expected to teach, and the teaching and learning relationships with learners that that student teachers form can have a profound influence on their professional identities (Coward et al., 2015; Doran, 2020; Pillen et al., 2012; Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2010). These relationships are important for learning, because when teachers have good relationships with learners this can improve learner participation, motivation, and achievement (Al Nasserri, Renganathan, Al Nasserri, & Al Balushi, 2014; Scales, Pekel, Sethi, Chamberlain, & Van Boekel, 2020). While teaching and developing relationships with learners in authentic learning environments, student teachers tend to adapt to the school and learners’ home contexts (Leland & Haarste, 2005; Villacañas de Castro, 2020). This adaptation takes place when student teachers revise their professional identities teaching styles to better accommodate the learners’ needs, interests, and abilities during TP (Leland & Haarste, 2005; Villacañas de Castro, 2020). For example, teaching learners helps some student teachers to develop more relational professional identities, because they learned to place more emphasis on learning about and mentoring learners (Coward et al., 2015). In another study, South African student teachers became more empathetic to learners with difficult home lives and as a result they became more patient and caring when they displayed challenging behaviour in class (Arnold & Groenewald, 2022).

Unfortunately, during and after TP there are few opportunities that support student teachers as they reflect on their experiences and further develop their professional identities (Alvarado Gutiérrez, Neira Adasme & Westmacott, 2019; Lamote & Engels 2010; Pillen et al., 2012). If student teachers only focus on their own learning, they may miss opportunities to learn from more experienced teachers. When student or mentor teachers observe each other’s lessons, they should write notes on what teaching approaches and strategies have been used in the lesson and how these could be improved in future (Gomez Johnson et al., 2020; Meijer,

Zanting & Verloop 2003; Zanting & Verloop & Vermunt, 2002). The student teacher who does not reflect on and discuss what he or she has taught and why with the teacher may fail to access and develop his or her <sup>18</sup>practical knowledge (Zanting & Verloop & Vermunt, 2002; Meijer et al., 2003; Moosa & Rembach, 2020; Mukeredzi, 2017). Through guided reflections on teaching experiences student teachers revised their professional identities by viewing teaching as co-construction of knowledge through learner-centred teaching strategies (Beijaard et al., 2000; Lamote & Engels 2010; Swinkels, et al., 2013).

In this study it is important to explore how and in what ways the student teachers conceptualised their learning and if they understood that they were not only gaining knowledge and skills, but also learning to become teachers. Therefore, the theoretical framework of the study focuses on learning as the development of professional identities within a specific community of practice rather than the learning of skills related to professional development. During TP, teachers assigned as mentors act as the primary person responsible for induction and support of the student teacher (Cohen et al., 2013; Jita & Munje, 2022; Izadinia, 2017). When student teachers apply theoretical knowledge gained at university to authentic school environments their university and school mentors should help them to deepen their understanding of what it means to be a teacher and reconsider their current professional identities (Busher, Gündüz, Cakmak, & Lawson, 2015 2015; Cohen et al., 2013; Maphosa, Shumba, & Shumba, 2007; Poulou 2007; Quick & Sieborger, 2005). Due to the importance of the mentor teacher, the next section will consider how the mentor teachers supports the students' professional development, which includes their identities development, during TP.

## **2.7 How mentor teachers support student teachers' identities development**

Identity development is social and situated (Robinson & Rusznyak, 2020; Smit & Fritz, 2008). Student teachers' personal and professional identities depend upon their social identities, which are identities tied to social categories that people belong to, such as the category of 'student teacher'. Social identities are situated, meaning that they are negotiated by people during interactions with others in particular contexts (Craib, 1998; Vignoles,

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<sup>18</sup> Practical knowledge includes knowledge about oneself as a teacher, how to develop a curriculum, the context in which one works, the learning process and the learners, and the subject and how to teach it (Elbaz, 1983/2019; Meijer et al., 2003; Zanting et al., 2002).

2011). While a person may identify as a student teacher across multiple contexts, they may enact this identity in different ways depending on the context and the people that they are enacting the identity with and for (Alexander & Glen Wiley, 1990; Vignoles, 2011). For example, a student teacher may belong to the social category of student teacher, but sometimes act as a student, a future teacher, or a class teacher depending on whether he or she is in a lecture, writing a reflection on their teacher identity, or involved in simulated teaching on campus or TP off campus. In the examples provided above, the student negotiates the identities of a student, a future teacher, and a class teacher by interacting with people in the situation, including, peers, lecturers, and mentor teachers. Immersion in a particular school context thereby provides student teacher with opportunities to develop their professional identities with and through existing relationships with established members of the school community, most notably the students' mentor teachers (Pillen et al., 2012; Cross & Ndofirepi, 2015; Smit & Fritz, 2008; Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2010).

Since the mentor teachers are generally the primary people responsible for the student teachers' professional development, they have a great deal of influence on the development of student teachers' professional identities during TP (Cohen, et al., 2013; Izadinia, 2016; Moosa & Rembach, 2020). While some universities use retired teachers as mentors, most mentors are teachers who work at the school where the student teachers conduct TP (Daly & Milton, 2017; Ewing, 2021). Mentor teachers, through the mentor-mentee relationship, support student teachers by inducting them into the school community and helping them to conceptualise and develop suitable ways of teaching disciplinary content to learners (Ambrosetti et al., 2014; Hudson, 2010; Maphalala, 2013; Moosa & Rembach, 2020; Rogers, 2011). It is important to understand the nature of the mentor-student-teacher-relationship because it influences the construction and development of student teachers' professional identities. This relationship is complex because it requires both parties to share their specialised knowledge in an appropriate manner as part of a social relationship where the mentor is in a position of power (Moosa & Rembach, 2020; Lentz & Allen, 2007).

Lai (2005) argues that the relationship between mentors and student teachers contains three interrelated components: relational, developmental, and contextual support. The three main roles that mentor teachers play in each of these domains are "instructional coach, emotional support system, and socializing agent" (Butler & Cuenca, 2012, p.303). When mentors provide relational mentoring, they provide emotional support to student teachers (Butler & Cuenca, 2012; Davis & Fantozzi, 2016; Lai, 2005; Schatz Oppenheimer & Goldenberg,

2023). Relational support from mentor teachers is important, because student teachers face unanticipated challenges when dealing with people that require emotional regulation and quick responses (Davis & Fantozzi, 2016; Loughran, 2013). Student teachers are expected to deal with difficult learner behaviour, which can include violence and bullying, in an emotionally sensitive and caring manner (Davis & Fantozzi, 2016; du Plessis & Marais, 2013; Murray, 2006).

When mentors provide relational support to student teachers, they take on the roles of critical friends, colleagues, protectors, and advocates (Butler & Cuenca, 2012; Ambrosetti et al., 2014; Davis & Fantozzi, 2016; Lai, 2005; Schatz Oppenheimer & Goldenberg, 2023). While mentors have more power than mentees the word ‘collegial’ shows that mentors can learn much from mentoring, including, what their strengths are, new teaching practices, improved self-efficacy, and information about a school administration (Eby, Rhodes & Allen, 2007; Schatz Oppenheimer & Goldenberg, 2023). Mentor teachers act as colleagues and critical friends when they urge mentees to undertake novel activities, such as, after-school activities, provide encouragement after a setback, and include the student teachers in the school community (Ambrosetti et al., 2014). When mentors act as protectors and advocates they guard their mentees against criticism, conflicts, negative attitudes, and dull work, and highlight their contributions to the school (Ambrosetti et al., 2014; Lieberman, Hanson & Gless, 2012).

Relational mentoring includes induction into the school community, which is very important for making student teachers feel welcome at a school during TP. Induction into a school community could include introductions to other staff members, a tour of the school or the surrounding community, and invitations to attend and share ideas in staff meetings (Ambrosetti et al., 2014; Cherian, 2007; Johnston, 2015; Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2009). A well-structured induction includes invitations to social events and feeling supported to speak during staff meetings and parent-teacher events, helps student teachers to feel that their contributions to the school are valued (Ambrosetti et al., 2014; Johnston, 2015; Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2009).

While relational mentoring is personal, mentors also provide student teachers with developmental support (Ambrosetti et al., 2014; Davis & Fantozzi, 2016; Lai, 2005; Schatz Oppenheimer & Goldenberg, 2023). Mentors offers developmental support when they act as

models of good practice as they help student teachers to improve their practices and meet specific professional goals (Ambrosetti et al., 2014; Lai, 2005; Moosa & Rembach, 2020; Schatz Oppenheimer & Goldenberg, 2023). Mentors offer development support through praise and feedback focused discussions and reflections on lesson planning, presentation and assessment (Butler & Cuenca, 2012; Caires, Almeida, & Vieira, 2012; Gomez Johnson et al., 2020; Hamaidi, Al-shara, Arouri & Abu Awwad, 2014; McGraw & Davis, 2017; Robinson, 2001).

Whereas the developmental component of mentoring helps student teachers reach specific professional and personal goals, the mentor teacher also provides contextual support when he or she acts as a socialising agent (Ambrosetti et al., 2014; Butler & Cuenca, 2012; Davis & Fantozzi, 2016). This kind of support includes advice on the expectations including how teachers should behave in general, and in the specific school and surrounding community (Ambrosetti et al., 2014; Grima-Farrell, 2015). Mentor teachers provide contextual support through modelling of expected behaviour during classroom teaching, meetings, and other school events; general discussions around the profession and expectations for teachers; explanations about the school's culture, structure, rules, and policies (Ambrosetti et al., 2014; Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2009; Lai, 2005; Marais & Meier, 2004; Schatz Oppenheimer & Goldenberg, 2023).

Mentor teachers should support student teachers by providing support in all three domains, the relational, the developmental, and the contextual. However, some student teachers and mentors express a preference for providing or receiving one type of support over another. In the study by Schatz Oppenheimer & Goldenberg (2023), mentor teachers provided relational support and helped student teachers manage their emotions during a school visit. However, previous studies found that mentors are more likely to provide developmental support through explicit feedback and guided reflection on classroom teaching and are less likely to offer emotional support to student teachers (Jenkins & Fortnam, 2010; Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005; Mena, Hennissen & Loughran, 2017; Maphalala, 2013; Maynard, 1996; Schoeman & Mabunda, 2012). Davis and Fantozzi (2016) found that student teachers who expressed a preference for relational support felt more confident when mentors helped them manage negative emotions and build warm relationships with learners. In the same study, student teachers who wanted developmental support required feedback and assistance with lesson planning, implementation, and evaluation to their teaching (Davis & Fantozzi, 2016). When

mentors do not focus enough on relational support this can leave beginner teachers feeling unsure how to build positive relationships with learners and their families (Doran, 2020). Mentor teachers can support student teachers by clarifying their needs through discussions or a continually updated mentoring plan, which could include time that is dedicated for mentoring or an open-door policy where student teachers can seek help at any time (Davis & Fantozzi, 2016; Izadinia, 2017; Liu, 2014; Schatz Oppenheimer & Goldenberg, 2023). Mena et al. (2017) suggest that mentors require information on potential needs and conversational modelling with mock mentees to allow their mentees to express their support needs rather than choosing and directing conversations where advice and feedback is provided.

The kind of mentorship that teachers provide has a direct impact on the professional identities of the student teachers they mentor. Student teachers who feel that their mentors were approachable, caring, and supportive reported positive teaching-practice experiences, which strengthened their desire to become a teacher (Cherian, 2007; Ewing, 2021; Izadinia, 2017). Approachable mentor teachers can discuss personal and professional challenges with student teachers, including problems with relationships, mental health, and stress (Ewing, 2021; Cherian, 2007). Mentor teachers show that they are caring and supportive by welcoming student teachers to the school, reassuring them after a lesson has not gone well, and encouraging them to try new approaches and activities (Ambrosetti et al., 2014; Izadinia, 2017). Student teachers who feel anxious and fearful about their ability to teach diverse effectively or to manage a classroom may need additional care and support in the form of reassurance and positive re-enforcement from their mentor teacher (Alves et al., 2012; Grima-Farrell, 2015; Izadinia, 2017). Supportive mentors also help student teachers to feel welcome in the classroom and able to teach the class in ways that they prefer, such as using teaching strategies and media to relate content to learners' lives (Cherian, 2007; Izadinia, 2017; Smethem & Hood, 2011). When mentor teachers assisted the student teachers to teach in ways that affirmed their developing profession identities, it built their confidence and made them feel more prepared to teach in the future (Izadinia, 2015; Izadinia, 2017; Yuan, 2016). Through relational, developmental, and contextual support, mentor teachers provide student teachers with opportunities to reflect on and make decisions about who they would like to become as teachers, and what they can do to become these kinds of teachers. By paying attention to these components, I should be able to see how individual mentor-mentee relationships shift and evolve over teaching-practice blocks, and what effect this has on the construction and development of student-teacher professional identities.

Student teachers are individuals with different developmental needs and expectations. To avoid conflict and misunderstandings, mentor teachers and student teachers should discuss what roles and duties each party will assume during teaching practice (Davis & Fantozzi, 2016). Student teachers with supportive mentor teachers find it easier to create meaningful lessons that draw upon their personal histories and the learning and experiences that learners bring with them to the class (Villacañas de Castro, 2020). Thus, the type and quality of the mentorship that student teachers receive from their mentors has a large influence on the construction and development of student-teacher professional identities. The amount and kind of support the mentor teachers provides to the student teachers is affected by the support that the mentors receive from university and the school where they work.

## **2.8 School and university support for student teachers and mentor teachers**

For many teachers acting as mentors to student teachers from multiple higher education institutions with their own requirements while ensuring that they continue to teach their own learners is a challenge (Edwards & Mutton, 2007; Evans & Abott, 1997; McGraw & Davis, 2017). Principals can support who mentor student teachers by providing them with additional time for and recognition of this role (Iancu-haddad & Oplatka, 2009; Robinson, 2001; McGraw & Davis, 2017).

One challenge student teachers encounter is that mentors teachers in South African schools who are not confident in their teaching abilities are reluctant to be observed while teaching, which limits the students opportunities to learn from them (Jita & Mokhele, 2014; Robinson, 2001; Mukeredzi, 2017). Since Black teachers' work was strictly controlled and monitored by state officials during Apartheid, teachers in township and rural areas schools may be particularly reluctant to allow student teachers to observe their teaching (Jita & Mokhele, 2014). Principals may need to support teachers who have been monitored under the Apartheid system, so that they become used to receiving feedback on their lessons and providing feedback to colleagues for lessons have observed (de Jong, Meirink & Admiraal, 2019; Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990; Robinson, 2001). If teachers regularly observe and comment on each other's lessons they may be more willing let student teachers observe their lessons and more able to provide appropriate feedback to their mentees (Cherian, 2007; McGraw & Davis, 2017; Smethem & Hood, 2011). By discussing a mentor's lessons with them the

student teachers can gain insight into how experienced teachers use their practical knowledge to make decisions about teaching (Meijer et al., 2003; Mena et al., 2017; Zanting et al., 2002;). Thus, mentor teachers may be more likely to offer student teachers guidance when they work in a school where where colleagues share ideas and critique one another's lessons.

One way to ensure that teachers who act as mentors receive support is for the university to work with professional practice schools and teaching schools. Professional practice schools, are defined "as the type of schools, regardless of resource level, at which student teachers would receive quality support during their normal period of school-based training" (Robinson, 2016, p.14). These schools would ensure that student teachers receive guidance and feedback from mentors working in schools with different amount of resources. Teaching schools are schools established by the university to provide student teachers with opportunities to observe and participate in classrooms teaching that model the kinds of practice taught during the ITE degree (Gravett et al., 2014; Henning et al., 2015). Repeated placements in teaching schools provides student teachers with opportunities to develop practices through teaching, research and reflection that are informed by the theory that they have learned (Gravett et al., 2014; Henning et al., 2015).

Both professional practice and teaching schools should not be chosen on the basis of resources or grades as this would favour schools located in formerly White suburbs. Instead, schools with features, such as strong leadership, teacher commitment, and supportive learning environments should be chosen, so that students are exposed to complex and challenging teaching and learning situations in schools (du Plessis & Sunde, 2017; Robinson, 2016). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2014, p. 40), a policy research and advocacy group, classifies schools as challenging when they meet the following criteria: ten percent or more of the students have special needs; if learners' home language is different from the language of teaching or learning; and more than 30% of the students come from lower socio-economic status homes. Thus, due to the high-poverty levels and large number of EAL speakers, many schools in townships and rural areas would be considered as challenging schools placements for student teachers (Amnesty International, 2020; du Plessis & Mestry, 2019; Gardiner, 2008; Maringe et al., 2015; Nkadameng & Makalela, 2015).

Teaching practice requires student teachers to apply the theory that they have learnt on campus during TP or when conducting community-service projects in schools (Hascher et al.,

2004; Phillips & Condy, 2023; Resch & Schritteser, 2023). According to Opoku, Sang and Liao (2020), the integration of theory and practice is the single hardest and most important component for the implementation of successful teacher education programmes. Research shows that student teachers have more opportunities to apply theory and develop practices when they conduct TP in different schools with differing amounts of resources and student populations (De Wever, Vanderlinde, Gravett, Petersen & Ramsaroop, 2019; Nkambule, 2017; Nkambule & Mukeredzi, 2017; Tuytens & Aelterman, 2016; Rusznyak & Walton, 2017). When student teachers in South African taught in schools in rural areas they learned to use accessible language and introduce new terminology to accommodate large classes of learners (Rusznyak & Walton, 2017). During TP, mentor teachers and university lecturers should help student teachers see how they can apply the theory and develop their own practices when teaching, including when teaching a subject to learners in particular grades (Cheng, Cheng & Tang, 2010; Gravett et al., 2014; Henning, et al., 2015; Phillips & Condy, 2023). Development and alignment of coursework with TP could help student teachers better integrate theory and practice to address the challenges they face when teaching in schools (Cherian, 2007; Elshaw, Fass & Mauntel, 2018; McGee, 2019; Phillips & Condy, 2023; Smethem & Hood, 2011). In other words, teacher educators can also support student teachers' professional identities development in school contexts by extended school placements in different contexts, emphasis on relevant pedagogical approaches and practices, and reflective exercises (Gravett et al., 2019; Waddell & Ukpokodu, 2012; Whitaker, 2019).

Integration of theory and practice via lesson observation teaching is a challenge when South African mentor teachers use practices that contradict with theory learnt regarding inclusive practices. This could include use of teacher-centred teaching strategies, refusal to answer learners' questions, and teachers covering lesson content too quickly while telling learners to complete the work in their own time (Rusznyak & Walton, 2017; Moosa & Rembach, 2020). South African student teachers have also observed teachers in rural schools dividing class into the more and less academically able and only teaching the "clever" or "brilliant" learners in class (Gravett & Jiyane, 2019, p. 5-6). Some student teachers have observed lessons where mentors do not use effective classroom management strategies (Moosa & Rembach, 2020). Though the practice is illegal in South Africa, student teachers have also witnessed the use of corporal punishment by teachers in schools (Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2009; Lebesa, 2015; Moosa & Rembach, 2020; Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013; Tshatshu, 2016). Student teachers are aware when there is a gap between what they learn at university and what they see in schools

during TP, and weak collaboration between the university and the schools (Phillips & Condy, 2023; Schoeman & Mabunda, 2012).

It is difficult for universities and schools to create partnerships because staff at universities and schools may already have heavy workloads and operate according to different timetables (Robinson, 2016). Integration of theory with practice is also challenging for teacher educators who have taught in schools many years ago and struggle to connect the theory with current classroom practices (Phillips & Condy, 2023). When promotion in academia is tied to research there is also little incentive for lecturers to sustain partnerships with subject teachers (Ellis, McNicholl, Blake & McNally 2014; Phillips & Condy, 2023). Creating and rewarding lecturers for taking up opportunities to gain recent teaching experience in schools can help them to align the theory in their courses to the practical realities of the classroom (Phillips & Condy, 2023).

Since many institutions assume that mentoring is self-evident, mentor teachers receive no special guidance or professional development to understand their role and the ITE programme of the student teachers (Ambrosetti, 2014; Butler & Cuenca, 2012; McGraw & Davis, 2017; Zeichner, 2005). Fortunately some universities recognise that teachers require support through formal or informal orientation sessions, courses and workshops to acquire the knowledge and skills to support student teachers in their role as mentors (Ambrosetti, 2012; Childre & Van Rie, 2015; McGraw & Davis, 2017; Zeichner, 2005). Mentor preparation can include information on the aims, structure, and teaching approaches methods, including to co-teaching, in the teacher education programme, and the developmental and evaluative duties of the mentor teacher (Childre & Van Rie, 2015; Jita & Munje, 2022). Teacher educators can also meet with mentors prior to, during, and after the teaching practicum to explain or devise ways to provide developmental feedback and emotional support to student teachers (Ambrosetti, 2012; Jita & Munje, 2022; Smethem and Hood, 2011). Additional guidance on aspects of mentoring and the university curriculum helps mentors better support student teachers and align what they learn on campus and experience at schools during TP (Phillips & Condy, 2023; Quick & Sieborger, 2005).

Universities should also provide more support to mentor teachers, so that they have a better understanding of the role that they play in the student teachers' development. In a study by Izadinia (2016), all eight of the student teachers were aware of the effect that their mentors

had on their professional identities whereas seven of the ten mentors were unaware of this. While the mentors' passion or lack thereof affected the student teachers' passion for teaching and their belief in their ability to make a difference in learners' lives; mentors felt that the experience of teaching at a school was the sole factor shaping their mentees' professional identities (Izadinia, 2016). University programmes could make mentor teachers aware of how much they influence their mentees, so that they are conscious of how they can positively affect future teachers' identities.

Providing student teachers who work in challenging schools with support is important, because beginner teachers are often unprepared to teach in challenging contexts (du Plessis & Sunde, 2017; Naidoo & Wagner, 2020). In South Africa schools could be classified as having challenging work environments when there are under-resourced with large classes and many EAL learners (Amnesty International, 2020; du Plessis & Mestry, 2019; du Plessis & Sunde, 2017; Gardiner, 2008; Maringe et al., 2015; Nkadimeng & Makalela, 2015). Teaching additional language speakers is challenging because students teachers need to use simple language for learners to understand both general and subject-specific vocabulary (Rusznyak & Walton, 2017). South African student teachers find learner-centred strategies hard to implement for large classes because it is difficult to maintain classroom discipline and finish the lesson within the allotted time (du Plessis, 2020; Marais, 2016). Low socio-economic status learners may also exhibit more challenging behaviours during lessons (Naidoo & Wagner, 2020).

The type and amount of mentor support that the student teachers receive directly affects their developing professional identities during placements in challenging schools. Effective mentors in challenging schools guide student teachers to think about and reflect on the world through the perspectives of the learners in order to accommodate them and teach effectively (Gay, 2018; Miller & Pedro, 2006; Naidoo & Wagner, 2020). The advice, feedback, and observation of effective mentors makes student teachers feel welcome in challenging school contexts, which makes them more likely to persevere while facing challenges that they feel unprepared for (Naidoo & Wagner, 2020; Morettini, Luet & Vernon-Dotson, 2020). By facing these challenges with the support of their mentors, student teachers can develop their confidence, self-efficacy and self-esteem (Morettini et al., 2020). However, a lack of mentor support in a challenging school could cause student teachers to feel less confident or effective by the end of the school visit (du Plessis & Sunde, 2017).

This discussion illustrates how important it is that universities provide clear guidance and support to teachers who mentor student teachers to improve the support offered through the mentoring relationship. While universities support mentor teachers, the school context affects how much support the mentor teacher may be able to or used to providing student teachers. The next section of the literature review considers how negative experiences, where the student teacher does not receive sufficient support from the university or the mentors during the practicum, impacts on their professional identities development.

## **2.9 Negative TP experiences and professional identities development**

Since student teacher feel that TP in schools prepares them to teach in schools in the future, they look forward to developing their practice in schools (Admiraal, 2020; Hascher et al., 2004; Smith & Lev-Ari, 2005). However, adapting to a new environment while they are still learning to teach is stressful for student teachers (Admiraal, 2020; Caires et al., 2012; Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2009; Ngidi & Sibaya, 2003). Student teachers worry during TP about the likelihood of receiving support from mentor teachers; their preparedness prior to the practicum; their ability to manage learner misbehaviour; being evaluated by a lecturer or mentor; and having their lecturer or the mentor teacher view an unsuccessful lesson (Danner, 2014). Student teachers may also worry or be confused about how to integrate the theory and methods that they have learned while teaching in schools (Chen et al., 2022). Since TP is stressful for student teachers, they report disturbed sleeping and eating patterns, and tiredness and weariness after long days of teaching (Admiraal, 2020; Alves et al., 2012; Caires et al., 2012; Schoeman & Mabunda, 2012).

Negative teaching-practice experiences leave student teachers feeling isolated, less certain about their capabilities and futures as teachers, and demotivated and likely to drop out of their teacher education programmes (DeAngelis, Wall & Che, 2013; Johnston, 2015; Izadinia, 2017; Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2009; Marais & Meier, 2004; Ng'umbi, 2009). Unfortunately, not all student teachers experience the schools where they conduct TP as welcoming environments. During TP, student teachers may feel that busy schoolteachers are unhelpful and unfriendly towards them (Johnston, 2015). Schoolteachers contribute to student teachers feeling like outsiders by barring them from or not inviting them to common spaces and places where practices are negotiated or learned, such as the staffroom, seminars, meetings, and

social events (Christensen, Rossi, Lisahunter & Tinning, 2018; Johnston, 2015; Koross, 2016).

In the previous sections, a discussion about the kinds of support mentor teachers could provide to student teachers was provided. While mentors should provide assist student teachers with their professional developmental not all mentor teachers offer appropriate guidance and support to student teachers during school visits. When mentors do trust student teachers to teach the learners, this makes the students feel uncertain about whether they are developing their teaching and classroom management capabilities (Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2009; Marais & Meier, 2004; Moosa & Rembach, 2020). A mentor's criticism in front of a class or taking over from the mentee while he or she is teaching can cause the student teacher to feel incompetent (Moosa & Rembach, 2020). While student teachers learn from reflection and feedback on lessons, some mentor teachers discounted the importance of reflection and provide little feedback to their mentees (Izadinia, 2017; Moosa & Rembach, 2020; Mukeredzi, 2017). When mentors see the student teachers as 'substitute teachers' who can teach classes or mark work by themselves this limits the students' learning and can cause them to struggle with managing the learners' behaviour on their own (Gravett & Jiyane, 2019; Izadinia, 2015; Maphosa, Shumba & Shumba, 2007; Marais & Meier, 2004; Moosa & Rembach, 2020). Some mentors who are absent from school or remain in the staffroom during school hours feel that the student teachers should provide them with a break from teaching (Gravett & Jiyane, 2019).

Some mentors do not allow their mentees to deviate from using prescribed content and particular teaching strategies (Cherian, 2007; Johnston, 2015; Moosa & Rembach, 2020). Student teachers may find their mentor teachers are focused on preparing learners for tests by teaching content knowledge through direct instruction rather than using other pedagogies to build learners skills (Chen et al., 2022; Yuan & Lee, 2016; Zembylas, 2003b). The mentor teachers focused on passing down 'teaching tips' on specific teaching strategies do not scaffold student teachers' problem solving and decision making (Hascher et al., 2004; Elshaw et al., 2018; Robinson, 2001). Mentors who expect student teachers to teaching to conform to a particular teaching style or school culture can harm mentees' emerging professional identities by making them feel less confident in their teaching abilities and alienated from the school community (Izadinia, 2015; Teng, 2017; Yuan, 2016). Not all student teachers who are assigned to a mentor teacher who expects the student to enact a professional identity that

contradicts with their own will automatically be less confident in their abilities by the end of the teaching-practice block. Despite facing constraints student teachers are individuals with the potential for agency and even when constrained they can exhibit their preferred professional selves in the classroom and with learners through <sup>19</sup>tactical compliance and <sup>20</sup>positive self-imagining (Teng, 2017; Yuan & Lee, 2016). In Butler's (2021) study student teachers adopted temporary identities to teach in ways that fit their mentor's ideals and the prescribed curriculum, but they did not change their beliefs about teaching and preferred professional identities.

## **2.10 Conclusion**

While teachers lack the autonomy of most professionals, they are still expected to act professionally by taking decisions and responsibility for outcomes achieved by learners. Agency, beliefs, emotions, motivations, and previous teaching and learning experiences are some of the components of the professional identities of teachers. These identities are important because they guide how teachers think, act, and feel.

The current era of managerialism promotes competition rather than caring for learners and collaboration between teachers and co-teaching between mentors and student teachers. Teaching practice provides unique opportunities for student teachers to develop and revise their professional identities through their relationships with learners and teachers in authentic school contexts. Future language teachers' professional identities also influence which content is selected as part of the curriculum, and which teaching approaches, methods, sequencing, and pacing is used.

Student teachers find coping with the realities in schools and the assuming some of the duties of a teacher stressful and rely on the support of the university lecturers and mentor teachers during TP. The mentor teacher should provide the student teacher with guidance on the school culture and expectations, feedback on lessons taught or observed, as well as support during challenges he or she experiences at the school. Not all mentor teachers receive

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<sup>19</sup> Tactical compliance occurs when student teachers seem to adopt the mentor teacher's ways of teaching, while searching for avenues to express their own preferred professional identities (Teng, 2017; Yuan & Lee, 2016).

<sup>20</sup> Positive self-imagining occurs when student teachers imagine themselves being the kinds of teachers that they want to be in the future (Teng, 2017; Yuan & Lee, 2016).

guidance about their role from teacher educators at the university, or additional time and support to perform their mentoring duties from the school principals.

In some schools, the practices that student teachers see do not match the theory that they have learnt, which makes it difficult for them to implement inclusive teaching and learner-centred teaching strategies. To support application of theory, teacher educators and mentors must align TP with the aims and content of the ITE programme and provide ample opportunities for reflection and revision of professional identities. When mentor teachers do not provide opportunities to teach using preferred approaches and methods this can harm student teachers' developing professional identities by reducing their confidence and motivation. However, some student teachers display their resilience by trying to teach or imagining themselves teaching in the future in ways that affirm their professional identities.

## **ACT THREE**

### **Professional identities development through the looking glass**

#### **3.1 Conceptualising student-teacher professional identities**

This study used two theories, Situated Learning and Positioning Theory, to gain insight into how TP influenced the development of student teachers' professional identities. This framework addressed the complex ways that student teachers, as agents, construct and develop their professional identities with others while situated in different school contexts. As Situated Learning theory focuses on different contexts with their existing network of social practices and social relationships, it served as a lens to understand the different opportunities that the schools offered for the student teachers to develop their professional identities. The theory allowed me to unpack how the student teachers, as individuals with various personal and social identities, developed their professional identities through participation in particular groups or Communities of Practice. Positioning Theory helped me to analyse and explain how the student teachers positioned themselves as they developed their professional identities in relation to others within specific social contexts. The theory further enabled a reflection on the fluid nature of relationships and identities, which was important to make sense of how the student teachers developed their professional identities through their social relationships with others during school visits.

Since social and relational identities are important for this study, they are briefly defined as part of the theoretical framework. Social identities are "... part of the individual's self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance of that membership" (Tajfel 1981, p. 255). Social identities, related to a person's relationships, roles, and memberships in groups are only personally significant "to the extent that individuals identify personally with them" (Vignoles, 2011, pg. 5). In this study some participants identified and performed of rituals associated with the social identity of being a Christian. Relational identities develop between people as they perform particular social roles within institutions or groups (Brewer, 2016), and was observed in this study when SPU students enacted their role of student teacher in schools during TP. The personal identities are also important which Fearon (1999, pg. 25) defines as:

... set of attributes, beliefs, desires, or principles of action that a person thinks distinguish her in socially relevant ways and that (a) the person takes a special pride in; (b) the person takes no special pride in, but which so orient her behaviour that she would be at a loss about how to act and what to do without them; or (c) the person feels she could not change even if she wanted to.

In this definition, personal identities include physical attributes, or talents that people are proud of, habits and dispositions, which orientate people's behaviour, identities that people would change if they were able to. Fearson (1999) acknowledges that personal and social identities are interconnected and the interconnections occurs because personal traits, including physical attributes, talents, habits and dispositions "gain much significance from their social meanings, including their association with social groups and categories" (Vignoles, 2011, pg. 5). Thus, personal, relational and social identities may be expressed at the same time (Trepte & Loy, 2017), and studying these identities as separate categories leads to a partial and simplistic account of identities (Vignoles, 2011).

### **3.2 Situated Learning Theory**

Behaviourism was founded in 1913 by Watson, and was the dominant approach used to study learning in English-speaking countries for approximately 60 years (Illeris, 2018; Watson, 1913). Behaviourists study how learners become conditioned to respond to stimuli present in the environment by conducting experiments into learning in a laboratory where multiple variables are accounted for (Illeris, 2018). Since behavioural learning theories do not consider how real-life contexts shape learning, these theories are not applicable to this study, which explores how student teachers learn to be teachers through teaching in real-life contexts. From the 1960s, in response to the limitations of behaviourism, noted scholars, including Miller and Piaget, challenged the dominance of behaviourism by proposing several cognitive theories of learning (Çeliköz, Erişen & Mehm, 2016; Illeris, 2018). Researchers who use cognitive theories to explain learning, study how people learn specific mental processes to complete complex tasks (Çeliköz et al., 2016; Illeris, 2018). Compared to behavioural theories of learning, cognitive theories of learning provide researchers with richer insights into how people learn specific mental processes (Çeliköz et al., 2016; Illeris, 2018).

Cognitive theories of learning tend to focus on how people learn to acquire patterns or stages of thinking, and do not pay much attention to how people learn to think and act with others in particular socio-cultural environments (Lave, 2009). Much of the research on school learning

examines how individuals learn content and the means to apply it (Delores et al., 1996). However, this study did not focus on how the student teachers learn content but was interested in how the student teachers used their previous knowledge to learn “to be” and “to live together” with others in school contexts (Faure et al., 1972, pg. 126; Delores et al., 1996, pg. 37). Learning to become concentrates on supporting learners to develop the abilities and attributes to be adults who participate in and contribute to a democratic society (Delores, et al., 1996, Faure et al., 1972). Student teachers are learning to become teachers who will contribute to a democratic society, by teaching future learners to be innovative and critical thinkers as envisaged in curriculum policy. The concept of learning to “live together” focuses on teaching students to be able to work in multicultural groups and teams while resolving complex conflicts (Delores et al., 1996, pg. 37). During teaching practice, student teachers resolved various conflicts in the classroom with staff members including their mentor teachers, learners, and fellow student teachers. Learning to be and learning to live together are relevant concepts for the study, because during TP student teachers learn to become teachers who can work with others to participate in and contribute to the school community.

As discussed in Act Two, learning to be a teacher is more than a cognitive exercise. Becoming a teacher is a complex social process that includes interactions with teachers and learners from different socio-cultural and economic backgrounds. Hence, social theories of learning with their focus on how people learn through interactions with others in particular contexts (Illeris, 2018), are more relevant for this study. In 1971, Bandura was one of the first researchers to pay attention to the social context when he proposed that children learn through modelling the behaviours or instructions of others. Two decades later, Lave and Wenger (1991) expanded upon Bandura’s Social Learning Theory to argue that learning is situated in specific social contexts. If learning is socially situated, then what one learns is not only propositional knowledge, but also the ways of operating with others in particular contexts (Wenger, 1998). Lave (1991; 1996; 2009; 2012a; 2012b) describes how learning is an everyday social activity that is inseparable from other types of activities in the theory of Situated Learning. Thus, formal learning in the classrooms is not separate from or better than learning in practice (Lave, 2012a), and student teachers engage in formal learning and learning in practice in the classroom situations. For the participants, formal teaching took place in lectures and tutorials and learning in practice took place during the mock lessons to peers, and classes observed or taught to learners in the schools during TP. This theory helped me to analyse the different interactions that the students experienced during teaching practice,

how they reflected on and made sense of them, and ultimately what role these interactions played in the development of their personal identities.

Researchers and lay people tend to value formal learning over on-the-job training, as they believe that degrees provide knowledge that learners can transfer to new contexts while apprentices only learn simple mechanical tasks (Lave, 1991; 1996). However, apprentices also learn essential aspects of a profession including how to think, and act like a professional, under the guidance of masters (Lave, 1991; 2012b). While formal learning is supposed to teach people transferable knowledge, research indicates that learning is context dependent, meaning that people must unlearn, re-learn, or transform much of what they have learned to operate in new environments (Downs & Wardle, 2007; Lave, 1996; Lillis & Tuck, 2016; Wingate, 2006). One of the intentions for this study was to examine and understand, through reflection, the new attitudes, beliefs, and values things that the student teachers learnt, unlearnt, and transformed as they developed their practice and professional identities.

Researchers who understand learning as situated in everyday activities seek to understand how individuals learn with others through continual engagement in and interpretation of the world in particular contexts (Lave, 2009). Three helpful concepts in Situated Learning that help me to explore the student teachers' identities formation in practice are Communities of Practice, Legitimate Peripheral Participation, and Learning Trajectories.

Communities of Practice (CoP) are important spaces for the learning and members' identities development. According to Wenger, Trayner, and de Laat (2011), a community of practice is:

a learning partnership among people who find it useful to learn from and with each other about a particular domain. They use each other's experience of practice as a learning resource. And they join forces in making sense of and addressing challenges they face individually or collectively... (p. 9).

Members in CoP learn shared practices from each other that are relevant within specific domains, where appropriate abilities and expertise are prized (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). Only people who are knowledgeable about a domain and engage regularly to create and sustain meaning-laded shared practices are considered members of CoP (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). Thus, interest in the same domain does not mean that people share a CoP (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). While staff at a school share some common goals, they may belong to different communities of practice like pedagogical practices and only interact with each other when they share knowledge about the subject

matter and content knowledge. While a school is a common community, there may be other smaller more engaged communities of practice within a school. For example, teachers of a particular subject who meet regularly to find ways to improve their teaching of a subject are a CoP, and teachers of a grade or phase meet to discuss how best to assist their students. During TP, student teachers were part of CoP in the school, and several were also part of smaller CoP that were formed to address teaching of a particular subject or phase.

In a community of practice, there are novices or newcomers to the community and ‘old-timers’ who are more knowledgeable and experienced members of the community, with closer relationships to existing community members (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Newcomers engage in a process called Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP) to “become part of a community of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.29). LPP provides new members of a community of practice with opportunities to learn the everyday practices of the community under the guidance of ‘old-timers’, or established members of the community (Lave, 2009; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Student teachers learn from the guidance of the more experienced mentor teachers and other staff members, and add to practice, which is defined as “experiences, stories, tools, and ways of addressing recurring problems” (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015, p. 2). Newcomers learn different practices through performing tasks that it takes various levels effort to complete and degrees of associated risks (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In a school context, this means that student teachers learn to draw from and add to practice under the guidance of the more experienced mentor teachers (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015, pg. 2). By engaging in and reflecting in shared practices with others, especially their mentor teachers, student teachers participated as members of the school communities and developed their professional identities. Though LPP is a less involved form of participation, it affords people who are not yet recognised as professionals with genuine opportunities to develop their identities as members of the community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Thus, LPP was used to analyse how student teachers’ interactions with more experienced members of the community strengthened their knowledge and skills and developed their professional identities as temporary members of CoP.

In CoPT (Community of Practice Theory) the three processes by which more experienced members induct newer members into a community are mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998). Mutual engagement refers to the amount and patterns of interactions that create a sense of shared meaning or frames of reference when identifying

and solving problems in the community of practice (Iverson & McPhee, 2008; Li et al., 2009). During TP, student teachers participated in the teaching, marking, and extra-curricular activities under the guidance of their mentor teacher. By engaging and reflecting on these activities the student teachers shaped the development of their professional identities. Joint enterprise occurs when two or more people have a shared purpose and take joint accountability for decision making and actions to achieve shared goals (Iverson & McPhee, 2008; Li et al., 2009). During the school visits, joint enterprise occurred when student teachers and mentor teachers shared some of the responsibility for the teaching and learning for specific subjects and grades that occurred in the classroom. Shared repertoires are the language, including jargon and stories, the rituals, and the practices known and used by members in a CoP (Iverson & McPhee, 2008; Li et al., 2009). In this study, it was the more experienced mentor teachers who usually taught the shared repertoire to the student teachers as the novices and legitimate peripheral participants in the community of practice.

Since student teachers developed their professional identities by interacting with their mentor teachers, the theory was relevant to analyse whether and how the relationship between mentor teachers and the student teachers learning in a community of practice. Where systems to support new members are not in place or are insufficient, this can limit newcomers' participation and development of professional identities in a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This means that for participation in a school community student teachers require that the structure(s) and organisational culture(s), which created learning opportunities or barriers to learning, are clearly explained (Fuller, Hodkinson, Hodkinson & Unwin, 2005). Since each school was organised differently, it was important to consider how the learning opportunities or lack thereof that were offered by the CoP in schools influenced the student teachers' professional identities development during TP.

The preceding paragraphs discussed how established members in a CoP generally welcome and provide new members with learning opportunities. It is important to mention that the engagement of individuals in a CoP is not uniform, because it also depends on the individual's particular background, and preferred professional identities. Since Communities of Practice consist of different individuals with their own histories and aspirations, the ways in which individual members of a CoP learn and develop their identities is also unique. This was noticed in the current study, as student teachers with unique histories responded differently to similar challenges in CoP, resulting in development of varied professional

identities. Dreier (1999) state that each person's particular history, ideals, and desires shapes his or her participation within one community of practice and across multiple CoP. Thus, each student teacher has a unique learning history in previous CoP that shape their learning and identity goals and motivate them to engage in a community of practice in particular ways. This means, to understand each student teacher's participation in community of practice, it was critical to understand their rich and diverse socio-cultural and historical backgrounds.

Lave and Wenger (1991) acknowledge that individuals in a community of practice can choose their own unique learning pathways, which they refer to as Learning Trajectories. This could mean that some student teachers may be more focused on learning to be subject specialists while others may be more interested in learning how to become part of the school management team. For Wenger (1998), the act of engaging with and learning specific practices in a community is inseparable from the development of identities in that community. In this study I also acknowledged that for student teachers learning to be a teacher is inseparable from the process of developing one's professional identities. This theory is useful, because it acknowledges the important link between learning and becoming a member of any community, and at the same time analyses the student teachers' development of professional identities within CoP. Using the theory I analysed individual student's engagement in various duties within the communities, the skills learnt, and the professional identities that developed when experienced teachers members passed on knowledge and skills to student teachers in particular CoP during TP.

Since Situated Learning focuses on the community and not on the status and agency of the individual in the community, it cannot form the entire basis of the theoretical framework of the study. To strengthen the theoretical framework, I have included ideas from Positioning Theory, because it pays more attention to how individuals, as social agents, position themselves in relation to others in social contexts. With its emphasis on positioning, the theory enabled me to understand how the individual student teacher related to others in a school during TP, as they tried to enact their preferred professional identities.

### **3.3 Positioning Theory**

Positioning Theory seeks to understand how people position themselves in response to being positioned by others, and how they attempt to position other people (Andreouli, 2010; Harré,

2008; Davies & Harré, 1990; Harré & Moghaddam, 2003). Positioning takes place in conversations where two or more speakers attempt to position themselves and each other (Mcvee, 2011). In the original Positioning Theory, positions are called subject positions to indicate their flexibility, fluidity, and blurred boundaries (Andreouli, 2010; Mcvee, 2011). According to Harré (2015), subject positions are “shared and sometimes contested beliefs about how rights and duties to perform certain acts are distributed among the interested parties” (p. 265). Rights are generally what people believe that others owe them in terms of their own power to speak and act. In a school the mentor teachers, principal, and other staff members in the school have power over and therefore more rights than student teachers. Duties are the expected behaviours that people believe they owe to others or that are owed to them by others (Harré & Moghaddam, 2014). For example, in the study the mentors, principals, and other staff members expected the student teachers to behave in a particular way within the school community. There were also various duties, such as administration, observation, teaching, invigilation, and marking that student teachers were expected to perform in particular spaces, including the school yard, classroom, meeting rooms, and hall. In essence, each subject position is a socially understood set of beliefs prevalent in particular communities about who has a moral claim to particular rights and duties (Harré, 2015).

To claim a particular subject position, people must first recognise the ways in which this position could or should be enacted or performed in a community (Duveen, 1996). Positioning Theory is influenced by the work of Wittgenstein and Vygotsky (Harré & Van Langenhove, 1991; Howie & Peters, 1996; Peters & Appel, 1996). In 1953, Wittgenstein first challenged the view that language was located in individuals’ minds and argued that language was a socially developed phenomenon bound by norms and rules. Harré and Langenhove, built on the work of Wittgenstein (1953, 1972) by focusing on how positioning occurs through social interactions in the form of conversations that refer to communally understood moral norms (Howie & Peters, 1996; Peters & Appel, 1996). These norms are the rights and duties that are available to people holding or attempting to claim particular subject positions (Harré & Van Langenhove, 1991). Positioning Theory also borrows from Vygotsky’s (1978, pg.57) belief that, “Every function in the child’s cultural development appears twice: first, between people (inter-psychology), then inside the child (intra-psychology)”. According to Harré and Van Langenhove (1991), positioning follows a similar pattern whereby people’s internal positions are dependent upon how people are positioned and are able to position themselves and others in a particular community. Therefore, how someone is positioned or positions

himself or herself externally mirrors their desired internal positions. All external and internal positions are associated with certain rights and duties, which exist in particular times and places, in storylines accepted by specific communities (Harré & Van Langenhove, 1991).

According to Positioning Theory, time and place are created through reference to pre-existing storylines, or common stories where participants occupy certain subject positions associated with particular rights and duties (Harré, 2008). Theorists who use Positioning Theory analyse how speakers in conversations use communicative acts to create storylines to project particular subject positions onto others and to accept or reject these positions. These communicate acts include spoken words, tone of voice, facial expressions, gestures, and dress (Mcvee, 2011). The student teachers' choice of spoken words and tone was apparent in the initial audio voice note and the audio journals sent to the researcher via WhatsApp, and their facial expressions, gestures, and dress were visible during the interviews. The interactions between the three elements in Positioning Theory, subject positions, communicative acts, and storylines are shown in Figure 2, which is shown below:

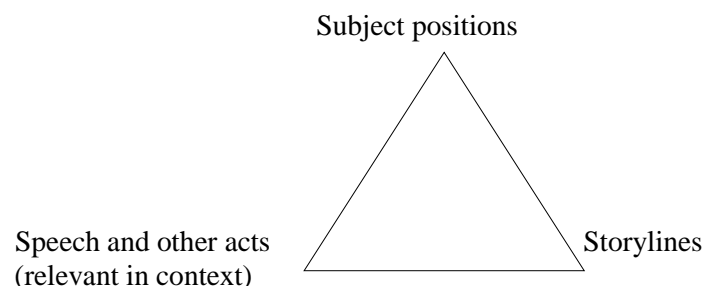
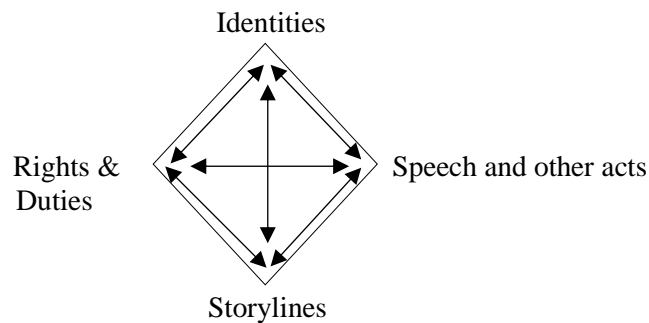


Figure 2. The positioning triangle (based on Harré & Moghaddam, 2003, pg. 5-6)

In the above figure, people take up or project upon others particular pre-existing social positions, called subject positions, with associated rights and duties, through their use of speech and other communicative acts situated within recognisable and understood storylines (Harré, 2008). In the original Positioning Theory triangle, rights and duties are tied to subject positions, which are socially accepted beliefs about rights and duties to assume, attempt to take up, reject, or project particular positions onto themselves and others.

Slocum-Bradley (2009) has expanded the original triangle into a positioning diamond where she replaces the word subject positions with the word identities and includes rights and duties

as a separate dimension. A slightly adapted model of the positioning diamond is shown below:



**Figure 3. The Positioning Diamond (Slocum-Bradley, 2009, p. 92).**

In some versions of the positioning triangle, the words illocutionary forces, a term developed by Austin (1961) is used, but Slocum-Bradley (2009) uses the words social forces as she believes that the second term is clearer. In the dissertation there are two reasons why the term speech and other (communicative) acts, as used by Harré & Moghaddam in 2003, was used rather than the term social forces. The term speech and other acts clearly refers to all communicative acts while the term social forces is imprecise, because it may be used to refer to people's relationships with other individuals and groups, and their position with regards to national or global debates (Ton, Stroebe & van Zomeren, 2022). While the positioning triangle in Figure 2 has been criticised as an unsuitable method to study narratives, because it does not provide a method for analysing stories (Deppermann, 2013), the positioning diamond in Figure 3 overcomes this weakness. Slocum-Bradley (2009) suggests that researchers use the positioning diamond to analyse narratives on three levels, which are influenced by the work of Bamberg (1997), who paid close attention to the analysis of dialogues. The first level is related to the content or what the narrator talks about in the story, the second level discusses the relationships between the narrator and other characters in the story or the intended audience of the story, and the third level is related to the ideological positions the narrator takes with regards to broader discourses, which are socially recognised ways of being, and discussions and debates taking place in society (Gee, 1990; Hall, 1996, 2011). The positioning diamond through its three levels of analysis pays attention to the form and content of the story, and it therefore a suitable tool to analyse narratives.

There are three advantages of using the positioning diamond rather than the positioning triangle as a theoretical and analytical framework. The first advantage is that the use of the

term identities is the same concept that is defined and thoroughly explored throughout the thesis, while the term subject positions is given much less attention. The second advantage is Slocum-Bradley's (2009) suggestion to pay attention to nouns and adjectives to understand how people refer to the identities of themselves, others, or things that they ascribe an identity. She explains that people use nouns to refer to people or things and adjectives to refer to the expected attributes of these people or things (Slocum-Bradley, 2009). As an example, student teachers in the study used the noun word 'teacher' to state that he or she wants to become a teacher, or to provide reasons for why he or she wants to be a teacher. Many of the student teacher also used the adjective "caring" before the noun to describe their desire to become a particular kind of teacher. The third advantage of the positioning diamond is that rights and duties are a separate dimension, which could make it easier for me to clearly identify and describe the rights and duties mentioned by the participants in their narratives. Therefore, the use of the positioning diamond rather than the positioning triangle allowed me to relate the model more closely to the concept of identities and to describe the rights and duties that were linked to particular identities.

Positioning Theory is well suited to the study because it acknowledges that professional identities are enacted in the moment making them fluid rather than static (Andreouli, 2010; Mcvee, 2011). This means that this theory is suitable for exploring the development of student teachers' multiple, conflicting, and shifting professional identities (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Lamote & Engels 2010; Makovec, 2018), during TP. Professional identities that can be claimed and enacted in particular ways with reference to certain storylines can be more or less powerful than other identities. Although it is difficult to say in all circumstances which identities are stronger or weaker, the identities that are more powerful give people more rights over others, while subject positions that are less powerful offer people more duties to obey others (Andreouli, 2010; Harré, 2008; Harré & Moghaddam, 2003).

Since powerful and less powerful subject positions exist in relation to one another, the rights and duties of people are unevenly distributed (Harré & Moghaddam, 2014). Since the position of mentor teacher is more powerful than that of student teacher, mentors have more rights in school CoP, and student teachers have to do the duties assigned by their mentors. The positions of teacher or mentor teacher and student teacher and their resultant rights and duties exist within a commonly understood narrative where student teachers conduct TP at schools to gain experience under the guidance of a mentor teacher. Since the student teachers

serve under the guidance of the mentor teachers, the mentor teacher has the power to position their mentees in the eyes of their learners and colleagues. If student teachers attempt to claim particular subject positions, mentors can use their superior position in the school to reject these claims. Hence, student teachers who attempt to position themselves as legitimate beginner teachers with some authority in the classroom can instead be positioned by their mentors as students or assistant teachers (Izadinia, 2015; Yuan, 2016). Since the student teachers' claim to the subject position of teacher is tentative, their bid can be rejected by the mentor teachers who are viewed as more 'legitimate' members of the school community (Andreouli, 2010). Student teachers introduced as students to a class of learners might feel that their mentor teachers have malignantly positioned them (Liu, 2014). Malignant positioning is any positioning that reduces the rights of the person being positioned (Harré, 2008). When mentors position student teachers as subordinates, their duty becomes to obey the mentor teacher and to relinquish any right to teach learners in ways that they would prefer. Individuals can respond to malignant positioning by using communicative acts as they attempt to take up positions that counter this positioning (Block, 2017).

People choose which communicative actions to use by drawing on their past stories and the knowledge they possess about the relevant subject positions (Mcvee, 2011). During TP several student teachers who were positioned as assistants by their mentors, repositioned themselves as legitimate beginner teachers through <sup>21</sup>tactical compliance and positive self-imagining (Teng, 2017; Yuan & Lee, 2016). For the student teachers the success or failure of each re-positioning attempt had implications for their personal storylines and professional identities. Fortunately, the student teachers successfully repositioned themselves as legitimate beginner teachers, and the effect on their professional identities was positive, as they remained confident in their abilities and committed to the profession. Thus, positioning or re-positioning can lead to the self-creation of new storylines, and the personal revision of one's identities.

Some pre-existing storylines are formed in relation to broader societal discourses. For example, teachers position themselves in relation to the current debate about whether governments are de-professionalising teachers through increasing regulation over the school curriculum. Teachers who accepted the government's narrative that the state curriculum is

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<sup>21</sup> See page 45 for an explanation of tactical compliance and positive self-imagining.

required to improve the quality of education also accept their prescribed position as facilitators whose performance is solely determined by the students' grades on national exams (Buchanan, 2015). On the other hand, teachers who rejected this narrative argued that they require freedom to teach learners whose abilities and interests differ and that their performance is dependent on the intangible emotional and cognitive development of their learners (Buchanan, 2015; Naidoo, 2012; Zembylas, 2003b). Student teachers may also position themselves and others according to available discourses, for instance, current debates related to social identity including race, gender, language, religion, and sexuality. Hence, people try to ensure that they are recognised in particular ways by positioning themselves according to existing storylines and discourses within specific contexts.

The reason for including this theory in the theoretical framework is that I was able to analyse how the student teachers positioned themselves in response to other people in the school context, and how this influenced their professional identities. While Situated Learning focuses on the learning that takes place in a community, Positioning Theory addresses the power relationships between individuals and the ways in which individuals choose to position themselves and respond to being positioned by others (Davies & Harré, 1990). Positioning Theory was therefore useful to understand how the student teachers developed their identities in relation to others, including their 'powerful' mentor teachers. Mentor teachers hold the position of staff members and qualified teachers in schools, and this gives them certain rights and duties. In comparison, student teachers have fewer rights and duties as visitors in the schools and operating under the mentors' guidance.

### **3.4 Integrating Situated Learning and Positioning Theory**

The use of Situated Learning and Positioning Theory means that the findings have considered learning opportunities students took part in during TP, and how they located themselves in relation to other members of the community. Situated Learning focuses on learning in specific contexts, which is relevant for this study as it explored the professional identities development of student teachers during TP in particular school contexts. The theory also pays attention to CoP, where practices are developed and shared within communities. As each school is a separate community, the student teachers had different opportunities to learn particular practices depending on the school where they conducted their TP. The theory also pays attention to the LPP that trainee members of a profession engage in. This was relevant

for the study because the kinds of LPP that visiting student teachers engaged in during TP depended upon the practices of the schools where they conducted their TP. This study recognises that schools and mentor teachers created environments that the student teachers found supportive or unsupportive of their professional identities' development.

Since Situated Learning pays more attention to learning within a community rather than to the development of identities, Positioning Theory was used to understand how the student teachers as agents developed their own professional identities. Positioning Theory enabled me to understand how the student teachers actively positioned themselves to reflect their developing professional identities in relation to other members of the school community. In other words, Positioning Theory revealed how student teachers attempted to take up or reject particular professional identities during TP. While student teachers occupy the subject position, or socially recognisable role of student teacher, the rights and duties of each student teacher differed depending on the school environment and the nature of their relationship with their mentor teachers. Since the theory pays more attention to power relations than Situated Learning, it highlighted the ways in which the student teachers respond to being positioned in favourable or unfavourable ways by more powerful others in the school community.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

I used Community of Practice Theory to show how student teachers engage in Situated Learning to develop their professional identities during TP within specific school contexts. The student teachers in this study engaged in Legitimate Peripheral Participation to develop their professional identities through their engagement in particular activities during TP with other members of specific school communities. Positioning Theory allowed me to consider issues of power relationships inherent in TP where individuals with identities as teachers, including mentor teachers, have more authority and rights than the student teachers.

Throughout the participants' narratives I paid attention to how the student teachers accepted or resisted certain positions through their choice of words and speech patterns. As each student teacher is an individual, I explored how each student's developing professional identities are affected by his or her learning trajectory, which is influenced by his or her backgrounds, personalities, and life choices (Dreier, 1999; Fuller et al., 2005).

## **ACT FOUR**

### **A map to the buried treasure: Research design and methodology**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the rationale for the chosen research paradigm, social constructionism, followed by an explanation of narrative inquiry as a research design and the qualitative research approach. I further engage with the data collection methods, which include an audio recording, written and audio journals, interviews, and document collection. A brief description of the methods of data analysis, narrative- and document analysis follows. The next two sections of the chapter describe the processes that were used to ensure the study is ethical and trustworthy. The chapter concludes with a summary table, to consolidate the information for ease of understanding.

#### **4.2 Research paradigm**

Research paradigms are the worldviews of the researchers, which frame how they understand the nature of reality and their beliefs about how research can be used to learn more about our realities (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In previous chapters, I argued that professional identities are subjective and socially constructed with others in particular contexts (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). I believe there are multiple ways that research participants as subjects understand reality, and researchers who seek to understand participants' perspectives need to understand their experiences in particular social contexts. For this study, social constructionism was a suitable research paradigm as it allowed for an exploration of how individual student teachers subjectively understand "the world in which they live and work" and their place in this world with others (Creswell, 2013, p. 24). Paradigms operate as the lenses that researchers use to help them make methodological decisions (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017), and link with the chosen theoretical framework the research approach, design, and methodology.

