

**Departmental Heads' mentorship experiences of novice  
teachers' professional development in low socio-  
economic schools**

**by**

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**March 2024**



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of novice teachers' professional development

in low socio-economic schools

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19 February 2021

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- Data storage requirements.

## DECLARATION

I, Chantellé Antoniadis, declare that the dissertation, ***Departmental Heads' mentorship experiences of novice teachers' professional development in low socio-economic schools***, which I hereby submit for the degree *Magister Educationis* at the University of Pretoria, is my own original work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution. In the study work of others has been used, sources have been identified and acknowledgement has been provided through in-text references and in the list of references.



.....

Ms C. Antoniadis

March 2024

## **ETHICS STATEMENT**

I, Chantellé Antoniadis, obtained ethical approval for the investigation into “Departmental Heads' mentorship experiences of novice teachers' professional development in low socio-economic schools”. I declare that I observed the ethical standards and policy guidelines for responsible research in the code of ethics for researchers prescribed by the University of Pretoria.



## DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to the following people:

To my Heavenly Father, who has bestowed upon me unwavering strength, perseverance, and faith throughout the journey of this dissertation: "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with My righteous right hand." - Isaiah 41:10.

To my loving life partner and fiancé, whose unwavering support, motivation, guidance, and encouragement propelled me through the challenges of this dissertation, ensuring that I could reach my dream. When the journey became arduous, you were always there to lift me up and help me keep going. Thank you for your steadfast guidance and for always reminding me that I am not alone on this journey. I will be forever grateful to you!

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*Education is the key that unlocks the door to endless possibilities.*

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## ABSTRACT

Despite ongoing professional development efforts in South Africa, novice teachers in low socioeconomic areas are still struggling with low morale and high turnover rates. Challenges like inadequate infrastructure, crime, violence, and health risks are particularly pronounced in these settings. Global research indicates that adequate professional development and mentoring can help novice teachers overcome these challenges and succeed. Despite mentoring, novice teachers continue to face pedagogical and managerial difficulties. This qualitative study investigated the professional development of novice teachers at two low socioeconomic primary schools in the Cape Town Metropolitan district, Western Cape Province. Twelve individuals, including six departmental heads and six novice teachers, were purposively selected. The study utilised a conceptual framework examining the interplay between socioeconomic status, professional development, and mentoring, which guided the research. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews and document analysis, gathering rich data related to the participants' experiences. These results were cross-referenced to validate the findings. The study revealed a gap between what novice teachers expect from the teaching profession and their actual experiences, signalling insufficient preparatory training from universities to tackle professional challenges. This study found that the professional development in low socioeconomic status schools does not meet the specific needs of these environments, resulting in misalignment with teachers' and learners' needs. Burdened by limited time and resources, departmental heads face difficulties in providing effective mentoring. Based on the findings, this study recommends that professional development programmes be made relevant to teaching large classes and guided by novice teachers' challenges in low socioeconomic status schools.

**Keywords:** Departmental head, mentoring, novice teacher, professional development, socioeconomic status

## LETTER FROM THE LANGUAGE EDITOR

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03 March 2024

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**Departmental heads' experiences as mentors for professional  
development of novice teachers in low socioeconomic primary  
schools**

**Chantellé Antoniadis: Student Number: 14027527**

This is to confirm that I, Cheryl Thomson, executed the language and technical edit of the above-titled Master's dissertation in preparation for submission to the University of Pretoria for assessment.

Yours faithfully



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## ACRONYMS and ABBREVIATIONS

DH	Departmental head
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education
ECD	Early childhood development
FET	Further Education and Training
GET	General Education and Training
NT	Novice teacher
PAM	Personnel administration measures
PD	Professional development
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
SACMEQ	Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
SES	Socioeconomic status
SMT	School Management Team
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study

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## CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION AND CONTEXTUALISATION OF THE STUDY

### 1.1 Introduction

Significant adjustments and modifications have been made to initial teacher education in Africa in recent years to improve the calibre and quality of education throughout the continent. The focus of the evolving educational reforms includes the revision of curriculum frameworks and the adoption of creative teaching strategies and techniques. Even though these changes have the potential to improve the teaching profession, several obstacles persist, such as resource constraints, lack of infrastructure and finances, quality assurance being difficult in differing contexts, addressing the diverse multicultural and multilingual learners' needs, and most importantly, monitoring and evaluation needs to be ongoing. This study argues that the teacher's professional development is central to all educational changes.

Teachers play a crucial role in the success of schools. In modern society, teachers face moral, social, and emotional dilemmas when educating the technology-orientated 21<sup>st</sup>-century learner (Makovec, 2018). The role of teachers is further influenced by the environment's cultural and social factors. Having said this, teaching in schools has become akin to being a moving force with a moving target. Given the dynamic nature of the role of teachers, teachers must be trained to acquire a diverse set of competencies to navigate cultural and social factors to be effective in their roles, especially novice teachers (NTs). According to Sasser (2018) and Makoa and Segalo (2021), an NT can be defined as an individual with five or fewer years of experience in the teaching profession. NTs are seen as newly graduated teachers starting to teach in the teaching profession (or within the school context), and according to Uushona (2018), they have zero to three years of teaching experience.

Makovec (2018) argues that teachers need to develop a diverse set of competencies to fulfil their roles' requirements and expectations. These competencies include confidence in their subject knowledge, awareness and understanding of the pedagogical and psychological contexts, and the ability to design and implement effective curricula. Additionally, teachers should have a firm

grasp of didactic procedures in their specific subject areas and demonstrate emotional intelligence when working with others. These skills and attributes are developed over time, and it is an ongoing process of professional development (PD).