Although some researchers use the terms social constructivism and social constructionism interchangeably, the object of inquiry for these two paradigms differs (Mcnamee, 2004; Young & Collin, 2004). It was therefore important to use the paradigm that provided the most insight into how student teachers construct and develop professional identities. Social constructivists seek to understand the cognitive processes of individuals which is not the focus of the research. For social constructionists, participants understand the world through the “meanings and actions” they create with others in “specific situations” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 131). Since student teachers co-construct their professional identities in the university and schools as social contexts, (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2004; Gergen, 2001), social constructionism is a suitable paradigm for this study.

The choice of a particular research paradigm is important because it acts as a framework with implicit ontological and epistemological assumptions that guide the study. Ontology can be defined as the answers to questions related to “what exists, what is the nature of the world, what is reality” (Usher, 1996, p.9). Scotland (2012, p. 9) posits that “researchers need to take a position regarding their perceptions of how things really are and how things really work”. In this study, the student teachers’ experiences during TP and the professional identities they create during the school visits are viewed as socially constructed. In other words, the student teachers built their understandings of their experiences and professional understandings through participation in and reflection on the interactions they had with others in naturalist school contexts.

On the other hand, epistemology refers to “a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know” (Crotty, 2003, p. 3), which means that researchers must consider what knowledge is valid and how they come by this knowledge (Usher, 1996). In this study, the knowledge that the participants hold is viewed as “experiential, personal and subjective” (Sikes, 2004, p. 21). Thus, as the researcher I had to use an appropriate design to capture the participants’ lived experiences prior to and during the school visits, and to understand how these experiences influenced their subjective perspectives of their professional identities.

### **4.3 Research approach**

Since social constructionists understand knowledge as subjective and socially constructed (Chilisa & Kawulich, 2012; Mcnamee, 2004), qualitative research is a suitable approach for

this study. The three research approaches, qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods, have particular “epistemological, theoretical and methodological underpinnings” (Yilmaz, 2013, p. 312). It is important for researchers to understand the philosophical differences between these approaches to select a suitable approach and conduct the research in a manner that allows them to answer the research questions. Qualitative researchers are interested in the rich experiences of few participants in a context, while quantitative researchers believe that it is better to conduct large-scale research that can produce generalisable data. Mixed methods researchers use both approaches to gain a more nuanced understanding of the research questions and problems and provide comprehensive and holistic analyses of the data (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2014). Thus, for this study the qualitative approach was appropriate because it aims “to understand the situation under investigation primarily from the participants’ and not the researcher’s perspective” (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017, p. 8). The focus of the study was the SPU fourth-year student teachers’ experiences and understandings of their professional identities’ development during TP.

#### **4.4 Research design**

Creswell (2013) described research design as a blueprint or plan for conducting the research, which entails a detailed plan according to which the research is carried out. Knowledge in qualitative research is a quest to understand peoples’ experiences across place and time (Dewart, Kubota, Berendonk, Caine & Clandinin, 2019). One way to fulfil this quest is through narrative inquiry or “the study of experiences as story and a way of thinking through storying” (Clandinin & Huber, in press, p.3). In this study, I tell the participants’ stories while referring to elements of sociality, temporality, and place. Thus, the research findings present a detailed description of sociality, temporality, and place that acknowledges the lived experiences of student teachers in schools during TP and shows how these experiences shaped their understandings of their professional identities. Therefore, through a qualitative narrative inquiry design, I used the student teachers’ stories to understand how their experiences during TP influenced the development of their professional identities.

Sociality encompasses the personal and social conditions where the student teachers originate from, as part of the experiences (Dewart et al., 2019). Personal conditions include motivations, preferences, dispositions, feelings, actions, and re-actions, whereas the social conditions refer to the environment, including personal and professional relationships and

existing hierarchies (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007; Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). During school visits, the students as individuals with unique motivations and personalities developed their professional identities through the relationships they developed with staff members, most notably their mentor teachers and the learners. Paying attention to temporality illustrates how stories are evolving based on events in a particular time, which means that events, people, and places are always in transition between the past, the present, and the future (Dewart et al., 2019). The fourth-year student teachers professional identities' development was influenced by the meanings that they attached to prior schooling and teaching experiences and their aspirations for the future. Place is the physical environment where experiences are unfolding over time (Dewart et al., 2019). Places act as marker of space where certain events, personal and social conditions re-occur and can be reflected upon therefore play an essential role in narrative inquiry. The schools where the student teachers conducted their TP were sites where student teachers developed their professional identities as they participated in accepted practices and rituals.

Narrative inquiry is aligned with the social constructionism paradigm, which argues that knowledge is socially constructed and subjective, because the stories that people tell are also subjective and context dependent (Clandinin, 2006). For narrative researchers, stories are how people organise disjointed life experiences into plots, with a beginning, middle, and end, to make sense of these experiences (Clandinin et al., 2007; Polkinghorne, 1995). According to Cole and Knowles (2001), stories should not be understood in isolation and narrative researchers should relate the stories of the participants to their “political, religious, familial, and educational contexts” (p. 19) and discuss how stories are informed by wider public discourses. Clandinin and Caine (2008, p. 542) argue that these wider discourses include “larger cultural, social, and institutional narratives” that researchers should situate the participants' stories within. During data analysis, I socio-cultural and historical backgrounds to relate the stories they told to wider societal and institutional narratives.

Narrative inquiry is a suitable research design because when researchers study how participants change their self-representations through stories, and in relation to different contexts, discourses, and narratives, they may be able to gain insights into the participants' shifting and dynamic identities (Clandinin, 2006). Thus, by focusing on the student teachers' individual stories about their TP experiences, I was able understand how the participants construct and develop their professional identities.

## 4.5 Sampling

The study explored the professional identities development of the final-year student teachers at SPU. I used purposive sampling to select eight fourth-year student teachers to take part in this study. The purposive sampling method is used when “researchers deliberately hand-pick cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgement of a particular characteristic that the researcher is looking for” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p. 156–157). Hence, as recommended by Sargeant (2012), I choose participants with the most knowledge of the phenomenon, which was their professional identities development during TP.

I conducted purposive sampling by approaching the student teachers who were studying to become high-school language teachers who the TP Office had placed in <sup>22</sup>different school contexts for the second school visit. I invited potential participants until eight student teachers agreed to take part in the study. I reasoned that if two participants decided not to take part in the study, I would have a sample size of six. This is a good sample size, because Guest, Namey, and Chen (2020) found that 12 interviews are required for data saturation of over 80%. Since all eight student teachers participated in the entire study, the data gathered included 16 interviews.

Guest et al. (2020) argued that reaching data saturation is easier for homogenous populations. Though the participants were diverse in terms of factors such as, gender, race, class, age, and language, choosing to focus on language teachers helped to make the sample slightly more homogenous in terms of subject majors. Focusing on future teachers of the <sup>23</sup>languages allowed me to review literature concerned with the professional identity formation of language teachers in the PhD thesis. This is important, since literature indicates that the subjects of the student teachers influence how they view and understand themselves as teachers (Beijaard et al., 2000). Since student teachers’ subjects influence their professional identities, focusing on student teachers studying common subjects serves to strengthen the findings and recommendations of the study.

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<sup>22</sup> Since the second school visit took place online due to the restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, the students were assigned to other schools for the third and final school visit. More information on the context of the schools where students conducted the final school visit is provided in the chapter.

<sup>23</sup> All eight student teachers were studying to be teachers of English, and several were also studying to be future teachers of Setswana or Afrikaans.

#### ***4.5.1 Participating student teachers***

The TP Office allocated most of the students to schools for the second teaching-practice block, but due to the pandemic this block took place online instead of at schools. On 7 May 2021, I invited the student teachers to take part in the study by sending them an email. When I did not hear from students, I <sup>24</sup>obtained their cell phone numbers from one of the administrators and I followed up by sending the students a WhatsApp message. When the number provided by the administrator was no longer in use, I contacted the <sup>25</sup>student coordinators and asked them to remind the student to reply to me by email or cell phone number. Since less than half the students were willing to take part in the study, I continued to approach the students until I had the required number of participants on 14 May 2021.

I wanted to select only students who would become language teachers, because previous research indicates that the subject or subjects taught can influence teachers' professional identities (Anspal et al., 2012; Beijaard et al., 2000; Pozas & Letzel, 2021). At the university students who have English as a subject major have two choices. They can either become teachers of English and another language, either Setswana or Afrikaans, or they can become English, social science, and History teachers. In the study, six participants majored in English and another language, while two majored in English, social science, and History. The participants' details, including the schools where they conducted the third school visit in 2021 from 16 August to 1 October, are displayed in Table 1 on the next page:

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<sup>24</sup> Since I conducted research that would be of benefit to others, I could obtain the participants cell phone numbers without violating the Protection of Personal Information Act (Universities South Africa, 2020).

<sup>25</sup> The Teaching Practice Administrator appointed one student coordinator per school who liaised with lecturers regarding lesson assessments and recorded the attendance of his or her peers at the school during the teaching practice block.

Table 1: Details of the eight participating student teachers

	Name	School	Quintile	Subject	Phases	Hometown/s provinces
1	<b>Candice</b>	School A: Ex-Model C school where Afrikaans is the LoTL (language of learning and teaching)	Five	Afrikaans	<sup>26</sup> SP & FET	Kimberley, Northern Cape (NC)
English				FET		
2	<b>Landon</b>	School B: Dual-Medium English and Afrikaans Ex-Model C school	Five	English and History	SP & FET	Kimberley (NC)
Social Science				SP		
3	<b>Breyton</b>	School C: School in a predominately Afrikaans-speaking township	Four	Afrikaans	SP	Kimberley (NC)
English				SP & FET		
4	<b>Isipho</b>	School D: Dual-Medium English and Afrikaans Ex-Model C school	Two	Afrikaans	SP	Johannesburg, Gauteng, and a small town (NC)
English				SP & FET		
5	<b>Catriona</b>	School B: Dual-Medium English and Afrikaans Ex-Model C school	Five	Afrikaans	SP & FET	Small town (NC) and Bloemfontein, Free State
English				SP		
6	<b>Dineo</b>	School E: School in a predominately Afrikaans-speaking township	Three	Setswana	SP & FET	Village outside of Kuruman and Klerksdorp (NC)
English				SP		
7	<b>Moruti</b>	School F: School in a predominately Setswana speaking township	Two	Setswana	SP & FET	Village outside of Kuruman (NC)
English				SP		
8	<b>Buhle</b>	School G: School in a predominately Setswana speaking township	Two	English and History	SP & FET	Johannesburg, Gauteng

I aimed to select equal numbers of student teachers studying to be English and Afrikaans teachers. This was not possible due to the smaller population of Setswana students and the number of students majoring in the subject who decided not to participate in this research. This meant that I only had two participants who were studying Setswana and English as their majors. Most (4) of the student teachers, were studying Afrikaans and English as majors. The remaining two student teachers' majors were English, History and Social Sciences. All the participants had access to WhatsApp, which made communicating with them much easier.

<sup>26</sup> The Senior Phase (SP) is from Grades 7 to 9, and Further Education (FET) Phase and Training is from Grade 10 to 12.

This also enabled the participants to send me their daily journals at the end of each day of TP as a WhatsApp voice note.

Seven of the participants were located at different schools, while Landon and Catriona and were both placed at the same school. Prior to the virtual teaching practice block, the TP Office had placed the participants at different schools. However, once the block became virtual the TP Office amended the original lists for use in the second school visit changed, and the placed the two students at the same school. This was not a problem as it was interesting to compare how the experiences and professional identities' development of the student teachers at the same school differed. Even though there were seven instead of eight final schools, the schools' contexts differed, because there were schools in townships and ex-Model C schools in suburbs and English or dual-medium English and Afrikaans. This variation influenced the student teachers' teaching practice experiences, which contributed to the development of their professional identities during TP.

None of the participants were placed in Quintile 1 schools, which should serve the poorest fifth of learners (DBE, 2005), because there are few in the city of <sup>27</sup>Kimberley. Quintile 2 and 3 schools serve the next poorest learners, effectively 40% of the learner population. Three of the schools in the townships are no-fee schools, two Quintile 2 schools and one Quintile 3 school, where the government pays the schools over a thousand rand for each learner (van Dyk & White, 2019). In all three of these schools English is the medium of instruction. Two of the schools are in the largest township in the city, Galashewe, where the residents are mainly <sup>28</sup>Black. The other school is in a smaller <sup>29</sup>Afrikaans-speaking township, where the

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<sup>27</sup> Since the province includes smaller, rural areas where agriculture is the main industry, it is not surprising that there are more learners (21.5%) in the province than in the city that attend schools in the first quintile (van Dyk & White, 2019).

<sup>28</sup> While the terms Black African or Black/African are also used to classify this racial group (Pellicer & Ranchhod, 2020), the challenge is that these terms imply that the other racial groups are not 'true' Africans, and excludes Black people living in South Africa who are not from Africa.

<sup>29</sup> As there is only one high school in each township, the names of the townships are not provided to protect the identity of the two schools.

learners are mainly <sup>30</sup>Coloured. The remaining student teachers were based at a <sup>31</sup>Quintile 4 school and three Quintile 5 schools, Quintile 4 and 5 schools should serve the second richest and richest fifth of learners and therefore charge learners' families fees and receive smaller subsidies from the government (van Dyk & White, 2019). The Quintile 4 school is close to a small Afrikaans-speaking township and most learners are Black and Coloured. The school is a dual-medium English and Afrikaans school.

All three of the Quintile Five schools are former Model C schools. All three schools were in the suburbs, and two of the three schools are dual-medium English and Afrikaans schools and the third is a school where Afrikaans is the language of teaching and learning (LoTL). While Quintile 4 schools receive less than half of the subsidy per learner compared to schools in Quintiles one to three, they also have lower fees than Quintile 5 schools. In general learner performance is related to socio-economic status, and learners from Quintile 4 and 5 schools receive better marks at both high school and university level than learners who attended schools in the first three quintiles (Ogbonnaya & Awuah, 2019).

In summary, there are three former Model C schools in the fifth Quintile and four schools in townships in Quintiles two, three and four, and the schools are dual-medium English and Afrikaans or single medium, English, or Afrikaans-speaking schools. A summary of this information is provided in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Details of schools in the third practicum

School Type	Former Model C	Schools in townships
Number	Three	Four
Quintile/s	Five	Two, Three and Four
Location	Suburbs in Kimberley	Galashewe, and Afrikaans-speaking townships

<sup>30</sup> In South Africa, the term Coloured began as a racial classification used by the Apartheid government to describe any person who is mixed-race, including descendants of white Europeans, enslaved people from British colonies in Asia and Africa, and indigenous Koranna and Khoikhoi (Lawrence, 1994). This racial category is still widely used, and most people also choose to use this term to describe their racial identity (Pirtle, 2023).

<sup>31</sup> In this sample, it seems that the one Quintile 4 school should be re-classified into a fee-free school in one of the first three quintiles, as it is in and serves learners from a Coloured and Afrikaans-speaking township. van Dyk and White (2019) argue that many Quintile 4 schools are wrongly classified according to the more affluent area they are located in, and should be re-classified as lower quintile schools, because of the poor learners from townships that they serve.

LoTL	Dual-medium English and Afrikaans schools, and an Afrikaans LoLT (language of learning and teaching) school	<sup>32</sup> English LoTL schools and one dual-medium English and Afrikaans school
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A diverse sample should allow me to compare the participants’ experiences and developing professional identities across multiple research sites (Greene & David, 1984; Gustafsson, 2017). Please see a more detailed description of the research sites on pages 72-81. I have described the subjects and schools briefly. I will now describe the places where <sup>33</sup>four of the participants come from, or where their families currently live, as these places had an impact on their professional teacher identities development during TP. These four participants are based in the Pixley Ka Seme and John Taolo Gaetsewe District Municipalities, which are shown in the map below:



Figure 4. Northern Cape District Municipalities Map (Wikipedia, 2023).

<sup>32</sup> Although English is the LoTL, most of the learners speak Afrikaans or Setswana as their Home Language. There are 11 official languages in South Africa, but most schools use English as the LoTL (DBE, 2010; Gordon & Harvey, 2019; Mabiletja, 2015). The demand for schools that teach learners in English from Grade 1 is high, because parents and teachers believe that learners will acquire the language and achieve grades that allow them to study further or attain employment (Gordon & Harvey, 2019; Makoe & McKinney, 2014).

<sup>33</sup> Three of the participants were born and raised in the city of Kimberley, which is described as part of the research context in this chapter. Though one participant spent some time in Johannesburg, and another is from the city, a description of the context of the entire city would prove too lengthy.

Both municipalities are located close to the Frances Baard District Municipality where the Sol Plaatje District and the University are located. The proximity of the participants' homes to the University was a motivating factor for them to choose to study at SPU. Due to the small size of student teachers coming from these towns or villages I have not mentioned the places by name to protect the identities of the participants involved. It is important to describe the towns and villages where the student teachers are from, because, as mentioned in the research design, people use places to understand and develop their identities (Clandinin, 2006; Dewart et al., 2019). This sense of place is important for the student teachers' constructions of their professional identities, and three of the four student teachers have taught at schools in these towns and villages. For a year Moruti was a teaching assistant at a primary school in his village, and when student teachers could conduct TP at home, Isipho taught in the town where her mother lives, and Dineo taught at her former high school.

#### ***4.5.2 Small towns where the participants' families live***

Both towns are in the Pixley Ka Seme District Municipality, which is the second largest district in the Northern Cape Province (Yes Media CC, 2012). The district had a total population of 220 830 in 2019, which comprised 16.4% of the total population of the province, and an annual growth rate of 1.5% (Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, 2020). In 2018 most of the population was Coloured (59%), Black (31%) or White (9%) with very few people from other races (Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, 2020). According to the 2011 census, most of the population speaks Afrikaans (77%) and isiXhosa (18%) as a home language (Frith, 2011). An estimated 35% of the households live below the poverty line of R810 a month (Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, 2020). ). The main industries of both towns, whose total number of residents is 5 000 and 10 000, are mining and agriculture, and most of population identify as Christians. Like many of the residents Catriona experienced financial hardship during her childhood. Like most of the population in the district Catriona is Coloured and Afrikaans speaking. Catriona was born and raised by her grandparents in one of the small towns and when they passed away, she moved to Bloemfontein to live with her parents. Isipho is a member of the second largest racial and language group, as she is Black and isiZulu speaking. She grew up in Johannesburg, but sometimes conducts school visits in the small town where her mother works and lives.

### ***4.5.3 Rural villages where participants lived***

As there was very little information available on the villages Dineo and Moruti grew up, I have described the general area where the villages are located rather than the villages themselves. The Ga-Segonyana Municipality is in the John Taolo Gaetsewe District Municipality, and is largely rural, with 80% of the 104,408 residents living in villages in 2019 (JTG District Municipality, 2019). The largest town, Kuruman, had a population of 13 000 in 2011 (Frith, 2011). Dineo and Moruti come from two rural villages governed by tribal authorities located that are located approximately 30 minutes' drive from Kuruman (JTG District Municipality, 2019). The population are generally Black, 87%, and speak Setswana as a home language, 78.4% (Stats SA [Statistics South Africa], 2011). An estimated 68% earn less than R3 500 a month (JTG District Municipality, 2019). The main industries in Ga-Segonyana are agriculture and mining, and the municipality has an estimated annual growth rate of 2.5% (JTG District Municipality, 2019). Like most of the residents in the district, Dineo and Moruti are Black and Setswana speaking, and experienced financial hardship during their childhoods.

## **4.6 Research context**

In this section I orientate the reader to the context of the study, after presenting the context of participants' background. I firstly explain the geography of the Northern Cape Province, and the context of the capital city, Kimberley, where the study took place. I then provide more information about the seven schools where student teachers conducted TP in Kimberley, so that the reader understands more about contexts where the student teachers conducted the third and final school visit. As mentioned earlier, in the first school visit the student teachers organised to teach for two weeks with schools in their hometown before 29 March 2021, and the second TP block took place online from 7 to 25 June due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The eight participants were placed at seven high schools for the third school visit, which took place in Kimberley between 16 August and 1 October, as Catriona and Landon conducted the practicum at the same school.

### ***4.6.1 An introduction to the Northern Cape Province***

The Northern Cape is the largest province in the country, as it covers 30.5% of the landmass of South Africa (van Aswegen, Retief & Ernst, 2021). A map of the province is displayed on the next page.



Figure 5. Map of the Northern Cape (Wikimedia Commons, 2024).

It is the hottest, driest, and therefore least populated province with only 1.32 million people, or 2.2% of the population living in the province (Stats SA, 2019). Most of the population in province are Black (48.1%) or Coloured (43.7%), and a minority are White (7.7%) and Indian or Asian (0.5%) (Stats SA, 2018). The most widely spoken home languages in the province are Afrikaans and Setswana, spoken by 56.7% and 33.4% of the population (Stats SA, 2018). isiXhosa and English are the third and fourth most common home languages, spoken by 5.2% and 2.4% of the population, and other official languages are spoken by even fewer people (Stats SA, 2018). Most of the population, 68%, in the province are youth, who are classified as people under the age of 35 (Department of Economic Development and Tourism, 2015). In 2015 the province had a very high youth unemployment rate of 42% (Department of Economic Development and Tourism, 2015).

#### ***4.6.2 Kimberley: The place and its people***

Kimberley is the least populous capital city of the nine provinces in South Africa, with an estimated 244 000 residents (Mesthrie, 2014). The most spoken Home Language in Kimberley is Afrikaans, 49%, followed by Setswana, 33%, English, 8%, IsiXhosa, 6%, and Sesotho, 2% (Brand South Africa, 2013). The LoLT in schools in the city are English and Afrikaans. In terms of <sup>34</sup>race, most people living in the city are Black (46%), Coloured (40%) or White (13%) with the remaining one percent from other racial groups (Brand South Africa, 2013). Most of the Afrikaans-speaking Coloured population migrated to Kimberley for work after diamonds were discovered (Lawrence, 1994).

In 2011 more than half of the population of Kimberley lived in townships (Frith, 2011). In Kimberley, many of the poorest schools are in townships where most of the population is Black and Coloured. The learners who live in these townships are disadvantaged, because their family members have less opportunities than people living in the suburbs, which results in higher levels of unemployment and poverty (Macroplan, 2019; McKeever, 2017). According to Heaton, Amoateng, and Dufur (2014), the learners in the townships are also more likely to live in single-parent households, sometimes headed by older and less educated grandparents, or by one of their siblings, and are less likely to do well in school than their peers who live with both parents.

In 2014 Sol Plaatje University (SPU) was established in the city of Kimberley (Sol Plaatje University, 2024a). This was the first University in the Northern Cape Province, and the first of two universities to be founded after Apartheid ended in 1994 (Sol Plaatje University, 2024a). SPU is a comprehensive university where both degree three- and four-year and one-to-three-year diploma programmes are offered. In 2014 the University enrolled 141 first-year students in the first cohort and by 2021 there were 917 first-year students (Sol Plaatje University, 2024b; Sol Plaatje University, 2024c). The section below describes the schools where student the teachers conducted the school visit in Kimberley.

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<sup>34</sup> I am reporting the population demographics and the participants' races according to the current racial classifications used in South Africa. There is some controversy over the ways in which these categories were formed, and a more complete discussion around the ways in which this could have impacted the study is presented in the Limitations section of the these.

### **4.6.3 Quintile 2 schools in Galashewe**

Both Quintile 2 high schools are in the largest and oldest township in Kimberley, <sup>35</sup>Galeshewe. In 2011, approximately 107 920 people lived in Galeshewe, and most of the population was Black, 92%, and Coloured, 7% (Frith, 2011). Setswana (57%) was the most spoken home language, Afrikaans (25%) the second most, followed by isiXhosa (8%) and Sesotho (3%), indicating that in Kimberley Afrikaans is spoken as a home language by many racial groups (Frith, 2011).

**Chulumanco School.** This school was established in 1994, the first year of democracy in South Africa, and is one of the larger schools in the city. The school has over 1 200 learners enrolled, and achieves good matric marks as compared to most schools in the same quintile. The school is in one of the quieter neighbourhoods in the township, and there are fewer informal dwellings and more private houses or apartment complexes nearby. The road to the school is tarred, but the parking lot is mostly unpaved and visitors park under trees, as there is only a small, paved space available for teachers. The school is deceptively large and consists of closely spaced multi-storied buildings located on fine grained sand. The main administrative building has a small and neat entrance hall with few chairs for visitors, and the offices of the administrators and the Principal and Deputy Principal. The principal is a friendly Black man who he believes in the importance of research for knowledge generation and was excited that the school participate in the study. Considering the age and location of the school, I did not see vandalism or broken windows, and the learners' clothing appeared well cared for, which suggests that the staff manage the school well. Like the other Quintiles two and three schools, there are no visible sports fields on the school grounds.

**Masego School.** This secondary school is older and smaller than the previous Quintile 2 school, as it was founded in 1979 and had approximately 1 000 learners. The learners' marks have remained consistent most years, and the school has never been under DBE administration. This suggests that the school maintains a relatively good standard of education for learners.

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<sup>35</sup> The sprawling township was founded in 1878 to house mine workers after diamonds were found in Colesberg and it is named after one of the chiefs of the Setswana speaking Bathlaping Tribe (Thein & Wallin, 2004; Turkington, 2019).

Masego school is in the heart of the township with a few ‘shacks’ across the road from the school. Within an easy walking distance of the informal dwellings are the South African Social Security Agency offices, where people collect their pensions and unemployment benefits. The school has small grounds in-between the buildings, and like the other schools in the second and third Quintile, there are no visible sports fields on the premises. The Deputy Principal is a cheerful and energetic Black woman. The staff room is small, sparsely furnished, and crowded with desks and chairs arranged in a U-shape. Some of the classrooms were small, but the furniture and rooms were neat and had not been vandalised. Considering that most schools located in townships experience vandalism (Motshekga, 2020), it is commendable that the two schools are well-maintained. I did note that some of the learners’ uniforms were torn or worn at the seams but that their clothes still looked clean, which shows that despite poverty their families still tried to care for their children’s uniforms.

#### ***4.6.4 Quintile 3 School (Hanneli High School) location and background***

Hanneli High School was founded in the 1970s, and is one of the oldest ones in the township of Roodepan, which was established as an area for Coloured people under the Apartheid Group Areas Act in 1975 (Urban et al., 2015). There were 20 263 living people living in Roodepan in 2011, and most were Coloured (83%) or Black (12%) with Afrikaans as a home for 84% of the population, English for 9%, and Setswana for 3% (Frith, 2011). Even though only a small percentage of the population speaks English at home, it is the medium of instruction at the school and most teachers switch between English and Afrikaans during the lessons.

The school is large with close to 1 000 learners. It is made up of different face-brick buildings typically in an L or straight shape, but it has no visible sports fields. Many of the windows in the classrooms are broken and the small desks are full of the learners’ written notes and drawings. Some of the painted walls are also covered in writing and drawings. The main parking lot of the school is a small dirt parking lot facing the entrance of the school. The entrance to the school, administrative offices, and staff room are well-maintained.

While the school has produced some illustrious graduates, current pass rates and overall marks at the school are far lower than the national average. Parents have complained about teacher shortages, and that learners in their 20s have been repeating a grade for years, despite

the progression policy stating that learners should not repeat a three-year phase for more than four years (Department of Basic Education, 2012).

#### ***4.6.5 Quintile 4 School (Wren School) location and background***

Since there are not many schools in the area, the name of the nearby townships, and the exact information regarding population demographics will not be revealed to protect the identity of the school. Wren school is in a small predominantly Coloured and Afrikaans-speaking township established in the 1940s. This is one of the oldest schools in the city, as it was founded in the late 1880s by a missionary. The school was later moved to a mixed-race working- and lower-class area during the 1930s, before it became a school for Coloured people in the 1960s. The school is now a large Quintile 4 dual-medium English and Afrikaans school. It is one of the largest schools in the city, as it serves approximately 1 200 learners.

The school fees of R500 are considerably lower compared to the fees for the Quintile five schools. The roads to the school have many potholes and the pavement that runs parallel to the school gates is covered in litter. The principal is a quiet Afrikaans-speaking man. The administrative staff of the school are helpful and friendly. When I visited the school for the second time, I walked down one of the corridors and had the interview in the school library, which was a large space that was mostly empty of reading material. The staff room is a large and airy room filled with desks organised in a U-shape. Previously, the school had a very good reputation for strong teacher content and learners from Quintile 5 schools would take private lessons with teachers at the school. However, the pass rates for matric, especially for Mathematics, Physical Science, and Life Sciences, have declined in recent years.

#### ***4.6.6 Quintile 5 schools' context***

Unfortunately, if I were to mention the suburbs by name or describe too many details about them, it would be obvious to anyone who used Google which schools I was referring to. To anonymise the suburbs, I have not given them any names and I have given an overview rather than a detailed description of their location and population demographics.

All three schools in the richest quintile are former Model C schools located in the suburbs of the city. All three suburbs were created in the late 1800s after the establishment of Kimberley's first residential suburb Belgravia in the 1870s (Lunderstedt, 2023). Most of the residents in the three suburbs are middle to upper-middle-class. All three schools have

reputations for producing matric pass marks that are higher than the provincial and national averages. The schools are in suburbs that are within a five-minute drive from one of the main shopping malls, several of the city's private hospitals and clinics, and a police station.

In 2011, Afrikaans was the home language spoken by 50 to 71 percent of the population of the three suburbs. In the most racially diverse suburb, just over half the residents were White, almost 40 percent were Black, and less than 10 percent were Coloured. In this suburb, the most spoken home languages in order of number of speakers were Afrikaans, Setswana, and English. In other two suburbs, more of the residents are <sup>36</sup>White, just over 60 and almost 70 percent of the total population, and the most spoken home languages (again in order of number of speakers) are Afrikaans, English, and Setswana.

***Duke's Park School.*** This school has a long history, because like Kimberley High School it was founded in the 1940s. Duke's Park is a former Model C school and learner fees are approximately R16 000, a similar amount to Kimberley High School. With just over 800 learners, compared to other schools in the same quintile, it is slightly smaller school than Kimberley High School, and the same size as Dampier High school. The dual-medium (English and Afrikaans) is in a well-kept suburb, and the learners come from diverse racial backgrounds. This school has a strong Mathematics and Science focus and the necessary equipment and laboratories for the practicals. The large grounds of the school are well-maintained. While the front entrance and the steps leading to the school itself are large, the main entrance hall and administrative offices are small. The learners tend to be respectful to adults whom they do not know and generally greet them politely. The administrative and teaching staff of the school are helpful and friendly. The first time I visited the school I met the principal, a stern but friendly White man in his late 50s. He was glad that I came to see him in-person to get the signature as he does not like "dead letters", and he promptly signed the letter giving me permission to conduct research at the school. While the desks in the classroom were worn, the furniture and classroom itself was clean and neat. The small and neat staffroom was bare except for the basic and slightly newer tables and chairs than the ones in the classrooms.

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<sup>36</sup> The other residents are mostly Black or Coloured, with one to three percent of residents classified as coming from other unstated racial groups.

**Kimberley High School.** This school has a long history, because it was founded in the 1940s, and it changed its name when it was refurbished in the 1980s. Like Duke's Park School it is a dual English and Afrikaans medium school with racially diverse learners. It is a large school, as the approximately 1 100 learners pay fees of approximately R16 000 a year for day scholars, and more if they are boarders. Parents who live in the province in small towns or remote farms often chose or have no choice but to send their children to boarding schools. The large sports fields, which are a few kilometres away, indicate that learners use a school bus or are dropped off by their parents for sports. The school offers many sports and mentions bursaries for learners who excel in sport. The school has a reputation for producing matric learners with distinctions in multiple subjects, including learners who achieve places in the Provincial Top 20. Despite these achievements, there are no main roads close to the school, and visitors need to drive their cars along back roads to get to the school. The tarred road that the school is on has a few deep potholes on it on entrance a few hundred metres from the school. The school has two entrances, the main entrance opens onto the entrance hall and the reception, and the other entrance is one that learners and teachers can use to enter some of the other school buildings and classrooms. After entering the main entrance, visitors pass through the entrance hall, which is the largest and grandest of all the seven schools. In the entrance hall, the learners' awards and the school motto and emblem are displayed. Despite repeated visits to the school, I was not able to meet with the principal or the Deputy Principal, who were busy with meetings both on- and more often off-site.

**Dampier High School.** This is one of the older schools in Kimberley, as it was founded in the 1930s. The school is in a suburb close to one of the main roundabouts and main roads in the city. The well-tarred roads to the school are lined with trees, and the school itself is well sign-posted and easy to find. The school has well-kept grounds that include a sports field and a small amphitheatre. The support staff of the school are well dressed and friendly.

While the other two schools in the quintile began as Afrikaans schools and became dual English and Afrikaans medium schools, this school remains an Afrikaans medium of instruction school. With slightly less than 800 learners, the school is a similar size to Duke's Park School. Compared to the other two schools in the quintile, the school fees are the most expensive, at approximately R22 000, and there is also an option for learners to pay for room and board. Hence, learners tend to come from the middle or upper classes, and the uniforms of the learners look particularly neat and tidy. Most of the residents in the suburb where the

school is located are White, and the learners are also mostly White, but there are also a few Coloured learners. The website of the school states that they offer scholarships to underprivileged Afrikaans-speaking learners, which could include Black and Coloured learners who speak Afrikaans. Like Kimberley High School this school also has a reputation for producing matric learners with distinctions in multiple subjects, including learners who achieve places in the Provincial Top 20.

#### **4.7 Data generation methods**

The intentions of selecting specific research methods for a study is to ensure suitability, to address the aims and objectives and answer the predetermined research questions. Given that qualitative research is characterised by flexibility, openness, and responsiveness to context, I used multiple methods of data generation, including WhatsApp voice notes, written and audio journals, individual narrative interviews, and documents related to TP. Except for the documents sent by the TP Office, the data was collected from eight student teachers. For each of the methods of data collection, I asked the student teachers to reflect on and tell me their accounts of their teaching-practice experiences and professional identities development. Reflection is important to the study because peoples' experiences do not create learning, and only once people engage in purposeful thinking about experiences, thoughts, and actions do they learn (Fullan, 2006). Mintzberg (2004) believes that people can "gain conceptual insight" (p. 200) through reflection on experiences, meaning that the student teachers clarified their professional identities during the narrative interviews and while writing their journals.

##### ***4.7.1 WhatsApp voice note sent by the student teachers***

I had hoped that there would be enough time to interview the student teachers prior to TP about their current professional identities they might have developed in the previous three years, before their first school visit as fourth-year students. As this was not <sup>37</sup>possible, I asked the students to record a short audio narrative of their professional identities' development via WhatsApp.

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<sup>37</sup>. The TP Office placed the students in schools from 7-25 June, which meant that the start of the visit was the week before the mid-term break and many students returned to their hometowns. This meant that a face-to-face interview was not possible I arranged for the students to send me the audio prompt.

Before recording the narrative, the participants read a prompt. To view the words of the prompt, please see Appendix C. This prompt enabled the students to reflect on and tell stories about how their previous contexts, teaching and learning experiences, and how their family members had influenced their decision to become a teacher. This method was easy for the participants to use because the eight participating student teachers had smart phones and knew how to use the application to send people voice notes. The sharing of their biographical information and details about their lives helped me to better understand the student teachers' life stories (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Lewis-Beck, Bryman & Liao, 2004). The other advantage of WhatsApp is that all the messages are encrypted and can only be viewed through the devices of senders and receivers (Omanski, 2021; WhatsApp, 2021). This means that the voice notes were not stored on the WhatsApp servers and could not be easily accessed by third parties, including Facebook, the company that owns WhatsApp (Omanski, 2021; WhatsApp, 2021). This means that any voice notes are not stored on the WhatsApp servers and cannot be easily accessed by third parties, including Facebook, the company that owns WhatsApp (Omanski, 2021; WhatsApp, 2021). All the eight participants had smart phones and knew how to use the application to send people voice notes.

#### ***4.7.2 Images chosen by the student teachers***

I asked the participants to gather and share three images related to their personal and professional identities in the roles they play as people, student teachers, and university students via WhatsApp before the two interviews. I collected the three images because they acted as metaphors for student teachers to express different aspects of their developing professional identities (Rusznyak & Walton, 2014; Schlegel, Bench, Davis & Vess, 2015). I sent the participants instructions, which are shown in Appendix D to ensure that all the participants understood which kinds of images they should send and how to source the three images.

Instead of asking participants to take their own photographs on their smart phones, I asked the participants to select freely available photographs from the Internet. Although over two billion images uploaded to the Internet each day, many of these images are copyright protected and had to be purchased or a logo or name appears across them (Eberle, 2018). I therefore chose three platforms that are copyright free, meaning that the platforms allow users to download and use photographs for educational and commercial use (Pexels, n.d.; Pixabay, 2012; Unsplash, 2021). Using the above-mentioned platforms meant that the photographs the student teachers find could be legally shared in the thesis. If I had asked participants to take

photographs it would have been difficult to include these images as data while making sure that people and places, especially minors in schools, would not be identifiable.

During the interviews, I asked the participants to tell a story about each image and follow this prompt “Please talk about why you chose each picture and what the picture mean to you.” An advantage of using images to study identity is that it can help participants to concretise and clearly communicate their own identities, which can often remain implicit (Hatten et al., 2013). By taking the time to search for, select, and discuss the images participants have the opportunity reflect on and better understand their professional identities (Hatten et al., 2013; Hurworth, 2003). While images provide a shared point of reference for the researcher and the participant, in this research, it is the narration around the images and not the image itself that formed the primary data. I did not analyse the images by any particular method, instead in the Findings and Discussion Chapters the images are discussed in relation to the participants’ professional identities.

#### ***4.7.3 Learning journals written by the student teachers***

While many researchers use the terms diaries and journals synonymously to refer to the recording of participants’ daily experiences, including their thoughts and feelings, over a period of time (Filep et al., 2018). The TP Office calls all recorded reflections of the student teachers’ thoughts and feelings journals rather than diaries. The term journals may be more appropriate to the study, as diaries could be considered personal and unstructured accounts while journals are structured reflections on learning experiences (Rose, 2020). Student teachers write teaching journals when they reflect on their teaching during TP to improve their ability to reflect on their practice (Lee, 2004; Lindroth, 2014; Zulfikar & Mujiburrahman, 2018). As mentioned earlier, first four weeks of the second TP Block took place over May and June 2021 <sup>38</sup>online, because of the COVID-19 lockdown. Thus, students had to write a learning journal with 18 entries, one per lesson, and reflect on how designing the lesson enhanced their practice and shaped their professional identities. Student teachers received guidance in the form of reflection questions and a rubric, which can be found in Appendixes F and G.

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<sup>38</sup> As an alternative to TP in schools, students prepared and submitted 18 lesson plans and lessons comprising of twenty-minute-long narrated PowerPoint slides and learner worksheets on OneDrive, a cloud storage system

Unlike a private diary or journal, which is written only to be seen by the writer him or herself, participants know that solicited diaries and journals will be seen by the researcher (Milligan, Bingley & Gatrell, 2005). The disadvantage of soliciting journals or diaries is that participants may write details they think that the researcher is looking for, and so the presence of the researcher can change the participants' responses (Sheble & Wildemuth, 2009; Spencer & Mahtani, 2017). However, the advantage of this method is that participants are able to choose what to include in the diary and they would like to express their thoughts and feelings (Williamson, Leeming, Lyttle & Johnson 2015). This method is therefore appropriate for a constructivist study as participants can construct their own understandings of their TP experiences and developing professional identities in their journals. Another advantage of journals as a research method is that the researcher is not present when participants record their research (Sheble & Wildemuth, 2009). Not only is this less intrusive than observations of participants, but it also means that the participants are not limited by the presence of the researcher (Zimmerman, & Wieder, 1977). After the participants receive a prompt regarding the journal, the researcher has little input or control over the daily entries, but this meant that participants' unforeseen musings strengthen the study findings (Mackrill, 2008; Worth, 2009).

Although, I was unable to visit the participants each day as a lecturer at the University, I could still gather the written reflections of the participants during the second TP block. As the participants should reflect daily instead of recalling an event from memory, such as during an interview, their memories should be fresher, and the events more likely to be recalled accurately and described in detail (Sheble & Wildemuth, 2009). Another strength of this research method is that it helps researchers to understand the day-to-day experiences of participants who undergo transitions in their lives (Williamson et al., 2015). I observed how some participants were more nervous or anxious about using technology at the beginning of online visit and how with practice they became more relaxed and confident about recording their lessons. Thus, this method enabled me to gather detailed data on the experiences and professional identities development of the student teachers as they undergo the transition from University lectures to teaching lessons online.

One weakness of written diaries and journals is that the participants' journal entries vary in length and depth, and while some participants may express their thoughts and feelings in detail others will only write a brief note of the events that occurred that day (Milligan et al.,

2005; Sheble & Wildemuth, 2009). While student teachers can improve their ability to reflect and to integrate theory and practice by writing journals, sometimes written reflections of student teachers are inadequate (Ezati et al., 2010; Lindroth, 2014; Timoštšuk, & Ugaste, 2010; Zulfikar & Mujiburrahman, 2018). Student teachers tend to reflect on what happens in the classroom, their emotions, the relationship with their mentors, and to describe successes or failures instead of focusing on their own learning and how they are developing an identity within a specific school community (Ezati et al., 2010; Ivanova & Skara- Mincane, 2016; Timoštšuk, & Ugaste, 2010; Wahyuni & Putra, 2021). During the pilot study in 2019 study, I also found that student teachers did not display sufficient evidence of reflective practice in their journals. Most of the participants' journal entries were brief lists of events that were sometimes accompanied by a brief description of their thoughts and feelings rather than the hoped-for in-depth reflections. I believe that the journals resembled logbooks because the student teachers did not write a journal entry each day, and therefore their memories were not as fresh. During the interviews with five student teachers, they said that they either wrote occasional notes, which they used to their journals at the end of a TP block, or that they wrote their entire journals once the block was over.

This year to prompt the students to reflect more deeply in their journals, the other TP Coordinator and I revised the reflection questions for the fourth-year students. The questions now include a brief explanation about what kinds of answers the students should provide for each question. The questions also include more detail about what is expected from the students in their responses, and there are more questions about different aspects of TP, including the possible effects of the block on their professional identities. Before 2021, the journals were not worth any marks, and this could be why the student teachers do not spend much time writing their journals. As no marking rubric was provided for the journals, student teachers may have been unaware of the depth of reflection indicated by the guiding questions. This year the journals are worth 5% of the student teachers' mark for the TP module, and a detailed rubric was provided to students before the second TP block. A copy of the instructions and rubric that the students received to guide their writing of the journal are shown in Appendix F and G. The TP coordinators also asked the fourth-year students to submit their journals as files on Moodle or MS Teams at the end of the teaching practice block rather than in a physical file at the end of the Second Semester. This ensured that the students wrote their journals at the end of TP block instead of at the end of the year.

#### ***4.7.4 Audio journals of the student teachers***

Though the fourth-year students received more guidance regarding the journals in 2021, I decided to ask the student teachers to send me audio journals rather than written journals during each day of the <sup>39</sup>final school visit. Instead of having to wait until the end of the school visit like I had to for the submission of the written journals at the end of the second school visit, I received the participants reflections on their third school visit daily. This meant that they submitted each entry while their memories of the days' events were fresh, and I could ask participants for clarification or more detail via a WhatsApp message within 24 hours. This increased the usefulness of the data that I collected.

I chose to collect audio journals as I believe that speaking enabled the students to generate better narratives about their professional identities' development during TP than writing. Audio reflections are more suited for narrative analysis than written texts, because the researcher can analyse the content of the message and the message's tone, stress, and intonation (Worth, 2009). All these factors are important for narrative analysis where the voice of the storyteller also conveys the message (Worth, 2009). Audio messages also resemble stories more than written texts where writers tend to organise their thoughts more hierarchically and more linearly than is common in most narratives (Worth, 2009).

As the third school visit was seven weeks long as compared to the three-week long virtual TP block, the students submitted their journals for 35 working days. Although participants who keep journals for weeks at a time tend to write more detailed entries towards the beginning of a study and then to write less over time, this is not always the case (Milligan et al., 2005). For example, in one study participants became engaged over time and their diary entries became longer, but this could be because all the participants were retired and had few demands on their time (Milligan et al., 2005). In this study, only the entries in the last week of the journals, where students were invigilating, or helping to distribute reports, and some schools closed early, were less detailed.

#### ***4.7.5 Interviews with the student teachers***

The two approximately 30- to 45-minute-long narrative interviews with the student teachers took place towards the end of the second and third teaching-practice blocks. During the

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<sup>39</sup> This school visit took place in schools in Kimberley from 1 August and 16 October 2021.

interviews, the student teachers were asked to reflect on how the two teaching-practice blocks had shaped their professional identities.

The first interview occurred after the second teaching-practice block, after the eight student teachers have submitted their initial audio recording and written learning journals. I began the interviews with a single open-ended question that required participants to tell their life stories (Fehér, 2011). A question at the start of a narrative interview typically prompts participants to recount specific incidences from their lives, or to describe particular life episodes (Hyun-Joo, 2011; Ssali & Theobald, 2015). I therefore asked the participants the following narrative question to begin the interview, “please tell me the story of how you became the student teacher that you are today.” As the participants narrated their story, I did not interrupt so that they could tell their own story. When their initial account of their story of becoming a teacher ended, as suggested by Fehér (2011), I asked them open-ended questions about things that happened to prompt them to continue the story.

After the participants answered all the questions about their initial story, I gave them a second prompt, which was, “please tell me about how your experiences during this teaching-practice block have influenced your understanding of yourself as a teacher.” This encouraged them to share with me how they felt that their experiences second school visit had influenced their professional identities. If the participants did not speak in enough detail about the current teaching-practice block, I asked them a follow-up question, or questions that I prepared from reading their written journal. I used these prompts and follow-up questions to encourage the participants to expand upon important events, and their significance for the participants’ professional identities, during the interview (Hesse-Biber, 2017; Lewis-Beck et al., 2004). During the interview, I also asked the participants to tell me the stories about why they chose the <sup>40</sup>images, which they have found online, to represent their professional identities.

To prepare for the second interviews, which happened towards the third and final school visit, I listened to the audio journals and reviewed the transcriptions before I wrote interview questions on aspects of each participant’s professional identities that I wanted to know more about. The advantage of collecting the audio journals before interviews is that gained an

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<sup>40</sup>. This technique is referred to as photo-elicitation as images are discussed during the interview to try and elicit responses from participants (Hatten, Forin & Adams, 2013).

understanding of participants' lived experiences and posed follow-up questions to prompt them to deepen their reflections on their developing professional identities (please see Appendix E for an example of the questions asked in the interview).

#### ***4.7.6 Documents related to student teachers' professional identities development***

In addition to the above methods, I also used document analysis, which is “a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents” Bowen (2009, p. 27) to review and evaluate documents related to TP. I conducted document analysis by following the guidance of Bowen (2009) who recommends that researchers 1). select relevant documents, 2). skim the contents of the documents to select the relevant sections for analysis, 3). examine the documents, and 4). interpret the documents. I analysed these documents to gain an understanding of the TP context at SPU, and what kinds of professional identities the University expects from its fourth-year student teachers.

I selected documents that helped me to better understand the context of participants' teaching-practice experiences. The first document was the Teaching Practice Policy, written by the Academic Coordinator, who was the Head of Teaching Practice at the University. This document is important because it guides the work of the TP Office and the way in which TP is conducted at the University. The second set of documents were the written guidelines that the Teaching Practice Administrator and the fourth-year Teaching Practice Coordinators gave to the fourth-year student teachers and mentor teachers prior to the school visits. These documents clarify the expectations that the TP Office and TP Coordinators have for the student teachers in terms of conduct and assessments to during school visits. The third set of documents were the module guides from the Education and Pedagogy <sup>41</sup>modules that are part of the SPU B.Ed. programme. After reviewing these documents, I could see if what student teachers said about their professional identities development during TP was related to what they learned in the B.Ed. curriculum.

After I selected the documents, I skim-read them, before highlighting sections related to the narratives of the participants. I then examined the sections more carefully, and where relevant

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<sup>41</sup> At the university these modules are taught in the students' first and second years, as in the third and fourth years the curriculum focuses on how students should teach their chosen school subjects.

wrote an interpretation of how the documents had influenced the participants' professional identities development in Act Six and Seven of the thesis.

## **4.8 Ethics**

I was granted ethical approval for the study from the Ethics Committee of the University of the Witwatersrand before I collected data. In addition, the three research sites, Sol Plaatje University, the Northern Cape Department of Education (NCDE), and the schools where the student teachers conducted their TP, also granted me permission to conduct this research (please see Appendix A for the relevant documentation). The student teachers received information sheets and letters of informed consent, which they signed before the research took place. I upheld the ethical principles of autonomy when conducting the research by explaining the purpose of the study and that participants are free to withdraw from the study at any stage without incurring any penalties (please see Appendix B for the relevant documentation). To protect the participants' shared information, I used a four-digit password to access my phone where audio and <sup>42</sup>image files were sent, and pseudonyms for their identities when handling their data on my laptop. The data on the laptop was stored on a password-protected Internet-based storage platform called OneDrive. Once the study is completed, I will transfer all the WhatsApp voice notes to OneDrive and delete them from my phone. This will prevent the data from being accessed in case the phone is stolen. To ensure that the data is secure, I will keep it for five years from the date when it was collected and then destroy all the data gathered for the study.

### ***4.8.1 Relational ethics***

Though the participants were over the age of 18 and could have benefited from an opportunity to reflect on and develop their professional identities, I was aware that as their lecturer I had more power than the fourth-year students. Since I did not want to the students to feel obliged to take part in the research, I chose not to act as the TP Coordinator or mark the work of any students studying to become high-school teachers. To reduce the pressure

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<sup>42</sup> I did not ask the eight student teachers to generate images using their smartphones, which could include other people who have not consented to take part in the study and make it easier to identify the student teachers (Miller 2018). Instead, I asked the participants to collect images from the Internet. As it is important to ensure that research participants have copyright for all the images (Miller, 2018), I have asked them to use platforms with images that are free and legal for educational or commercial uses.

that the students might have felt to take part in the research when I contacted the students, I told them that the research is voluntary and has no bearing on their grade for the subject.

A full teaching load meant that it was impossible for me to physically share the participants' daily experiences. I built up a good picture of their experiences and developing professional identities as I heard about their experiences during the final school visit as I listened to their voice notes each day. While probing some of these experiences during the interviews the participants shared sensitive information, including criticism of teachers or school management. To ensure the participants' privacy was protected, I did not provide the names or exact location of their smaller home towns or villages. In addition to using pseudonyms for the schools, I also took other measures to ensure that people who are familiar with Kimberley would not be able to tell which school they had been assigned to during teaching practice. This included not mentioning area names, and in one case the population demographics, for suburbs and townships with only a few schools. Since describing the suburbs could mean that Kimberley residents knew which ex-Model C school I was referring to, I ensured that I only discussed the general conditions in which these schools were situated.

During the interviews, some of the participants mentioned very sensitive information. In one interview Breyton described an incident in which a learner reported being sexually abused by a family friend. He recalled some of the learner's words, but since I felt that she had told him her story in confidence I did not include this quote in the thesis. In another interview, a student teacher mentioned the difficulties women faced, but when I probed for more information she said what had happened was 'personal'. While the information she did not share could have revealed more about what it is like to become a teacher as a young woman in South Africa, I did not probe for any further information. In a country with high rates of gender based violence, I feared that I lacked the tools to discuss experiences that could involve unresolved trauma.

I found some of the interactions with participants during the interviews surprising. For example, one of the participants told me when she came to the university she met "White" teachers for the first time and was impressed because she thought that they are "better" than their peers from other racial groups. I tried to hide my surprise and instead probed her reasons for this assumption. Though she could not describe why she felt this way, it may be rooted in the past history of the country where the government afforded White people the most

opportunities for advancement. After she described this part of her story, I felt duty bound as a White South African to respond that I did not agree with her view, especially as I had personal experiences with exceptional academics and student teachers of all races. However, I am still unsure if it was ‘my place’ in this research to do so, or what good this could do in a country where it seems that Black students teachers’ identities are still informed by white privilege.

Another student teacher role me that the principal at the school warned him not to date learners. He recounted that the principal had said that though teachers’ salaries make them attractive to learners in poorer communities that they should not date school children. Though sexual abuse of school learners is a global problem (Canning, 2022), I felt shocked that the principal would feel a need to iterate such an obvious breach of ethical and legal behaviour to the student teacher. I have since learned that child sexual abuse by teachers is underreported and that a culture of silence perpetuates abuse (Masehela & Pillay, 2014; Rule, 2017). I therefore hope that open conversations like the one between the principal and the student teacher lead to fewer instances of teachers sexually abusing learners in future.

Over time, I become a point of contact for the students teachers and they began asking me for information, for example queries related to SACE registration with the or graduation. Since the students had participated in my study I felt a certain responsibility towards them. Therefore, when I could answer their questions, I did, and when I did not have the information I made sure to follow up with the relevant SPU staff members. As we had developed a congenial relationship over the course of the study, though I could not attend the B.Ed. graduation ceremony I made sure to congratulate each student teacher on the day of his or her graduation via WhatsApp.

One of the participants in the study also used to stop by my office to chat or to send me WhatsApp messages asking after my well-being. I was bit puzzled by how the student teacher benefited from these informal talks, but thought that bringing this up would make things awkward. I realised that these conversations served as a space for the student to discuss and clarify experiences and perspectives related to teaching. Thus, wherever possible, I spent time

discussing these matters with the student teacher. 4.9 Flow diagram representing the data collection process

There are multiple methods of data collection; for clarification, a flow diagram showing how the data was collected can be found below:

1. Collection of documents related to the participants' professional identities development. These documents were, the TP Policy, documents sent to the student teachers and mentors prior to TP, and the SPU B.Ed. Education and Pedagogy modules. ↓
2. Initial audio sent via WhatsApp prior to the second TP block, which took place from 7 to 25 June 2021. ↓
3. Images sent by participants to represent their identities as people, university students, and student teachers, sent a few days prior to the initial interview. ↓
4. Preparation of prompts and follow-up questions prior to initial interview, which took place towards the end of or shortly after the second TP block. ↓
5. Students' submission of written journals the week after the second TP block. ↓
6. Eight student teachers' submissions of daily audio journals via WhatsApp during the third school visit, which took place from 1 August to 16 October 2021. ↓
7. <sup>43</sup>Requests for updated images meant to represent the shifts in identities sent to participants a few days before second interviews. ↓
8. Preparation of follow-up questions, prior to second interview, which took place towards the end of the third TP block, either in the second last week or the last week of the third school visit.

Figure 6. Diagram of the data collection process.

#### 4.10 Chapter summary

To understand how the participants, make sense of their identities within specific contexts, the study used a qualitative approach and a narrative design, where the data generated are stories. The student teachers told their stories by recording a voice note before TP, in written

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<sup>43</sup> Only Dineo chose three different pictures to represent her identities as a person, university student, and a student teacher. The other seven participants chose not to change the images they felt still represented their identities both.

or spoken journals about where they described their teaching-practice experiences, through the selection of images related to their professional identities, and during reflective interviews. Additional data to understand the participants’ university and school contexts was generated from the Education and Pedagogy module guides and the documents given to students and prior to TP. A summary of this information is presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: RD&M summary table

<b>Research paradigm: Social Constructionism</b>			
<b>Stages of research</b>	<b>Writing of school and student teacher contexts</b>	<b>Document analysis</b>	<b>Preliminary analysis of narratives</b>
Data collected	Observations of seven schools where students conducted the third TP, and research into student teachers’ contexts	TP documents (TP Policy and documents sent to STs before TP) and Education and Pedagogy module guides	Data from the eight student teachers including (the initial voice note, written and audio journals, pictures chosen to represent their identities, and first interviews)
<b>Research ethics</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ethical approval granted from NCDE, University of the Witwatersrand, and principals or vice-principals</li> <li>• vice-principals of schools where the eight participants conducted their TP</li> <li>• student teachers read information letters and signed letters of informed consent</li> <li>• pseudonyms used to protect participants’ identities</li> <li>• password protection for both access to phone for data on WhatsApp and for the laptop for data on OneDrive, which is also password accessed</li> <li>• deletion of data from phone once study is completed</li> <li>• deletion of data from OneDrive five years after data collection</li> </ul>			

In the next chapter the analysis of the data is presented along with measures taken to ensure that the findings of the study are trustworthy.

## **ACT FIVE**

### **The route to get to the treasure: Data analysis and presentation**

#### **5.1 The importance of context for participants' stories**

Multiple ways exist for analysing the personal stories that participants tell about their own lives (Riessman, 2001). Polkinghorne (1995) suggests that narrative researchers can study the content and context of stories to understand the nuance and complexity of narrative data. In the previous chapter, I presented the context of the places that are relevant to the student teachers, their hometowns, the University, and the city, and schools where they conducted their TP. This information assisted me to better situate and understand the student teachers' narratives.

#### **5.2 Narrative analysis of the students' stories**

The initial audio recording<sup>44</sup>, interviews, written and audio journals, were analysed using a three-stage narrative analysis process, broadening, burrowing, and re-storying, developed by Connelly and Clandinin (1990) for studies that adopt narrative inquiry as a research design. A narrative is a story told by a person with recognisable characteristics including a plot, events, relationships, and perhaps a moral or message (Clandinin et al., 2007; Polkinghorne, 1995). Connelly and Clandinin (1990) developed these stages specifically for studies that adopted narrative inquiry as a research design. In the broadening stage, the researcher focused on developing a general understanding of the participants' stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Garvis, 2015). The burrowing stage involves a researcher deepening the knowledge of the participants' stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), which is achieved by analysing the different elements that make up the participants' stories. The re-storying involves comparing the times, places and relationships mentioned in the different participants' stories, and the ways in which these individual stories are related to prevailing discourses about teachers.

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<sup>44</sup> The student teachers sent an initial audio voice note before the virtual school visit and submitted written the journals after the school visit. The audio journals were daily voice notes sent each day of the school visit in Kimberley. The interviews took place during or shortly after the virtual and Kimberley school visits.

### 5.2.1 Broadening

Broadening occurs when researchers make generalisations about the participants' lives and stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). To broaden my knowledge of the stories, I wrote a "global impression" for each participant's life where I explained each story's tone, mood, life events and experiences, and trajectory (Lieblich, 1988). The global impressions provided a general overview, because they described what happened and how the participant felt about what happened during the events in the narrative (Beal, 2013). The five-step process I used to create each global impression is as follows: 1) transcription of the data, 2) ordering and re-reading the data, 3) writing drafts from memory, 4) checking the information against the raw data, and with the participants, and 5) writing the final version.