Researchers such as Al Shabibi and Silvennoinen (2018), Darling-Hammond (2017), Gumus (2013) and Postholm (2018) acknowledge that the PD of teachers is imperative to ensure improvement in classroom practice and learning outcomes. NTs with 1-5 years of teaching experience (Sasser, 2018) – their expectations and experiences give an understanding of the role that they need to fulfil. Insufficient support and the inability to reflect on experiences and practices cause barriers to their careers by negatively affecting their continuous PD. Hence, this study examines the difficulties and challenges that NTs face during mentorship by focusing on environmental factors, the socioeconomic status (SES) of schools, the impact of monitoring, and the support that department heads (DHs) of schools provide to NTs.

This study, *Professional Development of novice teachers in low-socioeconomic primary schools*, is explorative and guided by the importance of teachers connecting the professional, psychological, and pedagogical skills for the success of teaching and learning at schools.

## **1.2 Background**

When novice teachers (NTs) begin their careers, they frequently encounter formidable challenges and obstacles. Making the switch from university student to full-time teacher can often be intimidating because of the challenges of being fully responsible for managing classrooms, creating effective lesson plans, and meeting the requirements of a diverse learner body. Therefore, something needs to be done at school for the early-career novice teachers to assist them in meeting the daily demands of their new work environment. This study argues that mentorship is a much-needed strategy essential for novice teachers' professional development and well-being.

NTs globally struggle to adapt and perform their duties early in their careers and early knowledge and experience gained have a significant impact on their future PD (Ntsoane, 2017). Ntsoane (2017) further argues that the lack of competence due to a lack of mentorship and support influences the transition of NTs into the workplace

as well as competence that can create favourable behaviour depending on circumstances, environment, and belief systems. Ntsoane (2017) outlines the significance of why NTs need to be professionally developed and underscores the importance of effective PD programmes for teachers to provide teachers with the necessary competencies.

While the importance of PD has been in the spotlight around the globe for its importance in improving educator effectiveness, there are still ongoing concerns about the quality of PD programmes and their implementation. One specific issue is the lack of effective mentoring for PD participants. Swart (2013) emphasises that PD should not be confined to a specific time or space. Instead, it should be considered a continuous process that does not have a definitive endpoint. In addition, effective mentoring is crucial in helping educators implement new skills and practices into their teaching. Without adequate support, especially during PD events, PD can become a one-time event that does not translate into meaningful changes in the classroom.

Furthermore, the ever-evolving nature of education means that PD should be an ongoing process. This approach can provide educators with the necessary skills and knowledge to continually adapt to changing circumstances and improve their practice. The continuous approach is further exemplified by the fact that unqualified teachers remain unresolved in many countries, including Indonesia (Lie et al., 2018). Lie et al. (2018) indicated that the teaching profession has employed low-quality and incompetent teachers, which remains unchanged after many education reforms. The low quality and competence of teachers in low-SES rural schools are inadequately enforced by a policy that allows rural schools in Indonesia to employ teachers with no educational qualifications or with only a high school diploma (Lie et al., 2018). Lampert et al. (2019) investigated and conceptualised three different cases of impoverished urban school improvement initiatives in the United States, Australia, and Spain. The common factors in the communities involved in the study by Lampert et al. (2019) were poverty, historically marginalised, and poor SES. The researchers concluded that their research could not solve poverty but recommended initiatives for better education for children through teacher PD (Lampert et al., 2019).

In Africa, teacher education has undergone changes and reforms to improve education by revising the curriculum, the strategies, the approaches to teaching, and the PD programmes (Nantanga, 2014). Van der Berg et al. (2011) evaluated the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) III and concluded that teachers' content knowledge was lower in less-resourced than in well-resourced schools. The low-SES primary school context rarely offers favourable teaching conditions to NTs, and this may dissuade them from pursuing PD to gain the knowledge and skills required to improve educational performance in schools (van der Berg et al., 2011).

In the South African context, Coetzee (2014) expands that race, SES, and geographic location determine the quality of education received in South Africa. Given South Africa's past racial segregation, it resulted in a divide in SES. Low-SES communities have predominantly low-income households, relatively lower levels of education, and parents who are unemployed or working as unskilled labourers. The living conditions include poor healthcare, crime, and some children left orphaned or losing a parent before finishing primary school. Moreover, almost 30 years into the South African democracy, SES still influences the schools in South Africa, with formerly white and Indian schools outperforming black and coloured schools in academic achievement and participation (van der Berg, 2008; Coetzee, 2014). Ntsoane (2017) argues that there is low teaching competency and proficiency in historically marginalised, low SES, and impoverished communities. School environments in (many) low-SES primary schools are not attractive to knowledgeable and skilled NTs, fresh out of university.

Further explaining the education gap, the literature study by Bryant et al. (2019) affirms that South Africa has two different public school systems: one for the rich and the other for the poor. These two education systems divide pupils based on wealth, geographic location, SES, and language. This highlights that the education system benefits the wealthiest 20% to 25% of students, who attain higher grades compared to the broader system that caters to the 75% to 80% of students from poorer backgrounds. It can be derived from the Bryant et al. (2019) study of leadership in high-performing, high-needs schools, that South Africa needs to improve the quality of education for low-SES communities to deliver equal education for all learners. The SACMEQ report shows that the gap in education between high

and low-SES areas is skewed, favouring high-SES areas (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2017). This means that the quality of education received by students in low-SES areas is significantly lower than that received by students in high-SES areas. The report suggests that this education gap is a major challenge for South Africa's education system.

Given the significant gap in educational outcomes between high- and low-SES areas, research on PD, however, has mostly focused on the traditional school context, and this approach may not be well-suited to address the unique challenges faced by educators in low-SES schools. Ntsoane (2017), Gaikhorst et al. (2017), and Green and Allen (2015) indicate the importance of PD and emphasise that the programmes should be tailored to specific challenges such as the ones experienced in the low-SES school context.

Countries such as Canada, the United States of America and New Zealand have implemented induction programmes in their policies to support NTs in becoming competent and professionally qualified. The policy in these countries maintains that NTs should first complete the New Teacher Induction Programme and be assessed before they are registered as a qualified teacher (Ntsoane, 2017). In the United States, NTs must engage in an induction or state-supported mentoring program. These programmes range from initial orientation sessions at the start of the academic year to detailed, ongoing support systems that offer a variety of PD opportunities for NTs (Zembytska, 2015). A key aspect of the U.S. mentoring and induction programmes is their collaborative nature in both design and execution, tailored to meet the requirements of everyone participating in the induction and mentoring process (both mentors and mentees) and to utilise the resources specific to each school effectively. In African countries, such as Botswana and Ghana, orientation, mentoring, and PD are advised, but no specific policy is in place to address this. Implementing a policy on orientation, mentoring, and PD of NTs could improve the professional support that NTs in South Africa receive. Inadequate induction of NTs in South African schools may be an attribution to the absence of a clear policy. In South Africa, particularly in the Western Cape Education Department, many schools do not have induction policy programmes in place. Although induction is encouraged in many educational studies, South African schools have no official policy governing it. It is important to have induction policies



in place, as policy serves as the foundation for any event. Having policies in place provides direction for activities that are undertaken and acts as an objective in the teaching practice. The absence of a policy indicates that there is no starting point or guide, and the event will result in being inconsistent in the implementation of the process at a national level. Having a policy that includes an induction program, will have a positive effect on teachers' professional skills and will improve teachers' competencies.

In South Africa, low-SES schools are affected by poor-quality teachers and financial and physical resource constraints that overcrowded classrooms, causing the same effect on PD. Ntsoane (2017) argues that the current policy for induction - including PD and mentorship of NTs - is unsuitable for low-SES schools because the Department of Education (DoE) does not provide training. According to du Plessis and Eberlein (2017), South Africa's policy on PD states that DHs should provide instructional leadership; however, DHs lack training in offering instructional leadership, and there are limited in-service programmes available to assist DHs. In rural low-SES schools, low human, financial and physical resources also affect working conditions and overwhelm DHs, leading to neglecting PD (Ntsoane, 2017). The lack of resources significantly affects the environment that teachers teach in therefore, du Plessis (2014) suggests that an awareness of the external environment and the forces in which schools are operating is imperative to ensure a direct focus on the leadership in a school which could impact the PD of educators. It can be concluded that it is important to align PD with the low-SES school context and the constraints it puts in place (du Plessis, 2014).

Therefore, this study argues that mentorship is critical in helping novice teachers overcome the obstacles of their early careers. Schools and districts may support novice teachers in developing their professional teacher identity through setting up organized and structured mentorship programmes with practical implementation strategies for putting good teaching and learning practices first. Against this background, the study investigated how socioeconomic factors influence DHs' mentorship for the PD of NTs in low socioeconomic primary schools in the Western Cape.



### **1.3 Problem statement**

As outlined in the background of this study, there is a divide between low and high SES areas of South Africa's education system which has created significant inequality in educational outcomes. While PD is viewed as a potential solution to address the unique challenges faced by unqualified teachers in low-SES schools, the literature does not clearly indicate how PD should be tailored to the specific context of low-SES schools, and this is a significant gap in the literature.

To mitigate the education inequality that South Africa faces it is essential to improve the PD of educators in low-SES schools by investigating and addressing the gap in the literature. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the experiences and potential challenges experienced by NTs and DHs regarding mentorship and the PD they give or receive in low-SES schools to determine if changes can be introduced to improve the quality of education.

### **1.4 Purpose of the research**

Through the experiences and challenges of NTs and DHs, this study aimed to identify how socioeconomic factors influence DHs as mentors in the PD of NTs in selected low-SES primary schools in the Western Cape.

#### **1.4.1 Research objectives**

- To gain an in-depth understanding of how DHs develop and manage the PD of NTs in low-SES schools.
- To investigate the support structures that are currently provided to NTs for their PD.
- To identify the difficulties and challenges that NTs face during mentorship for PD in low-SES schools.

The study explored the current mentoring of NTs' PD in low-SES primary schools. The researcher examined the experiences and challenges faced by both DHs and NTs. The study sought to understand how DHs develop and manage the PD of NTs. The study also explored the current mentoring structures in place for the PD of NTs and the challenges that both DHs and NTs experience during the mentoring process. This study further explored how DHs manage the challenges experienced during this development.

## **1.5 Rationale**

Recent experience as an NT, having served in both low- and high-SES schools and as a researcher from my Honours study of mentoring and PD of NTs, piqued an interest in the topic of PD of NTs in low-SES schools. Not only did the low- and high-SES schools face completely different problem sets, but the gap between the wealthy urban independent schools and the poor low-SES schools vis-à-vis the learners' educational performance was significant. Having said this, one must be mindful that solutions to PD and mentorship cannot be generalised without consideration of the school context.

When considering the challenges and demands that NTs face, this study explored DHs' experiences in mentoring NTs for PD, especially given the circumstances (environmental, cultural, economic, and so forth) that schools face. Extensive research has been conducted on the benefits of PD and the challenges experienced by NTs entering the teaching profession (Mahmoudi & Özkan, 2015; Poom-Valickis, 2014; Postholm, 2018; Al Shabibi & Silvennoinen, 2018) and the poor conditions in which South African schools operate (Geldenhuys & Oosthuizen, 2015). Although these studies describe and explore the importance and need for PD for NTs to ensure success, there is little empirical research on how the socioeconomic factors that teachers face influence the PD they receive. This study assumes that if the PD is aligned with the conditions of schools, it can be more relevant in addressing the professional challenges experienced by the teachers. Exploring and investigating the needs of NTs working in poor socioeconomic circumstances may provide a source of valuable information to guide, direct and improve the processes of mentoring and PD of NTs. Ntsoane (2017) found that even though policy is in place for the PD of NTs, such policy documents are not suitable for schools that are resource-deprived. Low-SES schools could not achieve the same standards of education and require drastic changes to deliver a complete educational experience to the learners. Therefore, the PD of NTs and the influence of low-SES school contexts were investigated.