To transcribe the data, I paid attention to speech patterns of the participants, because for narratives, the way a participant tells his or her story contributes to the meaning that the story has for him or her. When the participant placed particular emphasis on parts of the text, then I **bolded** the words or phrases that s/he had stressed. When the participant spoke more loudly, then I used CAPITAL letters to show the words or phrases spoken at a higher volume. Conversely, when the participant spoke more softly, I used text in a small font size to show that the words or phrases were spoken at a lower volume. To show when the participant spoke slowly, I spread out the words, and to show when the participant spoke quickly, I pressed the words together. To show when the participants' pitch was raised or lowered, I used superscript and subscript. As an example, to shown when the pitch was raised, I placed this text <sup>rising above</sup> the lines in the transcript, and to show when the pitch was lowered, I placed this text <sub>sinking below</sub> the lines. While I could only capture the speech patterns from the voice notes, I captured the facial expressions and gestures when I transcribed the interviews, particularly the first interviews, which were recorded over Microsoft Teams. For an example, see the extract of the transcript below:

**Breyton:** (deep break in) okay mam (smiles), (looks up) it goes **way** (looks at camera) back to (looks up) I think I was in **Grade 8**, I started **tutoring, uhm, younger grades, and, uhm, my father**, is an educator, so, uhm (frowns), it's not because of **him** being a teacher, my first choice was **actually** chartered accountancy, **but**, I saw the ability (looks at camera) **in me**, uhm (looks up) to be able to <sup>influence</sup> **ONE** child in a positive **manner**, because (looks right) I took a child that was at, Level **2, and**, that child developed **so**, to Level **7** (nods head) **in** less than two **months** (nods head and looks at camera), **and-and, and, uhm**, I always said that it's **not** that I had, I didn't write **that test**. It was **that child** (looks at camera and widens eyes), (looks up) but I-I, I had, I-I-I, I had **this, uhm** (frowns and places hands in front of him), (looks right)

**PASSION** for it **after that**, when I saw **that, uhm**, (looks up) I have this **ability** (raises one hand with fingers together), (looks at camera) to really have this (looks at camera) **impact** in (looks down), -in (looks at camera) this child's life. E-even if I **have**, uhm (looks up), to make a difference in (looks at camera) **one** child's **life**, (looks up and right) what <sup>about</sup>, (looks at camera) 2000 or 3000?

This method of transcribing the data allowed me to engage with both the content by examining what the participants said and the meanings behind how they told their stories. This method of transcription was time consuming, and I <sup>45</sup>originally transcribed the data over six months from June and November 2021 by listening to and writing down what I heard from the WhatsApp voice notes and from recorded interviews.

After data transcription, I ordered and re-read the <sup>46</sup>written data and transcripts multiple times. I imported the transcripts for each participant from OneDrive into the <sup>47</sup>ATLAS.ti programme. To organise the data in this programme, I grouped the documents into eight separate groups where each group represented one participant. The name of the group was the pseudonym of the participant. To organise the data in the ATLAS.ti programme: I firstly created and named each group, then uploaded the data for each participant; and lastly, I numbered the documents in the order that the data was collected. The first piece of data was numbered as one and the last piece of data numbered as eight. By numbering the data, I was able to keep track of the different pieces of data (see Appendix I for more information).

I then wrote a draft version of the global impression from each participant from memory when the stories were still fresh, as I could recall the most salient information for each participant after I transcribed the second interview. I re-wrote the draft version until I had a complete draft of each global impression. I wrote the first complete drafts by adding more detailed information about the participant's life from the <sup>48</sup>data. At times I looked for a particular piece of information, for example whether the participant had attended a school in

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<sup>45</sup> I received a new work computer in 2022 and discovered that four interviews had been stored on the former laptop instead of on OneDrive and were no longer available, so I had to transcribe these interviews again. This time I used Microsoft Word online, as these transcriptions pay less attention to speech patterns than the originals this is covered in the final act as a limitation of the study.

<sup>46</sup> This included the initial voice note sent before teaching practice, the journal written during the first teaching practice block, the audio journal sent during the second teaching practice block, and the interviews about each TP block.

<sup>47</sup> I chose the ATLAS.ti programme to help me store and analyse the data, as it helps researchers to organise and analyse qualitative data systematically (Saldaña, 2016).

<sup>48</sup> The data was the transcriptions of the initial audio recording, the audio and written journals, and the interviews.

a rural area, a township or suburb. When I found interesting aspects of their story, I included this information in the global impression. To ensure that I had not left any important information, while writing the global impression, I re-read the participants' documents and added any newly identified information to the global impressions until I could not find any new information to add to the global impression. I thus went back and forth between all journals and interviews documents when I needed to clarify the details of the participants' stories.

Another way to ensure the completion of the first draft was to perform a member check by sending the global summaries to the eight research participants. Five participants (Candice Dineo, Isipho Landon, and Moruti) indicated they were no longer used the University email accounts, and I sent an email to their personal email address. I used the University email addresses, which were still active, for the remaining three participants. Three of the four participants commented on the global impressions, and Dineo clarified a few details, such as the place names, which were not clear over the audio. The second participant gave me permission to use the name Candice to refer to her, and the third asked that I use the pseudonym <sup>49</sup>Moruti to refer to him. The fourth, Landon told me that there were a few spelling errors in his global impression, but I assured him that the work would be edited before I submitted the thesis for examination. The other participants did not provide any feedback or input on the global impressions.

During the writing of the global impressions, I re-wrote the participants' narratives that they told over all the collected data as a global impression, a single comprehensive summary of each story. I was interested in how student teachers' professional identities' development was influenced by their experiences during TP. This meant that I did not include data that was not directly related to professional identities development in the global impressions. The global impressions were not written in the exact order that participants told me about their lives as they told me about the past, present, and future concurrently, instead the impressions were ordered chronologically for ease of reading. This means that in each global impressions, I described the participant as an individual and his or her background before moving to the development of his or her professional identities during TP.

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<sup>49</sup> I changed it for him in the thesis, but on reflection I changed it to Moruti, literally teacher, but usually used to describe the word preacher (Jones, n.d). This name seemed suitable, as he wanted to be a preacher, and feels that teachers should also preach to children sometimes.

When I re-read the draft global impressions before sending them to my supervisor, I realised that I could have better summarised the participants' experiences of the first teaching-practice block, which took place online, or how the images related to their identities. I re-wrote the draft of the global impressions to include more information about the participants' experiences during the virtual TP block, the <sup>50</sup>images they chose to represent their professional identities, and the <sup>51</sup>participants' subject and phase preferences.

After I made the changes to the global impressions when I read them, I noted that they were rather 'dry' and factual accounts, which focused on the participants' identity trajectories, but failed to sufficiently capture the tone and mood of the stories. The feeling behind the stories is important, because stories convey participants' emotions, and narrative researchers should seek to understand how participants feel things (Turnbull, 2018), including themselves, their relationships with others, and their place in the world. I edited each global impression to ensure that spelling and grammar were correct, that the meaning of the words used were clear, and that the story had a good flow. While all writing should be coherent or cohesive, I thought a good flow, or an easy-to-read story with a clear sense of movement between ideas and sentences was particularly important for stories, as they should capture the interest and stoke the imagination of the reader. In the final re-storying of the participants' narratives, I used participants' own words to capture their emotions and perspectives. Revising the impressions was important, as all qualitative research is iterative, and researchers continually re-interpret the meaning of the data (Berkowitz, 1997; Kekeya, 2016). By reviewing the data and revising the participants' stories for a period of seven months from November 2021 to May 2022, I was able to attain a more in-depth and nuanced understanding of their lived experiences.

The global impression which are shown in Appendix H, provided an overview of each participant's story, but this was not the final stage of the data analysis. In the next stage, burrowing, I described how I analysed the data in more detail.

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<sup>50</sup> Where participant had said in the journals or interviews how the chosen pictures related to aspects of his or her personal and professional identities, I described in the global impression how these images were related to his or her professional identities' development.

<sup>51</sup> Seven of the eight student teachers were more passionate about and interested in becoming teachers of the subjects that they taught at the Senior Phase and Further Education and Training level.

### 5.2.2 *Burrowing*

Once I have broadened my understanding of the data by making generalisations about the participants and the events in the story, I deepened my understanding of the stories' content by analysing the gathered data in-depth (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Turnbull, 2018). The analytical framework I used for the burrowing or deep analysis of the participants' narratives was the positioning diamond shown on below:

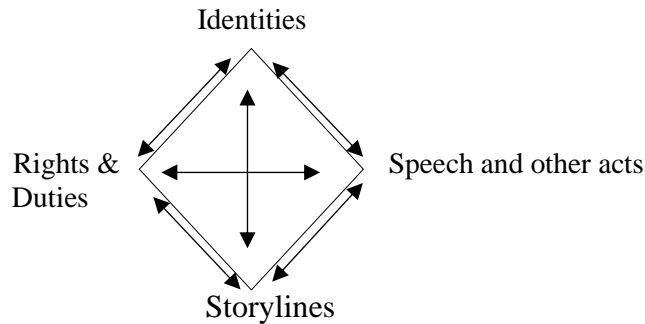


Figure 7. The Positioning Diamond (Slocum-Bradley, 2009, p. 92).

In this framework, the participants tell stories with recognisable plots or storylines, where they take up or contest particular identities that bestow upon them certain rights and mandate that they must perform the required duties. While telling their stories, the participants use speech and other acts, including facial expressions or gestures to communicate their feelings in relation to the described events, people, and places. Slocum-Bradley (2008; 2010) has used the positioning diamond as an analytical framework in two previous studies. In the studies, the participants' narratives were analysed through a table where the four column headings represented each of the four dimensions of the positioning diamond. Slocum-Bradley (2009) assigned each piece of information in the table to one or more levels used for narrative analysis that were originally developed by Bamberg (1997, 2000, 2003, 2004).

The first level is the narrator, who in this case is the researcher or the participant is talking about. While describing the content of the narrative, a person could describe what the people, and things operating like people, are doing in the story at what time and in what place (Bamberg, 2000, 2003, 2004; Moissinac, 2007; Slocum-Bradley, 2009). Level two is how the narrator interacts and assigns identities, rights and duties to him or herself and others in the present conversation (Bamberg, 2000, 2004; Slocum-Bradley, 2009). In this study, it was when the participants positioned themselves or others, including the researcher, during

interviews, or with an implied audience, for example when writing journals. The third level is where the person discusses themselves or others in relation to positions that could be framed as belonging to or contesting certain ideologies or debates, which are sometimes called master narratives or master discourses (Bamberg, 2004; Moissinac, 2007). For a definition of the term ‘discourse’ see page 56 of the thesis.

To analyse the data, I adapted the table used by Slocum-Bradley (2008; 2010) in her analysis of the narratives, which included the <sup>52</sup>transcribed audio voice note, journals, and interviews, and written journals, using the positioning diamond as a framework. In Table 4, which is on the next page, I created included three of the four dimensions of the positioning diamond under identical column headings as used by the author, namely: Storyline, Identities, Rights and Duties. In the positioning diamond, Slocum-Bradley (2009) calls the fourth column social forces, which are views or outcomes of participants, while I called the column ‘Speech and Other Acts’ as described in Positioning Theory. I used the term ‘Speech and Other Acts’ and showed how participants’ speech, facial expressions, and body language, expressed their views and emotions while told their stories To ensure that I did justice to what Barkhuizen (2009) refers to as <sup>53</sup>small stories, I described the participants’ speech acts in detail in the analysis. The way in which narratives were told was important, because when the participants described their personal and lived experiences, they highlighted how they constructed their professional identities through these experiences.

I also added two columns to Table 4. The first is the initial column where I copied the actual text that was extracted from the narrative, and the second is the last column called ‘Consequence for PID’. It contained my notes on the possible relevance the text and the textual analysis has for the participant’s professional identities development. The analysis of an initial audio note that was sent by Candice before the second school visit is shown as an example in Table 4 on the next page:

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<sup>52</sup> I analysed the data in the order in which it was gathered. I firstly analysed the audio voice note sent, which the participants sent before the first Teaching Practice block first. Then I analysed the journals, which were written during the first teaching practice block. Then I analysed the first interviews, which took place towards the end of or shortly after the first teaching practice block. After which, I analysed the audio journals, which the participants each day of the second TP block, and the second interviews, which took place towards the end of the second TP block.

<sup>53</sup> These small stories are the narratives that the participants tell as part of the conversation with me as the researcher about their experiences as people and student teachers.

Table 4: Example analysis of the narrative of the data

<b><u>Text</u></b>	<b><u>Storyline</u></b>	<b><u>Identities</u></b>	<b><u>Rights and Duties</u></b>	<b><u>Speech and Other Acts</u></b>	<b><u>Consequence for PID</u></b>
<p><b>And, at the end of the day.. I think my family inspired me, because it's like becoming, more than I can be. My mom raised me for her entire life, my grandma was like my number one fan, and my uncle always supported me, when I needed support.</b></p>	<p><b>A close knit and (mainly) matriarchal family (Level 1-personal position, and Level 2-relationship with family)</b></p>	<p><b>Grandma's girl (Level 2-self positioning) Child of a single parent (Level 2-possible identities and 3-disourses around children of single mothers being less likely to succeed) A child with a supportive family (Level 2-self and other positioning).</b></p>	<p><b>Mom's duty as a single parent to raise her (Level 2-other positioning) Inspired to take on the duty to be her best (Level 2-self and other positioning) Duty of her family to support her when she needs it (Level 1-personal feeling and 2-family positioning).</b></p>	<p><b>At the end of the day- opinion after much thought or experience I think- emphasis on personal perspective Emphasis on entire life to show the care her mom gave her support single-handedly (Level 2). Emphasis on number one fan to show how close she is to her grandmother (Level 2).</b></p>	<p><b>Inspired to be more than she thought possible, and to pursue teaching, by her family. While children of single mothers are seen as less likely to succeed (academically or in general), here the participant credits her family for helping her to feel that she could be more than she thought was possible.</b></p>

To analyse the data, I copied and pasted the transcribed audio voice notes, which the participant sent to me via WhatsApp, before the virtual TP block, into the first column under the heading 'text'. See Appendix C for the prompt sent to the participants to guide their recording of the voice note. To make Table 4 easier to read, I have<sup>54</sup> colour coded the text in the first four columns. After identifying the main storyline in the text, I typed a summarised version of the story into the next column, which is called 'storyline'. When I identified the storyline, I pasted or wrote about different parts of the text into the four columns, Storyline, Identities, Rights and Duties, and Speech and Other Acts. In the 'Speech and Other Acts' column, I noted the meaning of the words or expressions the participant had used, and which words she had emphasised, which I bolded, when she spoke (see pages 94 and 95 for more information on how I transcribed the non-verbal data). In the final column, Consequence for PID, I noted how the information in the other columns contributed to my understanding of the participant's professional identities development. In this column, I paid attention to

<sup>54</sup> I highlighted the text related to the storyline in red, the identities in blue, and I highlighted, and the text related to rights and duties in green in the 'Text' column. I then wrote down the main narrative in red in the column called 'Storyline'. Afterwards I wrote the possible identities in blue text under the heading 'Identities', and I wrote the rights and duties associated with these identities in green text in the next column.

participants' developing professional identities related to literature or to wider discourses. In the example Table, I discussed how participant's family was a source of inspiration for her to pursue a career in teaching, even though most of the discourse around single mothers discusses how their children are less likely to succeed.

When I had populated the first five columns, I then labelled the pieces of text in each column according to the three levels (Level 1: personal content, Level 2: personal relationships and immediate social context, and Level 3: ideological positions in larger discourses). In Table 4, when the participant expresses her own understanding or position, I have labelled this as Level 1. When she positions herself and others in relation to each other, I have labelled this as Level 2. I have used Level 3 to label text that referred to wider discourses, in this instance the discussions and predictions made about children of single mothers.

In summary, the tables for each participant served as an analytical tool where I described the participants' use of storylines with their imbedded identities and their associated right and duties, as expressed through their speech and other (communicative) acts. I then labelled the parts of the text in tables according to three levels. While the first and second level helped me to understand how the participant understood themselves in relation to others, the third level allowed me to see how the small stories of the participant were related to wider discourses. For instance, discourses related to teaching, teacher education, and professional identities development. By analysing how the small stories of the participants related to wider discourses about teachers I gained a rich understanding of how the student teachers constructed their professional identities during TP. During the third level of the data analysis, re-storying, I explained in more detail how the student teachers' professional identities were shaped by broader societal discourses.

### ***5.2.3 Preparing for re-storying***

After gaining a general and deeper understanding of the students' stories, I engaged in the process of re-storying, which means re-telling the participants' stories. Since it is not possible to tell the participants' entire stories in the thesis, I selected parts of their stories to re-tell in this thesis.

Before re-telling the participants' stories, I chose to gain a better understanding of the data as a whole data by summarising it. Before I met with my supervisor, I summarised the data, and

sent her the data analysis tables for six of the participants. My supervisor sent me her <sup>55</sup>notes on the data analysis as comments in a word document, see Appendix L for an extract from the feedback.

After the meeting with my supervisor, I summarised the data across the eight participants for each of the sub-questions. I was not able to summarise the data for each sub-question for all eight research participants, as I lost some of the nuance and detail in each participant's story. I decided to focus on summarising the data for each participant separately first, so that I could re-tell stories that were thick in description and rich in meaning. Since I had discussed the data and considered my supervisor's suggestions for Breyton's narratives, I decided to start by summarising the data for this participant, see Appendix M as an example. While this table was useful for summarising, reviewing, and analysing the data, it was almost organically out of conversation with my supervisor, and it took time to review and finalise. I therefore created a standardised table that was simpler and easier to complete on my own for the rest of the participants. The information I wrote under the first column shows how the participant's past experiences and context influenced her professional identity before the fourth-year TP. By acknowledging the participant's pre-existing professional identities prior to the fourth-year TP block, I considered how they had built on or developed alternative professional identities in their fourth year. I then summarised the data that was relevant to the main or sub-questions in separate columns in the tables. In the tables, the different sub and main questions are displayed separately, which makes it easier to compare each participant's data in relation to each of the questions. An example of the revised table summarising some of the data for Buhle is shown in Table 5 on the next page.

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<sup>55</sup> In her notes she made connections to parts of the literature that I had not related the data to and proposed new possible professional identities for the participant. I realised I had been quite literal with my interpretation of the participants' professional identities, only stating identities that the participants had directly stated. However, a participant may call himself or herself a lifelong learner, or he or she may discuss the attitudes, disposition, and practices of a lifelong learner without necessarily using the term. Therefore, I re-examined the data more carefully and closely for the identities that could be inferred or implied. To ensure that the identities were present in the data, I made sure that they were supported by many instances expressed in the participants' own words across the different data sources.

Table 5: Example of the revised data summary table

<b><u>Factors influencing the development of PI prior to TP</u></b>	<b><u>MQ. Development (behaviours and attitudes shown) of PID during TP</u></b>	<b><u>SQ2. Understandings of PID during TP</u></b>	<b><u>SQ1. Awareness of development of PID during TP</u></b>	<b><u>SQ3. Factors influencing PID during TP</u></b>
<u>Experience helping her aunt, who is a teacher made her want to be a primary school teacher (Voice note). When she became more interested in how teachers, particularly her History and Tourism, taught the subject she began to want to be a History teacher (Voice note)</u>	<u>Was pleased when learners opened up to her, sees herself and her father as an open person.</u>	<u>Relational/caring teachers Teachers as mothers/performing the mother role (Interview 2 Page 15). -Who monitor learners well-being and learning -Who helps learners when needed</u>	<u>Uses the terms 'mother the children' and is aware of how as a female teacher she plays a mothering role (Interview 2 Page 15).  Aware that the longer TP period allowed her to get to know learners better than the shorter TP blocks and develop better relationships with them (Interview 2, page 16)</u>	<u>Developing relationships with learners during TP  Self-perceptions  Wider gendered norms/discourses around teacher identities</u>

The information I included under the <sup>56</sup>second column related to the main question, and provided a summary of how the participants further developed their professional identity during the fourth-year TP. I chose to summarise the information related to the second sub-question in the next column, as the participants' attempts to behave in particular ways, was tied to how they <sup>57</sup>understood themselves as emerging teachers. I chose to summarise information related to the first sub-question in the next column, because as participants described their understandings of their identities, they reflected on how they understood themselves as teachers. In the final column, I listed all the factors mentioned in the previous columns that had influenced the participants' professional identities development during TP. Once I summarised the data for several participants, I wondered if I had understood the participants current professional identities well enough to describe how they had constructed their professional identities during TP. I thought that a visual representation for each of the

<sup>56</sup> This information in the column was related to 'storyline' and 'rights and duties' columns in the previous data analysis table, which was used when borrowing into the data. The participants developed their identities during teaching practice, as they chose to resist or enact certain rights and duties within a commonly understood stories of what happens in schools.

<sup>57</sup> This information was related to the column called 'identities' in Table 3 as the participants understood their professional identities in particular ways.

participants' professional identities would assist me to write the findings in Act Six. To construct a visual representation of the participants' professional identities I followed the steps described below:

1. I took the summarised data from the third column of the table, pasted it into a new Microsoft Word document;
2. I re-organised and summarised the data in list form; and
3. I created a visual summary of the data.

A simplified version of steps one and two where I used colours to show the reader the process that I used to summarise the participants' understandings of their professional identities is shown in Table 6 on the next page.

Table 6: Preparation before professional identities were represented visually

SQ2. Understandings of professional identities during TP of Landon	Summary of understanding
<p>A <b>motivator</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Strict/tough</b> (See page 17-18 and 26, <b>not wanting to look for marks for learners</b>, of journal)</li> <li>• a teacher who wants learners to <b>think critically</b> He wanted learners to think more critically, especially about source analysis in History (see page 10-12, 27 and 36 of journal), as future planning as well for Grade 12 and trying different thing</li> <li>• <b>A person who motivates himself, who derives inspiration/motivation/support from family</b>-see page 12 and page 45 of interviews, and <b>peers</b>-see page 46 of interviews, and from reflecting on previous TP during online TP-see page 20-21 of interviews, and <b>learners' participation in class</b>-see page 3 of journals, and learner performance, see page 28-30 of journals and learner and teacher appreciation, see page 7-8 of journals, and being part of top 20-see page 16 of journal)</li> <li>• <b>who feels proud</b> (like Buhle) <b>when him and his learners do well</b> (See page 30 of journals) and <b>praises learners/tell them he is proud</b> (Page 31 of journal)</li> <li>• a teacher who wants to develop learners with <b>strong characters</b> (See page 19 of journal)</li> <li>• a teacher who wants to motivate learners <b>to work hard/become hard workers</b> (see page 32 of interviews, connected to interactive teacher and 10-12 and 16 of journal) <b>and improve no matter their set/is impressed by their hard work</b> (See page 25 of interviews) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ a <b>strict</b> teacher with <b>high expectations</b> (only wants learners to have a reward, a break, or a "concession" when they deserve it/prove they are worthy of it, page 32-33 of interviews)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Motivator/motivated teacher</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>motivated by interactions with family, peers and learner participation</b></li> <li>• <b>takes pride in/motivated by his and learners' achievements</b></li> <li>• <b>tries/wants to be strict/tough</b></li> <li>• <b>maintains high expectations for learners and motivates them to try their best</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>to work hard</b></li> <li>○ <b>to think critically</b></li> <li>○ <b>to develop strong characters</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul>

After I summarised the data in a list, as shown on the right-hand side of the column, I represented the participant's understanding through a visual summary. The final representation was a summary for each participant's understandings of the different aspects of his or her professional identities and how these parts were interconnected. I then presented the visual summary for each of the eight participants in Act Six before I answered the following sub-research question, 'What are the 4<sup>th</sup> year SPU student teachers' understandings of their professional identity during teaching practice?' It took me seven months, from November 2022 to May 2023, to create the initial summary tables for each participant and the final visual summary for each of the eight participants.

#### 5.2.4 Description of the re-storying process

Before I discussed the findings, it is important to mention that I re-wrote and re-ordered the objectives and research questions. For the revisions to the objectives and research questions, see Appendix N. In the next section I explain the measures I took to ensure the findings of the study were trustworthy. I was inspired by the work of Naicker, Pillay and Blose (2020), who

used visual storyboarding as a technique to deepen interpretations and representations when re-storying narratives. I also borrowed from the PhD thesis of Sharan (2021) who used a similar technique by presenting drawings of marigolds that were metaphors for the participants' identities. In this study, before discussing the findings for each participant, I presented a visual summary of their understandings of their professional identities followed by the main findings per participant according to the research questions.

### **5.3 Trustworthiness**

Qualitative research is trustworthy when people have reason to be confident in the findings of the study (Amankwaa, 2016). This research used five criteria for trustworthiness, authenticity, credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability to ensure that the findings can be trusted.

#### **5.3.1 Authenticity**

Guba and Lincoln (1981) posit that authenticity is a unique expectation for qualitative research and a parallel concept for quantitative research does not exist. Shannon and Hambacher (2014) explain that authentic research represents the experiences of the research participants, which means that the findings and recommendations from the research can be trusted. In this study, I achieved authenticity of the findings through following processes suggested by Johnson and Rasuloova (2017) and Shannon and Hambacher (2014). Firstly, I collected data over a period of six months from May to October 2021. This allowed me to obtain the participants' perspectives on their experiences and the development of their professional identities during the three school visits for 2021. I used the knowledge gained about the participants' contexts through preliminary analysis of journal data, see Figure 6 for more information, to pose relevant questions about their TP experiences. Secondly, to attain the perspectives of the participants in their own voices, I used an audio journal created by the participants using through WhatsApp voice notes during their third and final school visit. Unlike a formal written journal, the spoken audio journal allowed them to speak to me more informally about their daily experiences. To represent the richness of the data in the audio journal and interviews I paid attention to speed, pitch, and tone when I transcribed the data, and where relevant and I explained the meaning of this non-verbal data in terms of the participants' professional identities. Thirdly, I sought to represent the participants' stories in their own words, and I used multiple longer quotes from each participant to fairly represent the rich accounts of their experiences.

### **5.3.2 Credibility**

Credibility is how confident the researcher is in the research findings (Amankwaa, 2016). This is important because a researcher should be able to confidently state the recommendations of the study so that other researchers and practitioners are able to act upon them. To achieve credibility, I made sure that all the transcripts of the different data sets were transcribed verbatim, and that the analysis of the different data sets were systematic and rigorous as noted in Chapter Five. I used multiple methods to gather and analyse data, known as triangulation (Amankwaa, 2016), to increase the credibility of the research findings. The data collection and analysis methods included document analysis, and narrative analysis of images, transcripts of audio voice notes, journals and interviews, and written journals. These multiple methods of data collection and analysis allowed me to understand the content and context of the stories to present rich findings, i.e. credible accounts, of how TP influenced the participants' developing professional identities.

Another way to enhance the credibility of the findings is to keep a record of the researcher's descriptions of the role that he or she has played in the research process (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017). I wrote down in a diary how my interactions with the participants and their stories had influenced the research findings. Throughout the research, I described in detail how my viewpoints towards the participants, the research contexts, and the methodological choices I made during data transcription, analysis, and presentation influenced the research findings.

### **5.3.3 Confirmability**

Amankwaa (2016, p.121) defined confirmability as "a degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest". To ensure that I had interpreted the data correctly, I performed member checking and asked each participant if I had correctly interpreted the data from the interviews, images, and journals to produce the global impressions (see Appendix H). To increase the confirmability of the research findings, I also explained in the thesis how and why I made certain methodological decisions, in case other researchers want to repeat this study in their own contexts. When I felt unsure about whether I have analysed the data in enough depth, I asked my supervisor to review the data procedures and the emergent findings.

### ***5.3.4 Dependability***

Research is dependable when the data are collected and interpreted in a manner that is consistent with the research design and methodology and could be repeated (Amankwaa, 2016; Connelly 2016; Johnson & Rasulova, 2017). The findings were dependable because an audit trail consisting of the following sources: raw data, transcribed data, written data, visual data, data analysis summaries was kept. The raw data were audio files of the voice notes sent and the interviews, the images sent by the participants to represent their identities, and written journal entries and reflective essays submitted on the Learning Management System in PDF format. The data that were transcribed were the voice notes and the interviews. The data was then summarised into preliminary and secondary data analysis tables, which I used to create visual summaries representing the participants' understandings of their professional identities. As suggested by Nowell et al. (2017), I ensured that the findings are presented in a systematic and relevant way through cross-referencing different sources in the audit trail against each other. The processes I used to analyse the data are presented in more detail in the next chapter of the thesis.

### ***5.3.5 Transferability***

To establish the transferability of the study, the findings, and the context in which they were produced, were described in detail. This rich description allowed me to suggest similar contexts in which the findings could apply, and for other qualitative researchers to infer whether the findings apply to the contexts in which they work.

## **5.4. Chapter summary**

The student teachers' narrative data was analysed by examining the content and context of the stories in three stages. In the broadening stage I gained a general overview of the participants' lives by writing a global impression of the narratives. The burrowing stage allowed an in-depth analysis of their stories data through use of the positioning diamond. In the final stage, re-storying, I re-organised the narratives to describe how TP shaped the SPU fourth-year student teachers' professional identities. A summary of the chapter is provided in the table on the next page.

Table 7: Chapter summary

<b>Research paradigm: Social Constructionism</b> <b>Research design: Narrative Inquiry (Qualitative Approach)</b>		<b>Ensuring trustworthiness</b>
1. <i>Broadening</i>	Gaining a broad understanding of the content of the stories through global summaries.	1. Authenticity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• preliminary analysis and posing of relevant interview questions</li> <li>• gathering and transcribing audio and interview data in participants' own voices</li> </ul> 2. Credibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the transcriptions were verbatim</li> <li>• multiple data collection methods (triangulation) were used</li> <li>• a researcher's diary was kept</li> </ul> 3. Confirmability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the participants performed member checks</li> <li>• the researcher described the methodological choices made</li> <li>• the supervisor reviewed the data analysis</li> </ul> 4. Dependability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an audit trail is available.</li> <li>• the process used to summarise data is explained and displayed</li> </ul> 5. Transferability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the study context and findings are described in detail.</li> </ul>
2. <i>Burrowing</i>	Constructing data analysis summary tables based on the positioning diamond for each participant gain an in-depth analysis of the content and context of the stories.	
3. <i>Re-storying</i>	Preparing for re-storying <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• creation of summary tables for each participant</li> <li>• creation of visual summaries</li> <li>• revision of the objectives and research sub-questions</li> <li>• telling each participants' story in relation to the research questions focusing on social forces and social context</li> <li>• comparing stories and relating them to discourses (master narratives)</li> </ul>	

## ACT SIX

### Digging for treasure

#### 6.1. Outline of findings chapter

The findings for the sub-research question, ‘*What are the 4<sup>th</sup> year SPU student teachers’ understandings of their professional identity during teaching practice?*’, showed that Catriona understood herself as a teacher in four main ways, as shown below: ÷

- a collegial teacher;
- a relational/caring teacher;
- a Christian teacher; and
- an energetic, confident, and motivated teacher.

These understandings are displayed in a visual summary followed by a brief description of each understanding, which includes . arrows and explanations to show the connections between these understandings.

6.1.1 *Catriona's understandings of her professional identities*

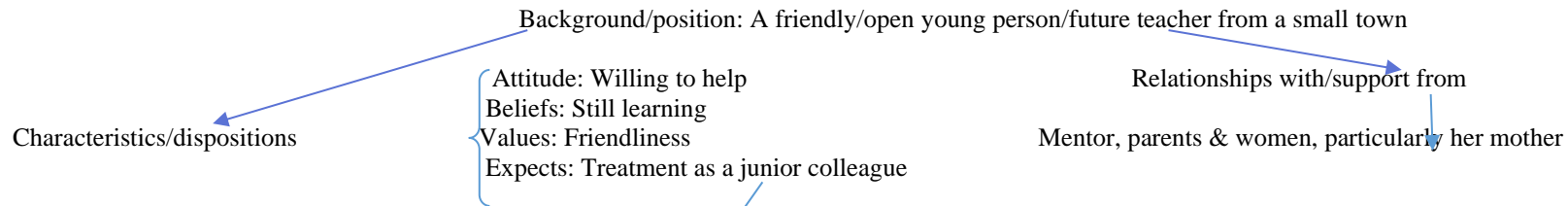


Figure 8. A collegial teacher identity.

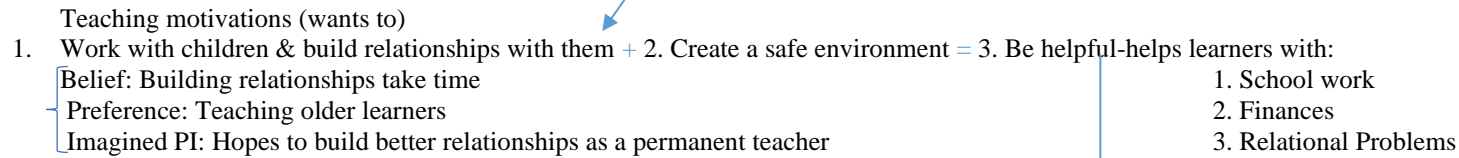


Figure 9. A relational/caring teacher.

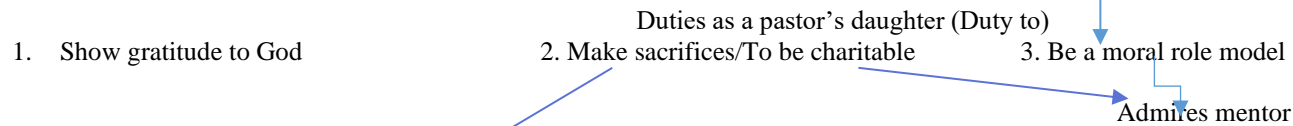


Figure 10. A Christian teacher.

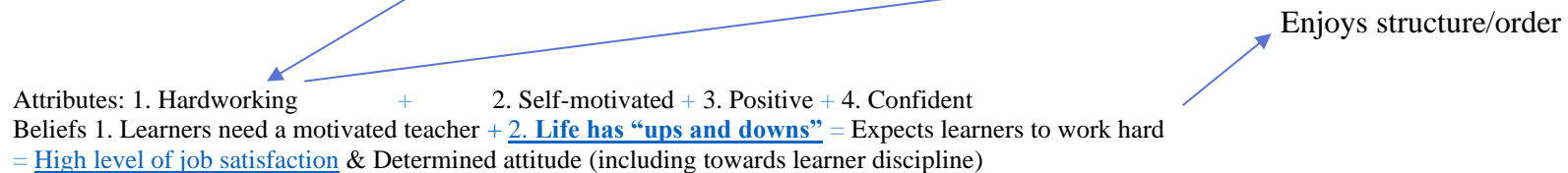


Figure 11. An energetic and motivated teacher.

Since personal and professional identities are interrelated (Bukor 2015, Makovec, 2018; Pillen et al., 2012), it was not surprising that Catriona sees herself as a “friendly person” and a teacher. Her small town upbringing where people knew one another contributed to her friendliness. During the final school visit, she formed close relationships with the mentor teacher, learners, and parents from her hometown.

As a collegial person, Catriona was friendly and willing to help. She was willing to help some of the older teachers with technology use and invigilation. While she enjoyed helping others , Catriona acknowledged that as a young collegial teacher, she still has “to learn <sup>58</sup>**a lot of things**” about teaching from others.

Despite being young, she expected staff members at the school to treat her like a junior colleague and felt that some of them did not meet this expectation. Like many of the student teachers in the study by Johnston (2015), she felt that the “the staff was [sic] very unfriendly” during her TP. This was disappointing for her because she had expected the teachers to be friendly and to treat her as a junior colleague.

Catriona described herself as a caring, and believed that learners find it easier to trust her and form relationships with her because she is a “very friendly and **open person**”. This desire and ability to form relationships with learners was central to her relational identity as a and caring professional. Catriona’s primary motivation for becoming a teacher was to work with children, which is a common reason why people want to become teachers (Alvariñas-Villaverde et al., 2022; Manuel & Hughes, 2006). Although After Catriona did not complete a degree in social work, While working part-time at a school she decided to become a teacher because she believed she could build good relationships with learners. Since building these relationships takes time, she did not enjoy the limited time she had with learners during TP. Like other student teachers, she imagined future ‘ideal identities’ (Lauriala & Kukkon, 2005; Teng, 2017; Yuan & Lee, 2016), where she would be permanently employed and able to form more meaningful relationships with the learners.

For Catriona, building relationships meant creating safe and welcoming environments for learners by helping learners with their schoolwork, advising them, and buying them school

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<sup>58</sup> Here the words a lot and things are emphasised to stress how much she still needs to learn.

supplies,. Being helpful was part of her upbringing, and her social identity as a Christian, which she had learnt partly from observing her mother as a pastor's wife making sacrifices for others.

My father's a pastor, she's a pastor's wife. So, it's between us at home, it's between her working 24/7 basically during the week, and it's between her duties as a first lady at church. She would, make sure that she gives us enough attention, but (nods head) somehow she has to sacrifice something.. to give<sup>59</sup> all of us what we want or what we need, so I saw that with my mother.

Catriona learnt that being a pastor's wife involved sacrifice, and believes that teachers should also make sacrifices for their learners. This was why she was willing to spend her time and energy supporting learners academically, financially, and emotionally. Her actions could be seen as an example of practicing Ubuntu, an African philosophy where care and respect is shown to others as part of the relationships people have with others in a community (Letseka, 2014).

At SPU during a second-year pedagogy module, students learn that the effective learning environments are "safe and comfortable (both physically and psychologically)" (Killen, 2015, pg. 72). Catriona wanted to create a "safe" environment for learners where they can always approach her for help, "because when something is<sup>60</sup> not sitting right for them, they're gonna come to me whenever they need<sup>61</sup> something". It seems that she connected the theoretical knowledge from the B.Ed. about creating psychologically safe learning environments and interpreted this to mean acting as a friendly and helpful person. She believed that safe environments mean learners can ask teachers for help, and that friendliness or warmth makes it easier for learners to trust and be open with her about their problems. Steele and Vargas (2013) found that a teacher's warmth and availability are two important components of classrooms where learners feel safe.

Catriona's beliefs as a Christian played a role in the development of her professional identities. As a pastor's daughter, she believed that having good morals was her duty, "I<sup>62</sup> have to be on the straight and narrow, because I am preacher's daughter". She felt that

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<sup>59</sup> She clarified in the interview that the phrase 'all of us here' represented herself as the only biological child and her three adopted siblings.

<sup>60</sup> She says the words 'not sitting right for them' fast as it is perhaps uncomfortable to consider all the problems learners might experience at home.

<sup>61</sup> She emphasised the word 'something' stressing that her learners can come to her for anything.

<sup>62</sup> Her she emphasises the words 'have' and 'be' to stress her duty as well as the words 'straight' and 'narrow' to show her moral obligation to lead a life free from vice.

young teachers in her town were failing in their Christian duty to be moral role models for the youth:

The-the teachers are very neverminded, and they are <sup>63</sup>**ALL, VERY young**. I think there's like, three teachers that are..**grown up, but the NEW ones**, they like 2, 3 years out of **varsity**, so it's **ONLY** young teachers **there**. Ladies and gentleman, it's only the **young**. **So**, like we **live** in the **same town**. So when you see what **they** are **busy with, weekends** and what **they are doing** (frowns), then you won't say (frown deeps), this is a **teacher**. This is someone.. whose supposed to.. basically like set an **example, or so**. They are **more** focused **on the fun than**, what's what they are supposed to do.

Catrina reflected that some of the young teachers' drank and socialised at places learners also went to instead of doing what they were 'supposed to do', their duties and responsibilities at teachers. This was the opposite of how she wanted to behave as an energetic and motivated teacher.

As an energetic and motivated teacher she is hardworking, self-motivated, positive, and confident. As a hardworking person, she expected learners to work hard. She believed that a motivated teachers increase learners' motivation, and explained that "If there is no motivation from the teacher's side then there will be no motivation from the learners as well". After dropping out from her previous degree she was very determined to deal with challenges to successfully complete her TP and graduate from the degree.

She worked hard and enjoyed being busy at school. While being busy does not always mean being effective, since teachers perform many different roles each day, the profession could suit a person who enjoys being busy. She was satisfied with her choice to become a teacher, which was represented by the chosen image of a smiling woman on the beach below:

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<sup>63</sup> Here she emphasises the youth of the teachers by stating the words 'all, very', 'new' and 'only' loudly. She also emphasises the words 'example' and 'teacher' to stress the role she expects from teachers and the words 'busy with, weekends' and 'fun' to highlight that they are not performing the expected duties of teachers. While she frowns to express her displeasure or disappointment in the teachers' behaviour while she says the words 'are supposed to do' quietly as she is hesitant to cast judgement on qualified teachers as a student teacher.



Figure 12. Image chosen to represent Catriona as a student teacher.

She explained that “I am very happy with what I do, the career I am about to pursue.” Catriona’s happiness also came from her personality and outlook on life, as she described herself as a “a very joyful, energetic and cheerful person” **as shown in the picture of the two laughing girls in Figure 13 on the next page.**



Figure 13. Image chosen to represent Catriona as a person.

As a positive person, her philosophy is that life has “ups and downs”, and as a university student and a Christian she states that “you have to make sacrifices”. The chosen picture of two fists opposite each other with a thumbs up on the left-hand side and a thumbs down on

the right-hand side represents her approach to life. These aspects of her personality and outlook were important, because the personal and professional identities of a person are intertwined (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Beijaard et al., 2000; Beijaard et al., 2004; Izadinia, 2012). Thus, Catriona's positivity, energetic and cheerful personality, and disposition contributed to her being a cheerful, positive, and energetic teacher.



Figure 14. Image chosen to represent Catriona as a university student.

Even though Catriona was still a student teacher, she described herself as confident and in-control and enjoyed creating well-run classrooms. Catriona stated that she felt more prepared to be in-control of a classroom after the final practicum. Although Catriona preferred certain level of control over the learners, she was still a relational and caring teacher. She was inspired by her former high-school teacher, who she described as,

A very **strict** person, and she's also **very**, straight to the **point**. So whenever I got to her **class** I would want to be on my **BEST** behaviour. But beside the fact that she's strict, she's **very**, she's a very friendly person, and most of the learners were scared for her-of her because of her strictness (moves head backwards). But me on the **other hand**, I think it was the **friendliness** and whenever you got to her classroom it was very **homely** like you felt **at home!**

The emphasis was on her strictness versus her friendliness, and on how much she felt at home in her class. Like her teacher, Catriona had multiple identities and strived to be both a caring or relational teacher and to be in-control of her classroom.

In the next section, Catriona's professional identities' development is discussed to answer the three remaining sub-research questions.

## 6.2. Catriona's PID during TP

In this section, I present the findings for two research questions: '*How do 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers further develop their understandings of professional identities development during teaching practice?*', and '*To what extent are the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers aware of their developing professional identities during teaching practice?*' Since identities development relies on awareness of and reflection on one's professional identities, I discuss both the development of each identity during TP and the participant's awareness of this development.

As a caring a relational teacher, Catriona wanted to create a welcoming environment for learners. She felt that she had successfully created a welcoming learning environment for learners during the school visit in January of 2021 at her old high school.

Uhm, I.I want my learners **to**, as I just said, when we get to my **class**, I don't want them to feel, **distant** or, like most of the learners they experience a lot of stuff **at home** so I don't want them to come to **school** saying that they are experiencing the same thing **at home**. I want them to **be** actually **EXCITED** when they come to **my class**. And then they know, I'm going to Miss Catriona's class. Like, uhm, can I make an example? The **last time** the beginning of the **year**, uh, I did my teaching practice at schools, at the same school **again**. An then **one** of the **learners** was **shouting** and **saying** (Ons gaan nou na ma se klas toe), basically they are going to mama's class.

She understood and showed empathy for the learners' circumstances, which was why she wanted them to be happy when coming to her class. Catriona was happy when learners called her "mama", because she felt like she had created a second home for them. This was the way she felt about her former high school teacher's class, which she described as "homey" because she felt "at home" in it.

The learners positioned her as a mother figure, and like teachers in Vogt's (2002) and Moosa's studies (2024), she was pleased because they associated her with positive stereotypes of women as caretakers whose right and duty is to care for others. Catriona emphasised that visiting the school for a second time allowed her to get to know the learners more.

Catriona's professional identity as a caring teacher was associated with helping learners financially during the same school visit.

I made the environment safe for **them** because when something is not sitting right for them, they're gonna come to me whenever they need **something**. I'm also a student, but I, I help wherever I **can** even if it means involving my **parents** ... **For**, uh, whenever a learner, you know, you must have your school things you must have your, you must have a **shirt**, you must have a **trouser**, **socks**

and **that**. So when **one**-I think three of the learners came to me and they said they don't **have**. **So**, I also don't have money because (laughs) I'm a student. And then **I**, relied on my **parents** to please **help** me out with **this**. Can you please, even if it's just the **socks**, or even just the **shirt**, or maybe pencils, or so. Then they would **gladly** assist **me** (nods head), and... <sup>64</sup>**HELP ME HELP** another learner, or a child at school.

Here Catriona expresses her professional identities as a caring and relational teacher and as a Christian teacher and draws on her parents' support and the values learnt from her grandparents. She narrated a common story of the wife and mother as a sacrificial figure told in other studies, see Elliott, Powell, and Brenton (2015), and Horne and Breitzkreuz, (2018). Catriona is aware of the financial challenges learners face, as a person who was raised by her grandparents when the parents could not afford to bring her up.

In the final school visit from 1 August to 16 October 2021 at an ex-Model C school, the needs of the learners were not financial, but Catriona adapted and assisted learners with their schoolwork and relationship problems. She described helping one learner with a problem she experienced with a friend, "and then there was <sup>65</sup>**another one**, uh, crying in class... and I asked what's wrong? And she said, no, she, uh, quarrel with **her best friend**. And then basically I just encouraged her that we all go through that sometimes and there's still <sup>66</sup>**a lot to go through** and that's it basically." Here she positioned herself as the older more knowledgeable person, and a student teacher who had a duty to assist learners and the right to give honest life advice.

She also expressed her caring and relational identity during this school visit by helping learners with their schoolwork,

...they would come to the table or to wherever I'm sitting and asking if I can **help them**, and not just only with the Afrikaans, but with **anything else**. So that really makes me feel **very** <sup>67</sup>**comfortable** and **appreciated**. I mean, basically, **with school**, whenever you would get there, there was this <sup>one learner</sup>. um, who let's say struggled **with business**. I don't know anything about business, but I tried my best to out **this person**.

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<sup>64</sup> She uttered the words "help me help" loudly to show how much she wanted to help learners, which demonstrates a Christian attitude towards helping others.

<sup>65</sup> The words 'another one' suggested that Catriona helped multiple students.

<sup>66</sup> . She emphasises the difficulties of life by emphasising the words 'a lot' and 'go through', and what she said aligned with her philosophy of life that it has its 'ups and downs'.

<sup>67</sup> The words "comfortable and appreciated" were stressed to show their importance this had in her developing professional identity.

Catriona confidence grew as learners felt comfortable approaching her for assistance with schoolwork in other subjects. This further re-enforced her caring and relational teacher identity and her passion for the teaching profession and working with children. Catriona imagined a future where she was a permanent teacher who had more time to develop stronger relationships with the learners. She was motivated by her ability to build good relationships with learners in the school visits, which made her feel “happy”, optimistic, and satisfied with her choice of career. She was also motivated by the relationship she built with her Afrikaans mentor from the same town, because they valued hard work and making sacrifices. She felt that her Afrikaans mentor has a “passion for teaching” and “would go out of her way” to assist the learners. Research by Nias (2005) indicates that for teachers shared values and beliefs are central for forming productive collegial relationships.

During the interview she described negative interactions with some of the staff members at the school.

Mmm, as I said, um, the first week I really didn't enjoy it, because the staff was very unfriendly. The principal himself didn't come introduce him[self]. And then, um, later that week, he called us into his office and asked us why didn't we come and introduce ourselves (disbelieving tone)? And so that really wasn't a pleasant, uh, week for us. I think, all of us at the school.

As a collegial teacher she values friendliness, she was disappointed when some teachers were unwelcoming. Even though she experienced the school environment as “unfriendly”, her mother helped her to sustain her identities as a friendly person and teacher. Catriona complained in the first week of the school visit “every single minute, every day”, and her mother reminded her to “just, just keep your head up high, be as friendly as you can, no matter who does what or who does what. Just be you”. When she felt demotivated her peers also helped her remain energetic and motivated as they discussed the challenges they faced and motivated one another during the final school visit.

Early in the final school visit, Catriona explained that the principal made it clear that the student teachers should act as assistants to the teachers.

So basically, uh, the day that the principal called us in, he said, we are not allowed to say, you must do whatever they ask you to do because you are **here to learn**. And, um, that's part of the learning process. So whenever someone asks you to do something, you must drop whatever you are busy with, then go and help **this someone**. That's, that's basically what I did not like about **some of** the staff at the school.

The words ‘this someone’ are stressed to show the unequal power relations between this important someone and the less important student teachers who were in the schools to learn about the profession. This was a reminder to the student teachers of their position as visitors that needed to finish the practicum as part of their degree requirement. In her dairy, Catriona acknowledged how frustrating the school visit was for her at times,

Today I had a really rough day. It started with me having an off period and they got to me in the staff room, asking If I can please assist with the invigilation. I had an off period, so I was glad to help them out. The problem started when no one came to release me, and I had lessons to present to the learners as my mentor did not feel well enough to do it. I invigilated for one hour and thirty minutes while it was supposed to be just 30 minutes. The person who had to release me forgot to release me and I cannot leave until that person comes. I had lessons to give, and I missed out on one class as the other one I had off. After my release came, I went to fetch my books in staff room as I was about to go to my next class then one of the teachers stopped me along the way to tell me to take clean paper to every classroom where the learners are writing. At this point I am really angry, and I am in a hurry and also stressed because I have a class to attend to. You are not allowed to say no when someone sends you or else it will sound like an excuse and you must do as you are told even if you have a class full of learners waiting on you, the invigilation is much more important. This really did not sit well with me at all.

As she expected to be treated like a junior colleague, she found the way that some of the teachers treated her disconcerting. She felt angry that the school context made it difficult for her to express her identities as a collegial teacher and as an energetic and motivated teacher.

During the final school visit, Catriona was aware of her developing professional identities as an energetic, collegial, and motivated teacher who was in the process of improving her administrative and pedagogical practices. Thus, learning to use the marking system made her feel that “at least now I know most of, most of the things for when I have my, my own classroom”. Catriona therefore looked forward to having her “own classroom”.

As a collegial teacher, Catriona was willing to learn and “glad to help” teachers during the school visits. In the second school visit, she was “grateful” to her mentor teachers for the opportunities to assist them with marking, report writing, and distribution. Engaging in legitimate peripheral learning with the support of her mentors enabled Catriona to strengthen her professional identities. If her mentor teacher shared the attitudes that other teachers showed towards student teachers, Catriona’s opportunities to improve her practice and strengthen her professional identities within the school community could have been limited.

She was self-motivated and explained how she would plan her lessons, “before I present my lesson so that I can get use[SIC] to the sequencing and pacing”. Catriona was aware that she was self-motivated because she described herself as someone who is energetic, cheerful, motivated, and positive. Though she said she did not enjoy writing the <sup>68</sup>journals, she found that they helped her to reflect on her practice and to improve her teaching. Her desire to improve her teaching was part of her professional identity as an energetic and self-motivated teacher who was in-control of her classroom.

Although Catriona did not use the word “confident” to describe herself during interviews, she wrote in her journal that the lecturer that assessed her said that she was “very confident”. She reiterated in the same journal entry that “Being confident is who I am, it is what I am, and it is what I want to stay”. Confidence in one’s abilities is important for teachers, as confident teachers are more likely to learn new teaching methods and to remain resilient and committed to teaching over time (Day et al., 2006; Selcuk et al., 2018).

Catriona felt that the principal and younger teachers did not take student teachers’ duties during TP seriously. She sometimes felt powerless compared to the employed staff members, and said that “the **younger ones** and the **principal**, they really didn't **accommodate us**”. For student teacher performing the duties of a teacher is important as it help them to develop their professional identities during school visits.

As a person who believed that life has its “ups and downs”, she saw negative interactions with the principal and some of the teachers as a possible drawback of conducting practicum at the school. Rather than lose motivation, she acknowledged that she may face similar challenges in future, and she remained happy with her decision to become a teacher.

I think the, the, the main thing is that we basically have to **be ready** for the unexpected. Like, we can't always expect good things there to be **bad things** in order for us to, how can I say, to grow individually, to basically know that it won't always be **stars** and it won't always be the **good things**. So I think, uh, the **teachers here** at NC, being like they are of what they did to

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<sup>68</sup> Although Catriona did not submit daily audio journals like the other participants the reflective journals that she submitted as part of the final practicum were very detailed and seemed to provide an honest account of her experiences. Since the journal was a good account of her experiences during the third and final school visit, quotes from the journal are used in the thesis.

us or how they handled us, basically shows that every **school**, every **job**, for instance, has their **own things** and we just have to deal with it.

She acknowledged that such experiences were preparing her to “be ready” for any future situation job, which will have its “own things”, or mix of positives and negatives. As an energetic and motivated teacher, her philosophy that life has its “ups and downs” served her well, as she was able to see difficult moments during TP not as a sign that she had chosen the wrong career, but as part of being a teacher.

She reflected on her learning experiences during the final school visit by saying, “that all it is, they have to deal with it. It's up to **yourself** that you have to be positive about it all to not let it get **under your feet** or so, build a bridge, get over it *and that's it*”. She emphasised on the word ‘yourself’ and taking personal responsibility not to let the negative experiences during practicum affect her too much. This management of negative emotions through reflection is a key part of teacher professional identities’ development (Zembylas, 2003a; 2003b). She chose to manage these challenges and emotions by herself as an energetic and motivated teacher who enjoyed retaining control over her environment.

Working at a school where teachers treat student teachers as administrative assistants rather than teachers in training left Catriona with little room to say no to their demands. Despite being treated as assistants, student teachers were expected to be able to invigilate and keep the learners quiet on their own. Catriona worried that others would watch her failing to keep boisterous learners quiet on the camera, and she would be called into the principal’s office. This fear is understandable, as managerialism has coincided with teachers’ work being monitored under surveillance (Moremi, 2016; Perry-Hazan & Birnhack, 2019; Stillman & Anderson, 2015).

Catriona reflected on her values, which were friendliness and positivity, and her ability to draw support from her mentors, peers, and her mother. Her focus on her own learning helped her to manage the negative emotions she felt during the final school visit. Instead of giving in to the anger and despondency she felt towards the school management and the way some teachers treated her, she focused on her own learning. Through her relationships with her mentor teachers and her improved administrative and pedagogical practices, she strengthened her identities as a collegial and relational teacher.

The responses to the final sub-question, ‘What are the factors that influenced the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers’ professional identities development?’, suggest that Catriona’s experiences during the school visit were mediated by five main factors. These were her gender, her relationships with others, her current personal circumstances, which were her personality traits, the culture and rituals of the school, and her Christian upbringing.

Catriona’s gender, which is one of her social identities, influenced her experiences during the fourth-year school visits. She was willing to adopt the role of the learners’ ‘mother’ as a female teacher, as this supports her identities as a caring and relational teacher. As a woman Catriona found the speeches by women as part of women’s day in the school, deeply meaningful.

I think that it was the old school principal or <sup>69</sup>schoolteachers who were at the school before,... they really, spoke about the **hardships** that women had to **face** and how, how difficult is for a woman to prove **herself**. Some of us, I think that me as well could relate because from a young age, um, you can, you can already feel the **pressure** that you as a woman, uh, have to **endure** just to be basically **seen**, not, not seen, feel that to be, uh, **recognised**. And they said, the speeches that they delivered, really motivated, a lot of us.

As a young woman she felt that was under more ‘pressure’ than male colleagues and had to do more just to be ‘seen’ and ‘recognised’ for as a woman. She said that in past she had faced “stereotyping” and “negative attitudes” where “women can't do this, this is only for men”. Being aware of the stereotyping of women as less capable than men, makes Catriona likely to ‘endure’ or persist to gain recognition as a professional teacher. While she seems aware of the stereotyping that women in the <sup>70</sup>country face, she did not seem to question or to try to reject this stereotyping. Her lack of counter-positioning could be due to her lack of power as a student teacher in both university and school contexts. It is possible that with more time and experience, or a more supportive community of allies in a school that such counter-positioning may be possible.

Catriona’s relationships with her mother, peers, the teachers, and the principal in the final school visit were important for her professional identities’ development. Her mother was a

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<sup>69</sup> Parts of the quote in yellow have been changed as the name of the school was replaced with more general wording to protect the identity of the school.

<sup>70</sup> While more women are teachers, stereotyping means that School Governing Bodies are less likely to appoint women as principals, because female teachers are seen as nurturing and passive, and their male counterparts as strong leaders (Johnson, 2014; Mestry & Schmidt, 2012; Moorosi, 2010).

source of support because Catriona sought and followed her advice during TP. Similarly, her peers were another source of support, as they reflected on their experiences during the second school practicum, discussed the challenges they faced, and motivated one another. While she had a positive relationship with her mother and her peers, she had a strained relationship with the principal and some of the younger teachers. She did not think she should be treated as an administrative assistant by these staff members. With little power to negotiate as a student teacher, and as a positive and motivated person, Catriona focused on the meaningful relationships she built with her mentors and the learners. Through her engagement in these relationships, as mentioned already, Catriona developed her identities as a relational teacher.

Her belief in life's "ups and downs" meant that in the final school visit she did not fixate on the negative aspects of the school culture, such as, the administrative role student teachers are expected to play. As a positive and motivated person, she found aspects of the culture that she did enjoy and engaged in rituals, including the speeches on women's day and the prayers during assemblies. Through prayer she strengthened her identities as a Christian person and a Christian teacher. Her faith comes in part from being raised as a pastor's daughter and her choice to live as a moral role model for learners. Since she was taught to make sacrifices and be charitable, she was happy to ask her parents to help the learners at a less affluent school.

In conclusion, Catriona's faith; her ability to form and maintain supportive relationships with family, peers and mentors; and her friendliness, strong motivation, determination, and positivity allowed her to remain engaged and to develop her professional identities during both practicums.

### **6.3 Breyton's understandings of his professional identities**

To answer the question 'What are the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers' understandings of their professional identity during teaching practice?' Breyton's understandings of his professional identities are shown in the two figures on the next page.