## **1.6 Research questions under investigation**

The following research questions were formulated to guide the investigation into the mentorship of DHs in the PD of NTs in low-SES primary schools.

### **1.6.1 Main research question**

How do socioeconomic factors influence departmental heads' mentorship for the professional development of novice teachers in low-socioeconomic primary schools in the Western Cape?

### **1.6.2 Secondary research questions**

Sub-questions that reflect and support the main research question directly:

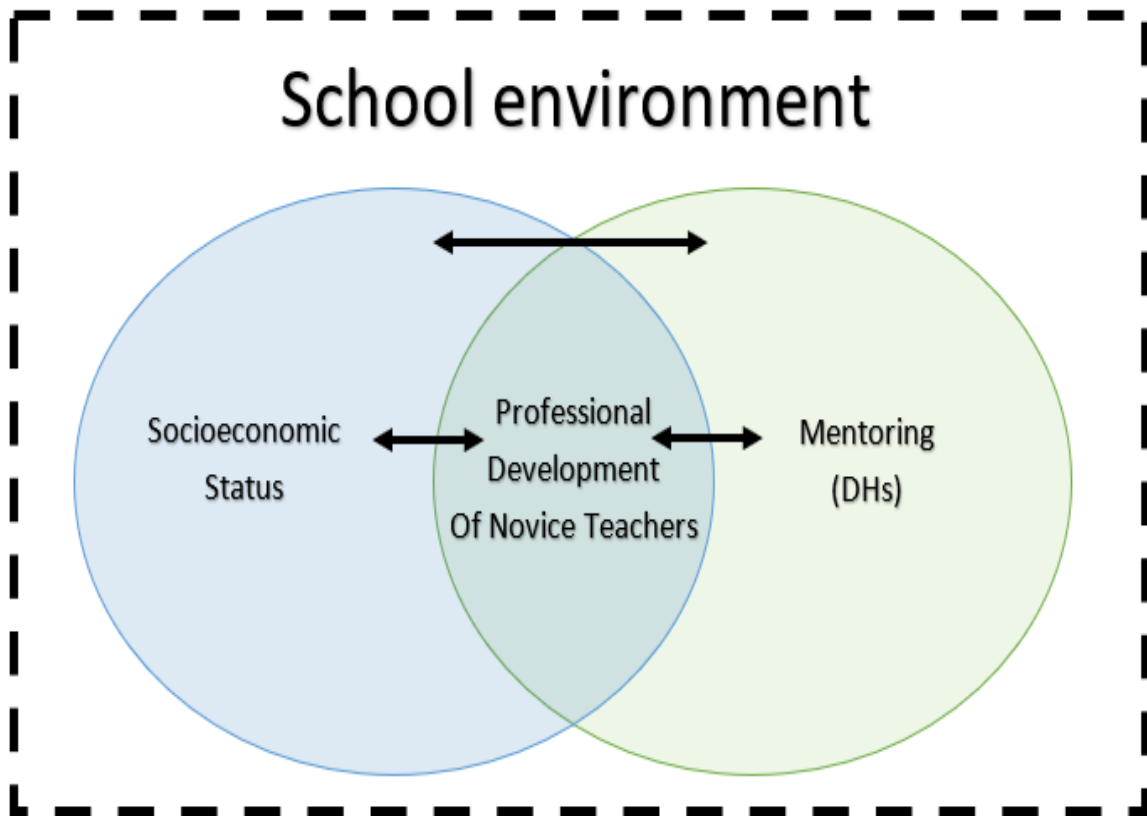
- What are the mentorship experiences of departmental heads in managing the professional development of novice teachers in low-socioeconomic primary schools in the Western Cape?
- How do departmental heads influence the professional development of novice teachers through mentorship?
- What difficulties and challenges do departmental heads and novice teachers face during the mentorship process for professional development in low-socioeconomic primary schools in the Western Cape?
- How do the departmental heads manage the identified professional development challenges in low-socioeconomic primary schools in the Western Cape?

### **1.7 Significance of the study**

The study yielded significant findings that shed light on mentoring in the PD of NTs in low-SES primary schools in the Western Cape. Moreover, this study identified the crucial role of mentoring in the schools that participated in the study and the constraints as well as the difficulties faced by DHs who act as mentors. The study highlighted the challenges faced by NTs in their PD. These findings provide valuable insights, which include the importance of mentoring in low-SES primary schools, the challenges that mentors and NTs encounter, and the opportunities for growth and improvement in this area. The primary aim of this study was to understand the role of mentors in mentoring NTs PD in low-SES schools and how it can contribute to existing knowledge concerning PD policy implementation and the conceptualisation of PD in low-SES schools. The study made recommendations from the findings on the mentoring of NTs PD in low-SES schools. Factors that challenge the mentoring of NTs PD are highlighted so with the purpose that other mentors and NTs can be aware of them and attempt to combat these challenges within their school's context.

## **1.8 Conceptual framework**

The conceptual framework of this study consisted of three main elements: SES, PD, and mentoring. These three main elements tie the study together such that a focus could be applied to the effects of SES on the mentoring of NTs for PD by DHs in the context of low-SES schools of the Western Cape. The conceptual framework posits an interconnection between SES, PD and mentoring with a dynamic relationship and that a change in one element can impact the others. To elaborate further, when a change in SES occurs, it is predicted that a change in PD and mentoring must follow if outcomes remain the same. Therefore, this study will examine the school context in detail and determine the extent of influential SES factors and how these factors contribute to the difficulties faced by NTs. Identifying the challenges of NTs and DHs with PD and mentoring will provide insights into the factors that require a change in PD to resolve these challenges.



**Figure 1: Interaction of the main elements of the conceptual framework**

In Figure 1, the three main elements of the conceptual framework each adversely affect the quality of education in low-SES schools. The school environment is put under pressure from socioeconomic factors; DHs struggle to perform their mentoring duties; and NTs are vulnerable due to their inexperience, while PD is not efficient and effective.

To determine the state of a sample school we will rely on the participant responses and determine the effectiveness of NTs' PD. The responses will indicate how DHs and NTs are motivated, how they approach PD, and how they participate in the mentoring process. Through the lens of the conceptual framework, the main elements provide the sense to consider the shortfalls of South African teachers and their motivation levels to improve the quality of education. The conceptual framework attempts to find a meaningful and aligned perspective towards SES, PD and mentoring to focus on instilling NTs with the necessary skills to improve themselves and align their skills to the constraints of the low-SES context.

To apply the conceptual framework, this study collected data from low-SES schools and compare the current challenges and methods of PD and mentoring to the traditional methods outlined in the literature and how these methods align to address challenges proposed with literature targeting low-SES contexts. The study gained a fixed reference point to compare against the literature by rooting the data collection in the low-SES school context. There are two outcomes relevant to consider when a sample school is analysed. If a low-SES school is performing well despite challenges, then a deviation from traditional PD and mentoring approaches should be observed. Therefore, the findings would indicate whether a change in approach is necessary to improve the current state of mentoring and PD for NTs and increase retention of NTs in low-SES schools.

It is important to acknowledge that the lived experiences of educators are complex, and schools may be using a mixture of traditional and novel approaches to facilitate their culture in terms of PD and mentoring. By keeping an equal focus on the three main elements of the conceptual framework, this study followed a balanced approach to determining the main research question. Therefore, this study's findings attempt to guide how we can act to encourage change through understanding the inter-relationship between SES, PD, and mentoring. Therefore, the findings may not be generalisable, but by analysing the data in the scope of the conceptual framework, the study provided a means of comparison to base analysis and recommendations for improvements to drive further research.

## **1.9 Definitions of key terms**

### **1.9.1 Departmental head**

Mpisane (2015) describes a DH as an instructional leader, a leader of learning, as someone who gives instructions to teachers and who directs teachers on their instruction to provide effective teaching and learning within the school. The DH is also responsible for directing PD at schools.

### **1.9.2 Low-socioeconomic schools**

Low-SES schools are schools that are in urban areas that were historically marginalised, underdeveloped, and segregated by race. They are overcrowded and plagued by poor infrastructure, crime, violence, and health risks (Masitsa, 2011). The term can also relate to a township in South Africa which is closely related to

slums in international contexts. The schools sampled in this study were township-adjacent.

### **1.9.3 Mentoring**

Mentoring can be traditionally described, according to du Plessis (2014), as a one-to-one relationship, between a novice and an expert and can be seen as a process in a professional career or a process of development whereby an experienced person supports and guides a less experienced person which will improve performance and competence.

### **1.9.4 Novice teachers**

Many studies worldwide define the term NT differently, with a common idea that NTs are inexperienced, new to the school environment, and have teaching experience of between one to five years. This study views NTs from this perspective.

### **1.9.5 Professional development**

PD is a strategy and process used in a school to ensure continuous, ongoing, upgrades and updates in improving school practices, knowledge, and skills for educators to improve their competencies and ensure effective teaching and learning (Smith, 2015). PD is a core factor in the improvement of a school, by developing changes in the beliefs, attitudes, and skills of educators and renewing, re-inventing, and enhancing teaching (du Plessis, 2014; Smith, 2015).

### **1.9.6 Socioeconomic status**

SES is a scale that is used, by a blend or interaction of sociological and economic factors, to classify and measure a person according to his/her income and work experience, and the social and economic position of a person according to others based on the type of education, occupation and type of prestige, place of residence and sometimes ethnic origin and religion (Bhat et al., 2016; Maswikiti, 2008).

### **1.10 Research structure**

To ensure the research report is well-organised, with content that logically progresses and addresses the research objectives and questions, it is structured as follows:

## **Chapter 1: General orientation and background**

The research commenced by introducing the study, outlining the background, stating the problem, defining the purpose and rationale, posing research questions, highlighting the study's significance, presenting the conceptual framework, defining key terms, and summarising the chapter.

## **Chapter 2: Literature review**

Chapter 2 is a detailed review of the literature on the PD of NT by DHs in low-SES primary schools. Relevant sources, including articles, publications, policy documents, and books, were reviewed to provide the literature discussion for this study.

## **Chapter 3: Research design and methodology**

This chapter discusses the research methodology which includes the paradigm, approach, design, sampling and participants, data collection methods, as well as the trustworthiness of the study and ethical considerations.

## **Chapter 4: Findings and discussion**

Chapter 4 presents the research findings and analysis of data collected through semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The data collected is presented in themes and sub-themes that are aligned with the research questions. The findings are further compared with literature that speaks to the focus of this study.

## **Chapter 5: Summary of the findings, conclusion, and recommendations**

Chapter 5 summarises the findings of the study, draws conclusions and makes recommendations.