### 6.3.1 Professional identities of Breyton

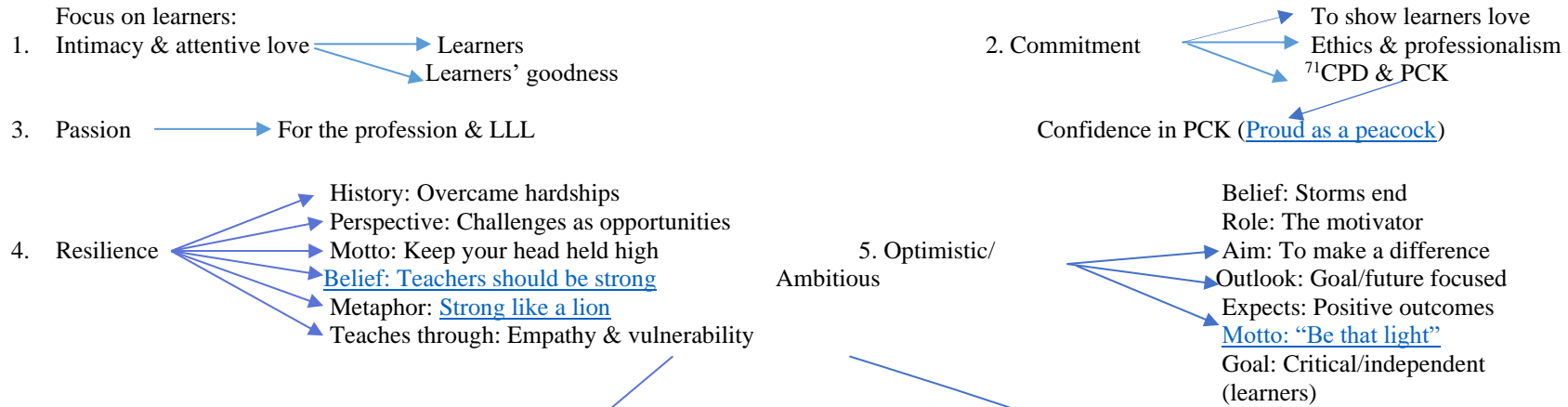


Figure 15. A committed and passionate teacher.

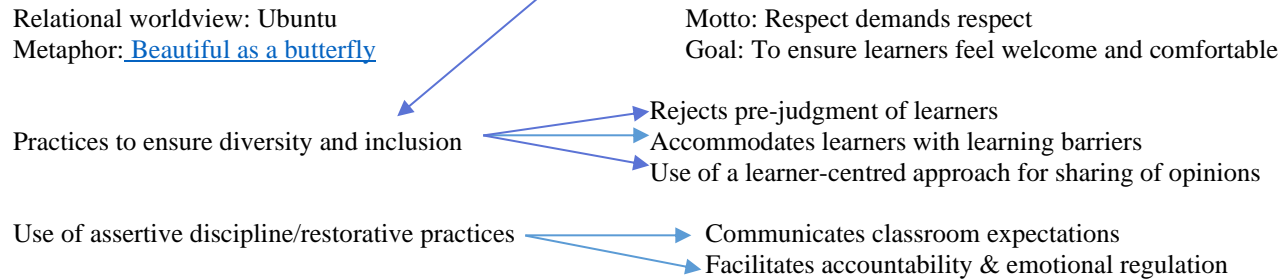


Figure 16. A welcoming and respectful teacher.

<sup>71</sup> The acronyms are for the phrases, Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK).

Breyton is passionate and committed to teaching and has close relationships with and cares for learners. He tried to act in a loving way to learners due to his belief in the existence of good in every learner. He strove to see and understand learners clearly and centred the learners' perspectives and needs above his own. Breyton is also committed to the ethical and professional conduct expected from teachers and professionals (Burke, 2004; Evans, 2008). He described himself as having a "passion for education" and being a "lifelong learner" who is invested in continuous professional development (CPD). He said, "I always said that I chose to be better than the person I was yesterday, so it's a continuous development of yourself." Due to this investment, he felt very proud of his pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). A peacock (Figure 17 below) represented Breyton's passion and pride in his knowledge.



Figure 17. Image chosen to represent Breyton as a student teacher. As he explained below:

Uhm, I really (looks up) **want to** (looks at camera) what was bestowed upon me, I want to (arms in wide circle) **share it** with everyone **because**, like a peacock open and (motions hands in a circle) spreads its feathers and **flaunts it** and **shows it** to everyone I'd like to do that, uh- figuratively speaking.

He emphasised his desire to share and flaunt his knowledge through the stressed words. He wanted learners to take pride in themselves and their work. Breyton felt that learners were less interested in learning as compared to learners when he was in school four years ago. He wanted to transmit his passion for learning to learners, "And I really want to be that light that brings that passion back to learning". He believed that this could be done by forming close relationships with learners and showing them respect and genuine love.

Breyton is a young Coloured man who believed in Ubuntu, which he described as a philosophy where “a person is a person through other people”. Ubuntu also encompasses showing respect for others (Letseka, 2014). Breyton believes if teachers show learners respect, they will respond in kind and explained that “respect demands respect”. The expectation of reciprocal treatment is another key feature of the philosophy (Letseka, 2014; Mligo, 2021).

During his first year at the University, Breyton became more comfortable with his identity as a gay man, and described why he chose an image of a to represent himself as a university student.

So, this is your t.time to (looks at camera and waves arms in a circle) <sup>72</sup>**come out** and (puts palms together and pushes them apart) **flourish** and become a (flaps hands like butterfly wings) **butterfly**. (looks up) **Beautiful** and ready to **show** the world it's **beauty** inside (motions to self) and out (motions away). And this is how I felt as a university student coming from high school that (frowns) I've never really, my voice is **actually** being **heard**. Uhm, so why not, **embrace** this and **flourish**?

Hence, his experience of moving from a high school where he was bullied for his sexuality to a more liberal university where he did not experience this kind of discrimination made him more willing to accept his sexuality. The chosen image of a bright red butterfly with its wings open is shown in Figure 18 on the next page.

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<sup>72</sup> The words come out could also be significant for Breyton who lived life openly as a gay man on campus.



Figure 18. Image chosen to represent Breyton as a university student.

Since Breyton felt his voice could be heard and he could flourish, the butterfly represented his identity as a university student who could express all of his identities. Due to his experiences he did not want learners to “feel left out”, instead he wanted to ensure that he created classrooms where diverse learners felt included.

I’ve always promoted **inclusivity** (nods). I’ve always.. uhm, asked, (moves both palms forwards) **learner’s** perspectives. I’ve-I’ve, I’ve promoted **diversity**. Because I really.. want to (looks at camera) create that platform, (looks up) that learners feel, (looks at camera) that they are **welcome** and feel comfortable in interacting **with** (here he motions to himself with his hand instead of saying the word me).

Breyton emphasised the words inclusivity and diversity, which he promoted through a welcoming learner-centred approach. The opinions he expressed strongly relate to the White Paper 6 and the Salamanca Statement, both of which are readings in a second-year pedagogy module in the B.Ed. programme (Department of Education, 2001; UNESCO, 1994).

Breyton encouraged learners to adopt a respectful attitude towards others and used assertive discipline and restorative practices in class. Restorative practices occur when learners and teachers take accountability and make amends for hurtful behaviour towards others (Hendry, 2009; Lodi, Perrella, Lepri, Scarpa & Patrizi., 2022). As part of assertive discipline, Breyton took a proactive approach to classroom management, and clearly set and communicated expectations for learner behaviour. It is possible that Breyton was influenced by what he was taught in a module related to classroom management, but he could also have seen proactive classroom management modelled by teachers during his own schooling or during the school visits.

As a committed and passionate teacher, Breyton has three main character traits. He is resilient, optimistic, and ambitious. Part of his resilience came from the belief that he had become a strong person. He equates being a strong person with the image of a lion (see Figure 19), and the metaphor I chose to represent his personal identity was ‘as strong as a lion’.



Figure 19. Image chosen to represent Breyton as a person.

As a resilient person, he viewed challenges as opportunities to learn and improve as a teacher. Breyton is an optimist who believed that “the storm”, or negative events in one’s life, will end. As part of his optimistic personality, he believed that teachers could bring out learners’ potential. He aims to make a difference, and be a teacher who inspires learners, which is why his motto was “<sup>73</sup>**be that, light, be that positive person** in their lives”. He thought educators have a duty to critically question what they have been taught and to remain open-minded instead of being led “like a horse”. He also hoped to motivate and help learners to develop into independent and critical thinkers.

Breyton is an ambitious person who is focused on academic accomplishments and always worked hard to achieve his goals. Despite the challenges he faced, he continued to strive towards his goals, and explained that, “I don’t allow my past to determine my future”.

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<sup>73</sup> He emphasises the words ‘be that’ to show that that this requires action and effort on the part of the teachers and the words ‘light’ and ‘positive person’ to show the impact that teachers can make.

Breyton believes his focus on his academic work came not only from his upbringing but also from his innate desire to achieve things for himself.

One of the challenges Breyton discussed was his sexuality. Research shows that teachers, from minority ethnic and racial groups, who are part of the LGBTQIA+ community feel that they must hide their identities while at school (Bracho & Hayes, 2020; Llewellyn & Reynolds, 2021; Msibi, 2019). Breyton's response illustrates this point:

And it's also **so difficult** being, having *a sexual preference that I have*, being in **this environment**, not being able to express **who you are** and having a father who was very **strict** and **prim** and **proper**, it's **difficult** because you have to look up to that standard, you have to keep on pretending to be someone you **are not**, and it's, it's getting to **you**. It's getting to **me** if *I can't say so*, because my father's very **strict**, so it's **him**, academics is everything. And I'm not doing this because of him doing this, because **of myself**. I've applied for Honours because of myself, this is where I'm getting and he [did not] **force** me to do it. But what I, I'm saying that to him, academics is [not] **everything** and I can, I need to also **live for me**.

Breyton also acknowledged the pressure he faced pressure not to “express” who he was in the school “environment”, and because of his conservative father who expected him to behave appropriately by hiding or masking his sexuality. However, he had begun to have conversations with his father about living more authentically as a young, gay, Coloured man.

#### **6.4 Breyton's PID during TP**

This section answers the two questions ‘*How do the 4<sup>th</sup> year SPU student teachers further develop these understandings during teaching practice?*’ and, ‘*To what extent are the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers aware of their developing professional identities during teaching practice?*’

As a passionate teacher and lifelong learner, Breyton devoted time to thinking and planning fun and engaging lessons and activities to help learners develop a passion for learning. During the virtual TP block in June 2021, the student teachers pre-recorded lessons, which Breyton felt helped him to develop the ability to use media to engage learners during. During the final school visit in August and October 2021, he observed most teachers using “chalk and talk”. Breyton said he “came down to their level, their level, their technology level” to make lessons interesting for learners who use technology in their everyday lives. Learners seemed to respond to the lessons with increased enthusiasm and he noticed “how well

behaved these learners are, how intrigued they are, how, how they <sup>74</sup>**participating**". He used media as a reward by sometimes allowing learners to watch movies after good behaviour or assessments. However, he ensured that "there needs to be something that they can learn out of it" and was therefore attentive and responsive to the needs of modern-day learners. He compared his approach to how he was taught as a learner, which was through a teacher-centred approach as teachers "walked over" or dominated the learners in class. Breyton believed that allowing learners to share their opinions was a way of including them in the process of teaching and learning. He wanted learners to be themselves and share their ideas with others, so they can "flourish" like butterflies.

Breyton is a passionate teacher who believed that teachers who are unethical lack passion for the profession, which was supported by Žydzūnaitė and Arce's (2021) findings that ethical and moral behaviour is a key component of the behaviour of passionate teachers. In the final practicum, as a passionate and committed teacher Breyton became a more loving towards learners.

Ma'am, I would, I would personally, I would show my learners **love**. **Love** because, and I've shown them some sort of inclu-inclusivity. It's very important, um, because modern-day learners get bullied not only by learners, but by teachers, teachers **belittle** the learners teachers swear [at] the learners and things I've [seen]. And it's not nice because you get sworn at home and you get sworn at school. So where do you really, where do you draw **the line**? *So what I would do differently is **love them***, love them enough so that they know the worth, motivate them and support them in **everything**, no matter how little it is.

Breyton saw that learners were shouted at by teachers at the school and possibly their parents at home, which was why it became important for him to show them love to motivate e them and make them feel included in his class. Breyton was aware of his position as a person from the middle-class, and although this was a Quintile 4 school, it was also attended by many learners from nearby townships. Throughout the TP, Breyton was aware of the challenges that poorer learners, particularly those from child-headed households, experience. This awareness was part of the decision to show learners love, which they may not receive at home.

Breyton respected the learners instead of belittling and demotivating them by shouting and screaming. During TP Breyton was given a class that was labelled as very disruptive to teach and used the opportunity to promote inclusion and diversity in the classroom. He chose to

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<sup>74</sup> As a teacher who used learner-centred methods, he prioritised increased participation during lessons and

resist the positioning of the class as disruptive. Instead of ‘pre-judging’ the learners, he wanted to form his own opinions of them. He was analytical and, instead of re-acting to the classes’ negative behaviour, he thought of the reasons why they behaved in this way. When he chose to teach the class, Breyton found that “firstly, they, they were very uncertain. Why am I **there?**” Though he felt demotivated, he asked himself “How can this, this, this class determine where am I heading?” Since he was reflective and headstrong, he did not allow the class to determine his future, and decided to respectfully ask them what more he could do to help them. Breyton showed the class respect, which was part of his professional identity as a committed and passionate teacher who shows learners love. This indicated that Breyton could reflect on his actions and motivate himself to find new ways to express his professional identities and develop his relationships with learners.

Breyton was culturally responsive because, as part of his identity as a respectful teacher, he reflected on the learners’ identities and perspectives to find ways to teach effectively (Gay, 2018; Miller & Pedro, 2006; Naidoo & Wagner, 2020). When he asked the class why they still misbehave with other teachers, he recalled their words “you showed us one thing that respect is important and that is why we respect you enough, because you respect us, even if we just Grade Nines, you respect us.” Grimova and Van Schalkwyk (2016) also found that learners like Breyton’s who live in communities affected by poverty, violence, and crime believe that respect between teachers and learners should be mutual. Breyton felt that the analytical and respectful approach he took with the class worked, because he formed a strong bond with them, and the class became one of his favourites. Due to this positive result, he was more convinced that the key to classroom management and teacher-learner relationships was mutual respect.

To create a respectful environment, Breyton focused on teaching learners to respect one another “**disciplining** learners, uhm, which in a **respectful manner** which they **should**, uhm acknowledge each other when busy in class and **not** distract **them**”. Breyton was determined to teach learners to raise their hands during the lessons, so he could give them opportunities to speak in class, and he told learners to respect their peers and not distract them when in class. He encouraged the learners to develop restorative practices, instead of punishing them. According to Lodi et al. (2022), the restorative practice in schools helps learners whose behaviour mentally or physically harms others, to make amends for their actions and support those who have been harmed. Restorative practices are a viable alternative to punishment as a

means of discipline, because they have been shown to better learners' social skills and relationships, and to decrease learner absenteeism, misbehaviour, and expulsions and suspensions (Lodi et al., 2022).

There were two instances where Breyton felt extremely disrespected by learners. In the first instance, Grade 8 learner who knew Breyton when he was a matric student told him that "this teacher business is getting old", which was disrespectful, and he did not tolerate such behaviour from the learner.. In the second instance, a learner who was older than Breyton refused to wear a mask, and the Deputy Principal (DP) asked the learner to apologise. The principal's actions seem to indicate that the school implemented restorative practices in response to disciplinary problems. This could be why Breyton also believed and implemented these kinds of practices.

Breyton used reflection as a tool to remain calm during the lesson. When the Grade 8 learner tried to belittle him in front of the class, he realised his anger could make him behave in a negative way. He then remembered that the TP Coordinator had reminded learners to breathe and take enough time to react appropriately, and he stepped out of the class briefly and took a few deep breaths before responding to the learner. This example shows that when his professional identities are threatened by learners' behaviours, he stepped back from the situation and choose a course of action in line with the kind of teacher he wants to be. This is a teacher who is respectful to others and committed to behaving in an ethical and professional manner.

In both instances he was able to rely on the support of the DP who knew him from his days as a learner and from TP. Breyton was glad that the DP was able to handle the matter, because he felt that as a student teacher, he did not have the right to discipline the learners himself.

While he asked the DP to intervene with the male learner, Breyton's longer-term plan was to address the class and share his story to show the learners that he was there to help him. He felt that sharing his hardships could help learners as they benefit from his example of resilience.

And he, he really didn't trust me at first, and then it took me another day with him to speak to him. But, I spoke to them as a group *because I cannot just give one learner my attention, not*

*the others*. I spoke to them as a group and I really just opened up and I said, I explained to them **my journey**. I told them that you should never allow your past to determine your future because no one is, no one is born with the silver spoon in their mouth, so there is hope, there is resources for you, you need to take it and you need to grasp [it], but because there is **life** outside there, you just need to be focused **and push**.

This showed that Breyton felt that teachers have a duty to motivate learners to face life's challenges and not to lose hope.

Breyton respected learners, teachers, and parents in the school. His view was that being respectful of learners' opinions meant he did not have to act as "the dominant figure" in a classroom. He rather minimised power differentials between himself and his learners using learner-centred pedagogies. This approach could have created positive and respectful relationships with his learners (O'Grady, 2015). To encourage inclusivity and diversity in class, Breyton used technology as a teaching tool, especially while teaching in a virtual classroom. During the simulation, he used examples based on the autistic avatar's hobby to teach personification to the class, an experience that strengthened his desire to include all learners in class. Breyton also respected parents, which was observed when he responded appropriately with one learner's mother who was drunk and used "vulgar terminologies" in school by taking her aside to prevent her child from feeling humiliated.

Breyton further developed his professional identities through resilience when he experienced gossip from some teachers who felt that because his father was the former principal of the school he wanted to take their "position". Another trial that made him felt "helpless" was when a crying female learner told her father that she had been sexually abused by his friend. The father told the daughter to shut up, which unsettled Breyton and he sought advice from his father who told to accept that he could not help the learner and to focus on his own well-being. He unwillingly accepted his father's advice as a visiting student teacher because he felt "...that is **wrong**, because you need to... Ma'am, you need *to do anything in your power* to be able to save **that child**, because that's just, at the end of the day, it's just **a child**, it could happen to your child". Here he emphasised right from wrong and that learners were still children and showed a strong commitment to act ethically and to help learners that faced abuse at home. All these experiences contributed to Breyton's developing professional identities, as he compared the virtual and face-to-face TP and said, "if I compare it [TP] from the virtual school visits currently, I'm more stronger [SIC], I'm more at ease, I'm more

confident, and I'm more embracive in, um, having this **passion** to be in this environment.” As a hopeful teacher, he wanted learners “to be critical thinkers to think outside the box and not spoon-feed with [SIC] them”.

Thus, throughout his practicum, whether it was his decision to show learners love, to motivate them, to focus on his professional development, or to act in a respectful way towards parents and learners, Breyton showed agency. He was able to draw from his personal belief that “respect demands respect”, and the resources that were present in the school context, including his relationship with the Vice-Principal and the learners, to behave in ways that furthered his identities as a loving, respectful, and hopeful teacher.

This section answered the final sub-research question ‘*What are the factors that influence the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers’ professional identities development?*’ It was Breyton’s experiences and relationships in primary, high school, and university that influenced that his professional identities development.

His schooling experiences at primary and high school influenced his professional identities’ development. During primary school, he felt privileged to learn from a passionate Grade R teacher, and first “fell in love with this profession” in Grade 11 and 12 when he began to tutor his cousins and younger learners at his high school. As a tutor he felt that he made a difference, because his tutees improved their marks, and this motivated him to become a teacher. He also credited his lecturers for adding to his passion for teaching. From his observations as a school learner and student teacher he believed that many teachers lacked passion for teaching. He said “That is why we are **belittled** in our profession because there's no seriousness, there's no **passion**, there's no **etiquette** for this profession, and it's sad”. Breyton believed that educators who behaved unprofessionally and unethically led others to disrespect the profession.

In high school he experienced bullying because of his sexual orientation, which was one of his social identities, and this is why he wanted to to promote inclusion in his classes. When became a first-year student at the University, he found that learning about social identities in a first-year module helped him to question society’s beliefs, including, presumably, negative beliefs around homosexuality.

...going to the butterfly, as a university student, uhm coming from high school being a university student, (looks down) you are in this **cocoon**, because this is what society believes, so you need to (claps) agree what society <sup>75</sup>says (claps) you cannot voice your opinion, this is **right** (claps), this is **wrong** (claps)

In his life, Breyton overcame obstacles, including, being a gay man in a conservative society, his mother's death while he was in high school, adjusting to his father's re-marriage and the suicide of a close friend and peer while at the University. He felt that overcoming these trials made him a stronger person. The picture of a lion represents his "strength, courage and majesty to reach for my goals despite the challenges I face and the acceptance I want from society". He believed these hardships allowed him to inspire learners and to be more empathetic to the challenges they face. His father was a positive role model, because he taught Breyton to be proud of himself, "to hold his head high" despite what others say. When he had negative interactions with teachers at the school during the final school visit, he remembered that his father encouraged him to be proud of himself.

Breyton constantly reflected on his ability to remain resilient in the face of any challenges during the school visit, he remembered the words of the TP Coordinator, "that teachers have to remain strong". This meant reminding himself that teachers must be "mentally, physically, and emotionally strong", because the nature of the profession requires teachers who are resilient. Student teachers in a study by Şensoy Murt and Erdur-Baker (2023) also believed that they should remain strong physically and mentally to care for learners in a post-COVID19 era. The student teachers who completed TP during COVID-19 also had to be strong during difficult times. The learners' positive responses to Breyton's teaching during TP strengthened his passion, commitment to teaching, and his belief in showing respect to learners. Breyton believed that learners should take pride in their learning and be supported to share their opinions in order to become critical thinkers and lifelong learners, as the future of the nation. This was the reason he had high expectations for learners, which has been shown to increase teachers' commitment to the professional and learners' motivation and performance (Nel, 2016). When learners failed to meet these expectations he could rely on the Deputy Principal whom he had a good relationship with to talk to the learners about their conduct.

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<sup>75</sup> He looked down to show how it felt to be imprisoned in a cocoon and each clap showed how much people tried to force their views on others.

In summary, Breyton chose to use Ubuntu, an African moral philosophy or way of living, which promotes respect for learners, and for him this including listening to their perspectives and using restorative discipline in the classroom.

### **6.5 Moruti's understandings of his professional identities**

Moruti's three understandings of his professional identities are presented below:

- a relational and reciprocal teacher;
- a responsible teacher; and
- an emerging practitioner

These identities are represented Figures 20 to 22 on the next page.

### 6.5.1 Professional identities of Moruti

- a. *A positive and present teacher*
  - Engaged and present with learners
- b. *A patient and respectful teacher*
  - Patient and respectful with oneself and others
  - Sees discipline as a process

- c. *A stricter teacher*
  - Use of positive discipline
- d. *A passionate teacher-A teacher who:*
  - Loves teaching
  - Is passionate about Setswana
  - Takes pride in learners' learning

Figure 20. A relational teacher.

*A professional teacher-*  
Professionalism means being

- a. *Supportive*
  - A teacher who supports learners
- b. *A role model*
- c. *Organised*
  - Well-prepared/good time management

- c. *Dedicated*
  - Teachers are hard workers who work overtime
  - Able to work under pressure or even when ill
  - Views himself as a ST who will build endurance

Figure 21. A responsible teacher.

- Desire: To keep improving himself as a teacher
- Attitude: Willing to learn
- Goal: To improve and to produce high-quality work

- Actions: Willing to take criticism and to ask for help
- Values: Optimism and gratitude
- Improved: Confidence

Figure 22. An emerging practitioner.

Moruti's relational professional identity was centred around the idea of reciprocity, as he believed that the way he treated learners and teachers would be reciprocated by them during the school visit. Reciprocity is a key feature of Ubuntu (Letseka, 2014). Mligo (2021) states that people treat others the way they expect to be treated are willing to give to others in need because they expect community members to return the favour in their own time of need. To establish discipline, Moruti exercised patience with himself and his learners, because he reasoned that discipline is a process that takes time.

This approach was based on reciprocity, as he expected that showing patience with the learners will also cause them to be patient with him. Thus, Moruti remained patient with learners during the final school visit, and also tried to become a stricter teacher who still disciplined the learners in a respectful manner. For example, during his lessons he "encouraged" learners to observe classroom rules and made them aware of "their responsibilities in the classroom". He respected the learners and showed them kindness by encouraged them while remaining firm. Classroom rules, including for homework deadlines, are all aspects of positive discipline that increase learners' esteem and ability to appropriately manage their emotions and behaviour in a school setting (Nelsen, & Gfroerer, 2017; Thakur, 2017). In addition, Moruti was positive and grateful for new challenges and opportunities to learn during TP, and felt that it was important for teachers to be physically, emotionally, and mentally present in the classroom with learners. He tried to remain engaged with learners during classes because he believed that busy learners caused fewer disciplinary problems, as they are too busy to distract others from learning.

The concept of reciprocity was used to build relationships with learners, and as a responsible teacher Moruti also supported his learners. He offered them advice and guidance because he felt that teaching "still fall [SIC] under the category of pastoral studies". Thus, in addition to the expected academic support, Moruti also provided learners with financial and emotional support during the school visits, which is part of pastoral care. The patience, presence, respect, and strictness that Moruti displayed in the classroom epitomised his professional identity as a passionate teacher.

Moruti was passionate about teaching Setswana as a language, because it is his mother tongue. For Moruti, it was motivating when learners improved in either English or Setswana,

because he was proud that learners learnt from his lessons. His dedication to teaching was part of his professional identity as a responsible teacher.

Moruti also viewed himself as a good role model for the learners, which is one of the unofficial roles of teachers. While teaching he wanted to be well organised, well-prepared, and to have good time management. These three components are associated with professionalism as the public and the media expects teachers to be dedicated and competent civil servants (Hoyle, 2008; Stronge, 2018). Thus, hard work was another critical teaching aspect for Moruti who was willing to work hard after hours to meet deadlines. Moruti wanted to build his physical endurance, so that he felt less tired and sick while at school. It is these early experiences and realisations about the teaching profession, during TP, that help prepare student teachers for the ‘reality’ of the profession they will join once they complete their degrees. This is why Lindström, Lofström, and Londén (2022) posit that while TP is the aspect of- teacher education that challenges student teachers the most, it is also crucial for their professional development.

Even though Moruti talked about himself as a teacher, he still perceived himself as an emerging practitioner. He was aware that he still needed to learn much about the teaching profession, and he was willing to improve, which is one of the purposes of TP. It was therefore important for him that his lesson planning and presentations during TP were of a high standard. As a relational teacher who values good relationships with learners and mentors, he was willing to listen if learners criticised his teaching and to ask his mentors for their help.

## **6.6 Moruti’s PID during TP**

This section answered the following questions, ‘*How do the 4<sup>th</sup> year SPU student teachers further develop these understandings during teaching practice?*’ and, ‘*To what extent are the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers aware of their developing professional identities during teaching practice?*’.

As part of his identity as a relational and reciprocal teacher, Moruti learned to be more present in the classroom. Rodgers and Raider-Roth define teacher presence as “the experience of bringing one’s whole self to full attention so as to perceive what is happening in the moment” (2009, p. 267). This includes paying attention to the current re-actions, behaviours and actions of individual learners and groups of learners in class (Roefs, Leeman,

Oosterheert & Meijer, 2021). During the final school visit Moruti reported that his relationships with the learners improved over time and that he felt more confident in himself as a future teacher. Though he did not discuss the possible benefits that being present has for learners and teachers, a study by Roefs, et al. (2021) found that when students are present in a classroom they develop the confidence to build, and maintain social relationships with others.

For Moruti, being present meant paying attention to the learners during the school visit to meet the school's and University's expectations despite his cousin experiencing mental health problems.

And then uh, I have to be professional in the, in the learning environment so that, so that I'm not affected by it, the family matters. Because the, the learners are able to feel your presence in the, in the classroom, if your mind is here, they are, they can feel that agh the teacher is not with us here.

Without overlooking his cousin's worsened mental health condition during school visit, Moruti decided to concentrate on his primary duty as a student teacher, which he saw as being present in class with the learners. He equated being a professional with not displaying any signs of facing personal problems in the workplace, because learners can tell when teachers are not present during class.

To become a part of the school community, Moruti invested time and energy to "build some positive relations, with the learners and the teachers", which is part of "getting used to the learning environment, and get used to, everything that is happening within the school environment". Although Moruti was initially concerned with his lack of school experience due to the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>76</sup>, he found that "I am started to get used to the learning environment whereby now I am no longer anxious". This represented Moruti's willingness to devote time and energy building relationships, which made him felt less anxious about the school visit.

While many student teachers find classroom management challenging (Gravett & Jiyane, 2019; Marais, 2016), as a relational teacher Moruti opted to be patient in the first week as he got to know the learners. When Grade 11 learners took a long time to "settle down", he tried to "... talk to them and motivate them". To explain the reason for this approach, he said:

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<sup>76</sup> For more information about the virtual TP block, see the section called 'Teaching Practice at SPU' in Act One of the thesis.

I hope that, uh I will be able to manage them as time goes on, because they are still new to me, and I am still new to them, so I have to manage the classroom, and try to discipline the classroom accordingly, so it's not a once off thing, I cannot be able to do that, it will take some days to try and get to know them and they also have to know me, so that we can build a good relationship.

Though his observations of teachers and learners over the four years, he felt that teachers in township schools, which he referred to as urban schools, lacked patience. He explained that “urban schools lack competent teachers, they are not patient, and they call the learners names when they cannot finish their work in time”. This supports previous research, which found that student teachers often view behaviour from teachers that conflicts with what they have learnt about expectations for good teaching at university (Gravett & Jiyane, 2019; Marais, 2016). This could inspire them to behave in ways that are opposite to what they have observed (Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Rodrigues et al., 2018). Thus, despite encountering impatient teachers, Moruti chose to remain his 'actual self' (Lauriala & Kukkon, 2005), a patient teacher with learners, because he believed that the profession demands patience from teachers.

Moruti foregrounded the importance of respect and was pleased when “there was respect” between him and the learners because he believes that learners respond positively if a teacher is respectful and patient, which entails reciprocity. His past teaching experiences played a role in setting expectations for himself and for the learners, as represented below.

Okay, before I knew that uh, I don't have to-to be friends with the learners and I, have to be strict, the learners must know uh, if I'm in the classroom what to do, what is expected of them, and uh, what I am, what I have to do actually, in the classroom.

He ensured that learners were aware of what was expected of them in the classroom when the teacher was present, so that he could fulfil his duties. This was another way of addressing respect between a teacher and learners in the classroom, where everyone knows what to do and how to behave for teaching and learning to take place. Thus, Moruti was aware that both organisation and dedication were part of being a professional teacher, and that teachers and learners needed mutual respect, which is also an important aspect of the philosophy of Ubuntu.

For Moruti developing classroom discipline entailed becoming stricter while respectfully enforcing classroom rules and keeping learners busy with tasks during the teaching and learning process. The following statement is illustrative:

Okay, uhm, what I've put into practice is that, uh, sometimes, there's a point now where you have to be a bit stricter with the learners, so that they know, if you tell them to do this, they have to do it, because some of the learners might take advantage of it, whereby now you are not strict and they just tell you, uh sir we did not do this because of that, and then that is not a good, uhm, reason for them to tell you [that].

Moruti was aware of his developing professional identities as a strict yet relational teacher, and during the school visit, he said, “so, uh, I've learnt a lot during this practical, whereby now I have to explore my uh, management skills, and uh, the discipline in the classroom, also.” Moruti enforced discipline in class with the learners, and also became stricter with himself, by recognising the importance of performing his duties and ensuring that learners complete their work. Due to his improved classroom management, he felt more able to “take charge in the classroom” and became confident in his ability to manage a class, which is an important part of the profession. While he remained a relational teacher, he also found new ways to enforce his right to discipline learners to ensure they dutifully followed his instructions.

Previous research has shown that practicum can be a stressful time for teachers (Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2009; Ngidi & Sibaya, 2003; Nkambule & Mukeredzi, 2017). During the school visit, Moruti reported feeling tired and sick, and his learners could also tell that he was tired, “I just felt like I was very much tired and they could also recognise that I am very tired”. He felt that this also affected his critical mental capabilities necessary for a teacher to function, “I started to get a bit tired and my mind [felt] that tiredness, I was really tired, so I couldn't even think well”. Though he often felt fatigued during the practicum, as an emerging practitioner he was willing to improve his stamina, “so that is, a thing that I have to improve because there was a lot of work that I had to do so”. Teaching as a profession is demanding and tiring because it requires sharing knowledge with the learners in multiple classrooms and administrative work, which includes monitoring and addressing learners' socio-economic issues.

As a responsible teacher, he believed that teachers should be dedicated to their work resulting in his identities development during TP. Gee (2000) conceptualises identity as “a certain kind of person in a given context” (p. 46), and Moruti developed a certain way of thinking about the profession based on his experiences. He was aware that the teaching profession can be tough at times, but despite these challenges he displayed optimism and a belief that he would overcome and conquer challenges when he said that, “I know that being the teacher you will

always be tired, even when I start to work, there will be a lot of uh, responsibilities that I have to do, and then tiredness will always be there, so I just have to endure, and conquer at the end.” This epitomises passion, responsibility, dedication, and understanding the nature of the profession.

Even though he worked hard during his final school visit, Moruti showed gratitude even when he encountered challenging learning behaviour which he re-framed as an opportunity to learn more about classroom discipline. As he recounted in the final interview “I am grateful, I am not complaining about anything, every opportunity that I get, I **have to** use it ... I had to take on the challenges and say I’m going to do this, I will be with these learners”. Moruti realised that the challenges he experienced during TP were part of his learning and enhanced his teaching skills that he would need while working as a member of the profession.

Gholami, Faraji, Meijer and Tirri (2021) discuss how exposure to practice helps student teachers develop a moral foundation whereby they become more caring and sensitive to the needs and well-being of the learners. It seems that experiences during TP also strengthened Moruti’s commitment to learners’ well-being. One aspect of learners’ well-being was providing guidance to the learners, which he saw was part of his duties as a role model. He first saw himself as a “role model” after he spent a year as an assistant teacher at a primary school when he was academically excluded from the University. While Moruti wanted to be pastor, on reflection he felt that teaching shared some similarities with preaching because he could still provide moral guidance to the learners. While Moruti expressed a desire to become a “change agent”, which is mentioned in the University TP policy, it was unclear whether this was part of his identity as a role model.

Though Moruti’s commitment to the profession is commendable, it did make his peers at the school hostile towards him because they perceived him as overly dedicated. Moruti’s description of their behaviour illustrates this point:

... most of them [student teachers] will be sitting in the staffroom there, ... they are always complaining that I’m always in the classroom, and that is what I <sup>77</sup>want to do, ... engage with the content and understand it, and study what I don’t understand so that I’m able to explain it in a better way to the learners.

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<sup>77</sup> The word ‘want’ showed his strong desire, and the word ‘engage’ represented the importance of building relationships with learners as a relational teacher.

During the final school visit, he chose to take on the roles and responsibilities of a classroom teacher and behaved in a way befitting of a future teacher.

Moruti enjoyed it when the learners he taught improved in English or Setswana. However, he specifically talked about his passion for the Setswana language and how he could use code-switching to explain some difficult content or concepts, “I have a passion for Setswana as it is my language and when I teach the students can understand me better. To entrust [this] to learners a gift for them to remember<sup>78</sup>”. It was unsurprising that Moruti was confident teaching in the mother-tongue language, because he expressed himself well and confidently. Interestingly, he felt less capable as an English teacher and said, “I do not have too much experience in English, in how to teach the content and what should I do. I had guidance from a teacher but not too much as he was very busy”.

Moruti acknowledged the challenges with teaching English due in part to the insufficient guidance from the previous mentor teacher. During the first school visit in his hometown before 29 March 2021, his mentor teacher was too busy to assist him when he asked for help with the teaching of English. After this school visit, he did not take initiative to reflect and improve his abilities to teach English by himself when he returned to the University. Consequently, he was not aware that learners had been struggling to understand his English lessons, until they told him during the longer second school visit and he approached his mentor for help. He became a more self-directed student teacher and discussed the importance of reflection towards the end of the second school visit. He felt that “if I want to be, a better teacher, uh, I always have to reflect on, what I did, during the lesson, even, after the lesson, what went wrong and what went right, during the lesson, and then I have to revisit my lesson plan”. He stated that this kind of reflection could help him to better connect his lessons to the learners’ prior knowledge and find better ways to explain the content. Recognition of areas to be developed and strengthened and use of school visits as opportunities to improve the identified practices is crucial for student teachers, because learning to become a teacher is a lifelong process. Moruti’s confession that he had less experience in teaching English is shocking, since this is one of his majors that he had been taught how to teach as the subject at the University.

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<sup>78</sup> The emphasis on the word ‘remember’ here indicates that he feels that when he teaches Setswana that he is imparting wisdom to learners that they will draw on beyond the classroom.

Moruti's feeling that knowledge and skills with regards to the teaching of English were confirmed by his learners when they said, "Sir, while you teach Setswana we are able to understand you, uh, very well, but then in English, uh, we are a bit confused". As an emerging practitioner he viewed the learners' feedback as constructive criticism and sought his mentor's assistance. It seemed that the lack of effective mentorship during the first school visit hampered his professional development, while the mentor in the third and final school visit helped him to improve his English language teaching approaches. Hellsten, Prytula et al. (2009) also found that mentor engagement was critical for positive learning experiences for student teachers during TP. It was concerning that if the mentor for the final school visit was disengaged, he might have finished his fourth year without proper guidance to teach English as a subject well to additional language learners.

Successful collaboration between pre-service teachers as newcomers and mentor teachers as experienced members of the community is a key element of creating a functioning community of practice (Wenger, 1998). This sharing of experiences between the novice and his mentor as an 'old-timer' built a stronger commitment to the teaching profession, and included seeking help, when necessary, "that is whereby now, I go to my English teacher, ah 'How do you teach this certain type of content to the learners, so that they are able to understand?'"

Moruti showed more agency in the third and final school visit second as compared to the first school visit. His willingness to learn from criticism, to ask for help, and to improve his teaching, enhanced his practices where he used pictures and other media and related the knowledge in the lesson to the learners' prior experiences when he explained English texts. Through admitting the need for help from his mentor instead of being defensive when he was criticised by learners, Moruti showed maturity and agency, which represented his growing confidence as a student teacher. He might not have asked for help from his previous mentor because he possibly felt that he the mentor too busy to provide him with guidance. It was also possible that over the longer TP period of seven weeks, as compared to the shorter three weeklong first school visit, learners became more comfortable sharing their feedback on his English lessons and he also became more comfortable to approach his mentor teacher for advice.

This section answered the final sub-question, ‘*What are the factors that influence the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers’ professional identities development?*’ His experiences prior to the University, and his experiences while at the University had the largest influence on his developing professional identities. His reflections on and responses to these experiences were mediated through his personal circumstances, including his personality, beliefs, values, and outlook; and his relationships with others, including his mentors, the learners; and his family.

During the first interview, Moruti mentioned that his parents’ lack of involvement in his life resulted in late enrolment in primary school. Since he lived in a rural area, he had to travel far to school by bus. He initially chose Maths and Physics and admitted it was a challenge because he “was not familiar with them” and had to repeat a year of high school. Despite these challenges, Moruti was determined to succeed in his studies and to learn from the challenges he faced. In addition, his relationships with and experiences with his family also enhanced his passion for the profession. He reflected that his now deceased grandmother had called him ‘her teacher’, and that his mother has also called him ‘teacher’. Although he had originally wanted to be a pastor, the encouragement from his family made him become more passionate about becoming a teacher in the future.

These early experiences influenced his perseverance and commitment to learning about the profession, and so he persevered even when he was sick and critiqued by learners, which became a learning opportunity for him. While at University, Moruti failed first year in 2017 and after he was academically excluded he reflected on the reasons for his failure and became more responsible and dedicated to his studies.

When I compare myself there’s a difference. Actually a big difference. Before I was wasting my time looking at soapies, spending time on YouTube, and entertaining friends. I realised that these things will not help me to reach my dreams and that I need to stay motivated and determined.

Moruti knew he could achieve his dreams if he reflected on his past mistakes, and changed his views and behaviour while at the University. When I asked him about his identity as a student, he sent me a picture of himself on campus as the representation of his identity.



Figure 23. Image chosen to represent Moruti as a student.

The above picture was taken in front of a courtyard on campus, the “WP [William Pescod area of campus]”, and this informal setting shows a relaxed student teacher, who enjoyed University life. He explained that “... I don’t like to take too many pictures. This is a picture that proves that I was a student, that tells people about the University life and the campus.” While he had a newfound sense of confidence, Moruti was also a private person because he did not like taking too many pictures. He could be introspective understood himself well because, instead of sending me pictures from two websites, he decided to send his own pictures, which had a deep meaning for him. This reflexivity was important for his developing professional identities during TP, because during challenges and ‘trials’ during the school visits he needed to be confident and act maturely after being critiqued to ask for help.

Moruti’s previous teaching experiences as an assistant teacher at a school in his hometown was where he began to develop his professional identities, because he realised that he was relational teacher who relied on reciprocity. Being a member of the community as part of the staff at the school impacted his professional identities deeply because he realised that he loved the profession, which was the reason why he chose a picture of himself in the staffroom to represent his identity as a teacher.

Although he was academically excluded from the University, Moruti did not give up, instead he worked as an assistant teacher in a primary school in his village. Being a member of the staff made him think seriously about his professional identities as a teacher, which was represented in the picture below that shows him dressed for work in formal clothes.



Figure 24. Image chosen to represent Moruti as a teacher.

Moruti realised that teaching is an important profession that requires proper preparation and hard work, which was already discussed in previous section. He discussed his experiences working as an assistant teacher and demonstrated his professional identity as a relational teacher who relied on reciprocity. As he explained below:

This picture is the staff room the one time in [name of school redacted]”. When I am in the school I have to respect everyone and get to know them and work together with them. I need to learn how do they do things and how can I get along with them. It is all about the relationship between you and your colleagues.

From his experiences of occupying the assistant teacher’s role, he realised that being a good teacher was about collegiality, which for him meant developing good work relationships, and respecting colleagues. As mentioned, he also showed respect for the profession through a formal dress-code, which was also part of his identity as a proud teacher.



Figure 25. Image chosen to represent Moruti as a person.

Moruti's responses to his experiences were influenced by his personal conditions, which included, his personality, beliefs, values, and outlook on teaching and life. He remained positive and optimistic during the final school visit and believed that he could overcome challenges and learn from them to become a more effective teacher. He noticed that he became more confident as a teacher due to the intentional learning and growth he experienced while teaching at the school. He is a patient and respectful person who values good relationships with others, and when learners misbehaved at the beginning of the final school visit, he was willing to spend time building better relationships with them. His professional identity was informed by aspects of Ubuntu, the African philosophy, which includes mutual respect and cooperation. For Moruti, Ubuntu informed his outlook on teaching, and as a relational and reciprocal teacher, he respected learners and staff and worked together with the teachers at the school during the final school visit. During the final school visit, he developed good relationships with his mentors and the learners. From his reflections, Moruti noticed an improvement in his practice and was grateful to his mentor teachers for the guidance and support during the school visit.

His good relationships with learners developed when he acted as an assistant teacher in his village, and the learners respectfully addressed him as 'Mr.'. This title which made him take on the identity of a role model whose duty was to inspire and help learners learn more fully.

This picture [figures 24 & 25] is about the time during 2018 when I was working as an assistant teacher at a primary school, so most of the young learners call you Mr Mr Mr every

time they want to talk to you. That's the thing that <sup>79</sup>encouraged me to be the role model and to try so that they can learn from me. I'd like to be someone who is knowledgeable who is excellent, a mentor.

As an assistant teacher he performed administrative duties on behalf of the teachers, and while did not teach alone, he assisted the educators to teach their classes. Moruti's choice of images indicated that he saw himself as a teacher and a person who should be a role model for learners. The words "knowledgeable", and "learn from me", encompasses both subject expertise and other psychosocial aspects of teaching that are part of mentorship. As an assistant teacher he became knowledgeable when he performed administrative assisted educators to teach their classes. Though Moruti was a student teacher, he integrated his personal and professional identities, as he viewed himself as a role model both as a person and as a teacher.

As a religious young man, he originally wanted to be a pastor but was unable to study theology. While he considered teaching as a career in Grade 11, he admitted that "I was **not passionate about it**". By finding similarities between the two professions, he became more enthusiastic about teaching, as he could also provide support and guidance to the youth, not only as a pastor, but also as a teacher. Moruti compared being a teacher with being a pastor and found that "teaching and pastoral studies are similar because both require you to study to train in it. Both posts have challenges. You need to first gather, and then prepare to present so you do not get confused". Perhaps these kinds of comparisons motivated and instilled in him a greater passion for the teaching profession.

## **6.7 Dineo's understandings of her professional identities**

Dineo had three main professional identities. She understood herself as a:

- role model;
- an independent professional; and
- a relational/collegial teacher

A summary of her professional identities is shown in the Figures 26, 27 and 28 on the next page.

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<sup>79</sup> The words "encouraged me" showed that learners addressing him respectfully and motivated his believes in the positive impact he could have on the learners' lives as a role model and mentor.

### 6.7.1 Professional identities of Dineo

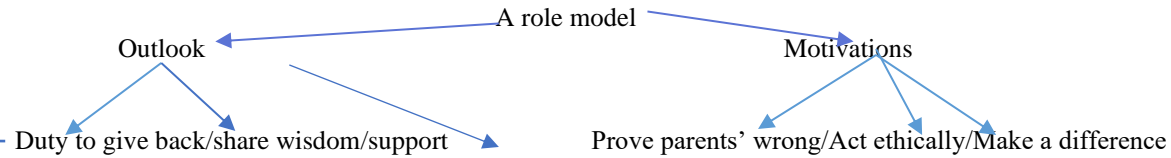


Figure 26. A role model.

- Good relationships with learners, peers, lectures & teachers
- believes this helps her manage the classroom better
  - good communication & EQ
    - shows empathy
    - able to ask for assistance
    - willing to help and to learn

A learner/emerging practitioner-Improving:

- time/deadline management
- classroom management
  - ability to remain calm & civil
- self-efficacy

Figure 27. A relational/collegial teacher.

- Self-reliant

  - SDL during the pandemic
    - self-mastery of technology
  - responsible acting teacher
    - prefers teaching alone
    - enjoys being trusted
    - growing workload awareness

- Problem solver who takes initiative

  - observant
  - adaptable
  - resourceful
  - hopeful
  - positive
  - resilient

- Emphasis on self-care/  
work-life balance

  - takes breaks from school
  - invests in a social life

Figure 28. An independent professional.

Dineo grew up in a village approximately 30 minutes' drive from Moruti's village. As a role model, she hoped to become a teacher who will act ethically and make a difference in learners' lives. She also understood herself a relational and collegial teacher who strove to build good learner relationships, which she believed helped her manage the classroom more easily. Similarly, as a collegial teacher she had good relationships with her peers, lecturers, and teachers in the schools, particularly her mentor teachers. Being a good communicator was also important for Dineo, as she showed empathy for the teachers that experienced high workloads, low learner marks, and conflict with the principal. She asked for assistance and offered to help others. The low marks, vandalism, and poor school management in the school were indicative of the problems that exist in disadvantaged South African schools, especially the schools that are located in townships (Dawood, 2020; Spaul, 2015).

As part of her relational and collegial professional identity, Dineo saw herself as a learner and emerging practitioner. During the final school visit, she felt she had improved her time management, ability to work under pressure, classroom management, and ability to remain calm and civil in class. Dineo is also an independent professional who is self-reliant, a problem solver, and a person who invests in self-care and prioritises a good work-life balance. As an independent professional and problem solver, she took initiative to solve encountered problems and described herself as observant, adaptable, resourceful, hopeful, positive, and resilient. Dineo constantly improved her own time management while maintaining a work-life balance as a university student and student teacher. After the first school visit, she chose a picture of friends enjoying themselves to represent her ability to balance her studies and social life, see Figure 29 below:



Figure 29. Initial image chosen to represent Dineo as a person.

It was through observations and experiences during the final school visits that Dineo realised teachers normally have heavy workloads, hence her emphasis on the importance of a good work-life balance. During the second school visit, she chose a picture of a suitcase to represent her identity as a person who needed to take breaks from TP. She explained the image by saying that student teachers “sometimes we forget that we have a life”, out of university life.



Figure 30. Second image chosen to represent Dineo as a person.

She explained why she chose to pack her bags and visit nearby family members to cope with stress during TP.

So, what I normally do when I'm under, a lot of stress, I just take my bag and I, go! Whether I go, I don't go home, I can either go to my aunt there, in Klerksdorp, or I go to my uncle here in Kimberley, just to change the, the environment.

She was possibly indicating her awareness of mental health issues and the importance of taking care of oneself and changing environments to take a moment to decompress when she felt stressed. While she acknowledged the heavy workload of teachers at the school, she was also cognisant of the importance for teachers to balance the personal and professional aspects of their lives to sustain their commitment and motivation to the profession over time (Day et al., 2006).

## 6.8 Dineo's PID during TP

In this section, the answers will be provided for the next two research sub-questions: *'How do 4<sup>th</sup> year SPU student teachers further develop these understandings during teaching practice?'* and, *'To what extent are 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers aware of their developing professional identities during teaching practice?'*

Dineo's developing professional identity as a role model was foregrounded when she responded to the learners who perceived the University as a place where they could be "free" to do as they like. She told the learners that "it's not about being free, it's about balancing [between their schoolwork and social life]". It is therefore understandable that Dineo advised learners to take accountability for their studies and explained that that she balanced her free time with completing coursework. The school where Dineo did her last TP could be regarded as having poor infrastructure, because it had broken windows in multiple classrooms, and graffiti covered the walls inside and outside the school buildings. In response, Dineo acted as a problem solver during the final practicum, when she asked learners to cover the windows in Winter for her to continue with teaching.

We took the charts, we took the charts and we tried, tried to close up the gaps on the, the windows so at least the wind can be blocked from coming in the classroom, because it was very cold, the classroom was freezing cold, so at least we managed to patch here and there and the class became better, and I went on with the lesson.

This showed that Dineo was adaptable and resourceful, an important skill, especially for teachers in township contexts. As a problem solver, she was hopeful and positive that she could deliver good lessons and make a difference despite the challenges she faced. Dineo felt that teachers "should also look at the learners' side to see how they can maybe help or give them one more week to push, because they are really really left behind". Thus, she felt that it was important for teachers to be positive, and to represent that positivity Dineo chose a smiley face, see Figure 31 on the next page.



Figure 31. Image chosen to represent Dineo as a student teacher.

She explained her choice of image by saying, “when they see you also happy and being smiley, it also, I don’t know, it makes, it makes them, to be able to approach you”. Hence, being optimistic and positive was part of Dineo’s identity as a relational teacher who strove to act as a role model for the learners.

As a student teacher Dineo questioned the teachers’ morality when she observed their surprising behaviour during invigilation of exams at the school.

So many things happened here, ma’am,... when it’s exam, it’s when the learners are writing, the, the test, it has to be strict. So here, you find teachers writing the answers for the learners there, and I have to invigilate, and then eh... I don’t know, to never mind what they wrote on the board because, these learners, they are kind of slow, so I just have to ignore. ...So for me it was.. I don’t know, and they just, they told us that, when you see a learner maybe trying to take something out to, just look away and let the child... be, let the child copy from whatever paper that they have, their notes on.

Within such a context, Dineo felt powerless, because she had to obey the teachers who told her to ignore the learner’s ‘immoral’ behaviour during the exams. She experienced some of the ‘realities’ of the profession, which could have challenged her developing professional identities and required her to reflect critically on the type of a teacher she wanted to become. While she empathised with the teachers’ situation as a collegial teacher, however, as a role model she hoped that despite the pressures she faces in the future, she will continue to be an ethical teacher.

So I'm wondering if, when-when, I-I became a teacher professionally, would I do the same? If my learners are maybe similar to these ones, or are there any alternatives that I can use to help, the learners.

Although Dineo experienced 'unethical' practices from some teachers, she hopes that she will find other ethical ways to help learners as a teacher. Hence, when she saw learners' low marks she reminded herself that the reason she wanted to be a teacher was to make a difference in the learners' lives, stating that "so, I think the only way that kept me going.. was, to at least to make a difference, in these learner's [lives]." Thus, for Dineo making a difference seemed to be linked with helping learners with their academic work, rather than disempowering them by giving answers and further disadvantaging them.

She empathised with the challenges that learners faced and was willing to provide them with emotional support. She described how she encouraged one learner who faced difficult circumstances.

She's from an orphanage, yah mm, she was telling me about her life and how she regrets coming here, and I advised her if it was possible next year, she can change the school, and she's like, she doesn't have the, birth certificate, and whatsoever, and I asked her if she doesn't have the, social workers who, come here, and does this interviews, and she said that, she does have a social worker, but they're so reluctant to do their job, she's been asking them for the birth certificate ever since, so that she can apply with [it]. ...she says that she doesn't belong here, even the learners are teasing her that, she doesn't ha-have a home or a family and whatsoever.

Though she was a visiting student teacher, her willingness to help and be a role model to the learners made them trust her enough to share their problems and worries. As a role model, she also offered learners financial support as illustrated below:

And, this other one, he's-he's selling uhm the popcorns and the sweets and peanuts... I asked him why is he selling those things, he was like, he needs, he's at least able to buy electricity, and bread! And me and the student teacher, who just left here, we got together, and we bought him, three packets of popcorn and the spices that he needs, to-to use for those popped ones.

Dineo understood and wanted to help the learner facing financial hardships because she experienced financial challenges as a rural learner. By empathising with learners, and supporting them emotionally and financially, she was able to build better relationships with them. Although she found that learners' attendance was very low at the school, her good relationships with them meant that she could rely on the learners to listen to her when she asked them to attend her lessons that would be assessed by SPU lecturers. Dineo also helped with administrative work, which is part of teacher's professional work, and learnt more about

marking process, including, recording marks, writing report cards, and distributing reports. She said, “with admin I think I’m ready. I’ve learnt, I’ve learnt a lot with admin, honestly, so... Even though it’s a lot of work, yah it’s a lot of work”. Dineo’s participation in the administrative tasks helped her to appreciate teachers’ hard work and she felt more confident about completing such tasks in future.

Dineo also developed her identity as a collegial teacher, as she asked her peers who spoke Afrikaans for help to co-teach the English classes, and “they come and help or they explain at least what I’m trying to say in Afrikaans”. She acted collegially when she assisted absent teachers by teaching their classes. There was tension in the school between the principal and the teachers because of teacher<sup>80</sup> absenteeism and<sup>81</sup> miscommunication. Conflicts at the school sometimes made it difficult for Dineo to ask her stressed mentor for guidance. As she explained, “seeing the tension there, then, we just visitors here and we don’t know what to do, you can see teacher is angry but you want to ask him maybe for something. I can’t because of, the tension that, they have with the management”. Even though the student teachers were part of the community of practice during TP, they were also visitors that needed to follow the rules and do their duties within a high-conflict situation. This is concerning because it has been shown that negative experiences of practicum impact student teachers’ professional development by making them feel less confident about their future careers (du Plessis & Marais, 2013; Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2009).

Dineo saw herself as an emerging professional who was self-reliant, and rather than asking for help, she mastered the online technology to pre-record lessons during the second school visit in June. In the first week of the final school visit, the principal advised all the student teachers not to be alone with the learners in the classrooms.

He, he told us that, the high school is a public school, a township school, i-it is one of those dangerous schools, if I may say. And, he told us to be more careful with the learners, because they, they are always high on drugs, they use drugs a lot, and, I have noticed that too. He told us to refrain from arguing with them, if they want to argue we must just leave the class, and they also told the teachers not to leave us along because when they are high, including the girls, they can harass us, he even mentioned, rape, as a possible thing, that they can do. And, we were ... and don’t know, but we felt somehow scared, to even go to the classes.

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<sup>80</sup> In her journal Dineo mentions the principal and one of the teachers fighting about his low attendance at school.

<sup>81</sup> One example of miscommunication was when the school secretary did not communicate the new timetable, and the principal was angry to find the teachers in the staffroom.

This advice made her cautious and wary during the first few weeks of TP, however, because of her professional identity as a self-reliant and responsible acting teacher, Dineo overcame her fear of the learners. As a problem solver, she found ways to teach the learners with her peers without a teacher present. Dineo found it easier to teach the learners with peers, because some teachers seemed to struggle with managing learner behaviour. She described the learners' behaviour in class with their teachers as “disturbing and embarrassing” or “aggressive”. The learners were ill-disciplined in class and teachers seemed to have used that as an excuse to disrespect them.

As a relational teacher, Dineo used her ability to develop good relationships with the learners as a strategy to manage the classroom.

The way, yes these learners are, are not, well learned [educated], but I think.. when you give them time, when you talk to them in a polite way, when you get to know when better, I think they will, they become better. Unlike, because you just get in a class and you don't understand what, what the learners went through before they came to school, so if you can just randomly ask, 'Hey how is your morning', and all those things, you get to know the learners better and then, they get to know you also, and then, they become, everything becomes ... [better].

The school visit made Dineo more aware of the potential behavioural problems in schools and she chose to manage the learners' behaviour through developing good relationships with them. While this could make her more prepared to teach in challenging school contexts, it also seemed that Dineo was concerned about facing even more challenging learner behaviour in the future. As she stated in the interview, “I'm wondering how, of the type of the learners I'm going to meet next year, and... will they be.. I don't know, will they be like these ones or will they be, better? Are they gonna be worse?” Since managing learner behaviour is the most challenging aspect of teaching for many novice teachers (Gravett & Jiyane, 2019; Marais, 2016), it was not surprising that this concerned her. Dineo admired her mentor teacher's demeanour, as she was able to remain calm and civil despite the learners being disruptive in class. Engaging with and learning specific practices in a community is inseparable from the development of identities in that community (Wenger, 1998). Hence, Dineo developed her identity as a relational and collegial teacher by learning practices to manage disruptive learner behaviour from her mentor, such as, being calm and civil.

During the school visit, Dineo developed her ability to manage time, work under pressure, and remain calm. As an emerging practitioner, she reflected on and described the skills she

had learned and the impact this had on her professional identities. She reflected on how procrastination increased her stress and pressure, and in the final school visit she improved her organisation and time management skills as a student and student teacher. In addition, Dineo narrated how she developed her classroom and administrative practices during TP and how this allowed her to better relate to and manage learners during her lessons. As a result of the skills and attributes she developed, Dineo felt more confident about her abilities and more prepared as a future teacher. She was an optimistic and positive future teacher because she found solutions to the problems of poor learner attendance and low marks. While she did not share these ideas with the teachers at the school, she was able to use positive self-imagining (Teng, 2017; Yuan & Lee, 2016), to visualise a future where she has the power to carry out her preferred professional identities as a problem solver. Teng (2017), Yuan and Lee (2016) argue that this kind of visualisation may help student teachers with less power and authority from becoming demotivated when they are unable to make changes during their school visits.