### **1.11 Chapter summary**

Chapter 1 sets the stage for the study, covering various elements of the research. It offers background information on the subject, identifies the research problem, and clarifies the purpose of the research. The study's rationale is detailed, research questions are laid out, and the significance of the study, along with the conceptual framework guiding the research, is discussed. Additionally, this chapter defines essential terms used throughout the study and summarises the content of each subsequent chapter. Chapter 2 guides the reader through a literature review



focused on how DHs mentor NTs for PD in primary schools located in low-SES areas. This review explores the perspectives of both NTs and DHs regarding PD and mentoring, examines how SES influences PD and the quality of education, and addresses the challenges that NTs and DHs encounter during the PD mentoring process.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 of this study provided a background on the PD of NTs in low-SES schools. Globally, most NTs experience their first year as a sobering experience and may experience a transition shock that generates disbelief in themselves, their efficacy, competence, and learning potential (Bartell, 2004). This can generate conformity and dismiss the opportunities to participate in reform-based strategies and programmes in their practice (Miles & Knipe, 2018). Having said this, teachers' PD is crucial in retaining NTs and producing high-quality teachers to meet the demands of the school setting (Bartell, 2004). Within the school context, this PD of teachers is designed to build, form, and improve teachers' – especially NTs' - expertise and competence in their content knowledge and help them to adapt and perform under the circumstances of the school context (Hudson, 2013) and in so doing, improve the education of learners.

In this chapter, a discussion is generated to address the work of key literature thinkers like Sasser, Makoa, and Uushona, amongst others, on the topic of PD of NTs and to elaborate on how this research fits in with both international and national research and literature. PD policies are used to support relevant and recent data, and an in-depth analysis of teachers' experiences in PD is discussed. The leadership role of the DHs is explored. The importance of leadership and its effectiveness within the school context is examined, as well as the role – and the importance – of leadership in the PD of NTs.

### 2.2 Novice teachers and professional development

#### 2.2.1 The novice teacher

Although there is no standard definition of an NT around the globe, many studies around the world define the term NTs differently, with a common idea that NTs are inexperienced, new to the school environment, and have teaching experience between one to five years. With the significant amount of literature on NTs internationally and nationally, it is still noticeable that NTs struggle to adapt and perform their teaching role effectively.

Effective teaching is a global issue and is not limited to South Africa's NTs. Teachers complete their degrees and are thrown into the deep end and start teaching in often hostile environments where not just pedagogy and managerial factors are an issue. Among these hostile environments, teachers in low-SES schools face challenges due to the prevalence of violence, corruption, and mismanagement. These challenges include disruptive classroom environments, lack of resources, safety concerns, limited parent involvement, and high turnover rates (Masitsa, 2011; Tshabangu & Msafiri, 2013). Fantilli and McDougall (2009) argue that NTs globally are not emotionally and practically ready to face the challenges that the teaching career demands and that retaining NTs during their initial three years proves challenging. According to Bartell (2004), the first three years for NTs are the riskiest, and NTs tend to leave the profession because of the lack of meticulous support and deliberate development for NTs during the transition from novice to more experienced teacher.

According to Moir (1999), Naegle (2002) and Curry et al. (2016), NTs undergo five stages of transitioning in their first years of teaching. These transition phases are (a) anticipation, (b) survival, (c) disillusionment, (d) rejuvenation, and (e) reflection. In the anticipation phase, Uushona (2018) argues that NTs are full of anticipation at the start of their careers, are excited, and have an idealistic outlook towards making change using their degree/education/training. However, the first months in the profession often do not meet these expectations (Naegle, 2002). In the survival phase, the day-to-day operation in the classroom proves overwhelming, and NTs work countless hours each week, barely hanging on and surviving the pressures (Naegle, 2002). Uushona (2018) states that this reality shock can lead to stress, exhaustion, and illness. The many responsibilities placed on NTs may lead to despair as they become consumed with the tasks ahead instead of focusing on their accomplishments. The NTs enter a phase of disillusionment, which can potentially impact classroom management, especially when the self-esteem of NTs is at its lowest (Naegle, 2002). A short reprieve comes in the form of the school holidays when NTs have time to relax and the rejuvenation phase kicks in. Once again, progress and improvement are made in the classroom, and the hard work pays off, and there is light at the end of the tunnel (Naegle, 2002). After the challenging survival and disillusionment phases, NTs begin to experience progress and

improvement in their work. They better understand their learners' needs, become more confident in their teaching abilities, and develop more effective instructional strategies. This progress can result in a reduction in the amount of time and effort required to plan and deliver lessons, making the work less complicated. As a result, NTs may feel a renewed sense of enthusiasm and motivation for their work, which can further contribute to their success in the classroom. The NTs move into a reflection phase of preparation, planning, teaching, and being creative as this becomes less exhausting. In this phase, the NTs, use their time to speak to their more experienced colleagues, learning and taking in information (Naegle, 2002). Naegle (2002) asserts that during these transition phases, NTs change what does not work and adapt to what does work. However, Curry et al. (2016) caution that some teachers who teach in exceedingly tricky circumstances may never exit the worst of these phases, fall deeper into chaos and may decide to leave the profession.

The transition of NTs into the teaching career has to be eased through support in knowledge and information, methods and techniques, reflecting on oneself, social contact, and support from outside (Miles & Knipe, 2018). Miles and Knipe (2018) further state that NTs need to possess the required proficiency in discipline knowledge and specialised expertise believing that NTs must be commended for their accomplishments and helped through difficult times with mentoring, PD, and harnessing of skills. This is because the skills acquired through university studies are insufficient to prepare NTs for the actual classroom (Uushona, 2018). Uushona (2018) also posits that NTs feel unprepared and overwhelmed because of a mismatch between their expectations, their pre-service education (at universities and colleges), and the realities they face during their teaching experiences. Uushona (2018) also suggests that educational programmes should be inquiry-oriented and research-based and must address the needs assessment procedure in any form of planning. Schools must implement induction programmes that complement PD to compensate for the deficiency or lack of expertise of teachers entering the profession. Although induction programmes may help ease the transition into the teaching profession, they cannot be a substitute for continued PD. This study holds that continued PD is crucial for the sustained effectiveness of NTs

and the success of schools and NTs. In the next section, this study highlights the attributes, skills, and level of responsibility expected of NTs.

### *2.2.1.1 The expectations and perceptions of novice teachers*

Reddy (2018) defines NTs' perceptions of teaching as their view of the teaching practice regarding the quality of educational instruction, learning, and assessment. Yet, today's classroom demands a diverse set of skills to address classroom management, discipline, diversity, learner motivation, and the proficient application of technology: teachers are not only expected to fulfil their teaching role solely but to have obtained many more skills that are expected from society and the status quo of the teaching profession. Hartell and Steyn (2019) argue that this "new" role, responsibility, and definition of the work of a teacher gave rise to an entirely new range of voices - from various sectors of society outside of education - suggesting what the educational role of the teacher is and including their demands on the teaching role. These additional tasks add complexity and load responsibility to the teaching role and the challenges teachers must overcome. According to Cheng and Cheung (2004), these educational reforms necessitate more competencies from teachers to fulfil their roles successfully. The demand for quality teachers has grown significantly and is still expanding. According to Botha and Rens (2018), when NTs enter the profession and are confronted with this reality, they realise there is a misalignment between what is generally expected of teachers entering the profession and what is perceived. Botha and Rens (2018) suggest that the root cause of reality shock for NTs is the compartmentalisation of teaching knowledge and skills in their minds. This disconnect between what is taught in pre-service training and what is required in the classroom leads to a mismatch between expectations and reality, causing stress and frustration among NTs. The compartmentalised knowledge and skills do not transcend beyond university boundaries and are thus irrelevant to the context of the first years of teaching, leading to NTs feeling ill-prepared and unable to handle the demands and challenges of teaching full-time. To address this issue, the authors recommend a balance between instruction-related pedagogical support and providing emotional support to nurture emotional well-being and a teaching approach focused on self-care. By promoting a pedagogy of self-care for NTs, individuals' local knowledge and lived experiences can be embraced and celebrated, leading to effective and

successful teaching careers. Botha and Rens (2018) also discuss the notion of locus of control, which is about how much individuals believe they can influence the events that impact their lives. They propose that NTs with an internal locus of control are likely to be more resilient, flexible, and capable of navigating difficulties. On the other hand, NTs with an external locus of control might depend on others to affirm their purpose and vision. When NTs feel overwhelmed and disillusioned, they may question whether to stay in the profession or leave (Yee & Hassan, 2019). Hence, the research indicates that fostering an internal locus of control among NTs is crucial for enabling them to confront challenges and adjust their vision to seize opportunities that emerge once the initial shock of reality diminishes.

NTs shared that their tertiary institution prepared them well in terms of content knowledge and lesson planning. However, they felt ill-prepared for the rest. Their classroom management and skill to establish communities within the classroom were inadequate, leading to challenges within the classroom (Botha & Rens, 2018). Kyriacou and Kunc (2007) support the work of Botha and Rens and identify four major factors that influence NTs' commitment towards the teaching profession, namely: (1) school management, (2) time pressure, (3) pupil behaviour, and (4) having a happy private life. These challenges to commitment are relevant to the study because they highlight reasons why NTs are struggling to be professionally developed and can potentially impact their retention in the teaching profession, especially relating to low-SES schools. The challenges identified by Botha and Rens (2018) and Kyriacou and Kunc (2007) as to the perceptions of NTs could influence our understanding of the mentorship experiences of NTs and how DHs manage the PD of NTs in low-SES primary schools in the Western Cape. By being aware of these challenges and difficulties faced by NTs, they can better support their PD and provide mentorship that addresses these issues. Therefore, understanding the expectations and perceptions of NTs is important to provide recommendations for the effectiveness of mentorship programmes for NTs in low-SES primary schools in the Western Cape.

### *2.2.1.2 The gap in pre-service training of novice teachers*

According to Tabak et al. (2020), NTs need to possess the capability to think, feel, and behave as teachers. This implies that educational programmes should enhance the self-image, professional performance, and decision-making skills regarding

long-term career paths of NTs. Furthermore, pre-service training programmes are mostly content-based with little connection to practice (Rees, 2015). Tabak et al. (2020) scrutinise pre-service teaching training programmes and argue that undergraduate education programmes can be too theoretical and not sufficiently practical, such that the knowledge cannot be immediately used, but are relevant and effective in the classroom when entering the profession. As a result, NTs may experience a "survival period" in their early years of teaching where they must navigate and adapt to the reality of the classroom. This adjustment period can be challenging for NTs and may impact their PD from the challenges mentioned by Botha and Rens (2018) caused by reality shock. Tarman (2012) argues that field experience greatly influences NT's perceptions before entering the profession. Field experience enables NTs to contemplate their perception of the teaching profession and influence their choices regarding the grade level and kind of school they wish to teach in. Botha and Rens (2018) also support the impact of field experience, noting that 63% of their study's participants felt that practical/field experience equipped them for the actualities of teaching. Nonetheless, their research revealed that NTs did not appreciate the solid theoretical basis provided during their training, suggesting a potential disconnect in pre-service education. Botha and Rens (2018) highlight that within the South African context, most university pre-service teaching programmes require students to undergo 24 weeks of mandatory practical training as part of their field experience, frequently taking place in under-resourced schools. According to Tarman (2012), a crucial part of field experience is the location of the school, as this had a lingering perception that could prove damaging to the teacher because just as rural and low-SES schools are not attractive to experienced educators, the same reasons this is negatively influencing and shaping pre-service teachers' perspectives and beliefs about the teaching profession. Tarman (2012) added additional factors, including the level of placement, mentor teacher, SES, and distance from the university, which likely translates to commute, as influencing pre-service training of NTs.