In addition, Dineo was aware of and drew upon her developing professional identities as a role model, when she noticed learners' low attendance and poor marks, which was discouraging. She reminded herself that she wanted to make a difference to the learners' lives as a role model and that she needed to understand their reasons for misbehaving rather than label them as problematic. Her awareness and use of her professional identity as a role model allowed her to remain motivated and withstand the challenges that she encountered during the school visit. Dineo was willing to engage learners in classroom discussions to keep them busy and develop their knowledge and abilities. She was able to use her agency to make decisions about how to teach a misbehaving class, which was in line with her identity as a relational teacher.

As a collegial teacher she enjoyed being trusted by her mentors to teach the classes with her fellow student teachers, and thought that, "it showed that they have trust in me, and they saw that, I can, actually manage the class, so I saw that they had hope and faith, in me, because I did all that, alone in the classroom". This made Dineo felt more confident about her ability to manage learners' behaviour in future classes, which she learnt from her mentors. Dineo's professional identities included being a positive and hopeful problem solver, a calm and civil teacher when relating to learners, and a student teacher with good time management.

This section answered the final sub-question, ‘*What are the factors that influenced 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers’ professional identities development?*’. Dineo’s experiences prior to enrolling at the University influenced her developing professional identities. These experiences were influenced by her pre-existing relationships with her family and teachers; her personal conditions, including her personality traits and values; and her relationships with role-players, including the learners, teachers, and her mentor teachers, which were impacted by the organisational climate of the schools where she conducted TP.

Dineo moved from a small town to a bigger city to attend high school and experienced peer pressure. While trying to fit in this resulted in her making bad decisions to please her peers. Due to peer pressure, she fell pregnant in Grade 10.

<sup>82</sup>And I moved to **Klerksdorp** where (touches lips nervously) now it's more, more developed (waves hand) than where I come from. And when I got there, everything was so new to me, I wanted to try **everything**. I ended up doing **wrong** things (pained expression). So, me coming to university was also a way of rectifying the mistakes that I made when I was.. **Back** in high **school** where now (looks away remembering) I did everything, **because**, the peers were doing them. Not knowing the..the consequences that will come with those actions (nods head thoughtfully)”.

Since she was embarrassed about being pregnant she decided not to write her Grade 11 examinations. However, her schoolteachers encouragement to write the exams changed her circumstances and gave her new opportunities.

<sup>83</sup>And then **I**, and I became sick (nods head down) that I didn't wanna, I didn't want to attend **anymore**. I wanted to drop **out**. I remember when I was (eyes look left), when I just woke up, I was refreshing and then my teachers **came** to my **house** to **our house**. And they asked, why am I not at school and that time we're writing final exam. And I told them **that** I could no longer take **it** because I'm **sick** and I'm **embarrassed** (nods head downwards). They told me straight away that, ‘you are **gonna**, go get your uniform put it **on** and going to school an you're going to write your exam (nods head downwards sharply). All right?’ I got dressed we left and I was **late** (widens eyes) but they gave me the chance. wrote my final exam and I **passed**.

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<sup>82</sup> She emphasises the name of the town to show how much larger it was from her rural village; her hand wave also shows how much bigger and more developed the city was. She touches her lips nervously as she relates this difficult personal story. She emphasises how much she wanted to try new things and that these were the wrong things. She also stresses that this is the past through the emphasis on the words, back and school and that her actions happened because of her peers. The word ‘them’ said softly shows her remorse for her past actions.

<sup>83</sup> She emphasises the words ‘I’ and nods her head to show how strong her feelings were and the words ‘anymore’, ‘out’, ‘that’ and ‘it’ to show how frustrated she felt. Her emphasis on the words ‘came’, ‘house’, and ‘our house’ show how much her teachers’ actions supervised her and how much they meant to her. She also stresses that she was feeling sick and embarrassed by emphasising these words and nodding her head. Her teacher’s emphasis on the words ‘gonna’ and ‘on’ and her sharp head nod show that they were very firm. Thought she widens her eyes to show she was shocked to be late; she emphasises the word ‘passed’ to show how pleased she was.

Dineo felt that her family no longer believed in her potential, which was painful. Despite their perceived lack of support, she did well on her matric exams and obtained a bursary to enrol in a B.Ed. at the University. She explained that “I... but then at the same time I had to prove my parents wrong that... I'm gonna do <sup>84</sup>**it** and I'm not gonna be like one of those, young people at our communities, **that** let their parents UM...discouragement let them down.” Dineo wanted to do well in her degree and become “a better person” and prove her parents’ wrong for doubting her potential, after being hurt by their actions. The teachers played a huge role in Dineo’s decision to be a teacher because they continued to support her and assisted with application for the Bachelor of Education degree. As she explained, “they helped me **apply**. They gave me the application fee to apply. That's why I said it. They played a very <sup>85</sup>**huge** (nods head once) **role** (nods head twice) on me being **here** (nods head three times)”.

Due to her previous experiences of overcoming hardships, she envisioned herself as a role model for learners, and believed that teachers, as role models, should behave in ethical ways. Though she saw teachers acting unethically during test and examination invigilation, she wanted to behave ethically as a teacher and help learners to write tests and examinations without cheating. Due to her upbringing in an under-resourced rural community, where she felt her parents did not always support her, Dineo was empathetic towards the learners without parents and learners facing financial hardships. Her childhood and teenage experiences motivated her to help learners financially, build good relationships with them, and address their misbehaviour in class for teaching and learning to continue. Dineo felt that as a role model she was a good communicator and imparted her wisdom to the learners. Her ability to empathise could have proved helpful, because Zhang (2022) found that learners reported better relationships with teachers who they perceived as empathetic and were more motivated to participate in their class and learnt from them.

As a problem solver, Dineo described herself as observant, adaptable, resourceful, hopeful, positive, and resilient. This was demonstrated when she identified a problem, then solved it by using the available resources. She remained hopeful of her ability to make a difference in the learners’ lives, which was one of her aims as a role model. Dineo’s adaptability,

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<sup>84</sup> She emphasised the words ‘it’ to show her determination, and ‘that’ in a low tone to show the negative effect that parents can have.

<sup>85</sup> The words ‘apply’, ‘huge’, ‘role’, ‘here’ represent the influential and supportive roles teachers’ played in her professional decision.

resourcefulness, hopefulness, and positivity meant that she remained resilient in a challenging context, which improved her practice and confidence as a future teacher. Dineo's responses to her environment were shaped by the relationships she had with teachers and her fellow student teachers in the school context. As a student teacher within the community of practice, she admired her mentor teacher's demeanour and ability to remain calm and civil with 'ill-disciplined' learners. Dineo strove to emulate these characteristics when learners were being disruptive in class, which means some of her developing professional identities were influenced by being teachable and learning from experienced teachers. Her developing professional identities as a relational and collegial teacher were influenced by her willingness to help teachers with teaching and administrative duties. Collegiality in a community of practice is important and Dineo learnt that earlier when she asked her student teachers for help to teach the Afrikaans-speaking learners.

The school experienced high rates of teacher absenteeism, which mirrored reported literature on teacher absenteeism in the country (Moodley, 2019). Dineo's positive attitude meant that the teacher absenteeism at the school may have led to opportunities for her to participate in the school community by teaching and completing administrative tasks. She learnt from her previous childhood and teenage experiences and in so doing interacted with learners in ways that developed her professional identities as a relational teacher, a role model, and an independent professional. Her relationships with her mentor teachers in the school also helped her to develop her collegial professional identities.

## **6.9 Isipho's understandings of her professional identities**

Isipho had the following three main professional identities as a:

- confident educator;
- continuous learner and emerging practitioner; and
- caring and relational teacher

A summary of these three understandings is displayed in Figures 32, 33, and 34 on the next page:

### 6.9.1 Professional identities of Isipho

- **A team player, who:**
  - Takes initiative and is willing to assist
  - Now more confident and happier about her chosen profession

Figure 32. A confident educator.

- **Willing to learn**
  - Excited and eager to learn new things/face new challenges
  - Open to receiving assistance, feedback and constructive criticism

Figure 33. A continuous learner/emerging practitioner.

- **A motivator (both mother and friend to the learners)**
  - Empathetic
  - Helpful
  - Sensitive
  - Engaging
  - Well-prepared
- **A problem solver**
  - Reflective
  - Reflexive
  - Adaptive
  - Ethical

Figure 34. A caring teacher.

Isipho describes herself as a confident educator who is capable of managing learners in class on her own, an important capability for the teaching profession. During the final school visit, she was willing to use her initiative and assist teachers with teaching tools at school.

She chose the image of a butterfly (see Figure 35) to represent the growth of her confidence as a university student, who has gone through a process of “embracing the real me”.



Figure 35. Image chosen to represent Isipho as a student.

Isipho felt happier about her decision to become a teacher because she felt that her TP gave her the opportunity to embrace her real self in class with the learners, colleagues, and peers. She felt that she was an emerging professional practitioner and a continuous learner, because she was still evolving and learning about the complex teaching profession from experienced teachers. Isipho used the image of a caterpillar (see Figure 36) to represent herself as a student teacher saying that she was “still learning [to be] myself as a teacher and a person”. Hence, she was grateful to schools that allowed her to embrace “the real me”, which was represented by the butterfly that emerged from the cocoon.



Figure 36. Image chosen to represent Isipho as a student teacher.<sup>86</sup>

A caterpillar represented her transformation from being a first year to a final-year student teacher who was about to enter the teaching profession as a qualified teacher. The reference to both personal and professional transformation exemplifies the interrelatedness of teachers' personal and professional identities, where the personal aspirations, backgrounds, beliefs, personalities, and attributes of individuals affect their professional identities (Makovec, 2018). As a student teacher, Isipho understood learning to be about taking initiative and building confidence by learning from experienced teachers who provided guidance on areas, including classroom management skills. It was through her participation in the school as a community of practice that she received assistance from other teachers, which led to her feeling more confident and happier about becoming a teacher. She had a positive attitude towards learning and taking on new challenges and acknowledged that learning was also about receiving feedback and constructive criticism from others. This is part of her social conditions, which refers to people's relationships with other individuals and groups (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007; Connelly & Clandinin, 2006).

Isipho developed her understanding of her professional identities as a caring teacher who played the multiple roles of mother figure and friend while being helpful, emotionally sensitive, and empathetic to the learners. As a mother figure and a friend, she motivated learners using a learner-centred approach to teaching to promote engagement during her lessons. She explained that she is a person who likes to “get to hear other people's

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<sup>86</sup> Although the participants were referred to sites where they could retrieve copy-free images, Isipho used another website where credit is provided to the media company and author of the image.

perspectives in life” and chose an image (Figure 37) of a group of people congregating and talking to represent herself as a person.



Figure 37. Image chosen to represent Isipho as a person.

The image was linked with her view of herself as a problem solver who resolved challenges by drawing on her positive relationships with others and practicing reflection, reflexivity, adaptiveness, and ethical judgement. Isipho described herself as someone who constantly reflected on her teaching and adapted her lessons to meet the needs of the learners. Since problem solvers need to be open to multiple points of view, this could be why she was willing to receive criticism and suggestions when solving problems.

### **6.10 Isipho’s PID during TP**

In this section, answers are provided for the following questions, *‘How do 4<sup>th</sup> year SPU student teachers further develop these understandings during teaching practice?’* and, *‘To what extent are 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers aware of their developing professional identities during teaching practice?’*

Due to the restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, the second school visit was virtual, and the student teachers recorded and uploaded lessons online. As a teacher who liked to engage learners, Isipho did not enjoy the virtual teaching-practice block in June. While teaching online, she could not determine whether learners would have understood her lessons if she had presented them at a school.

The student teachers could only use direct instruction as a teaching strategy (TS) when pre-recording lessons, which could be the reason why Isipho chose to use the familiar TS for the first lesson that was assessed by a lecturer during the final school visit. Although using a different TS could have been more challenging, as a continuous learner and emerging practitioner, Isipho was excited to use group work for her second assessed lesson at the same school. The TS also allowed her to develop as a motivating and engaging teacher, “I used ah, group work because now I wanted to interact more with the learners compared to what I would do, in direct instruction”. This response showed Isipho’s excitement at having the opportunity to use a preferred TS that allowed her to “embrace the real me” and strengthen her confidence in her ability to use different teaching strategies.

Isipho was always willing and open to learning new skills, which was why she was grateful to have received assistance from her assigned mentor teacher prior to the second lesson. The mentor teacher helped her to arrange the learners into mixed-ability groups before the lesson. After observing Isipho teaching poetry, the mentor teacher advised her to discuss the theme with the learners to make them more interested in the poem before analysing it with the class.

As a continuous learner and emerging practitioner, her willingness to use an unfamiliar TS and her openness to receiving constructive criticism meant that she developed as a reflective, reflexive, and caring teacher who was felt capable of engaging learners in class.

Consequently, Isipho became more confident about her future as a teacher. Thus, she was able to teach noticeable English and Afrikaans languages when her mentor teacher was absent, and Life Orientation and Natural Science, which were not one of her subjects. She said that she felt useful to others during the school visit, “So... that made me feel, the fact that I was able to present the lesson it also still made me feel good because now, I’m a team player and I took initiative a student teacher”.

Her ability to be a team player was why she helped teachers with invigilation, marking, and teaching, which is part of collegiality, a critical aspect of the teaching profession. By assisting teachers, she developed a professional identity as a team player who was willing to take initiative by offering to help. Both managing the class by herself and the support she received from her mentors in preparing for her assessed lessons made Isipho feel “confident and happy about becoming a future teacher”. One of the purposes of TP is to expose student teachers

like Isipho to school environments where they can learn how to work with colleagues in the future.

Isipho enjoyed hearing learners' opinions during lessons and found that her learners were particularly able to share their views during the <sup>87</sup>Life Orientation classes.

... so, I engaged in a topic with them, engaged in a topic that wasn't school related, but, that was related to something different, so their opinions got me to see that, they not just they actually are interested in other things and not only things that are school related so that got me to, that got me to see a different side of them and that was very interesting for me.

During the LO (Life Orientation) lesson, learners discussed the Bible, which was interesting for Isipho because she heard different perspectives that helped her to understand her learners as people with knowledge and interests outside of their schooling. It was fascinating to hear this from Isipho, because it meant that as a future teacher she was aware of the relationship between the kinds of education that occur both inside and outside the classroom. The results of her willingness to help teachers and interact with and learn more about the learners, was that by the end of the final school visit, Isipho had developed her professional identity as a confident and caring educator.

Despite her identification as a caring teacher, when learners first called her their mother she was surprised and resisted this positioning.

Mmm. I learned that.. uhm, I'm probably repeating myself, but I've learned that, it's not only just being a teacher, but you as a teacher, you play so **many roles** you become, because one of them was saying, ja man, you're my mother and I'm thinking no, no, I'm not your mother. Like, how am I a mother?

While Isipho initially resisted being viewed as a mother figure, as the school visit continued, she understood the different roles that a teacher plays, "So I that saw that you're not only a teacher, but *you're a mother* ... you're a **friend** you're...". She was therefore aware of the shift in her thinking about her self-perception as a mother and friend to the learners, because she provided guidance, care, and affection to the learners like mothers are expected to do. According to her, these developing professional identities of being a mother figure and a friend required her to be helpful, emotionally sensitive, and empathetic. She was touched when learners shared that they had lost family members and empathised with them because

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<sup>87</sup> This was not one of her majors, but she often taught the class to assist a teacher who was busy with his duties as a member of the school's disciplinary committee.

her father had passed away during her first year of university. When her mentor teacher told her that many of the learners do not receive enough attention at home, she decided to show them love by doing little things that appeared to matter to the learners.

So and then I started this thing, like I fix their **ties** like when I when they come up to me I'm like okay, let me, let me fix that and then like oh, thank you ma'am, and then I call them with, I call them-give them these cute names, like my <sup>Hello, my Angel,</sup> you see just that just those, small things that help them to say okay, **at least** you see, *because they're not sometimes some of them are not getting attention at home*, so it's the little, it's the little that **counts**.

She thought that learners felt seen when, as a teacher, she gave them a little bit of attention by performing small acts of kindness. Isipho saw herself as "... a teacher and a person" who experienced emotions when working with human beings, especially learners from different family backgrounds. Authors posits that being forced to stifle one's emotions can be damaging for teachers' well-being (Song, 2016; Zembylas, 2003a, 2003b), as feeling able to express emotions is healthy. Isipho learned it was acceptable to express some of her emotions at schools and felt that this made her feel closer to the learners. Feeling strong emotions could also be a sign that she was invested in her work, which was commendable for an emerging teacher who was joining the emotionally complex teaching profession. She explained that,

I feel I feel like the fact that I was able to show emotion, she felt safe coming to me and telling me, okay, I'm having a problem *with this and this and this*, so me showing emotion and me having this positive... **attitude** kind of made her feel **at ease** to come and tell me that she has a problem **as well**.

She felt that after she shared her feelings while discussing the death of her father that the learners felt safer and more able to discuss their problems with her.

As a problem solver, when she faced an unexpected situation where a learner had a knee problem, Isipho acted ethically and firmly by not explaining the reason why the learner was not participating in physical education to the other learners. As she explained:

And (laughs) I had to be a bit firm with that one, because I'm like **okay**, no that's *none of your business*. She told me what's wrong, and ja, she came, she came to sit down, it's fine so that ja, that's why she couldn't participate (Laughs). And ja me having to be **firm** was a bit, mmm, *but I have to do it* because now you **can't**, you **can't** be asking personal questions, and I, and I'm not, I'm not at liberty to tell you that, okay, no, she can't participate because-because you know, so ja.

This represented Isipho's developing professional identities as a firm teacher who also developed self-confidence and believed in her decision-making skills. In the above quotation,

Isipho decided to keep the learner's information private, because "it also showed me that as a teacher, there's some things that you can't share with with, your learners... Ja, you can't just, tell everyone **everything**". She learned that as the acting teacher she had an ethical duty to make decision about what to share and keep private from the learners. In other words, she learned from the experience and her reflection on it and expanded her understanding of the duties of teachers. One of her traits as a problem solver was reflexivity, which was noticed when a class was a "bit rude" to her, she went home and asked herself, "okay, what did I do wrong? Because it's not only just **them**, but also **me** as well". Here she considered her own behaviour and emphasised the dual role of the teacher and the learner in building good teacher-learner relationships. This ability to examine herself as the acting teacher in the classroom led her to adapt her behaviour.

and then the next day, we met, *and I actually told them okay, we didn't get off.. in the right start, so how what, what went wrong? And then they're like no ma'am, we just felt that you were a bit offish towards us compared to the other classes, so we just felt that we not gonna, you know?... And I apologised and they apologised for being rude.*

After Isipho and the learners apologised to each other, she created a better relationship with them and they also behaved better, which led to the class becoming one of her favourites. She learnt that teaching is about negotiating and navigating expectations with learners, which in this case included showing one another respect, and recognising that her learners are thinking and reasoning individuals.

In answer to the final sub-question, '*What are the factors that influence 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers' professional identities development?*' the two factors that influenced her professional identities were her experiences prior to university and her experiences at the University. These experiences were mediated through her social characteristics, including, race, language, and gender; her personal conditions, which included her personality and dispositions; and her relationships with family, teachers, mentors, and her learners in different school contexts.

While she was at high school Isipho's relatives, who are teachers, encouraged her to become a teacher because they felt that it was easier to find employment as compared to graduates of more general degrees. While at first, she was not passionate about teaching, once she built relationships with learners during school visits, she felt that as a young person she could have a positive impact on their lives and developed a real "heart" for teaching. Another personal

experience that influenced her was the death of her father while she was a first-year university student, an experience that made her more sensitive to the losses her learners had suffered.

In terms of her personal conditions, her naturally empathetic and sensitive nature made it easy to love and care for the learners. She also had a reflective and adaptive disposition, which allowed her to reflect on the problems she faced and find new ways to adapt her teaching, and to develop good relationships with learners while acting in a professional manner. Her good relationships with the learners meant that they called her their mother, a role which she learned to embrace by showing them affection. Three of her social identities, race, language, and gender were also important for her professional identities' development. As a Black isiZulu home language speaker, she learned Afrikaans as an additional language since the first grade of school. Initially, she thought that when she took English and Afrikaans as languages, she would only teach Afrikaans as an additional language. Since Afrikaans was mostly spoken by White and Coloured people, she felt that as a Black person who spoke Afrikaans, she could encourage Black learners to speak the language. As this was not her home language and she did not use the language much outside the classroom, she felt she must prepare very well before she taught the Home Language learners during her school visits.

Her relationships with others, including her former teacher, the schoolteachers, and her peers also influenced her professional identities development. Her former Afrikaans teacher played an important role by advising her how to teach the subject matter, particularly the poem by discussing the themes with the learners before the lesson. As a visiting student teacher, she felt that the "warm welcome" from the teachers made her feel "more comfortable" at the school. Isipho's peers were helpful when she had to plan and teach a natural science class, as a non-specialist, because at that time the school did not have a natural science teacher. It was the collegiality that she appreciated from her peers, because she relied on them for advice and input, which helped her to feel more at ease when she taught an unfamiliar subject. Thus, managing to teach her subject and other subjects without a teacher present, and the support from her mentor teachers at the school, made her feel more confident and happier about her career choice.

### **6.11 Buhle's understandings of her professional identities**

Buhle had two developing professional identities that of a productive and professional teacher, and of a relational and interactive teacher. The mind maps summarising the two identities are presented on the next page.

6.11.1 Professional identities of Buhle

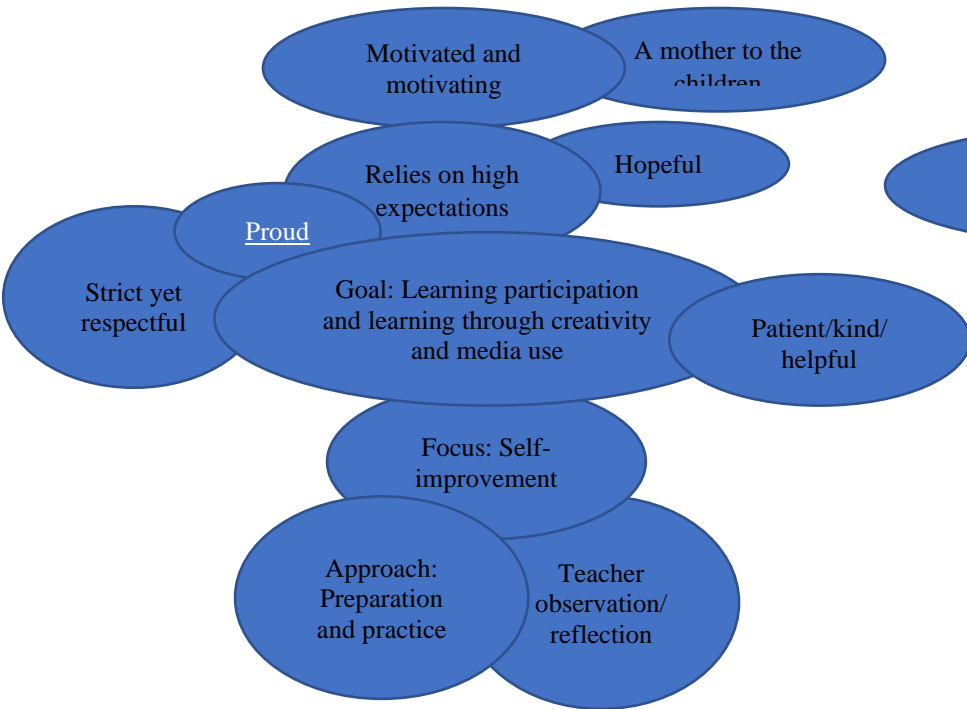


Figure 38. A relational and interactive teacher.

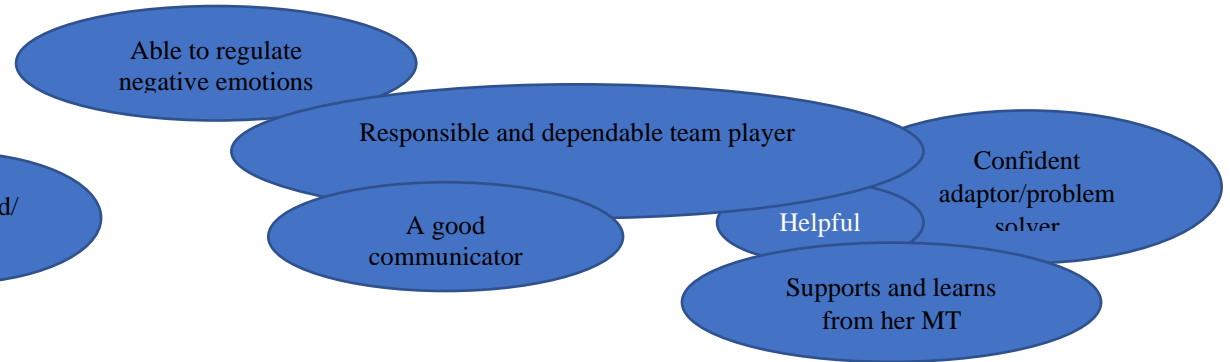


Figure 39. A team player and adaptor/problem solver.

Buhle saw herself as a team player, and a responsible and dependable professional and colleague. She was a ‘team player’ because she said she has good communication skills and was willing to support her mentor teachers and peers, and to learn from them as colleagues. Buhle’s ability to solve problems and adapt to new situations was bolstered by her personality as a confident person who believed that she could overcome the challenges she encountered while teaching. When she interacted with others in authority, she used emotional intelligence to regulate the negative emotions she felt during TP.

Buhle was also a relational and interactive teacher who was inspired to do her best and motivate her learners. She explained that she motivated the children like a mother would, “if I’m able to assist them, I’m able to assist them and, I feel that, I can basically mother the children or monitor and be there for them whenever they need me.” As a motivated student teacher, she had high expectations during school visits and made sure to prepare well for her lessons. Buhle was hopeful that she could assist her learners to improve their skills and knowledge in her classes and hoped to work as a teacher in a rural area to help learners in the future. As a person who aimed to build strong bonds with learners, she was strict but respectful when she interacted with them. She also said she wanted to display more <sup>88</sup>patience and kindness towards the learners.

While Buhle initially chose five images to represent her professional identity as an interactive and relational teacher, after a discussion with my supervisor, I chose the following three images because they best showcased her identities:



Figure 40. Images chosen to represent Buhle as a relational and interactive teacher.

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<sup>88</sup> Patience and kindness are also traits associated with the mother role, which she began to identify with during the final school visit.

In the first picture, a teacher sits next to and helps a learner with a kind smile on her face, which represents Buhle as a helpful teacher. In the second picture, a teacher is using smart board technology to deliver a lesson, like Buhle this teacher enjoys using media to make the lessons more engaging for learners. In the third picture, the teacher is using a learner-centred approach to encourage participation in class, which represents Buhle's developing professional identities as an interactive teacher. To improve learners' skills and knowledge, Buhle believes it is important for her to support learners to participate and take responsibility for their learning during lessons.

### **6.12 Buhle's PID during TP**

This section presents findings to the two research questions, '*How do 4<sup>th</sup> year SPU student teachers further develop these understandings during teaching practice?*' and '*To what extent are the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers aware of their developing professional identities during teaching practice?*'

Buhle encountered challenges that were caused by conflicts between teachers, poor school management, and learners' misbehaviour during the final school visit. For example, teachers were upset when the principal and DP scheduled invigilation for tests and exams during their class time. In another incident, Buhle reported that two learners chased each other down the hall, and one threw a brick at the other one while the teachers stood by. The next day the principal angrily reminded the teachers that it is their responsibility to keep learners safe.

As a problem solver, she described how she modified her teaching approach based on her observations of learners during class time. She applied this approach with learners who experienced interrupted schooling due to the pandemic.

I have to consider the fact as the mentor said they did not complete the syllabus of Grade 8 so some of them cannot comprehend the things, so you need to explain it differently, so I've been trying to do that, as a teacher I need to learn and practice to accommodate their different ways of learning or the different styles to help them understand what they need to do. How will I structure the pacing of the assignment, how will I make sure the students complete the assignment with me, as a teacher will I be able to give them enough time complete the work or will I be able to work with them, through the process of completing the work, should I give them step-by-step process of completing the work...instead of just giving the assignment and expecting them to complete everything.

Buhle's reflection on work the learners missed caused her to interrogate her own practices and adapt the pacing and scaffolding of her lessons during the final school visit. This meant that she was aware of the importance of critical reflection for self-improvement as a teacher, this strengthened her self-confidence and self-efficacy, two factors that increase teachers' motivation and commitment (Day et al., 2006).

Buhle developed her professional identity as a problem solver who was able to regulate negative emotions when she felt that the staffroom was not available to the student teachers.

... me and my fellow colleagues, (smiles) we have just decided that, uh, it's best that we don't, come to the staffroom. We let the staff room to the teachers, cause it was also the issue that, um, apparently when we do not have classes, they consider it as, bunking. So, we just stopped coming to the staffroom altogether and just staying, in a different class so that we avoid the whole thing of them perceiving us as, bunking, or, taking their space, so we just stay away from the staffroom

This identity represented her ability to use her good communication skills to support her peers who felt unwelcome in the school due to the tensions between some of the teachers. Buhle felt that the tension between teachers and school management, and between student teachers and teachers, made it difficult to engage with and learn from the teachers at the school.

And for me, as a student teacher, I feel that, to some extent, it's difficult to engage with them and get to know more about the profession if they don't get along themselves. And then, it's hard for me as well as student teachers to get along with them.

This experience challenged her ability to develop as a responsible team player during the final school visit, as conflict and territorial behaviour meant she felt less able to engage with other teachers and learn more about the profession. This situation created fewer and more surface engagements and less opportunities for sharing of practices between experienced professional teachers and the student teachers. Due to the various tensions Buhle felt that the "the environment itself, I feel that it's very unpleasant only". Unfortunately, as a student teacher she did not have the necessary power and authority to change the nature of the relationships between staff members or to address the learners' behaviour. As a relational teacher, and a responsible and dependable team player, she focused on the "pleasant" relationships she had with the learners and mentors and her own professional development. She also mentioned that covering the classes for a Life Orientation teacher strengthened her identity as a responsible and dependable team player. The good relationships she developed with the teachers and learners helped her to remain motivated throughout the school visit.

Teaching practice provides opportunities for student teachers to learn how to interact in a web of complex relationships that exist in the schools. During the final school visit, Buhle found herself unable to challenge the principal's authority when he interrupted her class and asked learners to write an assignment for a different subject. She felt that the principal had "disregarded" her lesson and "didn't respect me". Buhle's ability to regulate negative emotions and be a good communicator was challenged and she vowed to "always communicate with my co-colleagues", as she explained below:

To ask or rather negotiate ways where if I need extra time for my learners I can get or make arrangements, prior-before rather than assuming that the teacher is okay with me just taking the lesson from them or, without even finding out how far the teacher is with the learners.

Her commitment to being a professional who was a team player and a good communicator, was strengthened by experiencing what happened without open communication among all parties. During the school visits, Buhle developed as a relational and interactive teacher by striving to be helpful, respectful, creative and well-prepared for lessons. She wanted to emulate the characteristics, including, helpfulness, respect, creativity, and preparedness, which were displayed by the high-school teachers that she looked up to and had good relationships with. This professional identity was linked with the images she chose in Figure 40 which showed teachers assisting and interacting with the learners. This developing professional identity was challenged when some learners did not complete their homework. As a patient and kind teacher, she chose to motivate the learners to do their best. This was tied to the identity that she had developed as a mother to the learners, as she explained, "I feel that, I can basically mother the children or monitor and be there for them whenever they need me". This role meant checking up on and offering learners emotional support.

Instead of giving up on her learners, she continued to set high expectations in her two subjects, English and History. She encouraged her History learners to increase their subject knowledge and academic literacy, after noticing their challenges with academic writing. To exercise her patience, Buhle guided learners on how to structure and write paragraphs for an essay. She also motivated her learners to do research for their essays, which is an important skill for History.

As a responsible and dependable team player, Buhle showed collegiality by teaching a short story to the learners on behalf of her mentor teacher. She was happy when her mentor told

her that "... I did the short stories better [than him]", because she could feel that she was good at teaching learners this genre of literature. Buhle's professional identity as a team player meant that she should clearly communicate with and request assistance with the teaching of poetry, as she felt that she was "never really good with poem at school and it was not something that I enjoyed that much". Her mentor's advice helped her develop as an interactive teacher who uses learner-centred teaching to teach learners.

...because of the mentor teacher that I had and the way they told me that I should, analyse the poem in my understanding and try and interpret it in my understanding. And also, allow the learners to have their own interpretation of the poem. It has really made me feel comfortable to understand that, um, the poem is not one-sided, usually. It's not generally, what I want my learners to see, because I see this, they can see something differently from the poem, but it's just how I shape them to have the overall judgment of the poem.

Buhle was proud of her improved capabilities as an English language teacher and how she "managed to help my learners gain skills". She also felt proud of the learners' efforts and successes in her classes, especially when a class that "who either hardly uh, engage in class or, do the work that I ask them to do... actually completed the work." This sense of pride increased her motivation and her hopes for her future career because it made her feel "confident about teaching again in future". This could indicate Buhle's growing identification with the teaching profession, which literature shows is necessary for commitment to the profession (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006; Nias, 1999).

Through reflecting on her professional identities, she began to understand the complexity of the teacher's role and the importance of teachers' personal characteristics. During the last school visit, Buhle admired the patience her mentor teacher showed towards her learners, as she strove to be a strict yet respectful teacher. Though she did not state whether and to what extent she had developed these characteristics, during the final school visit she did show both patience and kindness when she gave learners an extension to complete their homework. While respect was important for Buhle, her reflections on her last school visit made her determined to be strict while teaching. When the Grade 8 and 9 learners disrespected her, she vowed to become stricter about establishing and helping learners to uphold classroom rules. It was possible that because she was teaching in a new context, a school in a township, where learners' behaviour was challenging, she had to adapt her practices. She balanced her value of respect while also focusing on discipline to ensure good relationships and interactions with learners in class.

The findings for the final sub-question, ‘What are the factors that influence the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers’ professional identities development?’ suggested that Buhle’s experiences prior to university and at the University influenced her developing profession identities. Her response to these experiences was influenced by her relationships with her family and her previous teachers, and her faith, values, and beliefs.

In relation to the role her family played, her aunt as a teacher allowed her to visit her school where Buhle interacted with young learners. Since this was a positive experience, Buhle decided to become a primary-school teacher. During high school she became more interested in her subjects and the way they were taught, so she decided to become a high-school teacher instead. During the first three years of her degree, four of her school visits were at a school in the rural area where her mother lives. Due to her positive experiences with the learners she believes rural learners are more disciplined and willing to learn than learners from schools in townships. Through her experiences she revised her vision of herself as a future teacher, initially she saw herself as a primary teacher and later she wanted to become a secondary teacher in a rural school.

Buhle’s previous learning experiences at primary school and at the University made her aware of and responsive to diversity in the classroom. She is a Christian, but because of the suburb where she lived in Johannesburg, Buhle attended an all-girls primary school with mainly Muslim learners. She learned that “not everyone has the same beliefs” and enjoyed the “good sense of community and unity” at her primary school, which explained her belief that teachers should be change agents who help others in the community. Buhle believed that she has a duty “not to judge” and be “open minded” and to “accept that different people do things differently”, which is important to consider as a teacher in the making. During a first-year module, which covered socialisation and the social identities of marginalised groups in society, she learned that “when you treat people who are developing with respect then they can grow as people”. Buhle’s belief in the values of respect and non-discrimination was aligned with learners’ rights in post-apartheid South Africa, including the right to an education free from discrimination and the right to be treated with dignity (Chürr, 2015; Engelbrecht, 2020).

As a high school learner, Buhle was close to her History, Maths and Tourism teachers. Though she chose to become a History and English teacher, she wanted to emulate all three

teachers during TP. As a relational and interactive teacher, she wanted to be helpful and respectful like her History teacher who “required respect and was respectful”. She admired her Mathematics teacher’s preparation for lessons and use of media, including articles and pictures to teach the subject, and the creative teaching approach of her Tourism teacher. Like her Mathematics teacher, Buhle always prepared well for the lessons, which was part of her identity as a productive, professional, and responsible teacher. As an interactive teacher, she also creatively incorporated media into her lessons like her former Mathematics and Tourism teachers. Hence, parts of her professional identities are directly modelled from the real examples of her previous high-school teachers.

### **6.13 Landon’s understandings of his professional identities**

Landon’s main professional identity was that of a passionate History teacher. This main professional identity was comprised of the following three sub-identities:

- respectful and engaging communicator;
- problem solver and lifelong learner; and
- motivator

For a visual overview of these identities, please see the diagram on the next page.

### 6.13.1 Professional identities of Landon

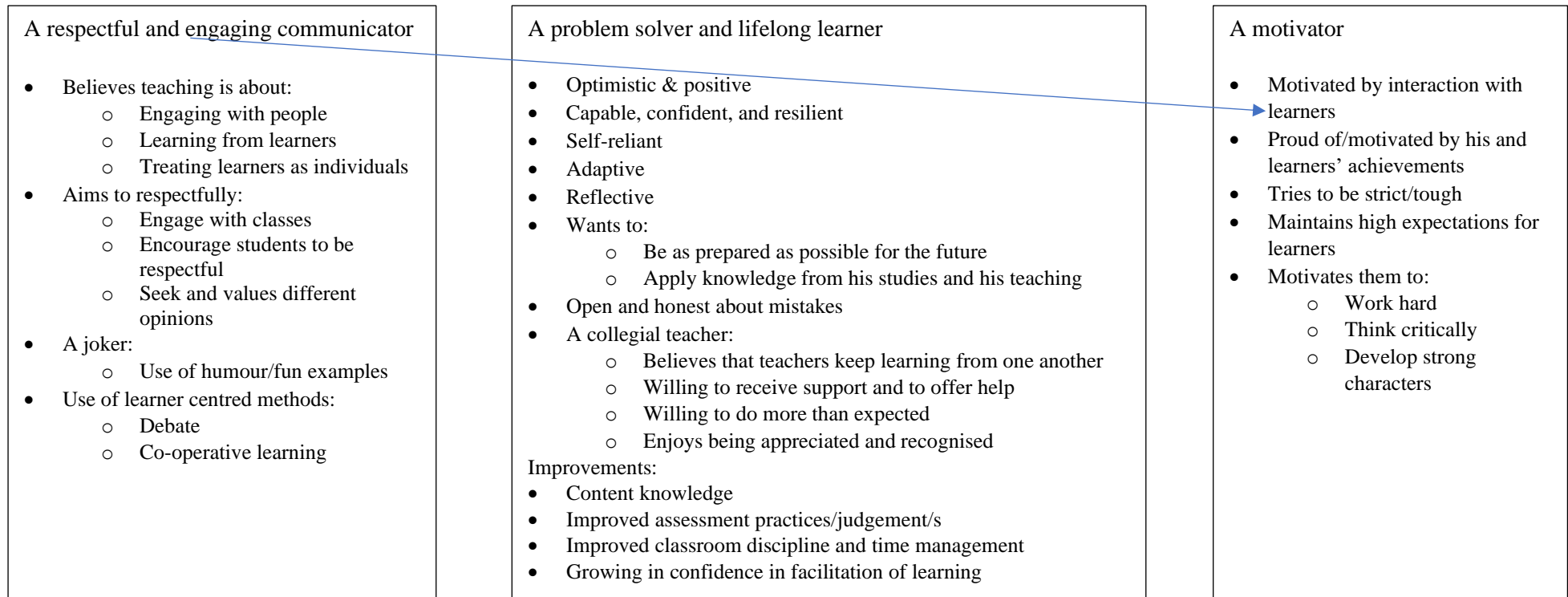


Figure 41. A passionate History teacher.

As a passionate History teacher, Landon described his love for the subject, “it’s more just the fact that History is where I tend to excel. I always been enthusiastic about History, so that’s where a lot of my attention has always been”. His passion for the subject was his main professional identity and included his sub-identities as a respectful and engaging communicator, a problem solver and lifelong learner, and a motivator.

The sub-identity that he discussed the most during interviews and in the journals was that of a respectful and engaging communicator an identity was based on his beliefs that teaching is about engaging and learning from learners in class, and treating learners as individuals. This indicates that Landon, like Freire, did not view his learners as “blank slates” and was aware that they bring special kinds of knowledge to the classroom (Uddin, 2019). This was why he tried to make learning as fun as possible. In the final school visit he engaged learners with humour during lessons and used examples that were fun. While he sought and valued the opinions of learners, Landon also encouraged them to disagree with one another’s opinions in a respectful manner. Teaching the learners to listen and respect each other’s ideas is an important part of preparing South African learners for further work and study in a diverse and multi-racial society (Iyer, 2018). Some of the learner-centred methods he used to stimulate engagement in class were debates and co-operative learning, which included whole-class discussions, and group work. Landon taught learners to develop their own opinions in dialogue with one another, which is a key feature of critical pedagogy (Uddin, 2019).

As a problem solver and lifelong learner, Landon displayed his abilities as a capable, confident, and resilient teacher. When he only had two weeks to prepare the learners for assessments, he was not discouraged and felt confident of his capabilities to prepare learners so that they would be ready to do well in their tests. When the learners misbehaved, he remained optimistic and viewed their challenging behaviour as an opportunity to develop his classroom management skills. As a lifelong learner, Landon was also adaptive and positive. He displayed an ability to adapt to novel situations, such as unexpectedly taking over the classes of a deceased teacher for the first three weeks of the practicum and preparing learners for their tests and exams. Though his workload increased, he was willing to do more than he felt would be expected of him as a student teacher. Nevertheless, Landon was positive about these learning experiences, as he aimed to be as prepared as a possible for his future as a teacher.

While carrying out some of the duties of a classroom teacher in the final school visit, Landon displayed attitudes that were associated with being a lifelong learner as he remained open and honest about any mistakes he made. He enjoyed his experiences at the school and wanted to apply the knowledge he learned from his wide reading to his own studies and to his teaching. Reading as a hobby is an important part of Landon's personal identity, which was why he chose a picture of a person with a stack of books instead of a head to represent himself as a person. See this image below:

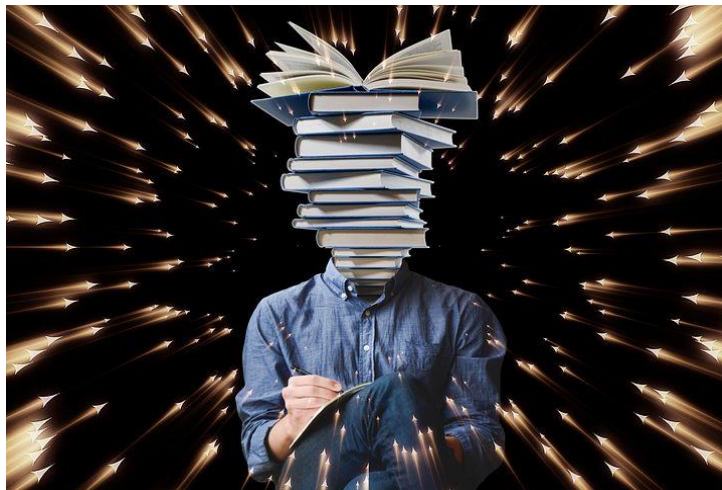


Figure 42. Image chosen to represent Landon as a person.

Reading is an important practice for teachers to enhance their subject knowledge and to assist with learners' development of the reading skills. These skills are important considering the recent Progress in International Reading Literacy Study results that showed that 74% of South African Grade 4 learners cannot read with comprehension (Spaull & Pretorius, 2019). While Landon was willing to learn from others, he also relied on his own experiences and knowledge to solve problems he encountered in the final school visit. When learners did not participate in classroom activities, he developed strategies for involving them in debates and whole-class discussions. Landon's reflections and adaptation of his teaching approach meant that by the end of the school visit his confidence in his ability to use learner-centred methods had improved.

He chose the picture on the next page characterise his positive and optimistic nature as a student teacher.



Figure 43. Image chosen to represent Landon as a student teacher.

The picture showed the word 'impossible' with the 'im' crossed out to leave the word 'possible'. This represented his confidence in his capabilities as a future teacher, and his resilience when faced with challenging situations during school visits..

His willingness to learn meant that Landon acknowledged his duty to constantly improve his knowledge of the content and his practice by learning from others and from his own reading. Throughout the school visit he was grateful for the support and guidance he received from more experienced teachers and offered to help them in return, which is expected of student teachers during TP as a way of honing their teaching and ability to work well with others. Since he assisted some of teachers with additional teaching and marking duties, he was grateful when they recognised and appreciated his contributions. By working with the teachers at the school, he learned more about assessment practices, including how to use the marks system and to set up and mark using memorandums. Wenger (1998) posits that the act of engaging with and learning specific practices in a community is inseparable from the development of identities in that community. Landon thought that his preparation of lessons during the school visit helped him to improve his Social Sciences' content knowledge, and that the teaching and administration he performed improved his time management. He did not like to procrastinate, because he wanted to be able to manage as a teacher with a full workload in the following year. His reflective nature and willingness to learn from others

meant that he improved his practice during the final school visit. When he thought about the reasons for the learners' poor conduct, he used some practices he had seen a teacher at the school use to establish and ensure learners followed class rules, and this helped him to improve learners' behaviour in the classroom.

Landon was also a motivator and gained satisfaction from the learners' achievements and from his ability to prepare them for their tests despite the absence of their previous teacher. To encourage his learners to meet the high expectations he set for them, he tried to become stricter in class so that they took their class and homework for his subjects more seriously. Through his teaching, he aimed to help develop learners who were willing to work hard, think critically, and act morally.

#### **6.14 Landon's PID during TP**

The focus in this section is answering the two research sub-questions which, *'How do the 4<sup>th</sup> year SPU student teachers further develop these understandings during teaching practice?'* and *'To what extent are the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers aware of their developing professional identities during teaching practice?'*

Landon often chose to conduct his school visits at his old ex-Model C high school in Kimberley, and he was also placed at his former high school for TP during his fourth year. He was ill with the COVID-19 virus for the first week of the practicum, and when he arrived at the school, he was informed that he would be taking over the teaching and administrative load of his former teacher who had passed away. Even though Landon was an optimistic and capable student teacher, he felt that he "still had to familiarise myself with the content cause it is content that I haven't done since I was in Grade 8 or 9". Although he felt as if he was "thrown into the deep end" and that this experience was "nerve wracking" he was excited for the challenge.

Landon displayed his abilities as a capable, confident, and self-reliant student teacher when he approached tasks, as he was "more than willing to take the challenge head on. I, said I'd, I'd be happy to do it". Another challenge he encountered as an English speaker was taking over the teacher's Afrikaans classes for Social Sciences. Landon demonstrated enough confidence in himself as an acting teacher to be open with the learners and ask for their help.

He told learners, “look I’m not Afrikaans, all I can do is try my best, but I’d love for you guys to help me”. Since he took a relaxed approach to making mistakes during the class, he said that “if I pronounced something wrong we could joke about it”. Student teachers are still learning about the profession and all teachers, as human beings, make mistakes that they should reflect on and learn from to improve. More importantly, his approach was to be aware of, learn from, and address mistakes to ensure that the learners had the correct content knowledge.

When Landon observed the teacher who had passed on in previous school visits, he found that the teacher focused on “learning while having a good time”, and sometimes gave the learners too much assistance. In Landon’s view the teacher’s approach made the learners have a “lazy mind-set”, because “these kids have become so accustomed to being spoon-fed and just being given everything”.

During the final school visit, Landon motivated the learners to think more critically, particularly about questions related to source analysis for History.

I don’t spoon-feed, History is about interpretation, and opinions, and these kids don’t know how to give their own opinions or interpretation, and they don’t know how to interpret on a deeper level. When they analysing sources, it’s all surface analysis and, they just parroting the source back and, when you ask them to formulate an opinion they just don’t know how, so, so I am trying to get that through to them and I am trying to teach them.

He believed that learners should work hard to become critical thinkers and motivated them to think carefully instead of leaving questions blank that required interpretation or application of knowledge. Even though Landon only spent seven weeks at the school, he was motivated by the learners’ achievements. Irrespective of some teachers ‘labelling’ learners placed in lower academic streams or sets, Landon explained that he maintained high expectations for all his learners.

I just want them to do their best and to show that they now, as unintelligent as everyone in the school seems to think they are, so that’s been my main focus and that’s what I spoke to them about today. I said to them today, you guys have shown me that you are capable, okay the marks aren’t out of this world yet, they are very good with regards to how much time we had.

The way he motivated the learners in the lower sets was tied into his identity as a student teacher who believed that nothing was impossible for himself and for the learners he taught.

His aim in final school visit was to develop “learners with strong character” who work hard to improve their performance, as he explained.

Learners who, try to help each other, learners who are hardworking who understand when you say that they only have two periods to do an assignment, so they shouldn't waste their time, uhm and then not try to soft soap you into getting extra time.

The above response showed how Landon developed into a stricter future teacher, as he believed learners wasted time in class. Landon was not impressed with the learners' lack of respect for time and believed they should only receive free time when they had worked hard and were up to date on their work. For him developing learners' strong work ethic included supporting them to take responsibility for the outcomes of their behaviour. As a result, Landon felt pleased when the two classes with lower academic scores took responsibility for their marks and were willing to work harder to improve their marks in future. While he wanted to motivate the learners develop good characters, unlike educators in the study by Iver (2018), he did not explain if or how he would use Social Science content to teach learners particular morals and values.

Landon enjoyed the face-to-face interactions with the learners, which was why he found the pre-recorded lessons demotivating.

<sup>89</sup>I think that's what one of-it's a big thing **for me as a teacher**, being able to have a **good** relationship with your learners **and** comparing that with a **virtual** lesson where you **don't have** learners it's-it takes **away** something **from MY** teaching **ability**. Because I don't **have** uhm that teaching **essence** any more with **virtual lessons**

As a teacher who liked to engage with learners in class, he felt unable to teach in the way that he wanted to during the <sup>90</sup>virtual school visit. Learning online frustrated Landon because he enjoyed sharing ideas with his friends who studied the same degree as him at the University. He motivated himself to produce “quality work” and complete his degree by “reminding” himself of the interactions he had with the learners in his <sup>91</sup>first school visit and he looked forward to interacting with learners in the future. This can be seen as an act of positive self-

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<sup>89</sup> Here Landon views himself as a teacher already and emphasises the kind of relationships he wants with learners, as well as what the interaction which not possible during the virtual school visits, which he felt detracted from his “ability” or “essence” as a teacher.

<sup>90</sup> SPU fourth-year student teachers spent three weeks in June 2021 recording and uploading lessons online instead of teaching in schools, because of the restrictions on in-person teaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

<sup>91</sup> In the first school visit, the fourth-year student teacher organised on their own a two-week practicum at a school in their hometown before the start of the First Semester on 29 March 2021.

imagining (Teng, 2017; Yuan & Lee, 2016), as Landon was motivated himself during the non-interactive virtual school visit when he imagined being an engaging teacher in the future.

Landon is passionate about History and engaged learners by asking them to share their different viewpoints. He found it challenging to teach classes who were unwilling to participate because he had no ‘back-up’ plan if learners did not participate in his lessons. Over the course of the final school visit, he developed his professional identity as an engaging communicator when he used new methods of motivating the learners to participate in debates and classroom discussions. One way he encouraged learners to respond to a debate was teaching them to defend a controversial viewpoint in class, and after noting which learners felt strongly about the topic, he asked them to share their opinions with others. He observed that the outspoken learners encouraged their peers to respond and participate and decided that learners were more willing to challenge their peers’ opinions than to openly disagree with him as their teacher. When learners did not participate in class, Landon reflected on and came up with possible solutions to motivate his learners to participate more actively in class discussions and debates. Through improved use of these teaching strategies, he developed his professional identity as an engaging communicator and learner-centred teacher.

Landon believed that teachers should learn from one another and was willing to receive support and guidance from other teachers and to help them with their work. While student teachers have reported high levels of teacher absenteeism and a lack of mentorship (Gravett & Jiyane, 2019; Moosa & Rembach, 2020), Landon felt that he could always call or message the subject teachers for advice. He explained that their support during the final school visit helped him to take over another teacher’s classes unexpectedly, “so, they definitely helped quite a lot, I think without them I would have struggled, their experience, really, made a huge difference”. Once a teacher was appointed for the Social Sciences post, which Landon had filled temporarily during the <sup>92</sup>final school visit, she became a de-facto mentor teacher to him. Landon helped the teacher by taking the Grade 11 History class so that she could “re-familiarise herself with the content”, because, although she was a trained History teacher, she had not taught the subject at her former high school. He explained that he had learnt a lot about classroom management from her.

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<sup>92</sup> This was a seven-week school visit at a school in Kimberley from 16 August to 1 October 2021.

While I maybe let kids get off the hook a bit too easily, she came in from day one not knowing any of the students, and she just knew how to discipline them, she's got her, ground rules that she has in her classroom, and she doesn't waver from them

Landon learned to become stricter about enforcing class rules from observing the teacher, "and, that's definitely one thing I learned, I need to set, ground rules, and I can't make, concessions for certain students, or, you know it's fine I'll let that one slide". He felt that this approach helped him to create a better managed classroom, "I got to stick to them cause then that creates, a, a proper system, in your classroom." Landon's actions showed that he was a collegial teacher and a lifelong learner from his willingness to learn from others, which helped him to develop practices that are important for the profession.

Considering the support that he had provided to the teachers in the school, Landon was disappointed by the principal's attitude towards the student teachers.

And then he pulls us aside and tells us that he's disappointed in us for not going the extra mile and, I think it's very unfair. In my opinion, it's kind of like a slap in the face to those of us that are putting in a lot of effort that are going the extra mile and beyond

Instead of being demotivated Landon decided that "I am just going to focus on the positives", which for him was the teachers' recognition of his assistance with some classes. He said, "at least the teachers noticing it, it made me feel like I was appreciated, like I was taking a load off of a lot of teachers, and they really appreciate that". The teachers' feedback motivated him because he felt they had seen and valued his efforts as members of the community of practice. Landon's efforts during the final school visit also helped to improve his confidence and abilities as a future teacher as he believed that he had learnt much more than his peers from teaching the Social Sciences class until a teacher was appointed.

I've been speaking to some of the other students and some other friends who are at other schools that haven't had the same opportunities I've had, and they say that they feel like they've learnt next to nothing, they don't really know anything when it comes to class management. They don't know, what the situation is when it comes to setting up tests, ah-content selection, these are all thing I've learnt now because I've been involved with the decision making, and, and that sort of thing. So, yah, it's definitely, uhm, prepared me for next year. Next year I can walk into a class and I can know, this is the style I'm going to be teaching in, this is how I'm going to interact with my learners.

Teaching practice was designed to give student teachers opportunities to learn as much as possible in the schools, which can include taking over some of the responsibilities of a regular teacher. This experience helped Landon to improve his classroom management,

assessment, and teaching practices. He felt that occupying the post of a full-time teacher for a few weeks had taught him more than his peers who only taught lessons on behalf of the subject and classroom teachers. Since Landon was suddenly responsible for preparing the learners for their tests, he felt that the challenge strengthened his confidence that he would be “able to adapt to other environments and situations very easily”. In other words, when he reflected on what he had learnt in the final school visit, he felt more prepared to occupy a post as a permanent teacher at a school in the following year.

The findings for the final sub-question, ‘*What are the factors that influence the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers’ professional identities development?*’ are discussed in this section.

Landon’s experiences prior to and during University influenced his professional identities’ development. During his primary schooling, his family praised his intelligence, and that motivated him to think of becoming a teacher. He also reflected on his experience and capabilities and decided that he would make a good teacher. His experiences during University were mediated; his observations and beliefs about the profession; the support during his fourth year from family, friends and former schoolteachers; and his love of History and of reading.

When he was still in high school Landon reflected on his strengths and weaknesses and this motivated him to choose teaching as a career, and to offer learners in the <sup>93</sup>first school visit advice on their future subject choices. After reflecting on his abilities, he decided to take <sup>94</sup>Mathematics Literacy as a subject instead of Mathematics, which he felt he was not good at. After assessing his strengths, he decided that his talents lay in working with people, and that would be a good teacher because he could work well with his future learners. His ability to work with learners was tied to his identities as a motivator and communicator. He encouraged learners during the first school visit to consider their own talents. He said the learners felt that they should take Mathematics, and he explained to them that he had “people based” rather than Mathematics skills and told the learners to “focus on your own skills”.

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<sup>93</sup> In the first school visit of 2021, fourth-year students arranged with a school to conduct teaching practice for two weeks before the term began on 29 March.

<sup>94</sup> Mathematics Literacy focuses on the practical application of mathematical knowledge in everyday contexts more than traditional Mathematics and was introduced in South African in 2006 as a school subject from Grade 10 onwards (Jojo, 2019).

Landon's relationship with his family prior to and during University influenced his decision to becoming a teacher. While he was still in primary school, his family called him "the smart one". This made him feel that he was good at explaining things to others, and he became more certain that he should become a teacher. Landon's mother and grandmother motivated and supported him by sending him content related to teaching and learning on social media during the lockdown, which he found demotivating due to a lack of interactions with the learners. His parents further reduced the "chores" he usually performs at home, so that he could devote more time and energy to teaching at the school during TP.

Landon's University friends, within the same degree, also played a critical role in his decision to become a collegial teacher. Before meeting his friends Landon described himself as "reclusive" as he wanted to do things by himself "in <sup>95</sup>MY WAY". Meeting friends who were also studying to be History and English teachers made him realise that "someone might have a-a better point of view than what you're putting forward", and he became "more able to work in a team". Since he felt that "teaching is about engaging with people" he has "come out of my <sup>96</sup>SHELL quite a bit". In the interview, Landon discussed how the influence of close friends made him less reserved and more outgoing. He now values and tries to increase learner participation when teaching.

Landon felt that he could always "call on my friends" and kept in "close contact" with them, which made him feel less alone. To represent this changed personality identity, Landon chose a picture of students chatting around a table to represent him as a university student (see Figure 44). This is an example of the relationship between the personal and the professional identities also found by previous researchers (Bukor, 2015, Makovec, 2018; Pillen et al., 2012).

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<sup>95</sup> The emphasis on his way here shows how uncompromising with regards to following his own point of view or methods he used to be as a person.

<sup>96</sup> The emphasis on the word 'shell' shows how reclusive Landon considered himself to be before learning to work with and share ideas with his friends in first year who studied the same degree as he did.



Figure 44. Image chosen to represent Landon as a university student.

The good relationships with and the admiration for his former teachers helped with the development of his professional identities. Landon chose to conduct TP at his former high school, because he enjoyed the way he was taught by his Social Science teachers. Landon was impressed by a teacher who taught in creative and fun ways by taking learners outside to look at anthills and demonstrating protest dances, which were used to boycott the Apartheid government. Another former teacher was knowledgeable, because he recited interesting facts without referring to the textbook during lessons. These teachers motivated Landon as he developed his professional identities as a hardworking teacher who is knowledgeable about his subjects and teaches in an engaging and creative way.

It was possible that the good relationships with the teachers and their trust was why they asked him to take over the Social Sciences teacher's classes during the school visit. He enjoyed the support of the two other Social Sciences teachers who were "helping me, so if I needed something no matter what time of the night, I could give them a call send, them a message, and they would explain whatever it is". Landon benefited from the mentor teachers' open-door approach, like the student teachers in the study by Schatz Oppenheimer and Goldenberg (2023), because he could ask for their help at any time. The mentors believed in Landon's abilities and supported him by ensuring that he had enough authority to assume the position of a temporary teacher by performing most of rights and the duties of a qualified teacher.

Landon's confident and optimistic nature, willingness to adapt, and love of reading helped him to assume the teacher's duties. He wrote in his journal that "I do have confidence in myself, and I know I will have them ready". He enjoyed reading as this was the main hobby he had developed since he was young, and because he received merit awards for his reading ability. He felt that his reading abilities helped him to teach English as a subject during the school visit. In addition, his passion for History also motivated him to put additional effort into creating interactive classes . As an optimistic and hard worker, Landon challenged himself to teach English and Social Sciences in an effective and creative way.

### **6.15 Candice's understandings of her professional identities**

Candice's three main professional identities were as a:

- relational teacher;
- passionate and professional teacher; and
- resilient and determined teacher

A summary of these identities is shown on the next page.

### 6.15.1 A relational teacher

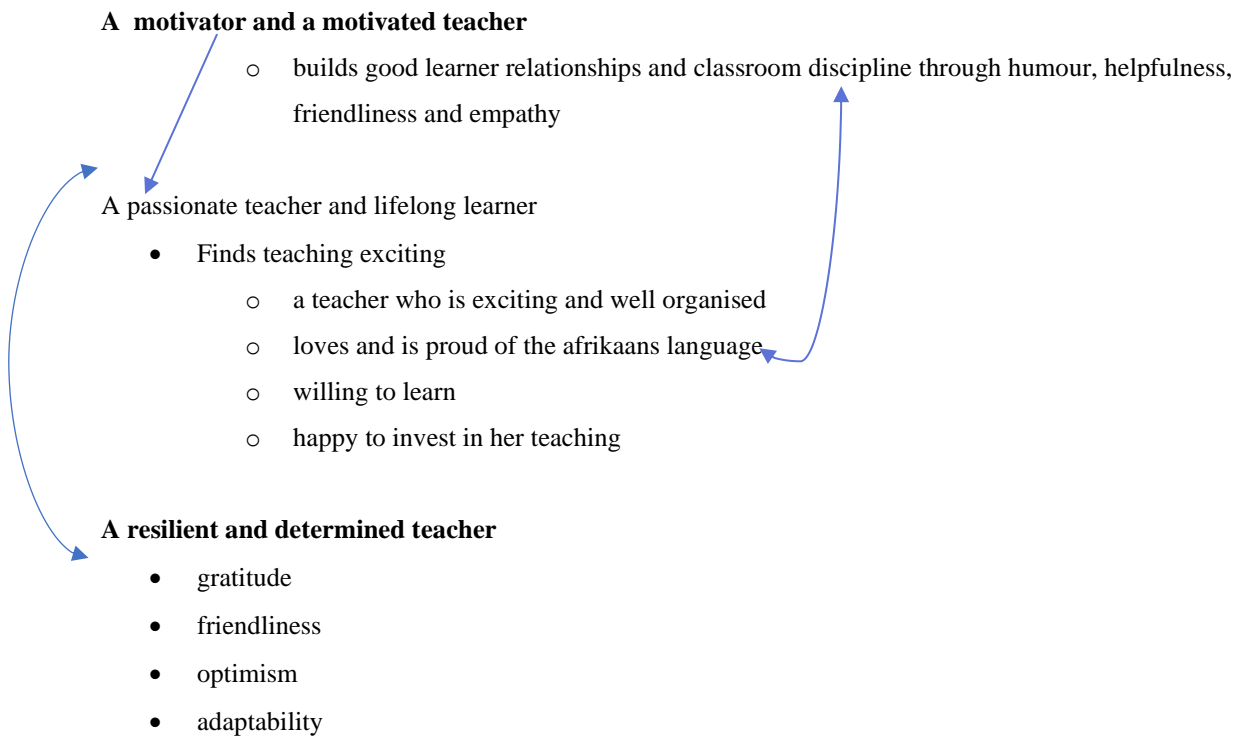


Figure 45. Representation of the professional identities of Candice.

As a relational teacher, Candice tried to create good relationships with her learners and believed that these relationships increased the learners' motivation, which helped her create well-managed classrooms. She conducted <sup>97</sup>both fourth-year school visits at her former high school and showed empathy towards a learner who faced difficulties at home and another learner who was bullied by other learners. Candice further created good relationships with learners by being humorous, helpful and friendly towards the learners.

She was proud of the learners that did well in her lessons, and this made her more confident and motivated to become a teacher, which fuelled her identity as a passionate teacher. To show this passion, Candice used words like 'exciting' to describe her feelings towards the profession. She was particularly passionate about teaching Afrikaans as a subject, which is her home language. Since she shared Afrikaans as a home language with the learners, she found it easier and more enjoyable to teach and interact with them, than when she taught the

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<sup>97</sup> For the first school visit, the fourth-year students arranged with a school to conduct teaching practice for two weeks before the term began on 29 March 2021, and the third and final teaching practice block of seven weeks took place from 16 August to 1 October in Kimberley schools.

learners English as a First Additional Language. She spent more time preparing lessons for the English First Additional Language learners to ensure that she explained the meaning of the words clearly to them. She developed professional identities associated with lifelong learning, including a willingness to learn and improve her teaching with the goal of making her classes as interesting as possible for learners.

Candice's passion for the profession and commitment to lifelong learning increased her resilience and determination to complete the practicum successfully, despite the challenges she experienced. As a resilient and determined person, Candice exhibited the following attitudes: friendliness, optimism, flexibility, and gratitude. She was friendly and respectful towards the staff members, learners, and her peers during both TP school visits, remained optimistic about the learners' capabilities, and was grateful when she managed to achieve positive learning outcomes. When she encountered problems with technology that was not working, she was able to adapt her lesson. For Candice, being grateful to her family, her friends, and her mentor teachers for their support was part of her identity as a university student.

#### **6.16 Candice's PID during TP**

The findings to the two sub-research questions: *'How do the 4<sup>th</sup> year SPU student teachers further develop these understandings during teaching practice?'*, and *'To what extent are the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers aware of their developing professional identities during teaching practice?'* are presented below.

As a relational teacher, Candice did not enjoy the second practicum, where she had to pre-record online lessons due to restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Throughout the virtual teaching practice, she missed the interactions with the learners because their unexpected responses help her to steer the lesson towards their interests.

Though she did not enjoy the virtual practicum, Candice was resilient and tried to adapt to the new circumstances while remaining determined to do her best. Her willingness to do her best including spending time planning her online lessons and money buying additional materials, such as, a small whiteboard.

Candice was always willing to learn from her two Afrikaans and English mentor teachers, who played a significant role in helping her to develop her professional identities during TP. She enjoyed observing and learning from her English mentor, who was her former teacher in high school, as she used humour to engage and build good relationships with the learners.

Candice used her knowledge of and strong bond with the learners to manage their behaviour in the more challenging classes. She explained that, “I started to learn their names, and the second day when I gave my lesson, so I said, listen Y listen S, listen.. and they were like.. how does she know me”. This meant that Candice was friendly towards the class when greeting and/or addressing learners by their names. She strategically formed particularly good relationships with the boys who were more likely to disrupt the rest of the class.

Even with the Grade tens, the moment when you, that I actually noticed, the moment when you get, friendly with the, ‘naughty boys’ in class, then the class is a dream because then they listen to you, so there was, I think there’s like, five boys in the B class that, if you have them, then you have the class, because then they are like, “Come boys, come let us quick”(said in the Afrikaans language), so if you, if you have them under control then you have the entire class, the 11s, the 11As, there’s one two three, four boys, if you have them you have the class.

Her ability to form good relationships with the learners who could have derailed the class meant that they helped her to keep the rest of their peers in line while she taught. It could have been her helpfulness, friendliness, and her use of humour and empathy that assisted Candice to become close with one Grade Eleven class. She good humouredly called them the “naughty class”, because there were mostly boys in the class who liked to make jokes and did not often complete their homework. While she said that the younger learners in Grades 7 to 9 were a “teacher’s dream” because they were quiet and did their homework, she felt they were too scared of their teachers, which meant that it was hard for her to joke with them in class. As a relational teacher who used humour and had a friendly relationship with the learners, she preferred and found it easier to bond with the more challenging class than the quieter classes. As a lifelong learner who was also a determined and flexible teacher, Candice enjoyed the opportunities to apply and adapt her teaching to a more challenging class.

As mentioned earlier above, the Grade 11 learners’ achievements during the school visit made Candice feel proud to have taught them, including assisting a shy learner who became a member of the student representative council.

Uhm, but the learners pick on him a little bit, and the one day, when they did the nominations, I told my teacher that I hope that he stands for the SC (Student Council), because that will give himself so much self-esteem because, the learners they really do pick on him, but he’s,

he's really he has the nicest manners, he does not back chat or anything, he just says, "Good morning", he sits at his desk, he write. So, he actually made the SRC (Student Representative Council), and I was, I was so, so proud of him.

The motivation to help learners succeed meant Candice was aware of a teacher's responsibility to develop learners academically, socially, and personally, which has been defined as holistic or whole-child development (O'Flaherty & McCormack, 2019). As part of building good relationships with the learners, Candice assisted a Grade Eleven class with their work and motivated them to work hard. The relationship she had with the class strengthened her identity as a relational teacher who, as a motivator, was helpful towards the learners and was also motivated by their efforts. For example, she always lent one learner, who did not have a notebook in the class, papers to write notes.

Candice felt that her professional identities included being a helpful and empathetic teacher towards learners and explained that "as a student teacher I am helpful and always assist those in need", which was represented by a picture of two children working together (see Figure 46).



Figure 46. Image chosen to represent Candice as a student teacher.

In the picture, an older child was helping a younger child to understand something, possibly schoolwork. According to CoPT, older children, as comparative experts, should assist the younger children as novices in a particular school community. Candice was aware of her empathetic nature, and recounted learning more about the lives of disadvantaged learners when she was placed at schools in townships for teaching practice. During the school visits,

one learner told her that some older boys had beat him and <sup>98</sup>robbed him of his taxi money. Candice retold the sad story of another learner she met during a school visit in her third year.

... there was a, a boy he was in Grade 4, but he was already 12 years old, and he keeps failing cause he has to go, uhm, skip school because he has to sell vegetables, **at a stand**, ... during school time. **And the boy, the-the**, ... The November before the year began, 2019.. he was stealing drugs from the house near, where he lives, and, before he could get the things out of the window, the window slammed off his fingers, and he's left with only three fingers on the one hand, and that is challenges that he's facing, due to the fact that his mom is an alcoholic who has, a little baby again, and he has no way to go to school. **The teacher supplies him with all his school supplies, without telling anyone. She bought him a bag and a pencil case, and books that he has to write in and stuff**, ... So that's challenges that that boy is facing and he's going to turn, 15 this year I think and then he's going to be in Grade Seven, and no, he's not even going to be in Grade Seven he's going to be in Grade Six and, eventually he's going to drop out of school due to the circumstances that he's raised in., **because his mother-his father passed away. His mother is not taking care of him like she should be.**

The empathetic behaviour was informed by an understanding of the learner's home circumstances, as Candice was aware that the learner was neglected due to an absent father, an alcoholic mother, and a young sibling. These experiences contributed to the learner's criminal behaviour, disability, and possible future dropout from the school.

Candice showed her resilience and determination during a <sup>99</sup>conflict with her peers and the fellow <sup>100</sup>student coordinator about the formal assessment of the taught lessons during the school visit. She took her mentor's advice to ignore the conflict and focus on her professional development. She was determined not to let the negative interactions with her peers get in the way of her learning, and she remained friendly with them even though they no longer <sup>101</sup>greeted her each day.

so they [her peers] don't greet me anymore, they speak the basics and that's that, so, uhm, there's, we don't communicate anymore because of that, and, I've actually been in classes

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<sup>98</sup> She then gave the learner money for the taxi, and when he tried to return the money the next day, she let him keep it to use for the tuckshop, which surprised the learner and made him happy.

<sup>99</sup> The conflict began when the other student teachers did not have enough assessed lessons. The student coordinator tried to assign other students to be assessed while teaching the classes Candice usually taught and asked her to have lessons assessed for classes she had not taught before. Candice queried this with the subject lecturer and was told that this was not the case, which angered the student coordinator, because she felt that Candice should not have asked him directly because she was not the coordinator.

<sup>100</sup> The TP Administrator at Sol Plaatje University assigns one student teacher at each school to act as the student coordinator during a school visit. His or her responsibilities include taking daily attendance, and noting any absenteeism among students, and communicating with subject lecturers about lessons to be assessed during the visit.

<sup>101</sup> In many African cultures people are expected to greet one another in various social contexts, including in the workplace. Greetings are expected as part of the social norms that govern African societies and to fail to greet a person is regarded as bad mannered and disrespectful (Wojtowicz, 2021).

with them for four years ... so, I just told myself that, I'm not here for them, I'm here for myself and I'm learning,... it's kind of a weird vibe, because in the morning they look at you and you like "Hello", and they look away

She chose to remain optimistic about the learners' capabilities throughout the school visit, and she continued to motivate them to work harder, "so... uhm, they, they don't, they don't have a care in the world, but when they do something, they try to do it good". Candice adapted by drawing some of the pictures on the board when she could not present a planned lesson using PowerPoint slides.

As part of her identity as a resilient and determined teacher, Candice has a friendly and grateful attitude towards others, because she always smiles, greets, and converses respectfully with the learners, fellow student teachers, and the teachers. She was grateful to her mentor teachers, at her old high school, for all the support and guidance they gave her during the <sup>102</sup>two school visits in her fourth year. Candice's gratitude was linked to the image she chose to represent her identity as a university student, which showed people worshipping (see Figure 47) and is connected to Candice's belief in Christianity.

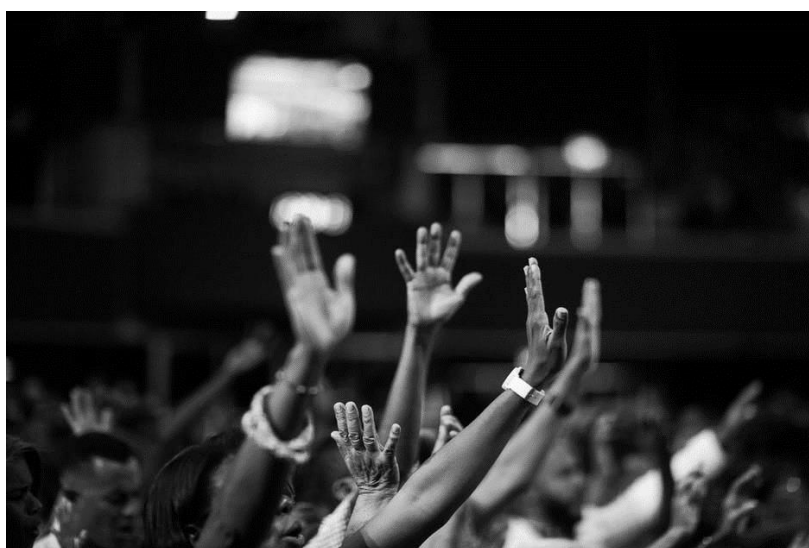


Figure 47. Image chosen to represent Candice as a university student.

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<sup>102</sup> The school visit of three weeks that took place before March 2021, and the school visit that took place between 16 August and 1 October 2021.

She explained her choice of image and said, “as a university student I am <sup>103</sup>GRATEFUL. I am grateful for each opportunity that is given to me and I believe that God guided me to where I am today.” The response and image strongly represented Candice’s identity and beliefs as a Christian.

This section presents and discusses the findings for the final sub-question, *‘What are the factors that influence the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers’ professional identities development?’* The teaching and learning experiences and the relationships that Candice developed through these experiences, prior to and during University, influenced her professional identities’ development.

Candice’s good relationships with her primary and secondary teachers influenced her professional identities. As a primary learner, Candice’s good relationships with her Grade 4 teacher inspired her to think of becoming a teacher. When the Grade 4 teacher asked Candice what career she wanted to do in the future, she said, “<sup>104</sup>**and** I kept thinking to myself, I want to become like you, I want to be a **teacher**”. She also enjoyed playing with younger learners at breaktime and pretending to be their teacher. In high school she was close to the three teachers who taught English, Afrikaans, and Tourism, and it was her English teachers’ passion for language that motivated her to want to become a language teacher. To demonstrate her passion for the profession, she explained that by being a teacher instead of doing an “ordinary job” she would be an “extraordinary person”. Candice felt that teachers are extraordinary because of the impact they have on their learners, whether directly or indirectly, and she wanted to “make an impact on either one or two or even three students, it’s not about the, the quantity, but rather the impact I made”.

In her final year of high school, she told her mother that she wanted to become a teacher, which conflicted with her mother’s plans for her to secure a job and help at home. Candice’s mother is a single parent and experienced financial pressure, which was why she wanted Candice to find a job after high school. Since she was a determined and optimistic person, Candice did not give up on her dream to become a teacher and asked her uncle for help, and

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<sup>103</sup> Here the word grateful is said loudly as Candice emphasises how grateful she feels to be studying to be a teacher.

<sup>104</sup> Candice speaks in a quick excited voice here and emphasises the words ‘and’ to show that she has come to a realisation and the words ‘teacher’ to show her respect and awe for the profession, and her excitement at the thought of becoming a teacher.

he helped to convince her mother to allow her to study to become a teacher. Considering her socio-economic background, Candice was awarded a bursary to study at Sol Plaatje University, which is close to her family home in Kimberley.

Relationships with her friends and family were important to Candice and are represented by the second picture of people enjoying themselves around a fireside on the beach (see Figure 48).



Figure 48. Second image chosen to represent Candice as a person.

To explain the image, she said that “I am also fun and outgoing. I believe that my friends and family is my foundation in life and I build my life on and around them.” She was particularly close to her mother and grandmother, as her single mother relied on her grandmother to help take care of her when she was working. During her first year, Candice’s mother saw her passion for teaching and began to support her career choice. The support motivated her to send quick updates to her mother and grandmother over WhatsApp about the positive experiences she had during the school visits. Although Candice was a student, she responsibly contributed to the cost of living at home by tutoring primary school learners after school for extra money, and this strengthened her teaching skills. She believed that the extra tutoring would make her a better teacher because she felt “it also builds your confidence, if you, uhm, explain to them the work and they ask you questions you’re not totally unprepared when you go to your school visits”.

While Candice felt that it might be hard to form bonds with learners for a short time, as a relational, resilient, and determined teacher, she felt it would also be interesting for her to build these new relationships.

...it's difficult to think that you will only have a bond with learners, for like a year or maybe two years and then they'll have to move on. But it's also going to be, fun, because you're going to get to meet new learners with new, challenges that they face in the classroom.

During the school visits at her former high school, she strengthened her relationships with her English, Afrikaans, and Tourism teachers, and developed good relationships with the learners. Her relationship with her former Tourism teacher existed both in and outside of the school grounds, as they had coffee, shopped for Candice's clothes for the school visits, and chatted over WhatsApp. Candice <sup>105</sup>chose to return to the school from the second until the fourth year of the degree when she was also placed at the school by the TP Office for the last school visit. Her good relationships with teachers and learners stemmed from her participation at the school as a high-school learner and her continued engagement as a student teacher in the school community.

Candice stated that "as a person I am adventurous and tend to hold on to special moments". Meaning that, she might be described as someone who likes challenges and can be sentimental, and to represent this side of herself she chose the picture on the next page:



Figure 49. First image chosen to represent Candice as a person.

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<sup>105</sup> As part of teaching practice, the student teachers at SPU choose schools in their hometowns for their school visits. Candice is from Kimberley and chose to conduct these school visits at her former high school.

The camera in the picture represented a person who likes new experiences or adventures, and there were also few pictures of key landmarks that showed she values and has fond memories of past experiences. Her love of learning and of a challenge and her sentimental nature made her bond easily with the “naughty class”. Though the class was more challenging to teach as they required more determination, flexibility, and resilience, perhaps their ability to respond to jokes also made them more memorable to teach. During the school visits at her former high school, she found it easy to get along with her mentor teachers, because one of the mentors was her former teacher, and the other one mentor was a former B.Ed. graduate of SPU.

## **6.17 Summary**

The previous sections presented and discussed findings for the sub-research questions, this section engages with the findings for the main research question ‘*How do fourth year SPU student teachers construct their professional identities during teaching practice?*’ The answer to this question is presented for all eight participants.

In this section, I discuss the three main ways in which the student teachers constructed their professional identities during TP. The first of these was through reflection on and learning from past challenges experienced in high school or the first year of the B.Ed. degree. Although the study focused on the fourth year, I acknowledge the possible influence of reflection on previous experiences on the fourth-year student teachers’ professional identities constructions during TP. The second was how the student teachers managed the challenges they encountered during the fourth-year school visits. The third was the ways in which the student teachers managed to develop positive relationships with the learners and their mentor teachers during the final school visit. The relationships with learners and mentors were dependent on the student teachers’ relational and collegial professional identities, a summary of which is provided in Figures 50 and 51.

### **6.17.1 Management of challenges during the fourth-year school visits**

Many of the participants overcame obstacles in their lives prior to the fourth year of the B.Ed. programme at the University that later shaped their professional teacher identities during TP. The participants responses to these challenges were mediated by temporality and place,

which included their reflections on past, present, and future events that occurred in specific contexts, and sociality, i.e. their personal and social conditions. Their personal conditions included, their beliefs, aspirations, dispositions, and their social conditions included their relationships with learners, former high-school teachers and mentor teachers during school visits, and family members. Three of the eight student teachers, Catriona, Moruti, and Dineo, grew up in <sup>106</sup>poverty. Moruti felt that one of the reasons he started primary school late was because his parents' absence in his early life meant that he was not enrolled at a primary school on time. He also spoke about repeating a year of high school because he failed Mathematics and Science, because the subjects were unfamiliar for him, and his one-year academic exclusion experience from the University. After these experiences, he vowed to work harder and became more determined to succeed in his studies. This was observed during the TP where he became more dedicated and responsible, and improved his <sup>107</sup>classroom practices.

Dineo felt that moving from a rural area to a bigger town and the peer pressure she encountered in high school were some of the reasons that she became pregnant as a teenager. Her teachers supported and helped her to complete high school and assisted her with the application to the University to study her B.Ed. degree. She returned to her school for TP prior to her fourth year to give back, and share experiences to motivate and support learners, which links with her professional identities as a role model. Her former teachers' unconditional support when her family had lost hope, helped Dineo to construct a relational professional identity as an empathetic, ethical, and helpful teacher. Both Breyton and Isipho experienced the death of a parent, Breyton's mother died while he was in high school, and Isipho's father died during her first year of university. Breyton felt that as a caring teacher this meant he could understand some of the hardships that the learners were experiencing. While he had previously not shared his story with learners, during the final school visit he shared his story as a tool to motivate learners to achieve their own dreams. Breyton also experienced bullying in high school because of his peers' intolerance of homosexual people and negative judgement from his father. He learned about respecting learners' different identities in a first-year module and vowed to include all learners in his class, because he did

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<sup>106</sup> All three student teachers grew up in poor rural towns. Due to her parents' lack of resources, Catriona was raised by her grandparents. Dineo said she attended a school where learners were 'underprivileged'.

<sup>107</sup> This included being stricter with learners, improving his time management and lesson planning, and the way he taught English as a first additional language. For more information, please see page 142 of the thesis.

not want them to be bullied like he was. Thus, Breyton's constructed relational and collegial professional identities as a passionate, caring, and respectful teacher to the learners, teachers, and his fellow peers.

Isipho started the final school visit feeling guilty because she could not display her emotions too openly because she was a sensitive person. The conversation with her mentor teacher helped her because she realised that he was also a sensitive person, and then Isipho embraced this aspect of herself. She shared that her father had passed away with the learners for the first time, which made learners feel free to also share how they had lost their family members. Isipho believed that showing her sensitive and empathise side to learners helped them see her as a human being they can approach and discuss their problems with. Though in high school and the school visit, Isipho constructed a relational professional identity around her sensitive, empathetic, and reflective nature. Candice was raised by a single mother who, at first, did not support her wish to become a teacher, as she wanted her to start working to alleviate the family's financial pressures. Instead of giving up, Candice told her uncle about her dreams, and he persuaded her mother to let her study at the nearby University. Due to her hard work and dedication to the studies on campus and during school visits, her mother supported her desire to become a teacher. Through this experience Candice constructed professional identities based on her resilience and determination, which also helped her to face some of the challenges she encountered during TP.

### ***6.17.2 Relationships with learners during the final school visit***

During the final school visit all eight student teachers developed their identities as relational teachers. A summary of this identity and the ways in which the student teachers developed is shown in Figure 50 on the next page:

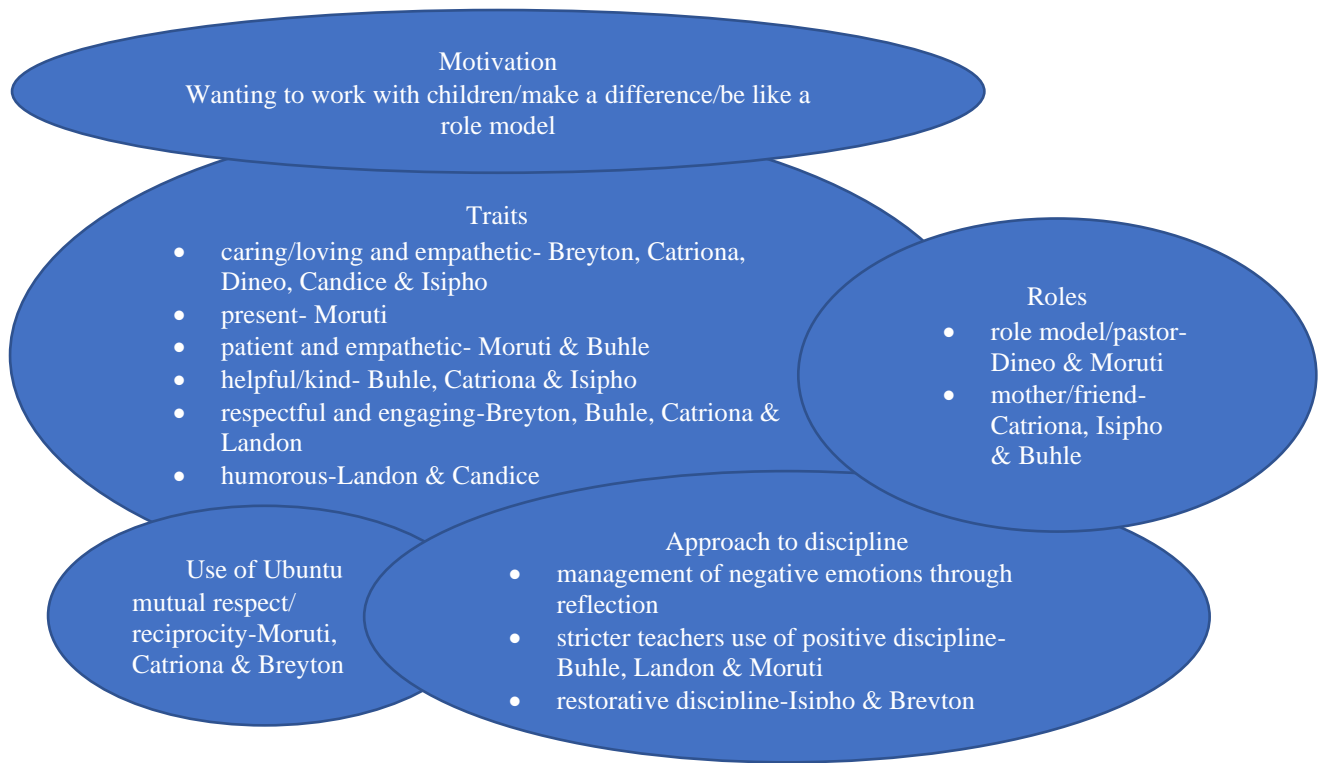


Figure 50. Student teachers' professional identities as relational teachers.

During the final school visit, four participants' personal conditions, specifically their motivation to make a difference in the lives of learners, and social conditions, most notably their relationships with learners, influenced their identities as caring and relational teachers. The four student teachers, Breyton, Candice, Landon, and Dineo shared a common motivation for wanting to become a teacher (Alvariñas-Villaverde et al., 2022; Manuel & Hughes, 2006). While acting as a tutor in high school, Breyton felt that he could make a difference in the lives of the learners. Candice also wanted to have a positive impact on the lives of learners. Landon felt that learners across all academic streams in the school should be confident in their capabilities. He therefore made sure to motivate the learners in the lower sets by telling them that they could achieve good marks in his subject and their future ambitions.

Dineo internalised what she learnt about making a difference during the B.Ed. degree at Sol Plaatje University, which she used to motivate herself and her learners during the final school visit. She learned that teachers could make a difference in the lives of the learners and decided to be a role model and to motivate herself when she faced challenges, including unethical behaviour from the teachers and learners' low marks. As a role model she continually tried to "reach" or make a difference to the lives of even a few learners during the school visit.

Several of the student teachers wanted to be teachers because of their positive relationships with family members and previous teachers. Candice wanted to become a teacher in primary school because she admired her teachers. Buhle visited her aunt who is a teacher at her school, and because of her interactions with the learners, she initially wanted to become a primary school teacher. However, due to her good relationships with her high-school teachers, she decided to become a secondary school teacher. As a relational and interactive teacher, she emulated the preparedness, respectfulness, helpfulness, and creativity of her former teachers. Dineo's supportive teachers throughout her teenage pregnancy were her role models, and she used her experiences to be a role model and to motivate learners at her former high school. As a respectful and engaging communicator, Landon also sought to emulate his teachers' knowledge and creativity when teaching. Previous research also found that students wanted to become teachers because of family members who are teachers and positive experiences with their own schoolteachers (Gershenson & Jacinto, 2019; Lamote & Engels, 2010; Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Rodrigues et al., 2018). This research adds to the literature by showing how the student teachers who emulated certain characteristics of their teachers developed their own identities as relational teachers who were engaging and communicative.

Wanting to work with children is a common reason for choosing to enrol in ITE (Alvariñas-Villaverde et al., 2022; Manuel & Hughes, 2006), and this was why Catriona and Isipho decided to be teachers. Catriona dropped out of her social work degree due to a perceived lack of support from academics and peers, and after working for a year as a teaching assistant in her hometown, she discovered that she wanted to work with children. Since she was fulfilling this desire while conducting TP at schools she felt happy with her career choice. She was motivated in her first school visit when she imagined herself developing good working relationships with her learners as a future teacher. Though Isipho had initially chosen the profession based on future job security, once she developed relationships with the learners, she felt that she could have a positive impact on them and she developed a real "heart" for teaching. Part of her motivation came from her conviction that as a young person she could relate to and motivate learners.

For some student teachers their relational professional identity was developed through reflection on TP and their personal their social conditions, including how they used their

attributes to develop good relationships with learners. These attributes were their key personal qualities, and included demonstrations of empathy, love, care, and patience when interacting with the learners. For example, during the final school visit Breyton and Isipho reflected on what they knew about the learners and realised how difficult some of their homelives were. Since they felt that learners do not get enough attention and affection at home, they decided to act in an empathetic and caring way towards the learners. Breyton decided to show his learners that he cared by listening to their opinions in class, and Isipho showed her learners love by taking the time to straighten their ties each day. Catriona, Isipho, and Buhle showed learners love, patience, and kindness, which were tied to their professional identities as mother figures. Catriona was pleased to be called “mama” by learners because she felt that her previous teacher was a caring mother figure to her and the rest of the learners. Isipho, at first resisted being positioned by learners as a mother figure, possibly because she felt that she could connect with learners as a young person more so than older teachers, and she later modified this identity to mother and friend. As both a mother and a friend Isipho showed learners motherly love and also related to and had fun with them in class as a young person.

For the final school visit Dineo, Moruti and Catriona taught in schools in the townships, and connected to the learners using their own experiences during childhood. Since they came from impoverished backgrounds themselves, they were sympathetic to the plight of the learners, and willing to assist them financially. This included giving learners money for their small businesses, for participation in school events, and for clothes and stationery. Candice felt sympathy for learner who was robbed during a school visit in her third year of the degree, and gave him money for transport. In addition to providing learners with academic and financial support, many of the student teachers also supported them emotionally during the school visits. According to Shoeman (2015) the support the participants provided was pastoral care, because it encompasses aspects of learners’ physical, affective, and relational well-being. This kind of care promotes holistic education focused on the emotional, physical, spiritual, and cognitive development of individual learners and their relationship to the natural world and to others in particular communities and societies (Mahmoudi, Jafari, Nasrabadi & Liaghatdar, 2012).

Magezi (2019) suggests that an African understanding of pastoral care would include a duty to engage in relationships with the less fortunate and to meet their spiritual and material

needs, especially for fellow believers. Hence, Catriona and Moruti's academic and financial support of the learners was related to their identities as caring Christian teachers. Moruti also offered learners life lessons or moral guidance. As a good Christian and pastor's daughter, Catriona saw it as her duty to help the learners in need during the school first visit, which took place before 29 March 2021. While it is common for teachers to spend their own money on the learners, for example in 2014 and 2015 94% of America teachers bought school supplies (Spiegelman, 2018), it can raise ethical concerns. Though the student teachers' intentions were honourable, they could have been accused of favouring some learners or promoting inequality, because they would not be able to give the same amount to all learners.

The student teachers developed good social relationships with the learners during the final school visit through their interactions in class. Moruti strove to be present and to focus his attention on the learners while teaching. Breyton, Buhle, Catriona, and Landon described interacting with the learners in an engaging manner in the final school visit. For Breyton and Buhle this meant using interesting media in class, including cartoons and a song, to teach creative and fun English and Afrikaans lessons to the learners. For Landon this meant using a learner-centred teaching approach to elicit participation through whole-class discussions and debates. The way that he used a learner-centred teaching approach was part of constructivism (du Plessis, 2020), because he motivated the learners to create and present their own arguments in History. Landon also tried to make lessons engaging for learners by using real-life examples in class. As he explained,

If there's something where I can make a sort of life lesson out of it, or if I can, use it to, use an aspect of life to explain the content, I do that, because it just makes, it a little bit more, fun focused, a little bit more enjoyable to learn than just, content content content, and trying to drill that into them.

Breyton and Landon used a learner-centred teaching approach because they wanted to enhance learners' critical and creative thinking skills. This approach was consistent with the student teachers' professional identities, as Landon saw himself as a motivating teacher, and Breyton expressed that he was a passionate teacher. Landon felt that the previous teacher, who he replaced during the school visit until a new teacher was appointed, "spoon-fed" the learners. He thought it was important for the learners to try and approach higher-order source analysis questions in History by searching for and thinking about the answers.

Catriona and Landon used humour when teaching classes. Candice thought of herself as an “exciting” teacher, and Landon, enjoyed using humour to make lessons more interesting. By using real-life examples, humour, and media it can be argued that the student teachers developed practices as <sup>108</sup>edutainers, who used both educational and entertaining (Johnson & McElroy, 2010). The student teachers who sought to make their lessons more engaging using media, a learner-centred teaching approach, and humour, prepared well before class to present interesting lessons to their learners during the school visits.

Moruti and Dineo defined themselves as role models. During the final school visit despite some teachers being demotivated and acting in an unethical manner during exams, as a role model Dineo hoped to act in an ethical manner as a future teacher. She also acted as a role model when she told learners they needed to work hard at university and when she encouraged a learner with no parents and guardians to continue concentrating on her studies.

Though the school contexts for TP were different, all the participants experienced disruptive learner behaviour in class. They managed learner misbehaviour through their relational professional identities, whereby they used their good relationships with learners to manage their behaviour while teaching classes during the final school visit. For instance, Candice developed a good relationship with the “naughty class” whereby she knew the disruptive boys in class well and when she asked the class to be quiet or to listen, they would also remind their peers of her instructions. Due to the principal’s warning that the learners could be violent, Dineo was worried about being alone in the class with learners, but as the school visit progressed, she began to enjoy teaching with her peers without a teacher present. Her approach to teaching the learners was dependent on her professional identities as a relational teacher, because she felt she could manage the class once she knew the learners and had developed a good relationship with them.

Though the learners’ misbehaviour could have challenged the student teachers’ relational identities, the participants felt that they had retained their identities while interacting with the learners. They managed learner misbehaviour through control over their own negative

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<sup>108</sup> While Hasim, Mohtar, Barnard and Zakaria (2013) and Yunus (2020) showed that Malaysian student teachers used the word ‘edutainer’ when describing their professional identity, the student teachers in the study did not use this word to describe themselves as teachers. It could be that the word is less used in the South African context, or that this component only formed a small part of the student teachers’ professional identities.

emotions, practices associated with the philosophy of Ubuntu, and improvement in classroom management practices. The participants regulated their emotions when they encountered challenges with learner misbehaviour in the final school visit. Emotional regulation is part of the work of teachers who feel both positive and negative emotions as they work daily with colleagues, management, and developing learners (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006; Song, 2016; Zembylas, 2003a, 2003b). The way that teachers feel about their work contributes to their job satisfaction, and many other aspects of how they perceive themselves as professionals (Day et al., 2013; Moremi, 2016; Wells, 2015).

Despite encountering disruptive learners, Breyton and Moruti chose to remain optimistic about their ability to resolve these challenges and better their classroom management. Breyton, Moruti, and Buhle also chose to control their emotions to remain calm and demonstrate empathy and patience to the learners during the final school visit. When learners were disruptive in class, Moruti reflected on the situation and reasoned that as they were still getting to know each other he should be patient with them. This aligned with his belief in reciprocity, which is a key tenant of Ubuntu (Letseka, 2014; Mligo, 2021).

Reflection is an important process pre-service teachers use to develop their professional identities (Ivanova & Skara- Mincane, 2016; Ezati et al., 2010; Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2010; Wahyuni & Putra, 2021). For the student teachers in this study, reflection on their own dispositions and beliefs were key for the management of their negative emotions during the final school visit. When they experienced learner misbehaviour, Breyton and Moruti concluded that this gave them opportunities to develop their classroom management. Buhle was able to manage her negative emotions by reflecting on the learners' circumstances and the possible reasons for their misbehaviour, including the classes they had missed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Breyton's reflection on the past allowed him to follow the advice of a member of staff at the University, which was to control his anger and remain calm when he felt a learner had disrespected him. Thus, the student teachers relied on their personal conditions, which included their dispositions and ability to reflect, to manage their emotions appropriately.

Some participants relied on mutual respect, a key feature of the African philosophy of Ubuntu (Letseka, 2014), to manage disrespectful learner behaviour. In this study, the four participants who discussed the African philosophy of Ubuntu in relation to their professional

identities were Breyton, Catriona, and Moruti. Perhaps Catriona and Moruti believed in the principles of Ubuntu, because they grew up in tight-knit communities, a small town, and a rural village, where people may rely on one another. According to Catriona, everyone was friendly and knew one another in her town. It is also possible that the participants as Christians were motivated to treat learners and teachers respectfully because of the biblical tenet to treat others as they want to be treated (Hailey, 2008). Breyton seemed to have internalised what he learnt about Ubuntu, which is that “a person is a person through other people”, from an education module where the term is defined in a similar manner. As part of Ubuntu, Breyton believed in mutual respect between teachers and learners. He enforced discipline in a respectful manner when he relied on the Vice-Principal to speak to a learner in class. The student teachers developed their relational identities through their beliefs, which were part of their personal conditions, and reflection on practice with learners that were related to these beliefs, which were part of their social conditions.

Buhle, Landon, and Moruti, became stricter regarding classroom management, but they still considered themselves as relational teachers, because they enforced deadlines or rules in a respectful manner. As the school visit progressed, Moruti managed classroom discipline through positive discipline by being kind and firm when encouraging good learner behaviour and reminding learners of the rule to submit homework on time. To ensure that learners behaved appropriately, Landon and Buhle enforced the classroom rules more strictly. The student teachers practiced assertive discipline, which recommends strategies for clearly communicating and enforcing the classroom rules (Coetzee, Van Niekerk, Wydeman & Mokoena, 2019). To manage learner misbehaviour during the final school visit, Breyton and Isipho had restorative conversations with learners (Lodi et al., 2022). As part of this restorative practice, they apologised to the learners who expressed that they had felt disrespected by them in class, and they received an apology from the learners. This repaired the harm that had been caused through the learners’ disruptive behaviour and both student teachers went on to develop good relationships with the class. By using practices associated with assertive, positive, and restorative discipline, the student teachers taught in an engaging manner while maintaining good learner relationships during TP.

South African student teachers cited classroom discipline as one of the main practices they struggled to develop and implement successfully (Gravett & Jiyane, 2019; Marais, 2016). Five of the eight student teachers in this study managed learner misbehaviour while

maintaining their relational professional identities through the management of negative emotions, mutual respect, and the use of assertive, positive, and restorative discipline. It is likely that after the final school visit these five student teachers will be able to deal with classroom management in the future.

### ***6.17.3 Relationships with mentors during the final school visit***

The participants' relationships with their mentor teachers was the basis for the student teachers' collegial professional relationships. These relationships were influenced by the pre-existing social conditions, including the social relationships and hierarchies present at each school due to its particular history. The mentor teachers provided guidance to student teachers, which helped them to plan lessons to increase learners' understanding of the content (Hill & Chin, 2018). While planning the lessons they used their mentors' advice and feedback to enhance their developing pedagogical content knowledge (Ambrosetti, Knight, & Dekkers, 2014; Caires et al., 2012; Hamaidi, Al-shara, Arouri & Abu Awwad, 2014; Hudson, 2010; Lai, 2005; Maphalala, 2013). The student teachers' professional identities helped them to develop fruitful relationships with their mentors. Isipho as Moruti's identity as emerging practitioners and Buhle's identity as a team player allowed them to learn from their mentors. With their mentors' support Isipho, Buhle and Moruti increased their knowledge of the learners, and learned to use a learner-centred approach to teach English as a First Additional Language and poetry, and in so doing developed their PCK.

It could have been challenging for Buhle, Moruti, and Isipho to teach English as a First Additional Language to the learners in township contexts, where exposure to formal oral and written English outside of the classroom may be limited (Mzimela, 2022; Spaul, 2013). It is also challenging for English teachers to teach learners with a limited vocabulary how to understand and engage critically with literary texts (Moyo, Beukes & Van Rensburg, 2011; Romylos, 2018; Rusznyak & Walton, 2017). Thus, Isipho and Buhle may have struggled to teach the learners poetry, because second-language speakers struggle to understand the meaning and the literary devices used in poems (Eliasari, 2018; Wai & Abidin, 2020). It is therefore understandable that South African teachers who worry about First Additional Language learners' English ability are less likely to teach poetry (Romylos, 2018). This is not a local phenomenon; Creely (2019) argues that few Australian teachers and mostly teach

English for communication purposes, because they are unsure of their ability to teach poems well (Weaven & Clark, 2013).

While some teachers teach poetry through formulaic line-by-line analysis of literary devices to prepare learners for assessments (Cooper, 2020; Diehl, Riddle & Bhatia, 2021), Isipho and Buhle's mentors focused on learner-centred approaches for teaching poetry. Research suggests that teachers can use a learner-centred teaching approach to relate themes to learners' lives to make poems more relevant, accessible, and interesting for them (Cooper, 2020). Isipho's mentor advised her to discuss the theme with the learners to make the poem more interesting for them, and Buhle's mentor advised her to help the learners to develop their own interpretations of the poem. By advising Moruti to use media and relate texts to the First Additional Language learners' knowledge, his mentor also encouraged him to develop a learner-centred approach. The mentors' advice helped Moruti embody a relational teacher who was present and engaged, was utilised by Isipho as a caring and engaging teacher, and by Buhle as a relational and interactive teacher. The improvement in their practices enhanced their confidence in themselves as future educators. The mentors' advice and student teachers' existing collegial identities, which included a willingness to learn, helped them as future teachers to develop their relational professional identities.

Of the eight participants, only Landon described reading books regularly. If Moruti and Isipho's reading habits mirror the majority of their peers, it is likely that they <sup>109</sup>do not read regularly for enjoyment and only engage in limited academic reading to complete assessments. Since reading develops one's vocabulary and academic writing ability (Bharuthram, 2017; Rimensberger, 2014), a lack of reading could have hindered the participants' ability to teach EAL and poetry as a literary genre. Teacher educators may need to actively encourage student teachers, particularly future language teachers, who should be reading role models for learners, to read for fun (Rimensberger, 2014). Buhle, Isipho, and Moruti's need for assistance with the teaching of English from their mentor teachers as final-year students, problematises the nature of ITE in South Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic. Glietenberg, Petersen and Carolin (2022) found that teacher educators at one South African University who used emergency remote teaching during the pandemic felt that

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<sup>109</sup> Only 16% of South African student teachers whose major it English read books regularly for enjoyment, and most South African university students read lecture notes and study guides rather than textbooks or journal articles to complete assessments (Bharuthram, 2017; Rimensberger, 2014).

the participation during contact classes was essential for teacher preparation. For many universities teachers adapted the content ad hoc instead of creating tailor-made online courses that promote understanding and engagement (Hodges et al., 2020).

During TP, the mentor teachers through their relationships with their mentees, influenced the professional identities of the student teachers. Fortunately, all the participants had good relationships with their mentors. One factor that helps teachers develop good relationships with one another is shared values (Nias, 2005). Catriona and Dineo developed close relationships with mentors whose values they admired. Catriona, who describes herself as a hard worker, admired the hard work and dedication of her mentor, who went the “extra mile” for the learners. Dineo admired the civility and calmness of her mentor, as she wished to develop these traits in herself as a relational and collegial teacher. This research suggests that collegial mentor and student-teacher relationships could be developed through matching of mentor teachers and their mentees according to their stated shared values.

The good relationships that Buhle, Candice, and Landon had with their mentors during the TP helped them to face some of the challenges they encountered during the final school visit. For Buhle, Dineo, and Landon, the good relationships they had with their mentor teachers helped to mitigate the disappointment they felt due to the negative relationships the student teachers had with other teachers or the school principal. While Buhle was disappointed that the student teachers were not welcome in the staffroom and Dineo found the conflicts between the teachers and principal unpleasant, they still had good relationships with and learnt much from their mentors. After the principal told the student teachers that they were not making enough effort to assist the teachers, Landon felt that he did not recognise or acknowledge his hard work. Landon did not become discouraged, because as a collegial teacher he was pleased that teachers at the school appreciated his efforts. Candice encountered a conflict with her fellow student teachers and based on her mentor teachers’ advice she decided to ignore the rude behaviour of her peers and focus on her own professional development.

As with the studies of Lai (2005), and Butler and Cuenca (2012), the mentors in the study provided relational and specifically emotional support to the student teachers. It seemed that this helped Catriona, Buhle, Candice, Dineo, and Landon to deal with school-based factors, which could have reduced their happiness and engagement during the school visit. During the final school visit, the student teachers dealt with teachers treating them like their assistants,

criticism of student teacher' work ethic by school management, and conflicts with peers or between school leadership and teachers. The happiness of student teachers and teachers is important, because if in- or pre-service teachers are unhappy at work they are more likely to leave the profession or discontinue their studies (Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2009; Wells, 2015). The student teachers also relied on their own positive attitudes to cope with the challenges they encountered during at the schools. Without the support of their mentor teachers and their cultivation of a positive attitude the student teachers could have been at risk of discontinuing their studies or feeling less optimistic or motivated about their future as teachers.

Another factor in the development of the student teachers' professional identities was their individual beliefs, strengths, and attitudes. These personal conditions assisted them to develop relationships with their mentors and to improve their professional development. Six of the eight student teachers, Buhle, Catriona, Dineo, Landon, Moruti, and Isipho, had identities as collegial professionals and emerging practitioners, which for Breyton and Landon included identifying as lifelong learners. Two of the student teachers, Buhle and Isipho, called themselves team players, but this was true of the six student teachers because they all assisted others during the school visits. For a summary of the student teachers' professional identities as collegial professionals and emerging practitioners see the Figure 51 below:

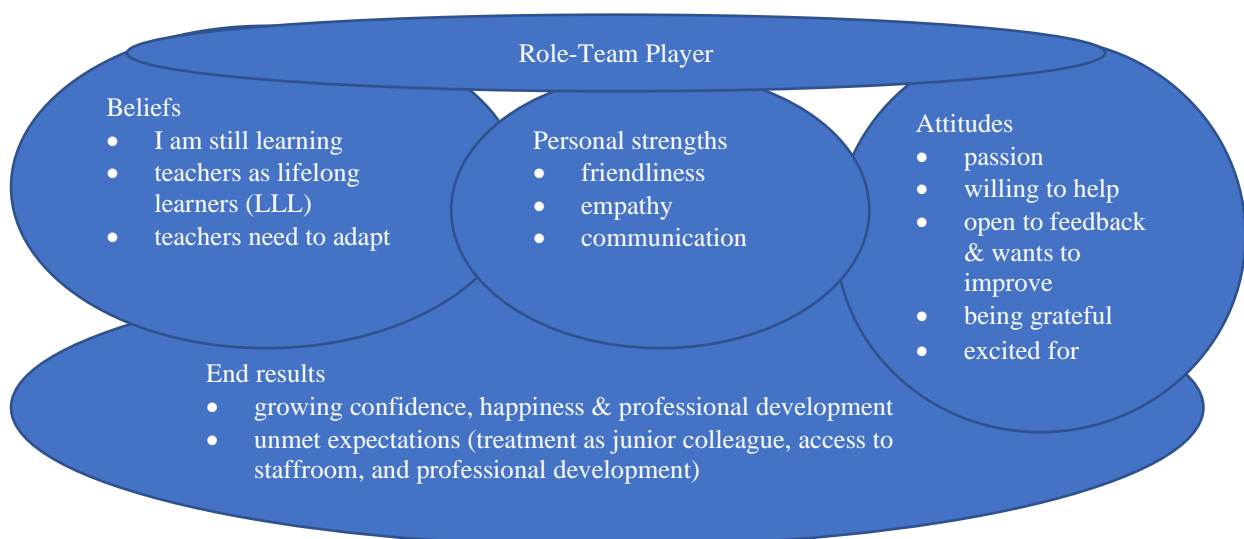


Figure 51. Professional identities as LLL/emerging practitioners and collegial teachers.

All six student teachers believed that they were still learning about the profession. For Breyton, this meant a commitment to lifelong learning, and for Landon it meant learning to adapt to new teaching and learning situations. In terms of their personal strengths, Catriona's friendliness meant that she built good relationships with her mentor teachers, and Dineo and Buhle displayed empathy towards the educators that faced challenges teaching in the township schools during the final school visit. Dineo also believed that being a good communicator allowed her to clearly ask for and take direction from her mentors during the final school visit.

The open and flexible attitudes of the student teachers positively influenced their ability to learn from others during the final school visit. All six student teachers helped their peers, their mentors, and other teachers with duties, such as invigilation, teaching, and marking. They were open to the advice of their mentor teachers and lecturers, because they wanted to improve as teachers for the future. Instead of fearing challenges, including learner misbehaviour, Moruti, Breyton, and Landon saw these experiences as learning opportunities. While Breyton was grateful to his lecturers, Candice was grateful to God, her friends and family for their support, and Catriona and Moruti were grateful for the guidance from their mentors in the final school visit. Five of the student teachers, Breyton, Candice, Catriona, Landon, and Moruti, were passionate about the profession, or the teaching of a particular subject. Due to the passion they spent time planning interesting and fun lessons for learners during the school visits. The positive attitudes towards their own learning helped the student teachers work hard and learn from others, most notably their mentors, during the school visits.

In terms of their professional identities, Breyton, Dineo, Isipho, Landon, and Moruti mentioned that due to how much they learnt during the final school visit they were more confident about assuming the duties of a professional teacher in the following year. This is important because a high level of self-belief in one's abilities is related to an increased level of commitment to the profession and a willingness to implement novel teaching methods (Day et al., 2006; Selcuk et al., 2018). Isipho's ability to build good relationships with the learners made her feel even happier with her career choice. This is important because pleasant emotional states are associated with lower teacher turnover (Madigan & Kim, 2021).

In terms of their professional development, these student teachers felt that their participation in the school communities had improved their teaching and learning <sup>110</sup>practices.

However, several student teachers felt that the sub-optimum conditions during the final school visit could have impeded their professional identities and professional development. Catriona felt that because the principal and the teachers viewed the student teachers as assistant teachers, they failed to meet her expectations to treat her as a junior colleague. She reported receiving little relational and emotional support from most of the teachers during the practicum. Since TP is a physically and emotionally taxing time, this kind of support may ease student teachers' anxieties and fears (Butler & Cuenca, 2012; Davis & Fantozzi, 2016; Lai, 2005). Since she had to assist the teachers and focus less on her own teaching, she was not always able to realise her identity as an independent classroom manager. Like the student teachers in previous studies, Catriona was unable to realise her preferred professional identities, but unlike these student teachers, this did not make her feel less confident in her teaching abilities (Izadinia, 2015; Teng, 2017; Yuan, 2016). Perhaps Catriona's confidence was not affected because, like the student teachers in Butler's (2021) study, her adoption of the assistant role was merely temporary, and she retained her beliefs and her preferred professional identities. As a collegial teacher, she believed that the teachers should have treated her as a junior colleague, however, as an energetic and motivated teacher, she remained positive and determined to complete the school visit.

Buhle and Dineo felt that conflict in the schools constrained their professional identities' development. Both student teachers said that the conflicts between management and teachers made them less able to ask other teachers for guidance and advice. Buhle was disappointed that the student teachers were not welcome in the staffroom. She felt that the conflict between staff at the school meant the teachers provided her with insufficient contextual support, and that they had not taught her how to behave as a member of a future school community.

Dineo emphasised the importance of work-life balance, which included spending time with friends and staying with her family, who lived outside Kimberley. Manging the personal and professional aspects of one's life is important because this balance may help teachers to

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<sup>110</sup> Dineo, Landon and Moruti improved their time management, Moruti, Landon and Buhle had better classroom management, and Landon could now use whole-class discussions and debates in History to increase learner participation.

remain motivated and committed to the profession (Day et al., 2006). Student teachers generally find TP stressful as they adapt to new school environments while managing busy school days, negative emotions, and learner misbehaviour (Alves et al., 2012; Caires et al., 2012; Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2009; Ngidi & Sibaya, 2003; Schoeman & Mabunda, 2012). Furthermore, during the pandemic, students also struggled with their mental health due to problems accessing technology, and feelings of isolation (Aguilera-Hermida, 2020; Aristovnik, Keržič, Ravšelj, Tomažević & Umek, 2020; Mseleku, 2020). Like university students in India and Turkey, Dineo coped by taking care of herself and her mental health by maintaining a good work-life balance and spending time with her family during weekends in the final school visit (Chandra, 2021; Şensoy Murt & Erdur-Baker, 2023). This helped her to relieve the stress she felt at having to learn to teach with technology in the online practicum and in the final school visit when witnessing unethical teacher conduct, conflict between management and teachers, and low learner attendance and marks.

It is interesting, although unsurprising, that student teachers learnt some skills, though there was limited professional identities' development during the <sup>111</sup>virtual school visit. A few of the student teachers, including Breyton, Buhle and Moruti, enjoyed learning how to teach with technology. Buhle and Moruti felt that teaching online had improved their ability to use media in their lessons while Moruti said that planning and recording the lessons and improved his time management. According to Marks (1990) the student teachers' improvements in planning lessons and in the use of media to teach their subjects would count as developments in their PCK. While teaching online in the pandemic Turkish student teachers in the study by Şensoy Murt and Erdur-Baker (2023) also improved their ability to teach using technology. However, during the virtual school visit, Breyton, Catriona, Candice, and Landon felt they could not develop as relational teachers, because they were unable to develop relationships with learners or engage them in class through a learner-centred approach. Since teaching is social and relational, the student teachers in this study, like teachers teaching online in the pandemic, felt that without the learners' physical presence<sup>112</sup> they could not evaluate the success of their teaching or what they should do to improve their practice (Christensen, Nielsen & O'Neill, 2022). This seemed to have prevented some of the student teachers from developing their relational professional identities-foregrounding the

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<sup>111</sup> The virtual school visit took place for three weeks between 7 and 25 June 2021.

<sup>112</sup> Teachers rely on learners' non-verbal facial expressions, gestures and silences to indicate whether or not they have comprehended or found the class interesting.

social and relational nature of identities development (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Smit & Fritz, 2008; Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2010). This suggests that student teachers require engagement and participation with members of specific school communities during TP for meaningful professional identities development.

Robinson and Rusznyak (2020) remarked during that while teaching online it is difficult to re-enact the situated and relational learning that takes place during school visits. The student teachers preferred the <sup>113</sup>opportunity to teach their peers who acted as ‘mock learners’ over Microsoft Teams, because even though a Teams meeting did not replicate a classroom setting perfectly, they could interact with ‘learners’ and receive feedback on their teaching. Though the University only had a few sessions on Mursion in 2021, the student teachers reported that they found these sessions useful because they could interact with realistic <sup>114</sup>avatars while teaching their subject content.

The student teachers constructed their professional identities during their fourth-year school visits in three main ways. Firstly, they reflected on the past, present, and future to construct professional identities prior to and during the fourth year of TP. Participants’ reflections and interpretations of their past challenges and current professional identities depended on their resilience, optimism, positivity, and their knowledge of educational beliefs and practices. The student teachers response to challenges experienced during the school visits in their fourth year was the second way in which they constructed their identities. The participants responded to challenges by relying on their personalities as confident, friendly, resourceful, and determined people, and on their general outlook on life, which included positivity and optimism.

The third way in which the participants developed their professional identities was through their engagement and participation with the learners, their mentor teachers, and other staff members in the school communities. The participants’ management of some of the learners’ misbehaviour relied on their identities as relational teachers who wanted to relate to and teach

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<sup>113</sup> Microsoft Teams was used as a medium for micro-teaching, which is where third- and fourth year students teach one or more subjects to a lecturer, who is a specialist in the subject, and to their peers, who are also studying the same programme.

<sup>114</sup> The avatars appear as cartoon figures on the screen, and they were operated by employees of a company called Mursion, which is based in the United States of America.

the learners in particular ways. They managed disruptive learners by drawing upon their motivations to become teachers; their dispositions; management of negative emotions; reliance on the principles of Ubuntu, an African philosophy; and use of classroom management strategies. For Catriona and Moruti, the relationships they developed with learners during school visits were positively affected by the integration of their personal and professional identities as Christian teachers. The participants' collegial professional identities helped them to develop good relationships with and learn from their mentors. These identities were influenced by the participants' personal beliefs, strengths, and the positive attitudes that they demonstrated as active participants in the final school visit.

When participants learnt from past hardships and the challenges they faced prior to becoming an SPU student and while studying at the university, they relied on knowledge in the personal practice domain. This domain constitutes of knowledge learnt from teachers' experiences outside of the school context (Koffeman & Snoek, 2019). When they experienced challenges, the participants used knowledge from personal practices and social domains, which included second-hand observations and advice received from others (Koffeman & Snoek, 2019). To resolve challenges during this school visit, the participants relied on their personal dispositions (the personal practice domain) and the second-hand advice from staff at the University and their families (the social domain). When the student teachers developed their relational and collegial identities, they relied on knowledge in the personal, social, and theoretical domains, which comprises of third hand accounts of concepts and theories written by others (Koffeman & Snoek, 2019). For example, the participants learnt from their personal and first-hand interactions with the learners and mentor teachers, from their second-hand social observations and the advice of their mentor teachers, and from theory learnt prior to TP. During the final school visit, their relational identities relied on practices related to theory on learner-centred inclusive pedagogies, classroom management, and the philosophy of Ubuntu.

## ACT SEVEN

### Treasure un-earthed: Discussion

#### 7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present a brief overview of the main points of the discussion in the form of answers to the sub-research questions before I discuss each of these points in more detail with reference to the relevant literature and the theoretical framework of the study.

#### 7.2 Brief summary of findings for the first research sub-question

The findings to the first sub-research question, ‘*What are the 4<sup>th</sup> year SPU student teachers’ understandings of their professional identity during teaching practice?*’ showed that all eight participants understood their professional identities as collegial and relational. The collegial identities centred around the student teachers’ relationships with the staff members at the schools, particularly their mentor teachers. The participants’ relational identities were based on the interactions and relationships they developed with the high school learners during TP. The development of these two identities occurred less during the <sup>115</sup>online teaching practicum. This supports previous research, which shows that for pre- and in-service teachers, identities development is social and relational in nature (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Robinson & Rusznyak, 2020; Smit & Fritz, 2008; Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2010).

#### 7.3 Findings for the second research sub-question

The findings to the second research sub-question, ‘*How do the 4<sup>th</sup> year SPU student teachers*

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<sup>115</sup> The online school visit took place from 7 to 25 June 2021, and students video recorded 18 lessons they uploaded to OneDrive during this time.

*further develop these understandings during teaching practice?*' suggest that the participants developed the above-mentioned understandings through participation in the school communities. The student teachers interacted with various groups during the <sup>116</sup>two school visits through joint enterprise, mutual engagement, and reliance on a shared repertoire of practices. The groups included the learners, school management and teachers in the school, most notably their assigned mentor teachers. The next section presents a detailed discussion of how the student teachers engaged in each of these three processes.

### ***7.3.1 Prior engagement with a CoP provides advantages for some STs over their peers***

While Landon and Catriona were placed at the same school for the third and final teaching practicum, their experiences and the ways in which they developed their identities, were different. Though some of this difference could be due to their unique motivations and personalities, Landon's prior engagement with the teachers at the school was one of the reasons his experiences differed from Catriona's. While Catriona was conducting TP at the school for the first time, and was unfamiliar with the schoolteachers and learners, Landon had been a learner and a student teacher at the school previously. The level of mutual engagement was different for the two student teachers, as Landon had more interactions and closer relationships with the teachers at the school. His previous participation in the school community meant that he gained knowledge of the shared repertoire at the school, which Catriona and the other student teachers still had to learn. Landon's relationship with his former teachers was the reason why the teachers entrusted him with the Grade 8 and 9 classes of a deceased teacher, prior to the appointment of a replacement teacher.

Landon's role was recognised as a de-facto temporary teacher by the community members of the school. Though Catriona was expected to invigilate or make copies for other teachers, which made her late to teach a class, Landon had access to more of the rights and duties of the teachers at the school. For example, he performed administrative tasks that his peers were not allowed to do, including marking the exams and entering the learners' marks on the official system. Other cases of student teachers being treated as administrative assistant during TP exists in the literature (Izadinia, 2015; Yuan, 2016). However, there was a dearth

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<sup>116</sup> The first two-week school visit was organised by the student teachers at schools in their hometown before 29 March 2021, and the second seven-week long school visit took place later that year between 1 August and 16 October.

of research where there were differences in the roles, rights, and duties student teachers performed by student teachers at the same school during TP. Since Landon was expected to take on more responsibilities than his peers, he was provided with support from the Social Science teachers. In effect the other two teachers in the department served as a professional learning community, as Landon felt he could always ask them advice regarding the teaching and learning of one of his <sup>117</sup>subjects. The teachers and Landon showed a high degree of joint enterprise. The teachers and Landon were motivated to provide and receive assistance from one another because they shared a high level of mutual accountability for the teaching and learning to ensure that the learners performed well during assessments.

The student teachers were told by the school principal that their role was to assist the teachers, which positioned them as the teachers' helpers rather than legitimate peripheral members of the community. The principal reprimanded the students for their unhelpful attitudes towards the teachers at the school, which positioned them malignantly. The principal's accusation was that the student teachers spent too much time in the staff room during school hours instead of assisting the teachers at the school, and this positioning that was refuted by both student teachers. Since Landon and Catriona felt they had worked hard during the school visit, they controlled the anger and frustration they felt when receiving what they regarded as unfair criticism. Catriona resolved to be cheerful as a "friendly person" towards the staff, irrespective of the principal's accusation. Landon had taken on extra responsibilities in the school by assuming the workload of a former teacher, and his efforts and helpfulness were recognised by few teachers and an administrator. In the studies by Teng (2017), and Yuan and Lee (2016), student teachers stayed true to their ideal professional identities by imagining positive futures or findings ways to subtly express these identities during the school visits. In this study, the student teachers' collegial professional identity was not dampened by the principal's negative feedback because they relied on the support and encouragement of others, whether mentor teachers or family members.

### ***7.3.2 Encountering a lack of joint enterprise and mutual accountability within a CoP***

For the final school visit both Buhle and Dineo were placed at schools in townships where they encountered a lack of joint enterprise, which lead to reduced interactions between

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<sup>117</sup> His three subjects were English and History for FET learners and Social Science (Geography and History at Senior Phase).

themselves, the mentor teachers, and the teachers. Buhle said that the student teachers stopped using the staffroom as teachers commented that they were “bunking” or not attending to their duties when they used the room. Though lack of access to the staffroom for student teachers has been reported by Koross (2016) and Mukeredzi (2014), this is problematic because the staffroom serves as a place where teachers can interact and share common practices with student teachers (Christensen et al., 2018). If student teachers lack access to this shared space, they may not learn practices that allow them to relate to and work with their future learners and colleagues, which could hinder their professional identities’ development. Another reason for the lack of joint enterprise at both schools was conflict between teachers, and between teachers and management. Dineo found that conflict between the principal and the teachers during staff meetings made it harder to approach her mentors for advice. Buhle felt that the principal ignored conflicts between different factions of teachers, and that his lack of action meant that she had not learned enough about how to act in a friendly and professional manner towards her future colleagues. This is an important part of contextual support where staff members model and discuss expectations for how teachers should behave towards colleagues, particularly for more formal work events, such as meetings (Ambrosetti et al., 2014; Lai, 2005; Schatz Oppenheimer & Goldenberg, 2023).

Dineo also felt that the teachers lacked mutual accountability because during invigilation of tests and exams, several teachers wrote down some of the answers on the board for the learners and allowed them to read from papers they hid in their sleeves. The teachers at the school, like some other South African educators, are falling short of the code of ethics and conduct expected of professionals (Carr, 2000; Carrim, 2019; Moodley, 2019; Msibi & Mchunu, 2013; SACE, n.d). Other studies have also documented cases where student teachers viewed teachers engaging in unethical conduct, such as use of corporal punishment or focusing their teaching on the learners whom they perceive as more capable (Gravett & Jiyane, 2019; Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2009; Lebesa, 2015; Moosa & Rembach, 2020; Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013; Tshatshu, 2016). While Dineo understood that the teachers might have been under pressure to perform due to the learners’ low marks, as a role model, she still wanted to act in an ethical manner in the future. To cope with conducting teaching practice in a challenging school context, which included learner violence and unethical conduct from teachers, Dineo focused on balancing her personal and professional life. In narratives, places are also important sources of meaning, a reason it was critical for Dineo to ensure a work-life balance and a physical and mental break by spending time with family outside of Kimberley.

This shows that the personal identities of a teacher are inter-related to his or her professional identities (Bukor 2015, Makovec, 2018; Pillen et al., 2012).

### ***7.3.3 Negative engagements and relationships with fellow student teachers***

During the final school visit, Catriona's and Landon's peers, their fellow student teachers who conducted TP at the school, supported and encouraged one another when the principal criticised them for not being helpful. However, Candice and Moruti both had somewhat difficult relationships with their peers during the final school visit. For Moruti this emerged from a difference in mutual accountability when he displayed more commitment as a future teacher than the other student teachers at the school, which resulted in his peers acting hostilely towards him, complaining that he spent too much time in the classroom. Since he wanted to develop his PCK to better explain content to learners, Moruti did not let his peers' comments bother him and chose to spend time improving his practice.

Candice also experienced a conflict from differences in perceived mutual accountability. When the coordinator informed her that the other student teachers would teach the classes that she had been teaching for assessed lessons, and that the lecturers should assess her lessons to classes that she had no taught previously, she queried this with the subject lecturer who told her this was not the case. The student coordinator and the other student teachers were angry at what they perceived to be an usurpment of the coordinator's right to contact the lecturers. After this incident, they acted in an unfriendly manner and did not greet Candice for the remainder of the school visit. While this reduced the engagement and potential for learning and support that she could have received from her peers, Candice decided to follow her mentor's advice and focus on her own learning. Several student teachers had <sup>118</sup>negative experiences at schools. These negative experiences seem to have weakened the student teachers' collegial identities slightly. Fortunately, the student teachers remained focused on their own professional development because of the support they received from their families and mentor teachers.

### ***7.3.4 Overcoming a lack of access to a shared repertoire***

For the final school visit, Dineo taught at an English medium school in a township where most of the residents speak Afrikaans as their home language. She was unable to teach

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<sup>118</sup> These experiences included school management positioning them as assistants, viewing hostile relationships between management and staff and between teachers, and having conflicts with fellow student teachers.

English via code-switching to Afrikaans unlike many of the teachers at the school. She relied on her Afrikaans speaking peers to assist her during her lessons. Many South African teachers have similar experiences where they teach English as a First Additional Language to learners of other languages, which they may not speak themselves (Romylos, 2018). This experience could have helped to prepare her for a future teaching post as an English teacher. Landon was placed at an English and Afrikaans medium school. He had to in Afrikaans for one of the Social Science classes even though it is his second language. Landon struggled with some of the Afrikaans vocabulary, and later asked an Afrikaans speaking teacher to teach the class to ensure the learners received high quality mother-tongue education. Though Landon relied on the Afrikaans colleague to teach the class, this might not be an option in the future. Due to teacher availability, particularly in rural South Africa, some teachers who speak Afrikaans as a first additional language have no choice but to teach in the language, which requires them to invest in learning the general and subject-specific vocabulary (Groenewald & Arnold, 2024).

### ***7.3.5 Teachers' influence on student teachers' professional identities development***

Moruti acknowledged that he was a better at teaching Setswana than English, because it is home language and he was passionate about teaching it. In the previous school visit, Moruti's mentor teacher did not have enough time to assist him with the skills and abilities to effectively teach English as a subject. This speaks to a lack of joint enterprise or amount and depth of interaction, and mutual engagement or shared accountability for developing the competencies of the student teacher. Buhle and Isipho both confessed that they were not confident in their ability to teach poetry, with Buhle saying she was not very "interested" in poems previously. This may reflect a context where first year student-teachers, including future language teachers, are not regular readers (Bharuthram, 2017; Rimensberger, 2014). During the school visit, the mentor teachers assisted Buhle, Isipho, and Moruti to develop their PCK using learner-centred methods, including the use of appropriate media and questioning to relate the texts to learners' knowledge. This advice improved the student teachers' confidence in their abilities to use learner-centred teaching to develop good relationships with learners, which was part of their relational professional identities. This example shows that the professional identities' development of teachers and student teachers is related to the subject that one teaches (Anspal et al., 2012; Beijaard et al., 2000; Pozas & Letzel, 2021). Without the advice from their mentors, the student teachers might not have

improved their capabilities as future language teachers and would have begun their teaching careers with less developed PCK.

Professional identities also develop through the interconnections the teachers make between their personal and professional identities, which includes the teachers' personalities. Research has shown that it is easier for teachers to work together when they have common values (Nias, 2005). Catriona admired her one mentor teacher for her dedication and hard work because as an energetic and motivated teacher, she saw herself as a hard worker. Her admiration for her mentor teacher was one of the reasons she looked up to and developed a strong relationship with her, contributing to the development of her collegial professional identities. Dineo and Isipho admired and wanted to be like their mentors in the final school visit, who were patient and calm, in Dineo's words "civil". Previous research has shown that student teachers who have positive learning experiences strive to be like their former high school teachers (Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Rodrigues et al., 2018). Candice, Buhle, and Landon also wanted to emulate their former high school teachers during the final school visit. Landon strove to be knowledgeable and creative as a History teacher, and Candice focused on developing good relationships with the learners like her former high school teachers and current mentor teacher. Buhle mentioned that her former teachers were helpful, respectful, creative, and well prepared. She displayed these traits by preparing lessons by using media, such as articles and pictures, and finding ways to help and motivate learners to improve while enforcing classroom rules in a respectful manner. The student teachers purposively developed certain traits to become better able to relate to learners like their former high school teachers and mentor teachers whom they admired.

Isipho also developed her relational professional identity through the relationship she had with one of her mentor teachers. At the beginning of the school visit she felt that teachers should not be too emotional with learners, while her mentor teacher expressed that she was an emotional person. She shared during a <sup>119</sup>Life Orientation class that her father has passed away with the learners, and this encouraged them to share their stories of loss with her. Breyton also shared parts of his story for the first time with learners during the school visit, including the death of his mother while he was in high school. Both student teachers felt that

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<sup>119</sup> Isipho taught Life Orientation classes during the final school visit to assist another teacher who was busy with his duties as a member of the school's disciplinary committee, even though it was not one of her subjects.

being open and vulnerable with learners might help them confide in them. Isipho and Breyton, through interactions with their learners, and for Isipho also in dialogue with her mentor, learned about the centrality of emotions for teachers' work. Sharing of emotions with learners is an essential part of teachers' work because it is part of the foundation for relationship building and caring for learners (Day, 2013; Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006; Nias, 1996; Noddings, 2012; O'Connor, 2008; Platz, 2021; Taxer & Frenzel, 2015).

According to Lai (2005) and Ambrosetti (2014), mentors provide student teachers with developmental, relational, and contextual support during teaching practice. In this study, mentor teachers provided developmental support to the student teachers by advising them on how they could improve their subject teaching. The participants also received indirect relational support from mentors, and their former high school teachers because they wanted to emulate them as role models. The student teachers wanted to develop some of the the values and personality traits of mentor teachers and former high school teachers that they believed would assist them to develop good relationships with learners. Since teaching relies on teachers' relationship with the learners, it is hard to separate the person from the professional. The literature shows that teachers perceive their personality traits as a central component of their professional identities (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Beijaard et al., 2000; Beijaard et al., 2004; Izadinia, 2012). The traits mentioned by the student teachers were calmness, creativity, helpfulness, knowledgeableness, patience, preparedness, and respectfulness. By emulating their role models the participants strengthened their relational professional identities.

### ***7.3.6 Learner relationships and student teachers' professional identities***

Teachers experience both positive and negative emotions while interacting with learners and colleagues (Day et al., 2006; Taxer & Frenzel, 2015; Zembylas, 2003a, 2003b). Several of the student teachers developed their relational professional identities by engaging with the learners positively. The positive emotions expressed by Buhle, Candice Catriona and Landon were pride in learners' behaviour and results, happiness when learners interacted with them inside and outside of the classroom, satisfaction in one's career choice, and fondness for the learners. When teachers express positive emotions, including, pride, happiness, and liking for learners, they have better relationships with learners efficiency, job satisfaction, and lower levels of burnout (Taxer & Frenzel, 2015).

To maintain their relational professional identities, the student teachers managed their own negative emotions and remained calm, patient, and respectful while enforcing class rules. After interacting with ill-disciplined learners in class Landon, Moruti, and Buhle vowed to keep calm, patient and civil, to suppress their anger, and to become stricter. A greater focus on class rules for Landon and Buhle, and on submission deadlines for Moruti, was not seen as in-tension with their relational professional identities as they vowed to enforce classroom management techniques in a firm and respectful manner. This can be seen as part of joint enterprise as the student teachers wanted to create shared purpose and accountability among the learners for them to follow the class rules. For Breyton and Moruti this was part of mutual respect, which is an important part of the African philosophy of Ubuntu (Letseka, 2014; Mligo, 2021). Breyton emphasised the importance of respect and accountability, which is a key feature of restorative discipline (Lodi et al., 2022; Hendry, 2009). Through interactions with the learners, the student teachers developed classroom management strategies in ways that affirmed their relational professional identities. This finding is encouraging as many student teachers have reported that classroom management is the most challenging part of teaching (Foncha et al., 2015; Gravett & Jiyane, 2019; Lamote & Engels, 2010; Marais, 2016; Moosa & Rembach, 2020; Moulding et al., 2014).

Two of the student teachers, Moruti and Catriona, developed relational professional identities based on their personal identities as Christians. The students' personal identities as Christians who prayed and attended church services influenced their professional identities, because they viewed themselves as Christian teachers. As Christian teachers Catriona focused on being a moral role model and financially supporting learners, and Moruti focused on imparting moral guidance to learners. This supports previous research that has demonstrated that teachers' and student teachers' personal and professional identities are interconnected (Bukor 2015, Makovec, 2018; Pillen et al., 2012). Both teachers provided pastoral care to the learners, which includes a focus on emotional, spiritual, and material well-being (Magezi, 2019; Mahmoudi et al., 2012; Shoeman, 2015;).

The relationships the student teachers developed with learners influenced their relational professional identities as caring teachers. Both Breyton and Isipho practiced pedagogies associated with love. For example, Breyton showed care for a class of learners by encouraging and motivating them, and Isipho showed affection for the learners who are not by doing small but significant things such as, calling them by affectionate nicknames and

fixing their ties. Small acts of kindness can make learners feel that a teacher cares for them, which makes them more motivated to learn from this particular teacher (Stronge et al., 2011).

Despite the personal and professional challenges that the student teachers faced, they remained motivated to make a difference in their respective schools during TP. Freire conceptualised a pedagogy of hope where educators help people to liberate themselves from their oppressors, which requires tools such as critical thinking and self-directed learning (Freire, 1994/2021). Several student teachers practiced their own form of these pedagogies; Candice remained confident in the learners' abilities, while Breyton, Buhle and Landon continued to set high standards for their learners. Maintaining high expectations for learners is important because it can help learners to improve their higher self-efficacy and subsequent academic performance (Rubie-Davies et al., 2020). Landon believed that learners streamed into lower academic sets were just as capable as the other learners and motivated them to believe in themselves. It is significant that Breyton and Buhle had high expectations in the final school visit for learners in Quintile 3 and 4 schools many of whom came from townships, as teachers often have lower expectations for learners with low socio-economic status (SES) (Johnston, Wildy & Shand, 2021; Reddy & Fadiji, 2020; Rubie-Davies, 2009). The teachers' expectations for learners from lower SES schools is important because learners from poorer schools have lower academic aspirations than learners from richer schools, and teachers have more influence on the aspirations of learners from lower SES than their parents do (Reddy & Fadiji, 2020).

For Breyton and Landon these high standards motivated them to support the learners to become more adept at critical thinking in the final school visit. Landon focused on teaching learners how to conduct source analysis in History in a critical manner, and Breyton aimed to develop more curious and independent learners with the dispositions of lifelong learners. These skills are identified as one of the four 21<sup>st</sup> century skills that are critical for the learners to participate actively in a globalised world (Astuti et al., 2019). The student teachers' practices promoted creative and critical thinking skills, were aligned the ideas in Freire's Pedagogy of Freedom (Freire, 1998).

There has been limited research that has explored how the student teachers used pedagogies of hope during school visits to make a difference in the lives of the learners. Several of the student teachers who were motivated to make a difference in learners' lives also used

pedagogies of hope during the school visit. In this study, the desire to make a difference as a motivation was tied to hope in learners' capabilities and the use of pedagogies of hope as classroom practices.

Although learner relationships were important for the student teachers' professional identities development, large scale literature reviews focus on teacher-learner relationships (Kincade, Cook & Goerdt, 2020; McGrath & Van Bergen, 2015). The research does not often mention how relationships between learners and student teachers led to the development of professional identities and competencies. Perhaps the lack of research stems from the assumption that a school visit is too short of a time to form relationships with learners that could impact one's personal and professional development. Since the student teachers were visitors or peripheral members of the school community, another assumption might be that they would not develop deep and meaningful relationships with learners. This research showed that learner relationships are important for student teacher professional identities development.

#### **7.4. Findings for the third research sub-question**

In this section I present a summary of the findings that relate to the research sub-question, 'To what extent are the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers aware of their developing professional identities during teaching practice?' The focus of the summary is on the eight participants' demonstration of awareness of their developing relational and collegial professional identities.

The student teachers described and discussed their developing relational professional identities during interviews and in their journals. They were aware that forming relationships with learners was a large part of their relational professional identities and described them ways in which they were emotionally invested during the school visits. Moruti vowed to become a more physically and emotionally present teacher in class when learners noticed that he was distracted. Breyton, Candice, and Catriona taught their subjects passionately and excitedly, Breyton felt language was a critical part of learners' education, Moruti wanted to share his Setswana language and culture with learners, and Catriona and Candice formed bonds with Afrikaans home language learners as Afrikaans speakers and teachers. Furthermore, for some participants their motivations for becoming teachers were part of their

relational professional identities. For example, Catriona decided to work with children after she worked as an assistant for a year and was satisfied with her career choice. Breyton and Dineo explained that they wanted to make a difference in the lives of learners, which Dineo used as a motivator despite teaching in a school with high absenteeism and low learner marks. Isipho and Breyton stated how their motivations had changed over time, they became more caring, loving, and affectionate after realising in the final school visit that not all learners received enough care and attention from their parents.

The participants were aware of how they used aspects of their personalities, including hard work for Catriona, friendliness for Candice and Catriona, helpfulness for Buhle, Candice, Catriona, and Isipho, and humour for Candice and Landon, to build good relationships with the learners. The participants were also aware of the influence their former high school teachers and the mentors had on their developing professional identities during the final school visit. Moruti and Catriona were aware of how their identities as Christians affected their relational professional identities. Catriona expressed how her beliefs and her experiences of growing up in poverty had motivated her to help learners financially while Moruti believed that like a pastor he should counsel and offer learners moral advice.

The participants reflected on and discussed how TP experiences helped them to think differently about their roles as student teachers and future teachers. While at the start of the school visit, Isipho saw herself as more an older friend to the learners, she noticed that as a future teacher she would also be a mother figure to them. Catriona was happy to be called “mama” during a school visit and admired a previous teacher who had been like a mother to her learners. Dineo felt that she was a role model to the learners after sharing her teenage pregnancy experience at her former high school in the previous school visits. Moruti also saw himself as a role model after learners addressed him as “Mr” while working as an assistant. Breyton, Catriona, and Landon used a learner-centred approach to build better relationships with the learners. Buhle, Isipho, and Moruti were able to describe how their mentors’ feedback during the final school visit helped them to teach English using a learner-centred approach. Breyton and Landon also used a learner-centred teaching approach to achieve specific goals with the learners, which included problem solving for Breyton, and critical thinking for Breyton and Landon.

The participants also described their beliefs about teaching and how they viewed their learners. Four of the student teachers, Buhle, Breyton, Candice, and Landon, discussed maintaining and communicating high expectations for learners in the final school visit. Breyton and Catriona believed that they should make their classrooms welcoming spaces for learners, Catriona focused on creating classrooms where learners felt safe, and Breyton on ensuring that learners were free from bullying. Catriona and Breyton were aware that these desires stemmed from their experiences as learners; Catriona had a teacher whose classroom felt safe and welcoming, and Breyton had experienced bullying in high school. Though he did not specifically mention inclusive education, much of what he said related to a past module that focused on how to create inclusive classrooms. Moruti, Breyton, and Catriona were also able to articulate their belief in Ubuntu, which they also learned about as part of the B.Ed. degree. The student teachers mentioned aspects of Ubuntu that were important for them, Breyton focused on the principle of mutual respect, Moruti discussed reciprocity, and Catriona mentioning the importance of community.

While Buhle, Landon and Moruti said they had become stricter with learners in terms of classroom rules and submission deadlines, they were also able to describe how they remained patient and respectful of learners. Candice took a relational approach to discipline and was aware that getting to know the learners by name and developing relationships with boys who were troublemakers, meant that they would help to keep the class in line. Breyton focused on teaching learners to respect one another through raising one's hand to speak, not talking when others are working, and apologising to the wronged party for acts of misconduct.

The student teachers described and discussed their developing collegial professional identities in the interviews and journals. Landon and Moruti were aware how past experiences had influenced these identities. Moruti became more responsible and dedicated as a university student and student teacher after he was readmitted following an appealed exclusion. Landon felt that he was more reserved until he made good friends he worked with on assignments at university, which could help him to work with other teachers in future.

Being willing to learn was an attribute of most of the student teachers, and when Moruti and Candice experienced disagreements with fellow student teachers during the final school visit, they chose to focus on their own learning instead of the conflict. Instead of allowing negative experiences with others to diminish their collegial identities, several of the student teachers

managed to regulate their emotions through their relationships with others, either family or their mentors, during the final school visit. Landon and Catriona felt angry and frustrated when the principal told all the student teachers that they were not being helpful enough. Catriona continued being her “friendly self” after encouragement from her mother, and Landon felt appreciated because his mentors praised his efforts during the school visit. When Dineo saw teachers acting unethically in the final school visit, she worried that she would be tempted to act unethically, but hoped that she would always act ethically as a future teacher.

### **7.5 Findings for the fourth research sub-question**

This section discusses the findings to the final research sub-question, ‘*What are the factors that influence the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers’ professional identities development?*’ I found five factors that influenced the development of the participants’ relational professional identities development and four that influenced the development of their collegial professional identities.

The first factor that influenced their relational professional identities was the student teachers’ reflections on and learning from the past, which included prior teaching and learning experiences, and previous challenges experienced. The pastoral care that Catriona and Moruti provided to their learners was influenced by their experiences of poverty while growing up and their strong Christian faith, central to which is the concept of good works. During the final school visit Moruti’s cousin was suffering with his mental health and learners noticed he was not focused in class, so in response he chose to be present during lessons and pray during the school visit. The assistant role and experiences of learners calling him “Mr”, motivated Moruti to choose the profession and be a role model for the learners. For Dineo, sharing her experiences as a pregnant teenager and being supported by her secondary school teachers to apply to university, influenced her to be a role model for learners. Catriona realised that she liked working with children, after discontinuing her studies in social work at another university and working for a year as an assistant at a school. Catriona, Buhle, and Isipho describes themselves as mother figures to the children. Catriona was happy to be called “mama” because she felt that one of her previous teachers had been like a warm and loving mother to the learners. After reflecting on the final school visit, Buhle felt that she could care for and support the learners “like a mother would”, while Isipho felt like she cared for the learners like a mother and was also a friend to them.

The second influence on the participants' relational professional identities were their motivations, including what motivated them to choose teaching as a career and what motivated them during their TP. For example, Catriona wanted to work with children and felt satisfied with career choice during the school visits. In the final school visit, Isipho and Breyton expressed a desire to care for the learners, which they did by sharing their experiences of losing a parent. Isipho felt that sharing her personal experiences would make the learners feel more comfortable about approaching her to discuss personal problems. She also showed her affection for learners by calling them by nicknames and straightening their ties. Breyton took the time to show learners love by praising or affirming a class of learners. Breyton, Buhle, Catriona, Dineo, and Landon, wanted to make a difference in the learners' lives, as Dineo wanted to continue to "reach" learners despite their poor marks, and Breyton told learners they could overcome challenges and pursue their goals. Since they wanted to make a difference in learners' lives, Buhle, Breyton, Candice, and Landon all held high expectations for the learners in the final school visit.

The third factor that influenced that influenced their relational professional identities was the way the student teachers related to the learners due to their dispositions and personality. Candice and Landon chose to build relationships with the learners using humour in class. Buhle, Candice, Catriona and Isipho focused on being helpful by providing learners with pens and paper in class, preparing lessons to develop learners' writing skills, and helping learners to complete their homework. Candice and Catriona believed that they built good relationships with the learners because of their friendly natures. Catriona also believed that being hard working allowed her to remain motivated and energetic while interacting with the learners during long school days. Dineo and Isipho stated that they wanted to emulate the traits of their mentors during the last school visit, which included being calm, patient, and civil with the learners. Three of the participants, Buhle, Isipho, and Landon, also emulated the knowledge, respect, creativity, preparedness, and helpfulness of their former high school teachers when interacting and teaching learners.

The fourth factor that influenced their relational professional identities was the student teachers teaching and classroom management approaches. The student teachers described using a learner-centred approach during lessons to achieve their goals and the goals they had for their learners. In the final school visit, Landon became a better a facilitator of debates and

classroom discussions. Catriona explained that she valued learners' unique viewpoints and knowledge, which she accessed through use of media and teaching strategies, such as group work, discussion, and questioning. Breyton used media and questioning to make the lessons fun and engaging. After advice from their mentor teachers in the final school visit, Buhle, Isipho, and Moruti learned how to teach in a more engaging way by using media and questioning to relate texts with the learners' prior knowledge. By using these learner-centred teaching strategies, the student teachers taught in ways that supported learners' communication and collaboration skills, which are two of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills linked to success in any knowledge economy. Breyton encouraged learners' creative learning through his teaching, which is linked to another 21<sup>st</sup> century skill, problem solving, which requires learners to display some curiosity and independent learning (Morris, 2019; Simons, 2000).

They also chose approaches to classroom management based on positive relationships that they wanted to have with learners. Buhle, Moruti, and Landon, felt that they became stricter and more likely to enforce classroom rules, behaviour which is in-line with a proactive approach to classroom management. Candice's approach to discipline was based on her good relationships with the perceived leaders of the "naughty" classes, who helped with the management of the class by constantly ensuring that the class was quiet and focused on their work. Breyton and Moruti worked hard to be calm and remain patient with disruptive learners. Moruti believed that the learners would become more disciplined once he had formed a bond with them. Breyton emphasised that if there was mutual respect between teacher and learner. Unity, reciprocity and mutual respect are also part of the African philosophy of Ubuntu (Letseka, 2014; Mligo (2021). Breyton took a restorative approach to classroom management by making the learners aware of their responsibilities towards other learners.

The fifth factor that influenced their relational professional identities was the student teachers' experiences while interacting with learners, because they enjoyed building good relationships and experienced positive emotions during class teaching. Buhle and Landon experienced pride when learners did their homework and participated in class, Catriona and Candice were also happy when learners greeted and interacted with them outside of class time, and Candice grew fond of the learners. Candice was particularly fond of boys in the "naughty class" and joked with in class, and of a shy learner who was bullied by other "boys" but managed to be elected to the student council, which she hoped would improve his self-

esteem. The student teachers also experienced positive emotions towards the profession, which included satisfaction with her choice of career for Catriona, a passion for the profession from Breyton, and an excitement for the future from Candice.

Four factors influenced the development of the fourth-year student teachers' collegial professional identities development. The first factor was the student teachers' reflection on and learning from past teaching and learning experiences, which included past challenges. Morut managed to successful appeal his exclusion from the university, and when he returned to campus he vowed to spend less time with friends and on social media and to become a hardworking and dedicated student and future teacher. For Landon working with good friends in the same degree programme made him less reserved and more outgoing, as well as more willing to work with others in future.

The second factor that influenced their collegial professional identities was the student teachers' experiences and observations of conflicts during the school visit. They managed these negative experiences through their good relationships with others, including family, peers, and mentors, and their own dispositions. Candice and Moruti managed conflicts with fellow student teachers during the school visit by ignoring the negative comments and interactions with their peers and focusing on their own learning. When Buhle, Candice, Dineo and Landon felt discouraged when witnessing conflicts between teachers and between school management and teachers they relied on their good relationships with others, including their mentors and family members, to motivate themselves.

The third factor that influenced their collegial professional identities was the student teachers' attitudes and relationships with their mentor teachers, due to their dispositions or personalities. For Buhle, Candice, Catriona, Isipho and Landon this included a willingness to learn from or to help their mentors and being grateful to them for their advice and support, which was seen as being a team player by Buhle and Isipho. Dineo displayed empathy for the teachers who worked in a school with conflict between teachers and the principal, low learners' marks, and concerns about learners on drugs or acting violently while at school.

The fourth factor that influenced their collegial professional identities was the student teachers' management of negative emotions when interacting with the teachers at the school,

including, fear, anger, and frustration. Dineo was worried that she would also act unethically by writing down the answers to tests and exams on the board or letting the learners cheat by reading notes hidden in their sleeves if she were also a teacher working at a school where learners had low marks. Catriona and Landon experienced anger and frustration when they felt the principal had spoken to the student teachers about not helping the teachers enough as they felt their efforts during the school visit had not been appreciated. Catriona was also angry and frustrated when she had to invigilate and print copies for the teachers, which caused her to be late to teach one a class. Due to their commitment to finishing their degree and becoming teachers, the student teachers worked hard to remain calm, civil and motivated throughout the final school visit.

## **7.6 Chapter conclusion**

In this study the participants developed their relational and collegial professional identities through mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and use of shared repertoires. The student teachers wanted to develop good relationships with learners due to a passion for the profession and for teaching, and their reasons for wanting to become teachers. These motivations included working with children and making a difference in the lives of the learners. The student teachers drew from their personality traits, use of a learner-centred teaching approach, and the high expectations they had for learners to develop their relational professional identities.

The student teachers managed to interact well with the learners, but their interactions with the schoolteachers were influenced, and sometimes limited by pre-existing factors within the school communities. The factors included unethical behaviour from some teachers, conflicts between teachers or between teachers and school management, and practice of treating student teachers as assistants rather than as learners in a CoP. This mutual engagement occurred with friends and family who were outside of the school community, and with teachers and mentors who were part of the CoP. Through these interactions the student teachers developed their collegial professional identities. The student teachers also developed their collegial professional identities by learning from their mentor teachers. This included assisting mentors to teach the learners in ways that could improve their skills and knowledge in the subjects they taught, and learning practices related to invigilation and marking.

## **ACT EIGHT**

### **Resolution**

#### **8.1 Introduction**

The study explored how the 4<sup>th</sup> year SPU student teachers constructed and developed their professional identities during TP. The construction of the professional identities during teaching practice, refers to how they conceptualised their understandings of these identities, and how aware they were of the development of professional identities. The development of these identities refers to the processes and relationships the student teachers used to further develop their professional identities during TP.

This act begins with an overview of the study, followed by the main findings from the study according to each of the research questions. The next sections of the act, provides the recommendations, and limitations of the study. The act ends with a short conclusion.

#### **8.2 Overview of the study**

Most research focuses on the development of PCK rather than on how student teachers construct their professional identities during ITE, this study contributes to the literature by exploring how fourth year student teacher developed their professional identities during TP (Izadinia, 2012; Romylos, 2018). Teaching Practice with its exposure to authentic schooling contexts is a particularly important time for student teachers to reflect on and develop their professional identities (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Hascher, Cocard & Moser, 2004; Ivanova & Skara- Mincane, 2016; Kakazu & Kobayashi, 2023; Lamote & Engels 2010; Makovec, 2018; Schultz & Ravitch, 2012). Thus, the main research question for the study was:

*How do fourth year SPU student teachers construct their professional identities during teaching practice?*

The sub-questions were:

1. *What are the 4<sup>th</sup> year SPU student teachers' understandings of their professional identity during teaching practice?*
2. *How do the 4<sup>th</sup> year SPU student teachers further develop these understandings during teaching practice?*
3. *To what extent are the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers aware of their developing professional identities during teaching practice?*
4. *What are the factors that influence the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers' professional identities development?*

In this study, Situated Learning and Positioning Theory were the lenses used to make sense of how student teachers constructed and developed their professional identities. As discussed in Act Two, becoming a teacher is a complex socio-relational process, because it entails interaction with learners and teachers in different school contexts. Thus, situated learning theory was relevant for this study because it focuses on how people learn through interactions with others in particular contexts, called communities of practice (Illeris, 2018; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). This means that learning is socially situated, and as student teachers develop their professional identities as part of learning how to operate with others in particular contexts (Wenger, 1998). For this study, the ways in which the student teachers as 'novices' in the school communities learned from their mentors as more experienced 'old-timers' was also important (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Positioning Theory (PT) was used to understand the experiences of the student teachers as learners and novices with less power than the educators appointed by the Department of Education in schools. This theory focuses on how people use known storylines, are plots in stories, to position themselves and others as rightful holders of certain subject positions with their attendant rights and duties (Andreouli, 2010; Harré, 2008). This study paid particular attention to how the student teachers used speech and other communicative acts, including gestures, facial expressions, and features of speech, to project, take up, or reject specific subject positions.

Since PT pays attention to the stories people tell, and stories are always situated in specific social contexts, narrative inquiry, which focuses on interpreting participants' stories (Clandinin, 2006), was a suitable research design for this study. The eight

participants majored in English language, and their other subjects were either Afrikaans or Setswana, or History or Social Sciences who conducted TP at schools where English or English and Afrikaans were LoTL in former Model-C schools or schools in townships.

The narrative <sup>120</sup>data gathered included an initial audio recording, written and audio journals, images, and interviews. This data was analysed using a three-stage process termed broadening, burrowing, and re-storying by Connelly and Clandinin (1990). Broadening entailed ordering the data in the order in which it was gathered, reading it multiple times, and then writing global summaries or broad outlines of each participant's narrative. Burrowing referred to an in-depth data analysis process where I analysed each piece of data for each participant according to the mentioned storylines, identities, rights and duties, and communicative acts. After broadening and burrowing, I was able to re-story the data in Acts Six and Eight. In Act Six, I presented the findings for each participant according to the four research sub-questions, before discussing the main research question, and in Act Eight I summarised the main findings for each of the research questions.

### **8.3 Main research findings**

This section reflects on the main research question and the sub-research questions in relation to the findings that were discussed in Acts Six and Seven. I use the research questions to present the main findings.

The main research question was, '*How do fourth year SPU student teachers construct their professional identities during teaching practice?*'

In this study, participation in joint enterprise and mutual engagement, and reliance on a shared repertoire of practices, were the processes by which the student teachers engaged with others in a CoP and developed their professional identities during TP. Most of the student teachers tried to build a sense of joint enterprise, or shared purpose and accountability, by

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<sup>120</sup> The initial audio recording where participants reflected on their professional identities that was sent via WhatsApp before the second virtual TP block in June 2021. The written journals were submitted by all the fourth-year student teachers on completion of this TP block. The audio journals were sent by participants via WhatsApp for each day of school visit, which occurred between August and October 2021. The participants were asked to send three images related to their identities as university students, teachers and student teachers before the two interviews, the first of which took place towards the end of or after the virtual TP and the second of which took place towards the end of the school visit.

emphasising the importance for learners of following classroom rules and treating peers with respect. Most student teachers also tried to build joint enterprise with the learners by encouraging and motivating them to improve their academic abilities, which included their ability to think critically, be creative, and solve problems, or to reach their goals. Several of the student teachers also worked with their mentor teachers to try and improve the performance of the learners in the subjects they taught.

The student teachers used mutual engagement or shared patterns of interactions with others inside and family outside of the school CoP. The student teachers related to friends and family who were outside of a school's CoP, and to learners, teachers, mentor teachers, and principals who were part of a school's CoP. The purpose of this engagement was to manage the stresses associated with TP, which included negative positioning by the principal and some of the teachers at one of the schools. Over time the student teachers learned the shared repertoires of the schools, many of which related to conducting administrative tasks, including invigilation, and marking practices.

The first sub-research question is:

- 1. What are the 4<sup>th</sup> year SPU student teachers' understandings of their professional identity during teaching practice?*

The findings to the sub-question show that student teachers had two main understandings of their professional identities, as either relational or collegial during teaching practice. The relational professional identities were based on their understandings of themselves as teachers who cared for learners, and the collegial professional were based on how they related to school management and teachers. These two identities are displayed in Table 8 on the next page.

Table 8: Summary of relational and collegial professional identities

<b>Identities</b>	<b>Motivations</b>	<b>Traits</b>	<b>Roles</b>	<b>Approach</b>	<b>Results</b>
Relational	Wanting to: work with children, make a difference, and be a role model	Caring/loving, empathetic, engaging, kind, present, patient, helpful, and respectful	Friend, pastor, mother, and role model	Use of Ubuntu (mutual respect & reciprocity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• better management of negative emotions</li> <li>• stricter use of positive discipline</li> <li>• greater focus on restorative discipline</li> </ul>
Collegial	Wanting to help and improve	Empathy, friendliness, and communication	Team player and lifelong learner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• grateful for advice and support</li> <li>• passionate and excited about learning</li> <li>• open to adapting practices based on feedback and new situations</li> </ul>	Growing confidence, happiness, and professional development versus disappointment due to treatment, lack of access to staffroom and professional development.

The second sub-research question is:

2. *How do the 4<sup>th</sup> year SPU student teachers further develop these understandings during teaching practice?*

The finding for the second research question is that student teachers relied on three ways of engaging with themselves and with others to develop their professional and personal identities during teaching practice. The first was to reflect on and learn from past experiences, which included challenges they had faced prior to the fourth-year school visits. When the student teachers reflected on the past, they attached meanings to their experiences and used them to make choices or decisions that positively influenced their relational and collegial professional identities. Through reflection on past teaching and learning experiences, the student teachers developed their relational identities by becoming more caring, empathetic, present in class, and more aware of their status as role models, mothers, and friends to the learners. Their reflections on past learning experiences also helped two of the student

teachers, Moruti and Landon, to develop into collegial teachers who are hardworking, and willing to work with others in the future.

The second method of developing their relational and collegial professional identities was the student teachers' articulation and reliance on their personal conditions. These personal conditions included their beliefs, motivations, dispositions, and ability to display positive emotions while regulating negative emotions during TP. The student teachers' personal conditions contributed to how they managed the learners' challenging behaviours in class, which contributed to the development of respectful and caring relational professional identities. Their beliefs, aspirations, motivations, and dispositions played a role in their development of a learner-centred teaching approach, which contributed to their relational professional identities. The student teachers also regulated the negative emotions they felt when encountering conflict with peers, or between teachers and school management. This emotional regulation allowed them to remain committed to learning from their mentor teachers, which was an important part of their collegial professional identities.

The third way that the student teachers formed their professional identities was through their social conditions, which was their ability to form from the relationships with people inside and outside of the immediate school context. Pre-existing relationships with friends and family allowed them to remain motivated while facing challenges during the school visits. Their relationships with the learners contributed to the development of their relational professional identities, and their relationships with the staff members, most notably their mentors, contributed to the development of their collegial professional identities.

The third sub-research question is:

3. *To what extent are the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers aware of their developing professional identities during teaching practice?*

The findings showed that the student teachers were aware of and able to describe their developing relational and collegial identities. All the student teachers were aware that the relationships they formed with learners formed a large part of their professional identities. This included awareness of building relationships with the learners through expression of positive emotions and regulation of negative emotions during the school visits. Many of the student teachers described their motivations for becoming teachers, which centred around

developing good relationships with and having a positive impact on learners. The student teachers knew how to use their personality traits to build closer relationships with the learners. For example, Catriona's and Moruti's Christian personal identity helped them realise their duty to provide pastoral care to the learners. Other student teachers viewed themselves as role models, mothers, and friends to the learners, which was linked to use of a learner-centred teaching approach. The student teachers articulated their beliefs which included maintaining high expectations, use of practices aligned with inclusive education, and a classroom management approach centred on principles associated with Ubuntu, proactive and restorative discipline.

The student teachers were aware that the pre-existing relationships with family and the relationships they formed with peers, teachers, and mentor teachers formed a large part of their collegial professional identities. As a result of reflection on their past experiences, Moruti and Landon became more responsible and willing to work with others. Most of the student teachers characterised themselves as collegial and teachable. The participants managed to regulate negative emotions when they encountered conflicts with peers, between teachers, or between teachers and management, which is an important skill in the profession requiring multi-group interaction and conflict resolution. It was also critical for the student teachers to control feelings of disappointment and isolation by being focused on positive relationship and the opportunities to learn from their mentors, whom they predominantly had good relationships with.

The fourth sub-research question is:

4. *What are the factors that influenced the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers' professional identities development?*

The factors mentioned in the previous act can be grouped into five main factors that influenced the development of the student teachers' relational and collegial professional identities. These five factors are the student teachers' reflections and learning from past experiences and challenges, their motivations and goals, their dispositions and personality, how they relate to others, and their emotional regulation. These five factors are summarised in Table 9 on the next page.

Table 9: Factors influencing professional identities development

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Relational professional identities</b>	<b>Collegial professional identities</b>
<b>Factor 1</b>	<b>Reflection on and learning from past teaching and learning experiences and challenges (prior to and during TP)</b>	
	Experiences as a high school learner Challenges during TP with learners and learner misbehaviours	Challenges during TP with school conflict, and treatment by management and teachers
<b>Factor 2</b>	<b>Motivations and goals</b>	
	Motivations for choosing to be a teacher (wanting to work with children and wanting to make a difference)  Motivations during TP (wanting to care for learners)	Goals for TP (wanting to improve and be prepared for the future)
<b>Factor 3</b>	<b>Dispositions and personality</b>	
	Calm, civil, patient, and respectful Cheerful, friendly, and humorous Knowledgeable and well-prepared Hardworking and helpful	
<b>Factor 4</b>	<b>Relational/collegial approach (how student teachers relate to others)</b>	
	Teaching approach- Learner-centred, and use of a respectful approach towards classroom management (informed by Ubuntu, proactive and restorative discipline)	Equal partner (“team player” and “junior colleague”)
<b>Factor 5</b>	<b>Emotional regulation Expression of positive emotions and regulation of negative emotions</b>	
	Positive emotions • passion and excitement • pride and fondness • happiness and satisfaction  Negative emotions • anger, fear and frustration	Positive emotions • gratitude • empathy  Negative emotions • anger and frustration • disappointment and isolation

## 8.6 Limitations and suggestions for future research

This was a small qualitative study of eight participants who were student teachers studying a Bachelor of Education degree Sol Plaatje University in South African. The university is one of two established after Apartheid ended, and was the first university to adopt a revised B.Ed. model based on the ‘Minimum requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications’ policy. An expanded study comparing the professional identities of student teachers at multiple universities who have revised their curriculum based on the policy could add to the current body of knowledge on teacher education. Comparative studies comparing the professional identities of student teachers across multiple counties would increase the scope of the study and the applicability of the findings for initial teacher education. The findings would be

highly applicable if future research was done in similar contexts, which in this case would be newly constituted universities in developing countries.

The research findings were based on an analysis of participants' stories. Since this data is self-reported, it is possible that the student teachers' reflections on their identities may not align with their practices during school visits. Future studies could combine a narrative design with observations of lessons and interactions with mentors to determine to what extent these identities are visible or absent during teaching practice. Previous research indicates that the subject or subjects taught influences teachers' professional identities (Anspal et al., 2012; Beijaard et al., 2000; Pozas & Letzel, 2021). However, in this study only Landon foregrounded his identity as a History teacher while the rest of the participants briefly mentioned their subject major. The ways in which subject majors are tied to professional identities development may be subtle tacit. A narrative study combined with observations could help researchers to tease out the linkages between subject majors and professional identities' development during practicum.

More research on professional identities' development during practicum is required. In the literature review, the gaps that exist for student teachers between learned theory and practice were explored. In this study the implementation or lack thereof of particular theories was not explored. It would be interesting to note how student teachers used or failed to use theory to develop their practice. This would entail an in-depth review of a particular curriculum, or part of the curriculum, prior to a narrative study of the participants' professional identities development during teaching practice.

Situated Learning and Positioning theory formed the theoretical lens of the study. While this theoretical framework was useful for helping me to understand how student teachers developed their professional identities during teaching practice, it did not include theories that focus on institutional transformation. Thus the research suggests ways in which the university and the schools can better support the student teachers' professional identities development, but does not seek to implement or monitor these changes. Additional applied or critical research on professional identities development could be used to transform universities and schools to better support student teachers during future TP.

In this study, the participants mainly developed their relational and collegial professional identities during teaching practice. Although much literature on the importance of mentor teachers for student teachers' professional development exists, there is less research on the importance of student teachers' relationships with learners. Therefore, I could not include a detailed discussion on how student teachers' relationships with learners informs their professional identities in the literature review. More research on how relationships with learners informs student teachers' professional identities during teaching practice is necessary. While the study does recommend ways to support these identities, further research could also guide teacher educators' future practices.

The recommendations in the study require additional time from lecturers and administrative staff. Due to the fees-must-fall protests and the declining university subsidies, particularly for students that receive financial aid in South Africa, most universities are increasing student numbers without hiring additional staff. Thus, in this context, and many others affected by managerialism, it will be challenging to implement these recommendations.

All of the findings of the study are context dependent. Some of the findings related to initial teacher education during the pandemic, may be broadly applicable. This study took place in 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic. This meant that the first round of interviews with the participants was held over Microsoft (MS) Teams when students were learning online at home to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Since, this could have impacted the quality of interaction between the researcher and the participants, it is possible that a face-to-face interview would have yielded richer data from the eight participants in this study. Hopefully, face-to-face interviews will be possible for future narrative studies on South African student teachers' professional development.

While the study found that some student teachers required their mentors' help to teach topics to particular learners, this challenge could also be attributed to the structure of the SPU B.Ed. degree. At SPU in the B.Ed. 'teaching of' modules in the third- and fourth-year lecturers demonstrate and students practice using pedagogies relevant to their subject majors and minors. In addition, in the first two years student teachers learn-from-practice by observing teachers during TP, and in the third- and fourth year they learn-in-practice by teaching during school visits. Hence, the COVID-19 pandemic deprived student teachers of opportunities to learn-in-practice through observation and teaching of mock lessons on campus and classes to

learners in schools. This could have worsened student teachers like Moruti, Buhle, and Isipho's knowledge of how to teach 1) a particular genre, poetry in Isipho and Buhle's case, and 2) a particular audience, which for Moruti was the teaching of English to First Additional Language learners. It is possible that had the student teachers been able to participate in a physical school visits and micro-lessons on campus they would have been better prepared to teach the subject before the final school visit in the fourth year of the degree.

For Landon, performing similar duties to a teacher at the school during increased his confidence that he could assume the role of a teacher next year. While it may be beneficial to expect SPU fourth-year students to act as the class teacher for several weeks, which is the normal practice at the University of the Witwatersrand, unfortunately this is not possible in Kimberley due to the limited number of high schools in the town. SPU student teachers conduct one school visit before term and half of the last TP block in their homeschools, and since many of the students' hometown is Kimberley, it is not possible for all the students to teach their own classes for an entire school visit.

Due to her positive experiences of teaching practice in a rural area Buhle wants to be a secondary teacher in a rural area. While some courses at Sol Plaatje University (SPU) mentioned teaching in under-resourced contexts, and English lecturers focus on how to teach English as additional language learners, the University does not offer supervised rural placements. Since (SPU) does not offer supervised rural placements, students may be less prepared to teach in a rural school compared to their peers from other universities who have conducted school visits in rural areas under the guidance of their lecturers (Nkambule, & Mbhiza, 2022). Buhle and other student teachers from SPU who want to work in a rural school, may not have been sufficiently prepared to respond to the needs of their future learners.

Due to the pandemic, the students conducted one of their teaching blocks online as a substitute for a school visit. In 2024 teaching practice occurs in schools, but the coursework is covered through a blended-learning approach. More qualitative and quantitative research on blended learning as a means to prepare student teachers and develop their professional identities is required. This research should investigate what impact the mix of online and face-to-face learning has on preparing student teachers for school visits.

In future, it could be useful to explore how different TP models help prepare students for their futures as teachers, and specifically how different practicum experiences contribute to the professional identities development as student teachers. It may be useful to compare models on TP in similar contexts. For example, future studies could in the South African contexts could consider if and how ITE curricula influence professional identities' development. Such studies could compare how pre-service teachers are prepared, supervised, and supported prior to and during TP in different schooling contexts throughout their B.Ed. degree at different institutions. Future research could also focus on the integration of TP into the B.Ed. programme and how the length of and responsibilities given to different B.Ed. cohorts during TP affects their professional identities' development.

### **8.7 Conclusion of the study**

This study added to the literature on student teachers' professional identities by showing how eight fourth-year student teachers at one South African university developed their professional identities during TP. The main identities that the student teachers developed during the school visits were relational and collegial, and throughout TP they were aware of and able to describe the development of these identities. The processes by which the student teachers developed their identities were reflection on experiences and challenges prior to and during TP, mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and use of shared repertoires within the school communities. The main factors that influenced the student teachers' professional identities were temporal (time), personal (personality and dispositions), and social (relationships) conditions. The recommendations from this research suggested ways that teacher educators could improve teacher education and teaching practice to support student teachers' relational and collegial identities. The recommendations focused on ways to improve ITE curricula and the implementation of teaching practice. The study suggests that ITE curricula could include opportunities to develop practices related to humanising pedagogies, learner-centred teaching, and a respectful approach to classroom management. The study also suggests that teaching practice programmes should consider monitoring and managing student teachers' reflection on identities development and conduct during TP more closely. When TP occurs online or through blended learning HEIs should invest so that virtual practicum is as authentic as possible.



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## Appendix A

### Ethical clearance letters and letters of permission

1. Ethical clearance letters from Wits



Signed conditional ethics clearance cert



HREC Non Medical Ethical Clearance Ce

2. Letter of permission from SPU



Arnold, L Ms - outcomes letter 19 C

3. Letter of permission from the NCDE



NCDE Research Permission L. Arnold

4. Letter of permission from high schools in Kimberley

Laura Arnold

[laura.arnold@spu.ac.za](mailto:laura.arnold@spu.ac.za)

076 477 3915

Name

Address

Numbers

#### **RE: Permission to conduct research**

The school management gives Ms Laura Arnold permission to conduct research by interviewing mentor teachers and student teachers on the school premises.

Name of person granting the permission: \_\_\_\_\_

Position of person granting the permission: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of person granting the permission: \_\_\_\_\_

Date that the written permission was granted: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B

### 1. Participant information letters for student teachers

#### **Participant information sheet for student teachers**

Dear Ms or Mr

My name is Laura Arnold, and I am a lecturer at Sol Plaatje University (SPU) who is studying towards a PhD in Education at the University of the Witwatersrand, School of Education. In order to fulfil the requirements of the degree, I will conduct research to understand how you as fourth year student teachers construct and develop your professional identities during teaching practice. In this study, the term professional identities refers to how you understand yourselves as future teachers.

As part of this research, I would like to invite you to send me voice notes via WhatsApp and for you to take part in two interviews. Before the interviews I will ask you to send me three pictures that you find on the Internet related to your teacher. The interviews will last for between 30-45 minutes each, and will take place towards the end of the first and second teaching practice block. During the interviews, I will ask you to tell me about how your experiences during each teaching practice block influence your views about yourself as a teacher. With your permission, I would like to audio record the interviews with a digital audio recorder, to capture your responses accurately and to listen to them repetitiously. I will ask you to send me one voice note reflecting on your teacher identity prior to teaching practice, and for you to send me daily voice notes reflecting on your experiences during teaching practice. I would also like you to give me permission to analyse the journals that you are required to write as part of teaching practice.

This study is not part of the official University B.Ed. programme. You will not be offered any financial compensation or any additional marks in any subject for your participation in this research, and you will not be disadvantaged in any way for not participating in this research. I will ask you to schedule an interview at a time that is convenient for you, and you may reschedule the interview at any time. If you decide to participate in this research, you will be able to withdraw your participation at any point in the research, and you can also choose not to answer any interview questions that you do not want to. If you experience distress during the interview, we will stop the interview, and you will be free to reschedule the interview for another time. If you need some emotional support following the interview/s, you can book a free appointment with the on-campus counselling services by contacting Ms Thabiseng Africa at [nthabiseng.afrika@spu.ac.za](mailto:nthabiseng.afrika@spu.ac.za) or 053 491 0293.

The findings from this research will be completely confidential, and any information that you share with me will be securely stored in One Drive, a password-protected Internet-based storage system, which will not be shared with anyone else. When I write the findings of this data in my thesis and in journal articles, and do presentations at conferences, I will give you, the schools where you conduct teaching practice, and any places and people mentioned by you, pseudonyms (false names) to protect your identity. Since the University is fairly small, even if I do use pseudonyms, there is a chance that other students or staff members at the University may be able to identify you. Before I publish my findings, I will invite you to meet with me to discuss the research findings, which will provide you with an opportunity to ask me to remove or to re-write some of what you have said so that it is harder for SPU students or staff members who read the thesis or journal articles to identify you.

If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethics of this research, please contact the Non-Medical Human Ethics Research Committee at 011 717 1408 or [Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za](mailto:Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za). If you have any questions about the research, please feel free to contact me on 076 477 3915 or [laura.arnold@spu.ac.za](mailto:laura.arnold@spu.ac.za). My supervisor is Dr Thabisile Nkambule and her contact details are 011 717 3049 or [thabisile.nkambule@wits.ac.za](mailto:thabisile.nkambule@wits.ac.za). The findings from this study will be published in the form of a thesis, which will be available through the library website of the University of the Witwatersrand.

Kind regards  
Laura Arnold

## 2. Letter of informed consent for student teachers



UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WITWATERSRAND,  
JOHANNESBURG

### **Informed consent form for student teachers**

Project title: Exploring fourth year Sol Plaatje University student teachers' professional identities development during teaching practice

Researchers' names: Laura Arnold

I hereby agree to participate in this research. The research has been explained to me and I understand that by agreeing to participate in this research I agree that:

The researcher can analyse my *reflective journals	Yes	No
I will be asked to send a **voice notes during teaching practice	Yes	No
I will be invited to participate in research interviews	Yes	No
I will be asked to bring pictures from the Internet to these interviews	Yes	No
The researcher can audio record these interviews	Yes	No
I have read the letter of informed consent	Yes	No
This research will be kept confidential	Yes	No
The researcher can quote me anonymously	Yes	No
The researcher will use a pseudonym (false name)	Yes	No

\*Student teachers wrote reflections, including daily journal entries during teaching practice, and will be asked to send me a \*\*voice note as their daily reflection in 2021.

Name of participant:

Date:

If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethics of this research, please contact Shaun Schoeman from the Non-Medical Human Ethics Research Committee; if you would like to know more about the research, please feel free to contact me, Laura Arnold, or my supervisor, Dr Thabisile Nkambule. The relevant contact details can be found below:

Researcher's contact details:  
Name: Laura Arnold  
Contact details: 053 491 0253 or  
[laura.arnold@spu.ac.za](mailto:laura.arnold@spu.ac.za)

Supervisor's contact details:  
Name: Dr Thabisile Nkambule  
Contact details: 011 717 3049 or  
[thabisle.nkambule@wits.ac.za](mailto:thabisle.nkambule@wits.ac.za).  
University of the Witwatersrand

Non-Medical Human Ethics Research Committee contact details:  
Name: Shaun Schoeman  
Position: Committee Secretary  
Contact details: 011 717 1408 or [Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za](mailto:Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za)

## Appendix C

Example of the prompt sent to participants before the initial WhatsApp voice note

“Good morning (insert name of student). I hope that you are well and enjoying the mid-term break.

Please send me a quick voice note where you reflect on becoming a teacher. Some hints to help you reflect are:

-Tell me about the place(s) where you lived, the primary and secondary schools you attended, and how, if at all, this influenced your decision to become a teacher.

-Tell me about your relationship with your family members, and how, if at all, your family influenced your decision to become a teacher.”

## Appendix D

### Example prompt that guided the participants to send the three images

Before the interview, I would like you to send me three images that relate to you teacher identity on WhatsApp. Each image should represent you as a person, a student teacher and/or as a university student. Use one or more of the following photo-sharing platforms: Pexels, Pixabay and Unsplash to find these images. The links to the platforms are:

<https://pixabay.com/>, <https://unsplash.com/> and <https://www.pexels.com/>.

## Appendix E

### Example questions for student teachers

- How did you decide to become a teacher?
  - What influenced/shaped the above decision?
  - How do you feel about this decision now?
- What kind of a teacher would you like to become and why?
  - What is your teaching philosophy, or values and beliefs about teaching?
- Considering the different teaching practice experiences, how close or far do you feel from becoming the kind of teacher that you want to be?
- How do you feel about the subjects that you teach?
- What were your experiences during teaching practice?
  - In what ways did your experiences during teaching practice influence your views about teaching and your understanding of yourself as a teacher?
  - If you have experienced any challenges during teaching practice, please describe these challenges.
- Can you tell me more about how the three images relate to your identity as a person, student teacher and teacher?
- When and how often did you write your reflective journals?
  - Tell me if and how you think writing these journals benefited you as a future teacher
- Tell me about your interactions with your previous and current mentor teachers?
  - How do your interactions with your current mentor teachers compare to your interactions with previous mentor teachers?
  - How did your mentor teachers help you to develop as a teacher?
- What kind of support did you receive from the University and the school with regards to the teaching practice block?
  - How supported did you feel by the University and the school during this teaching practice block?
- What do you notice when you look back on how you described the kind of teacher that you want to be in writing during/before and after teaching practice

## Appendix F

### The Learning Journal

Questions to guide your reflection on your learning are show below. You will not answer all the questions every day. **Only elaborate on the issues/questions that are relevant to you on the day!** Your learning journal should have 18 entries in total.

1. What did I do today for the online teaching assignment?
2. How did I think and feel about what happened today?
3. How does this online teaching compare to face-to-face teaching?
  - a. What unexpected challenges, some of which I may not have encountered with face-to-face teaching, occurred?
  - b. What have I learned are the possible strengths of teaching online?
4. How do I plan to improve my teaching in future?
  - a. What did I do that worked well, or that did not work well?
  - b. How would I teach this lesson differently online and in a face-to-face classroom?
5. How do I plan to improve my ability to teach with technology teaching in future?
  - a. What are my strengths and weaknesses when it comes to designing lessons and teaching online?
  - b. What areas do I need to improve upon and why?
  - c. What is my plan to improve my ability to teach with technology?
6. What did I know about teaching online before this experience and how much have I learned from this experience?
7. What knowledge and skills have I gained from this experience that I can use in future?
  - a. How will the knowledge and skills that I have learned benefit myself and my learners in future?
  - b. How can I use what I now know in a face-to-face classroom in future?
  - c. If I teach in a school with access to technology and WIFI, how would I use what I have learned in future?
8. Has this experience made me think differently about my teaching and/or about myself as a teacher?
9. What things would I still like to know about teaching online, and how do I plan to learn or to teach myself these things?

To see how your journal will be assessed, view the rubric attached.

Appendix G

**Learning Journal Rubric**

Criteria	Not Yet Competent	Emerging	Fair	Competent	Highly competent
Mark	1	2	3	4	5
Reflection type	1. The shopping list writer	2. The note maker or logbook writer	3. The surface reflector	4. The comparative reflector	5. The reflective practitioner (critical reflection)
Description	Only what the student did today for the online teaching is described	What the student did today for the online teaching and at what time is described	What the student did today for the online teaching, at what time, and how he or she thought and felt about what happened is described	What the student did today for the online teaching, at what time, and how he or she thought and felt about what happened is described (there may be some reflection on learning and future practice, but it is often absent or unconnected to future practice and teacher identity)	What the student did today for the online teaching, at what time, how he or she thought and felt about what happened, and how they plan to improve and how he or she understand himself or herself as a teacher are described in detail

## Appendix H

### Global impressions of the participants

#### 1. Candice

Candice is a cheerful and optimistic, plus-sized White Afrikaans woman. Her nature is reflected in the light and bright pictures she chose to represent her identities as a person, university student and student teacher. After high school she wanted to become a teacher, but due to the financial pressures at home her single mother wanted her to start working. Her uncle was able to convince her mother to let her study at Sol Plaatje University (SPU), and she was able to obtain a bursary to study a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.).

After the first year when her mother could see that she was passionate about teaching, and when she explained that she did not want to do something ordinary, instead she wanted to be extraordinary, she began to support her. She has tutored primary school learners throughout her four years and has really bonded with one little boy. Although she was unable to tutor during the second TP block, she continued to visit the boy she had tutored, and she was happy that she went to his house on his birthday by coincidence.

When she conducted the first TP block online, she missed the interactions and unexpected responses from the learners, as she found that when she had to give the answers, it was difficult to expand the lesson into different directions. For TP, she often chooses to return to her former high school in Kimberley, and she was placed there by the TP Office for the second TP block. Her time spent at the school means that she has developed a good bond with the learners and teachers there. She really enjoyed her TP and often sent quick updates over WhatsApp of exciting things that had happened to her mother and grandmother. During the last TP block, she got along very well with her mentor teachers, one of whom was a former SPU student teacher.

She experienced a conflict with the other student teachers, and especially the assigned student coordinator at the school. The student coordinator informed her that she would be graded in a phase that she was not teaching. She asked her lecturer about this and informed the student coordinator that this was not true. The coordinator was angry that she had asked the lecturer, as she was not the coordinator and now the other student teachers did not greet her or ignored her each day. Her one mentor reminded her that she was not there for them, and that she was

there for herself. She reminded herself that she was not at the school to make friends and resolved to focus on her own learning.

By teaching both the Senior Phase (SP), which includes Grades 7 to 9, and Further Education (FET) Phase and Training Phase classes, which includes grades 10 to 12 for Afrikaans, Candice realised that the Senior Phase classes had very little background knowledge about the world when a teacher told her she had to inform the learners about Apartheid to help them understand a text set during that time. Candice bonded more with the older FET Phase Learners as she felt they were less scared and more able to have fun in class. Although she said that the SP classes were a “teacher’s dream” as they were quiet and did their homework, she preferred one of the “naughty classes”, which was a FET class of mostly boys who often do not complete their homework. She enjoyed the bond she had with the class. She also liked it when they always asked her if she would become a teacher at the school and told her that they were sad when she had to teach other classes, instead of continuing to teach their class. She noticed that the language teachers of the class had a big impact on their learning and motivation. She reported that the English teacher of the class made notes and summaries of all the texts, so the learners could understand the work, and motivated the class to work hard in order to have free periods, particularly on Fridays. She said that because the Afrikaans teacher did not give the learners as much support and as many rewards for good behaviour, the class was falling behind in the subject, and the learners admitted they did not even know their set books for Afrikaans.

If she had a choice, she would choose only to teach the SP and FET Phase learners in Afrikaans and not to teach the SP learners in English. She finds it easier and more fun to teach and connect with learners in her home language. When she teaches in English, she says that she has to prepare more and sometimes she struggles to find the correct word or to explain the correct meaning of the word to her learners in English.

## 2. Moruti

Moruti is a slim, serious Black Setswana speaking man. He comes from a rural village near Kuruman in the Northern Cape and apart from the first five years of his life when he lived in a village in another rural area, Kakamas, which is also close to a tourist attraction, the Augrabies Falls. He attended primary school which was a very small and understaffed rural

school and high school in a larger rural school. He is religious and had wanted to be a pastor previously and enjoys the pastoral or guiding role that he plays in learners' lives as a teacher.

He was academically excluded at the end of 2018, and he successfully appealed his exclusion. While he was excluded in 2019, he worked as an administrative and teaching assistant in his hometown. His enjoyment of the work and his exclusion made him determined to work hard and to do well in his fourth year. The time he spent working in the school left a deep impression on him and his image of himself as a teacher is of him standing in the staff room, and his image of him as a person is of him dressed in a suit and was taken at the time he was teaching in the school.

To prepare for the virtual TP, the student borrowed a textbook and bought other materials for his lesson. At first, he struggled to adapt to teaching with technology, but over time he felt that this experience made him use media in lessons more creatively and to plan his time better. He struggled with noises outside when he was recording his lesson on one day. He often longed to be in a physical classroom with learners and to hear their voices, and he was not sure if his lessons were effective as he could not see if the learners had understood him.

During TP, he was placed in a school in Galeshewe, the largest township in the city. While he teaches Setswana to learners the Senior and Further Education Phase from Grades 7 to 12, he only teaches English at the SP from Grades 7 to 9. When he noticed that his subject content, pronunciation, or explanation of content to the student in English is imperfect he tried to improve. The learners, all EAL speakers, let him know what they understood him well when he taught in Setswana, but not so well when he taught them English. He asked his mentor for advice and applied what he was told to make his lessons easier for the learners to understand. He believes that because he comes from a rural area that he speaks proper Setswana and does not use as much slang or as many words from the Afrikaans language as the high-school learners at the school.

He also encountered a situation where a learner who is a sangoma was shouting and acting violently by throwing furniture and trying to hit or kick learners. He asked the learner to leave the class and to get another teacher to come. By the time the teacher came, most of the period was over and he then went to the principal to report the matter, and then the principal

called the learner and the learners' parents to the office. He had not known how to handle the situation, but he believed that he would now know how to handle these situations in future.

On Heritage Day, 24 September, which was a public holiday in the country, the learners could wear traditional clothes to school. This was a school fund raising event with a small participation fee. A few learners who did not have money to attend the event asked to clean the classrooms and he says although he was short of money, he gave them R20 and the other student teachers also gave them money, which made them very happy.

### 3. Dineo

Dineo is a Setswana speaking student from a rural area, which she describes poor, outside of Kuruman in the Northern Cape. For most of her life she attended rural schools, about 30 minutes distance from Moruti, where most of the learners were underprivileged.

She struggled in high school when she moved to a bigger and more urban city, Klerksdorp and fell pregnant. She then returned to her hometown. After she fell pregnant, she felt that her mother, aunts, and uncles no longer believed in her. On the day that she was due to write her Grade 11 exams her teachers from the school came to get her to write the exam. She worked hard at her studies and managed to obtain a bursary to study teaching at SPU. She often returns to her rural high school for TP. The teachers refer to her story to inspire the learners and she also hopes to become a role model for them.

During her first virtual TP block she found that when teaching with technology there are no breaks and it is easy to make a mistake as the lesson goes quickly, and in real life, teachers have more time to correct their mistakes. When teaching the first few classes she found herself using the English words instead of the Setswana, which she felt was "*totally not appropriate*", and said that in class she could have taken more time to think of the words and asked the learners for the words.

She wanted the learners to see how they would react to her teaching and her facial expressions when she recited a drama for the Setswana class. She was worried about the technology failing because that would leave her without another option. Her lack of knowledge and preparation for the topic on stories and folktales in Setswana made her doubt her "*ability to teach*". She found teaching of some transactional texts in English, including

minutes and an agenda, boring. Teaching these lessons without the responses of learners made her uneasy, and after the lessons she wrote that *“I did not present the lesson well because I had doubts if I am doing the right thing and everything felt so wrong.”*

She was placed at a very disadvantaged school during the second TP block. When the principal briefed the student teachers about the school, he warned them that the learners were on drugs and that they should let them leave the classroom if they misbehaved and that the learners could be violent and rape them, and that they should not teach classes alone. This made her scared of the learners at first, but over time she was able to develop relationships with the learners. She and another student teacher gave one learner, who sells sweets and snacks to learners for extra money for the house to pay for staples like electricity money, the popcorn kernels, and spices he needed, and he was so happy that he cried. She watched a boy lament that his life was over now, because he no longer could play soccer due to COVID-19, which was the only reason that he came to school, and she really felt sorry for him.

During TP at the school, she was unable to teach her main subject, Setswana, which she teaches at the SP and FET level, as the learners’ additional language was Afrikaans. As she does not speak Afrikaans, she had to try and adapt to the language barrier between her and the learners and her colleagues. Though the teachers speak English they often forgot, and addressed her in Afrikaans, she had to teach her minor subject, English to SP learners in Grades Seven, Eight and Nine, she often brought the other student teachers who spoke Afrikaans to the classes to assist her with her teaching. The participant felt strongly that the learners would have benefited if she could have been placed in a school where she would have taught them Setswana. She explained that in Kimberley the learners mix Setswana and Afrikaans, where in some cases they speak more Afrikaans than Setswana, but that as she grew up in a rural Setswana speaking community that she speaks “pure” Setswana.

The school was disorganised, and the length of the periods would be announced each day, this negatively affected her assessment as she had planned for a 50-minute grammar and speech lesson and only completed one part of the lesson. She described the poor relationship between the teachers and the principal. Once when the periods had changed the teachers did not know and were sitting in the staffroom when the principal came in and thought that they were bunking he began shouting and screaming at them. When the teachers were upset by the principal, she found it very hard to ask for support or guidance from her mentor teachers.

Most of the learners only came to school for the opportunity to have a free meal and once the lunch was over, they went home. As many of the senior learners were writing exams and could come and go when they pleased, the other learners also left through the front gate. She expressed surprised that no one monitored the gate and tried to prevent the learners from leaving. Some of the learners struggled to concentrate and keep up with the work in class and in some exams, she saw the content written on the board; she was also told not to interfere if she caught learners cheating during exams by taking papers out of their sleeves. When she was marking the papers, she found it very depressing and had to stop and take a break at one point, because all the learners were scoring zero for the question/s she was marking. She felt that some learners were very behind due to COVID and an English teacher whose post had been vacant for almost the whole year. She felt that the learners in the rural school where she usually teaches are more disciplined. She now feels more able to teach in different contexts but wonders if the learners in her future school will be even more ill-disciplined.

She selected three pictures during her first TP visit. One of her as a person with a rainbow on her face, which represented her being able to accept diversity as a university student, the other of a long and winding road as part of her journey as a teacher and the third of friends enjoying themselves to show that she feels work-life balance is important as a person. In her second school visit she changed her pictures. The pictures of the smiley face and the picture with the 'keep calm' message represent her ability to be positive during difficult situations as a student and student teacher like the one she had during her second TP block. The suitcase represents her ability as a person to keep a balance between her responsibilities as a teacher and her personal life. She often travelled between her current context and family in another town when she felt like she needed a break from TP. The three pictures she chose all have a soothing or calming colour palette.

#### 4. Landon-DM

Landon is a White English-speaking male from Kimberley. He is a little quiet and reserved at first but opens up to me over time. His family had a strong influence on him learning to be a teacher as they called him "the, smart one" in the family, and he found that he was good at explaining things to others.

Learning online was very difficult for the student as he generally studies with his friends who are studying the same degree at the University. He chose a picture of students chatting around a table to represent him as a university student. The recording of virtual lessons was also difficult for him because he did not have the interactions with learners. He has a love and a passion for History and relies on learners' points of view and perspectives in order to make his History lessons engaging. During his second TP block at his old high school, he found the lessons where the learners were unwilling to participate very challenging to teach as he had no plan for what to do if learners would not participate in the lesson. He learned ways in which to successfully facilitate whole-class discussions on History topics. His method for facilitating the discussions is to talk about a topic in a controversial way and to note which students feel strongly about the topic before asking them to speak. Once the more outspoken students have spoken, this prompts the other members of the class to respond. He finds that this method works well as learners are more willing to challenge one another's opinions than to disagree with the teacher.

He always chooses to conduct his school visits at his old high school and is often placed there. The school is a former Model C school with spacious and well-furnished halls and classrooms, and large sports grounds located several blocks away from the school itself. This shows that the school has a bus, and that the parents of the learners can transport them to the sports grounds by car. One of the main reasons he returns to the school for TP, is because of the expertise of and relationship with his former teachers. He feels that his English teacher is one of the best teachers in the school for "sheer teaching ability" and enjoyed the different ways he was taught History by his teachers. The one History and Social Sciences teacher focuses on creating a fun environment with learners. For example, he took learners outside to look at anthills and other aspects of nature, and demonstrated protest dances called 'toyi toyi', which he knew based on his participation in the ANC and the struggle for democracy in South Africa. The other teacher was very knowledgeable as he would know many facts about the topic, and he would not need to refer to the textbook during his lessons. Landon was very inspired by both teachers and wants to be knowledgeable and to teach in an engaging way.

The participant was ill with COVID for the first week of TP and when he arrived, he suddenly learned that he had to teach all the grades for a beloved teacher who had passed away. While he found it hard to replace the teacher who had made jokes and having a good time in class the centre of his lessons, he enjoyed the chance to take over the duties of a

teacher. This opportunity allowed him to create his own style of teaching based on class discussions and developing the critical thinking of learners. He wanted learners to think more critically, especially about source analysis in History. When the learners could not find the information immediately in the source, they tended to leave the answer out, and he urged them to think carefully and to answer the question. He said that this promoted more of the learners to answer these more difficult questions instead of leaving them blank.

Though he had not expected to assume all the responsibilities of a teacher during the second TP block, he was excited for the challenge. He chose the word 'impossible' with the 'im' crossed out to represent himself as a teacher. He always told the learners in the lower sets that they are just as capable, that nothing is impossible, and that they can achieve good marks if they work hard. He was generally satisfied with how well the learners did as he felt that the marks reflected well on his teaching abilities considering that the learners had not had a teacher for some time. He was pleased when some of the learners in the lower sets who had not done as well as they wanted to, said that they could have worked harder and intended to try harder in the next assessments.

He always wants to teach his learners to have a good work ethic. In the school where he taught, some teachers let learners have a free period during class time if they work hard. Some of his classes asked him for off periods and he was annoyed and said no when they had not earned it. When his learners badgered him for off periods, he would tell them that he would have given them a free period, but that because they had asked, he was not going to give them one. He tried to tell the class if they did not work hard previously, they had to catch up the work in the next period and that they could only have a free period if they had worked hard previously.

He also urged his learners to do their best and play to their strengths. He found that many learners wanted to take Maths whether they were good at it or not. He let them know that not everyone is good at Maths and that people have different strengths. He explained to me that he was also not good at Maths, and that he was better with people skills that are important for teachers.

The participant did not have an opportunity to apply for the post, as the school appointed a replacement teacher for the last half, of the TP block. He was disappointed that he could not

apply for the post, but he was willing to assist and to learn from the newly appointed teacher, who become one of this mentor teachers.

Although he has by his own admission, he was the weakest at teaching Social Sciences which he only teaches to SP learners in Grades 7 to 9 as his main focus is History, which he teaches to learners in the FET Phase in Grades 10 to 12. He said that he really had to “brush up” on and work hard to prepare for lessons related to Geography. He said that had to brush up on his Social Sciences. He also said that he puts the least amount of time and energy into the teaching of English as a subject, and would prefer a History post, he does a lot of reading, which would help him to teach the subject. Reading is a big part of his identity, and he chose a picture of a person with a book for a head to represent him as a person. He says that his main hobby is reading and that it was one of his earliest “talents”, and that from an early age he would receive merit awards for his reading. He believes that reading for pleasure develops your imagination, and your ability to read and write in school. He tries to encourage his young learners and his younger cousins to read as he feels that this would develop them more intellectually than watching TV.

#### 5. Catriona

Catriona is a short, Coloured woman with a ready smile who speaks Afrikaans as her home language. Before enrolling in her B.Ed., she studied Social Work at a different university for two years. She dropped out of the degree and spent a year at home before deciding to study teaching. Her parents have always been very supportive of her academic decisions. She said that even though there were fewer students enrolled in her previous degree, the lecturers were not as supportive and that she received more support from her lecturers at SPU. Since she is very happy with her current career choice, she chose a picture of a woman smiling and throwing her head back on a sunny beach to represent her happiness with her choice.

For most of her early childhood, she lived with her grandparents in a small town in the Northern Cape. When her grandparents passed away, she lived in Bloemfontein from Grade 6 with her parents. Her Christian faith is very important to her, and she describes her father as a pastor and her mother as the pastor’s wife. Her mother is her role model, and she describes how she works as a petrol attendant, handles the duties of the pastor’s wife, and raised three orphans, two boys and a girl as her own children. She enjoyed the morning prayers in assembly at the school, because they gave her an opportunity on busy mornings when she had

not had time to prayer to thank God for his blessings. Since her mother describes her as her “sunshine daughter” she chose two pictures of two little girls laughing in a field to represent herself as a “joyful, energetic and cheerful person” who does not want to “rub my unhappiness on other people” and to encourage others to smile”. In her interviews, she spoke in a quiet voice but laughed and smiled often. All the pictures she chose are light and bright, which could represent her cheerful nature.

During the virtual TP she was nervous as she had not taught with technology before. She hoped that things would “*turn back to normal*”, so that she could have interactions with learners in class again. She did not enjoy her final school visit. She found the principal unfriendly because he did not greet the students and told them off for not pulling their weight in the school by dropping everything to help the teachers, which she found inconvenient when she was in the middle of marking or preparing lessons. She also said that the younger teachers were unfriendly, as they did not greet the students in the morning. During the TP block, she relied on the encouragement of her mother, who told her to keep on being the friendly person that she is, and her fellow student teachers, who reminded her that the students were so close to achieving their goals. She ended up counting the weeks that she had left to go at the school. The image of herself as a student teacher she also represented the happy and unhappy moments that student teachers go through. In the image that she chose, here are two thumbs opposite each other, one thumb pointing up and the other thumb pointing down. She explained this as the fact that life and being a student has its “ups and downs” and that being a student teacher requires sacrifices.

Even though she did not enjoy many aspects of the school visit and insisted that we conduct the interview via MS Teams once she was back at home rather than on school grounds, she still preferred the school visit to the virtual TP block. She prefers teaching in an “actual classroom” because she can ask learners if they understand the work and have class discussions with learners. What she likes most about teaching in a face-to-face classroom is the opportunity to facilitate classroom discussions. Although she sometimes needs to keep the learners focused on the discussion topic, she enjoys it when learners take the discussion in new directions, and she can learn from them.

Like Candice she would prefer to teach in Afrikaans in future, and she only teaches English to the SP learners in Grades 7 to 9, Afrikaans to the SP and to FET learners in Grades 10 to

12. She thinks that learners are freer around you when they speak their home language and that you can form better bonds with them.

#### 6. Breyton

Breyton is a tall, Coloured bilingual (English and Afrikaans-speaking) man with an evident passion for teaching. He is inspired by the work ethic and dedication to the craft shown by his father, who is a former principal of a school that was reserved for Coloured children during Apartheid. Having a parent in the profession who was honest with him about the challenges teachers face allowed him a realistic view of the profession before he chose to become a teacher. Since his father was the principal of the school where he conducted TP, which was also his former high school, he faced some resistance from the teachers who did not like his father's authoritarian management style. He also felt that some teachers were threatened by him as they felt that he was there to take their jobs, and he reminded himself that he was there to improve his own teaching. Despite the tensions with the teachers, he had a very good relationship with the Principal and Vice-Principal.

He decided to become a teacher in part because of his positive experiences when he was in Grade 8 tutoring younger learners in his old school where he was able to help the learners to improve their marks. He has continued to tutor English at the university, where he also believes that he had a positive impact on the learners' marks, and his lecturer is sad to see him stop tutoring the students. Through his tutoring of high-school learners at a private school he has funded most of his university expenses and has not had to ask his father for money. In the future, he would like to help poorer learners achieve better marks, he would like to set up a programme where university students tutor learners from underprivileged communities.

While he looks up to his father, who he says is "very strict". He also struggles to gain his father's acceptance as a gay man. While his father prizes academics above all else, and Breyton is a high achiever, a former Head Boy with excellent marks at the University, he also realises that he must be able to live his own life. When his mother died while he was in Grade 10, he poured his energies into his studies, and they became an escape from him. In his second year of university, he had to deal with his grief and father's re-marriage, which occurred in his first year. Since he faced many challenges in his personal life, he chose a

picture of a lion to represent him as a person as the lion as the king of the jungle is seen as the strongest animal.

His Christian faith is important to him, and he often prays about how to handle the challenging behaviour he encounters from learners. As someone who is a sexual minority and faces prejudices, he also values inclusion and hopes to create inclusive classrooms in future. One of the most important components to his teaching philosophy is respect. He believes respect is not given and that it is earned and that all teachers should respect learners because even a learner can have an opinion and should be treated with respect. When a learner, who was a former junior at the school told him that the “Teaching thing was getting old”, he was so angry that he left the class and calmly asked the Vice-Principal to deal with the learner, as a student teacher he was unable to discipline the learner directly. When the learner denied being rude, the other learners in the class confirmed that she was being rude. The Vice-Principal then forced the learner to apologise and commented on her half-hearted (and possibly sarcastic) apology, and JP chose to move on realising that he could force the learner to apologise properly.

During the first day of the virtual TP, he said that he quickly managed to overcome his stress and anxiety at having to teach online. He said the experience had helped him to develop the skills of teaching with technology and teaching virtually. He reflected the teaching in this way requires patience with challenges, including loadshedding. In response to the question “Has this experience made me think differently about my teaching and/or about myself as a teacher?” He wrote, “No. It has given me the ability to push and push in achieving my goals.” He also mentioned that it was important to push through challenges and difficult situations at school or in life to achieve his goal of becoming a teacher throughout his audio and written journals.

He encountered some challenging situations during TP, including one where a female learner who was crying in his class disclosed that her father’s friend had sexually abused her. When the parents were called in, the daughter reminded her father that she had already told him about the abuse, and he told her to shut up. This situation made Breyton feel helpless, and he consulted his father who reminded him that teachers can only do so much. Fortunately, shortly afterwards his class complimented him by reminding him of the impact that he had on

them by saying. “Sir, we wish you can stay here forever, you understand us.” This made him feel better about the positive impact he had on the learners in the school.

In the school he was able to teach the one class that has a reputation for being difficult. He noticed the class were being standoffish and prayed about the situation before asking the class about their behaviour. Though the class was difficult to teach at first, he was able to form a bond with them by asking them what more they needed from him as their teacher. At the end of the TP block, when he asked the class why they listened and did their work for him and not the other teachers, they responded that it was because he respected them and did not shout and swear at them, unlike the other teachers. This really touched the learners and made them open up to him and come to him for help with work due for other teachers’ classes.

Breyton recognised that teaching is a taxing profession, and he often repeats the words of the Academic Coordinator of Teaching Practice, who said that to be a teacher you must be strong “mentally physically and intellectually”. He says he would recommend the SPU for the excellent quality of teaching and learning, and he is grateful for how much he has learned from his lecturers. If possible, he would like to have graduation face-to-face as this would be a celebration of all the learners have achieved. He also thinks that it is important to remember the students who did not make it, like his best friend at SPU, who committed suicide in her first year of her B.Ed. He would like to do his Honours in the future and to move overseas. He remembers that his one lecturer remarked that his “personality is too big for South Africa”. Unlike the other teachers of English and Afrikaans, he teaches English and not Afrikaans to SP and FET Phase learners in Grades 10 to 12, and in the future, he would like to teach English and not Afrikaans in an international school.

He feels that his experiences of teaching as a student have made him come out of his shell and represented this transformation with a picture of a bright butterfly that has emerged from its cocoon. As a future teacher, even though he is young, he feels like it is time to shine. He chose a peacock with bright shiny feathers to showcase this feeling but clarified that he would not be proud or show off, but rather find a platform to showcase his skills and knowledge.

## 7. Buhle

Buhle is a short, dark skinned, and plump young-looking woman. She is originally from Johannesburg, and she went to an all-girls' school with mainly Muslim learners, in a predominantly Muslim neighbourhood. She feels that this had taught her as a Christian to be open-minded and acknowledge that people do things differently and comes from different backgrounds, and to respect people from all faiths. She mentioned several times that she was an open-minded person like her father and that this trait could serve her well as a future teacher. She said that it was a struggle to adapt to boys and a different school culture when she went to a co-ed high school, but she liked learning and experiencing more about the world around her.

She was originally inspired by her aunt to be a teacher when visiting the primary school where she taught and playing with the children there. She decided to become a high-school teacher as a teenager because she felt that as a young person, she could relate to her learners better than to younger children in primary school. In her high school, she felt inspired by her the way that her Maths, History and Tourism teachers taught. Her Maths teacher used PowerPoint slides in a creative way, which gave her ideas about how to present her own lessons. She said her History teacher relied on research from articles and used pictures to make the lessons more interesting. She felt that her History and Tourism teachers were stricter than her other teachers, but very helpful to learners, and able to present the content in an interesting way. She mentioned that the History teacher knew his learners, required respect and showed respect to all the learners. She said in the first interview that she was inspired by the personalities of her teachers and that she identifies with some of these personality traits as she also feels like she is a strict person and a person who in part due to her experiences as a Muslim school understand diversity and respects her learners. Though she said in the first interview that she is happy that she is strict, and that in the future she would like to become more patient to develop herself into a better teacher.

She mentioned that the Tourism teacher was particularly creative when teaching lessons, and she admired him for being very involved in school sports for using his ideas to develop the sports teams in the school. This ties in with her view that good teachers should be involved in the community around a particular school. She believes that teachers had a duty to develop skills, such as reading and writing, in the community. She would like to be an agent of change, a term she said she learned from her first year during the Cycle of Socialisation,

which she learnt during in her first year in an Education module ‘The individual in the context’.

During the virtual TP she said that she had learned to use media like videos and PowerPoints in her lesson, which would help her to teach with technology in the future. In the journal of her first TP block she mentioned that she had made mistakes or had more to learn about a particular aspect of teaching but did not explain what she meant. She found it hard to teach online as there were no cues from learners about their understanding, which led her to teach in a way where she assumed that learners know nothing about the topic. Her journal shows that she likes to teach her lessons in a structured way as she always introduces the topic and links it to the learners’ knowledge, explains the lesson objectives, explains any genres and literacy devices and the text, gives learners activities, and then explains any homework they need to complete. While she admitted that she was not good at teaching poems in her learning journal, she managed to improve on this aspect under the guidance of her mentor during the school visit.

During TP, she noticed that many Grade 9 learners were not completing their homework and remarked that many of the learners in the grade whose marks were low had been pushed to the next grade in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. She commented that even though learners went to school every second day and had a day in-between they still did not do their homework, and how much this frustrated her. She was also very frustrated when learners did not do a story analysis despite how much time she spent explaining it to them and they just made notes or copied the story as it was. Despite these frustrations, she felt proud when mostly the Grade 10 and 11 classes, she did not teach many Grade 12 classes as is common for student teachers, and some Grade 9 classes responded well to her lessons and completed the work that was due.

She completed TP in a school in a township where most of the population is Setswana speaking. This was challenging for her as she does not speak the language well and had to try her best to translate small bits and pieces of the English and History textbooks, where other learners translate the entire books. She sometimes had difficulties in class judging whether learners were speaking about the work or were chatting about other things. She also found that relying on learners to translate the work was difficult as she could not accurately judge if they had translated the work correctly.

The biggest challenge she encountered during the TP at the school was the strained relationships between the teachers and the teachers and the principal. According to Buhle, the leadership did not address the conflicts or only commented on them briefly in meetings before moving on. She had one negative encounter with the principal when he came into her class and said she should stop teaching so that he could complete work for another subject with the class. She felt frustrated by the way that the invigilation were handled in the class where teachers had to invigilate according to a schedule even when they had classes and learners fell behind on their own work.

The student teachers handled the tensions between teachers by relying on one another for support. In order to reduce tensions between the student teachers and the teachers, the student teachers resolved not to use the staffroom for fear of being judged for bunking or for the teachers accusing them of taking over their space. Some student teachers had mentors that were also involved in the conflicts, but luckily Buhle said that her main mentor for English was new and not involved in the conflict and had taught her a lot about literature, especially how to teach poetry, which she said she did not know enough about and was not as interested in before. She would still have liked to form better relationships with the other teachers in the school and to be placed at a school where teachers as colleagues had better working relationships as she feels that this TP block has not prepared her to enter professional relationships with her colleagues in future.

She witnessed two instances of learners fighting; in the first one she spoke to the learners and asked them what the problem was, and they both calmed down, and in the second, one male learner was chasing another male learner with scissors and then threw a brick at him. She wondered what she should do, but she noted that the teachers did nothing, so she went back to her class. Later in the day, the principal yelled at the teachers, reminding them that a learner was killed in a school in Gauteng, and that questions about their own behaviour if learners get hurt will be raised and that the principal could be held accountable. She admitted that she was still scared and unsure what to do if learners fight in front of her. Though she was now more familiar with teaching in a school in a township, she would prefer teaching in rural areas, as she believes learners in rural schools are more motivated to succeed with their education.

She chose a picture of a female teacher sitting next to a female student and helping her to show that she was a helpful kind of person. She chose two pictures of male teachers teaching with media and technology to show that she was willing to learn and try new things as a student. She chose a picture a female teacher reading to an interested class, and two pictures of the same male teacher asking a one learner to complete a question on the board to represent herself as an engaging teacher who wants to get learners to participate in class.

#### 8. Isipho

Isipho is a quiet and light-skinned girl whose home language is Zulu. She has many teachers in her family, including an aunt and two cousins who advised her that she should become a teacher because she would always have a job. While she did choose to study a Bachelor of Education primarily for job security, over time she has developed a real “heart” for teaching. While she originally grew up in Johannesburg, her mom relocated a few years ago to a small town in the province, and she decided to study at SPU since it is only two hours from where her mother lives. Over the holidays, she completed her TP at her old high school in the town. While initially people remembered her in the community as a high-school learner, when she came to do her practicals they saw her in a new light, as a future teacher.

During the virtual TP block, she tried hard to envision her former friends and classmates as her learners while teaching even reprimanding and calling imaginary learners by their names. She found teaching virtually very nerve wracking as she could not determine if learners would have understood her lessons. She really enjoyed the chance to teach in a classroom where she could walk around and see if learners understood the work.

She also enjoyed the final practicum due to the friendly staff at the school. She had good relationships with and learned a lot from both her mentors. While the older and more experienced mentor had very good subject content knowledge, the younger female teacher took a more learner-centred approach to the teaching of poetry and had learners discuss a poem that was not initially very interesting to get learners more interested in the topic of the poem.

She was able to get to know her learners on a personal level and when talking with the learners about death, she shared that her father had passed away in her first year and how she had coped with the loss. She also learned more about the losses her learners had experienced,

and she realised that even the younger learners in Grade 8 had already been through more losses in their lives than her. She felt that learners who are dealing with a lot of hardships at home have no escape as they do not come to school as often and spend every day at home with their family problems. Since she feels that many learners do not get the attention that they need from their families at home, she made a point to greet learners at the door and to fix their ties for them to show them some affection.

Since the school has a strong vocational focus, she enjoyed learning about the more technical subjects at the school. Many learners were already somewhat motivated to learn English as a business language. She also found that she could motivate learners to learn English by reminding them of the importance of speaking with future clients. While at the school she taught some of the Life Orientation lessons a subject for which she had not been trained, but which she enjoyed as she got to show her initiative and ability to be a team player and to hear the learners' opinions.

Throughout her teaching practicum, she thought back to her two former language teachers, who taught her English and Afrikaans, and whose teaching still inspires her today. She is in contact with the one teacher, who taught her Afrikaans, and asked her for advice on her teaching through Facebook. She also relies on one of her classmates with the same majors as they plan and offer each other advice on their lessons together.

Though she has studied Afrikaans as a First Additional Language since Grade 2, and her grasp of the Afrikaans language is good enough to study it as a second language, she admits that she lacks confidence in her language abilities and needs more exposure to the language. When she registered late at the university, in a panic she chose to teach English at the SP and FET level, which includes Grades 10 to 12, and to teach Afrikaans only to SP learners in Grades 7 to 9. She thought that she would be teaching Afrikaans only as a First Additional Language. She said that by the time that she discovered she would teach the language as a Home Language, it was too short notice to change her subject choices. To compensate as a second language Afrikaans speaker, she prepares a lot for any Home Language Afrikaans classes. As she taught the Home Language Afrikaans class less than the English class, she feels that she did not get to know the learners in this class as well as the English Home Language Learners. As a Black person and second-language speaker of the language she believes that she serves as a motivator to people from other races that they can learn the

Afrikaans language and that it is not only people from the White and Coloured races who can learn the language.

For her pictures she chose an image of a caterpillar to represent herself as a teacher as she is still learning how to be a teacher. She chose the image of a butterfly as a student and explained that she is growing in confidence and “embracing the real me”. For her image to represent her as a person she chose a picture of a women at a beach-side campfire talking to others in a circle. She explained that she like to socialise with friends and with other people to “get to hear other people’s perspectives in life”.

## Appendix I

### Organisation of data in ATLAS.ti (in preparation of writing the global impressions)

- a. Voice notes of the participants. This was the initial reflection on their professional identity, which they completed before the first teaching practice block.
- b. The learning journals.
  - b.1. The journal the participants submitted after the first TP block.
  - b.2. The notes I made on the journals to prepare for the second interview.
- c. The identity of the participants as represented in images. Here I collected each of the three images sent by participants to represent their personal, student, and teacher identity. I included the date when the images were sent, the image, and below each image the text that the participants had used to describe the image. This text was often sent with each image via WhatsApp message and was also a response to follow-up questions I asked about the images during the interviews.
- d. The interview questions for the first interview, which included a set of general prompts for the participants and questions related to their initial reflection or interview.
- e. The transcription of the first interview, which happened towards or shortly after the initial teaching practice block.
- f. The daily audio journals the participants sent via WhatsApp voice notes during the second teaching practice block.
- g. The interview questions for the first interview.
- h. The transcription of the second interview, which was conducted towards the end of the second teaching practice block.

Appendix J  
Secondary identities of Catriona

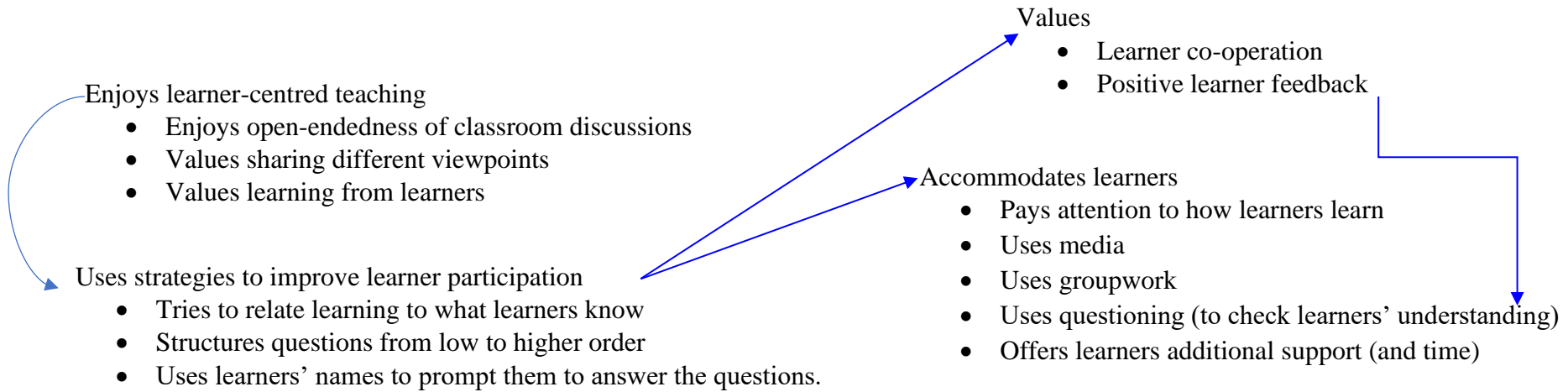


Figure 52. An interactive teacher.

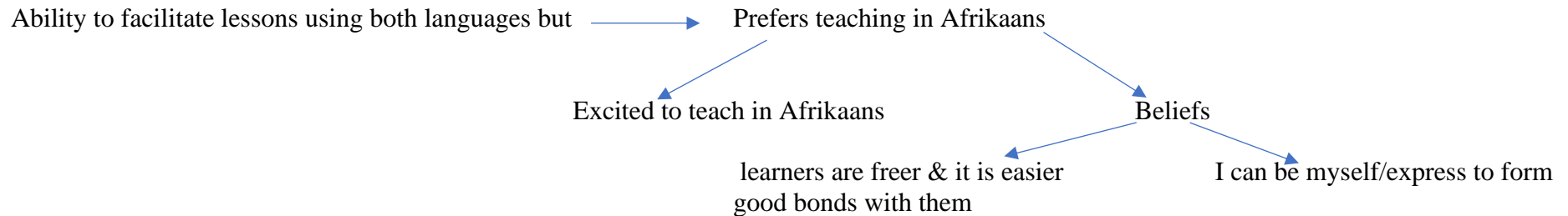


Figure 53. A language teacher.

Appendix K  
Secondary identities of Isipho

- Background
  - A Black student teacher and First Additional Language Afrikaans speaker
  - Choosing Afrikaans as a subject by default
- Past and present investment in and feelings toward teaching Afrikaans
- Current feelings and motivations towards the subject

Figure 54. A second-language Afrikaans speaker.

## Appendix L

### Feedback of supervisor on Breyton's professional identities

#### Breyton's understandings of his professional identities

To answer the question 'What are the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers' **understandings of their professional identity during teaching practice?**' I grouped Breyton's understandings of his professional identities into three figures. These three figures show a Breyton as a loving teacher, a respectful teacher, and a hopeful teacher. The first understanding of Breyton as a loving teacher is displayed **below**:

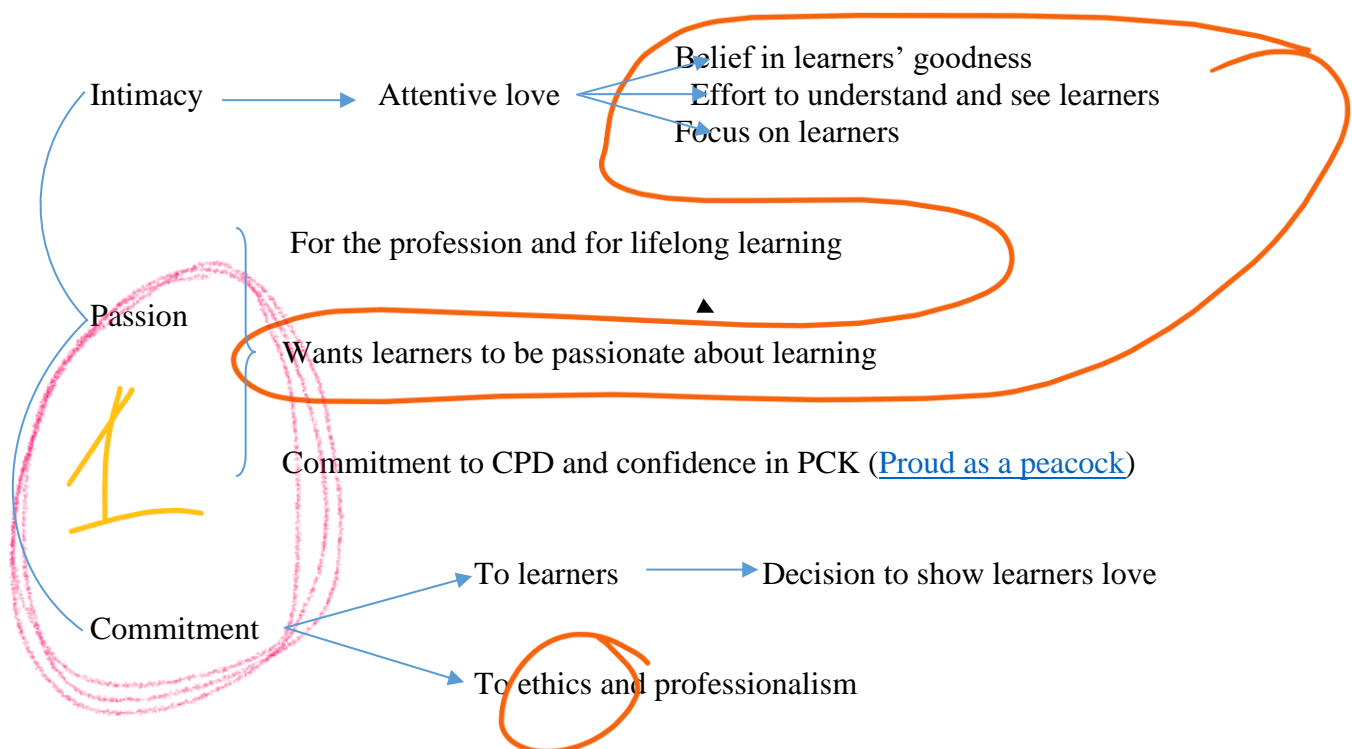


Figure 55. A loving teacher

As a loving teacher, Breyton is passionate (Dr Thabisile Nkambule (TN): I wonder if is not the same as "moral" from Catriona? Which is expected of teachers and teaching profession. However, you didn't mention this with Catriona - even though it appeared in the way she talks about "help and responsibility" to learners), committed and like Catriona he has close relationships with and cares for learners. This closeness or intimacy is brought about by acts of attentive love. Breyton like teachers who show learners an attentive kind of love, believes in the good that exists in every learner, strives to see and to understand learners clearly, and centres the learners' perspectives and needs above his own (Liston, 2008).

Breyton says that he “fell in love with this profession” in Grade 11 and 12 when he began to tutor his cousins and younger learners at his high school (TN: Influence-Last RQ). He describes himself as a teacher with a “passion for education”. He self-identifies as a “lifelong learner”, who is passionate about investing in his CPD, “I always said that I-I, I chose to be better than the person I was yesterday, so it’s a continuous development of yourself.” Due to this investment, he feels very proud of his PCK.

To show his passion and pride in his knowledge, he chose the image of a peacock to He explained his choice briefly in the interview.

“Uhm, I really (looks up) **want to** (looks at camera) what was bestowed upon me I want to (arms in wide circle) **share it** with everyone **because**, like a peacock open and (motions hands in a circle) spreads its feathers and **flaunts it** and **shows it** to everyone (TN: Isn't that when they do this they 'flaunt; pride? I wonder if it's not representing this - unless context is crucial here) I'd like to do that, uh-figuratively speaking.”

Here he emphasises his desire to share and flaunt his knowledge through his word stress, by looking at the camera and gesturing widely. Since he chose an image of peacock to show his pride (TN: Exactly my point above - he has pride within the concept of "passion" and "commitment". Good-we agree then.) in his knowledge, the metaphor I chose was proud as a peacock. The image he chose is shown below:

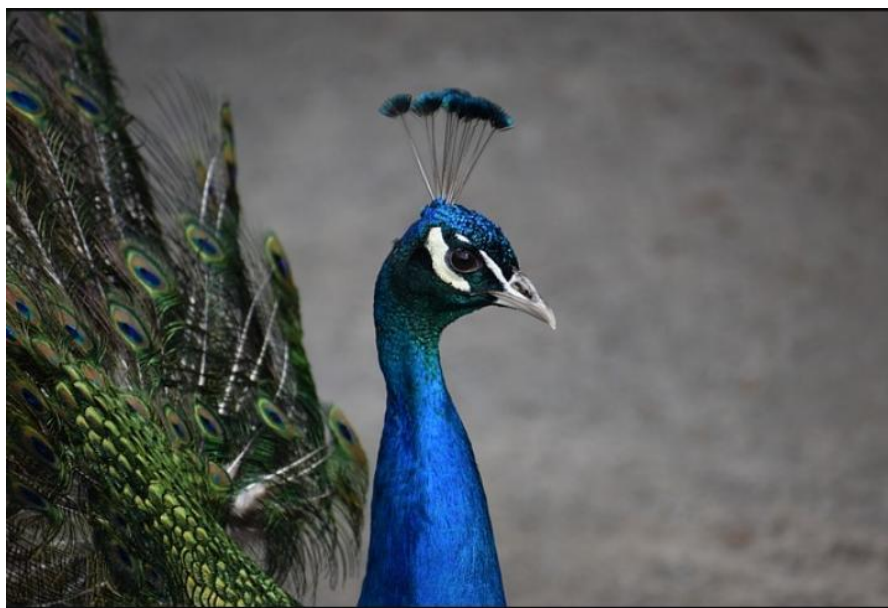


Figure 56: Image chosen to represent Breyton as a student teacher

As he takes pride in his own work, he also thinks that learners should also take pride in themselves and their work as well. He feels that learners are less interested in learning compared to learners when he was in school four years ago. As a person who is passionate about learning, he aims to make learners passionate (TN: Passion (teaching & learning)+ Commitment (learners & learning)+ Pride (teacher & learner)? Interesting) about learning again “And I really want to be that light that brings that passion back to learning”.

Breyton is committed to showing learners love as their teacher, (TN: This is the nature of teaching profession - to promote and encourage learning. Similarly, it will be interesting to know about his "conception of teaching".) and to always acting in an ethical and a professional (TN: Same "teachers as moral role models" from Catriona) manner, which are behaviours that are expected of professionals (Burke, 2004; Evans, 2008). He believes that because many teachers do not act in this manner (TN: Huge Controversial Claim though) that they are belittled (TN: I agree, generally, it has lost its status. There should be literature on this. I am thinking Catriona and Breyton are seen as teachers that tries to bring the "profession status" back, by promoting morals and ethics - as possible some of philosophy missing.) by others, “That is why we are **belittled** (TN: His informal observation and perceptions of the profession = **Influence**) in our profession because there's no seriousness, there's no passion, there's no etiquette for this profession, and it's sad”. Since passion is important for him, he contrasts this to teachers who do not show an interest in or give their best to teaching. He emphasises the words etiquette, or manners, which is important to him as a respectful teacher, this identity is outlined and explained more on the next page.

Relational worldview: Ubuntu

Motto: Respect demands respect

Metaphor: Beautiful as a butterfly (TN: Close relation with a peacock though)

Practices diversity and inclusion (TN: This link to the concept of "Passion + Commitment" - to Knowledge and the learners (Ubuntu). However, they talk about it differently with Catriona neh.)

- Ensuring all learners feel welcome and comfortable to participate
  - Rejection of pre-judgment of learners
  - Accommodation of learners with learning barriers
  - Learner-centred approach
    - Creation of opportunities for sharing of opinions

Use of assertive discipline/restorative practices

- Clear communication of classroom expectations

- Accountability for actions
  - Regulation of negative emotions
  - Opportunities for teachers and learners to apologise for misbehaviour/misunderstandings

**Figure 57: A respectful + Committed + Passionate teacher (TN: So this is dominant PID during TP - the FOCUS should be on this Laura here)**

## Appendix M

### Preliminary re-ordering of data in pre-paration for re-storying

Table 10: Re-ordering of Breyton’s data

Sub-research questions		Main research question	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>To what extent are the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers <b>aware</b> of their developing professional identities during teaching practice?</i></li> <li>2. <i>What are the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers’ <b>understandings</b> of their professional identity during teaching practice?</i></li> <li>3. <i>What are the <b>factors</b> that influence the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers’ development of particular professional identities during teaching practice? Reflection?</i></li> </ol>		<p><b><i>How do the fourth year SPU student teachers construct their professional identities during teaching practice?</i></b></p>	
<u>Influences</u> and <b>impact</b> prior to TP	<u>Influences</u> and <b>impact</b> during TP	<b>Behaviours and attitude</b>	Relation to professional identities
<p>His father (<u>family-father</u>) was a teacher/principal who did the right thing no matter what people said. He taught him <b>to keep his head held high</b> and <b>push through negative circumstances</b> to achieve his goals, he did not let learners’ behaviour detract from his achievements and his focus on his goals.</p> <p><b>Believes</b> that teachers should be strong- message he received from a lecturer (<u>his lecturer</u>). <b>Believes</b> he became a stronger person through his mother’s death (<u>experiences of loss/grief</u>).</p>	<p><b>Motivation</b>-Making a difference. <b>Believes</b> teachers are there to make a difference in learners’ lives. Was excited when he tutored younger learners in high school and their marks improved and wanted to become a teacher who could make a difference to thousands of learners (<u>teacher-learner relationships</u>).</p> <p>It was not until he reflected (<b>reflection</b>) on his PID that he connected this strength to his ability to help learners who he saw during TP go through tough times (<u>teacher-learner relationships</u>).</p>	<p><b>Keeping his head held high</b>-He states that he is not here at school to take people’s jobs or to make friends, he is here for the learners and <b>will keep his head held high</b>.</p> <p><b>Strong like a lion</b>-here he chose the lion to show that the believes that he has become a strong person who has gone through difficult times and who know learners face challenges, but who despite these challenges <b>wants to be a positive influence and a light for learners</b>.</p>	<p><b>Hope (Hopeful teacher)</b></p>

These tables helped me to organise my thoughts around how the participants constructed their professional identities during TP. I called the first column ‘Influences and impact prior to TP’. Under this heading the ‘influences’ were contextual factors prior to the fourth year TP, and the ‘impact’ was the effect of these contextual factors on the participant’s understanding of his professional identity. These understandings included his perspectives, values, and beliefs as a student teacher. In the second column, I discussed the participant’s current influences, including, experiences, and relationships in the school context, and how these

impacted on his understanding of his professional identities. These understandings included the student teacher's, values, beliefs, motivations, desires, and intentions; emotional engagement and regulation; and use of metaphor. Researchers have used metaphor as a tool because it helps them to visualise and therefore understand student teachers' professional identities development over time (Rusznyak & Walton, 2014; Schlegel et al., 2015).

In both the first and second column, I highlighted information in green where the student teacher displayed an awareness of his developing professional identities. In the third column, 'Behaviour and attitude', I discussed how the participant constructed his professional identities during TP. His behaviours included actions taken and roles played, and his attitudes included his intentions and perceptions. After reviewing the information in the first three columns, I then was able to come up with a possible name to represent the professional identity that the student teacher developed during TP. Through the process of creating and filling in the tables, I explored how the participant's prior life history influenced their understandings of and development of their professional identities during TP.

## Appendix N

### Revised objectives and research questions

I re-ordered the objectives of the study to discuss the objectives in an order that made it easier for me to tell the participants' stories in a way that I felt flowed more logically. To show how the original objectives were revised, each of the original and revised objectives are displayed in a different colour below:

#### Original objectives

- To reveal new insights into how aware the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers are of their professional identities' development during teaching practice.
- To describe what the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers' understandings of their professional identities are during teaching practice.
- To discuss the factors that influence the 4<sup>th</sup> student teachers' development of particular professional identities during teaching practice.
- To present a critical analysis of how the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers construct their professional identities during teaching practice.

#### Revised objectives

To achieve the aim of the study, the four objectives of the study are:

- To describe what the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers' understandings of their professional identities are during teaching practice.
- To present a critical analysis of how the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers construct their professional identities during teaching practice.
- To reveal new insights into how aware the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers are of their professional identities' development during teaching practice.
- To discuss the factors that influence the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers' development of particular professional identities during teaching practice.

After I revised the research objectives, I also revised the research questions. I had to add one research question to align the questions to the new objectives. Both the original and revised

research questions, with the new research question highlighted in yellow, are presented below:

### **Original research questions**

The main research question for the study is:

***How do fourth year SPU student teachers construct their professional identities during teaching practice?***

The sub-research questions are:

1. *To what extent are the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers aware of their developing professional identities during teaching practice?*
2. *What are the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers' understandings of their professional identity during teaching practice?*
3. *What are the factors that influence the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers' development of particular professional identities during teaching practice?*

### **Revised research questions**

The main research question for the study is:

***How do fourth year SPU student teachers construct their professional identities during teaching practice?***

The sub-research questions are:

1. *What are the 4<sup>th</sup> year SPU student teachers' understandings of their professional identity during teaching practice?*
2. ***How do 4<sup>th</sup> year SPU student teachers further develop these understandings during teaching practice?***
3. *To what extent are the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers aware of their developing professional identities during teaching practice?*
4. *What are the factors that influence the 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers' professional identities development?*

I changed the order of the objectives and added one research question, so that in the findings I could firstly describe the participants' understandings of their identities and then present the visual summaries of these understandings. I could then explain how the participants

developed the identities during TP. Through reflection people revise their identities; thus, after I discussed the participants' identities development, it was easier to reveal how aware they were of their professional identities' development during TP. After understanding how they constructed and reflected on their identities, it was easier to discuss which factors influenced the student teachers' professional identities development during TP.