From the literature, field experiences should be critically analysed and designed to encourage positive influences on pre-service teachers. The most glaring fact is that the expectations of NTs exceeded the ability of pre-service training programmes to prepare NTs for the complexity of teaching in today's teaching climate and the false



perceptions in the minds of pre-service teachers, who experience a reality shock when they enter the profession that has consequences to the way they see their career going forward. This is a clear gap in the pre-service training of NTs, and PD in the first years of teaching becomes crucial.

### 2.2.1.3 *The motivations of novice teachers.*

Bergmark et al. (2018) explore the motivations of teachers entering the profession and how this influences their experience. In doing so, they define three types of motivations: intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic. Intrinsic motivation refers to an envisaged joy of becoming a teacher and teaching others. It encompasses inherent aspects, such as expertise relating to the meaning of teaching and the passion for teaching and subject knowledge (Rees, 2015). The altruistic motive is the selfless nature of a teacher who will provide for those who need it. This involves the belief in contributing positively to society, viewing teaching as a significant and valuable profession, and the aspiration to aid in developing learners. Extrinsic motivation is akin to a career and a need to find a job. It is motivated by salary, status, and working conditions.

Bergmark et al. (2018) argue that teachers with intrinsic and altruistic motives are more inclined to leave the profession when they enter because of the reality shock they experience as their perception of teaching differs from reality. In contrast, an extrinsically motivated teacher is more inclined to leave the profession due to the intense pressure and stress placed on them due to poor health. A study by Bergmark et al. (2018) directly shows the link between the perceptions of NTs and their motive to enter the profession. Kyriacou and Kunc (2007) and Tarman (2012) support this viewpoint, stating that the degree of match between what an individual seeks in the profession and what the profession offers and entails contributes to their career choice. The three motives mentioned above are factors that ultimately shape the perceptions of the NT, which impact their attitudes towards teaching and their career.

It seems that motives and perceptions play a key role in success. Tarman (2012) supported this and elaborated that individuals who desire to teach and raise a new generation understand the important role of a teacher and admire the profession. These individuals have positive perceptions towards teaching and see success from



their outlook. Tarman (2012) argues that teachers' initial and evolving beliefs and perceptions about teaching as a profession are key factors that play an important role when student teachers transition into the profession. NTs must perceive the importance of a teaching society to have a greater chance of success. Nenty et al. (2015) investigated NTs' perceptions of the teaching profession and concluded that most teachers do not view their jobs as professional practice. However, those who view teaching as a professional practice were found to have increased overall teacher motivation, resulting in a positive attitude.

## **2.2.2 Mentoring**

The Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2008) describes mentoring as a relationship that offers guidance, support, a role model, and a confidante to junior members of an organisation until they achieve a certain level of maturity. Mullen and Klimaitis (2019) describe mentoring as an abstract concept that is hard to define due to competing definitions and research that has evolved over a long period. It is an elusive concept that is relatively easy to recognise the quality of mentorship in the field, but it is hard to define what is done to achieve good mentorship.

The DoE further elaborates that mentoring aims to provide knowledge, skills, and life experience from a selected successful manager or experienced teacher that is then transmitted to another employee to develop that employee for greater effectiveness and efficiency within the school context. The mentoring mechanism, therefore, takes the knowledge, skills, and experience from the mentor (e.g., the DH) and fosters a relationship to transfer knowledge and provide support and guidance to the mentee (NT). The following section will dive deep into what mentoring is and the impact and importance of successfully implementing mentoring within schools to satisfy the needs of NTs and grow them into successful, self-sufficient educators.

### *2.2.2.1 Mentoring and the role of a mentor*

Recent literature consistently acknowledges that mentoring is both relational and developmental, encompassing career and psychosocial dimensions, along with various phases and transitions. Traditionally, mentoring is understood as the pairing of a senior and junior colleague in a supportive relationship that assists the mentee in career progression and psychosocial growth. The career dimension focuses on

functions that boost professional performance and development, while the psychosocial dimension deals with psychological, social, or environmental factors (Mullen & Klimaitis, 2019). The career functions involve: “sponsorship, exposure and visibility, coaching, protection, and work assignments as well as career goals and planning, job-associated networking, employment seeking, interpersonal skills development, apprenticeship/internship training, and other related activities” or any activity related to career development (Mullen & Klimaitis, 2019). The psychosocial functions include role modelling, acceptance, and confirmation, counselling and friendship (Mullen & Klimaitis, 2019). Usually, the mentor possesses considerably more experience than the mentee, and together, they engage in a learning journey over time, during which the mentee benefits from the mentor's experience, knowledge and wisdom. Mentors provide their psychosocial functions by actively listening, counselling, and encouraging development that bolsters the mentee’s self-confidence. However, traditionally, when emotional and cognitive support is given, growth can be constrained when the relationship is hierarchical with a senior towards a subordinate.

To demonstrate the typical mentoring process, we look into the classic mentoring model identified by Kram (1984), who outlines that the phases of a mentor-mentee relationship involve initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition. Initiation is when the interaction between two parties peaks and a psycho-social assessment commences between the mentee and mentor, and there then is a possibility that a suitable match can occur that initiates the relationship. Cultivation is when engagement is at its most, with the mentoring functions being a transfer of career and psychosocial knowledge. Separation is when the relationship shifts and interaction becomes less, the mentee’s autonomy increases, and reliance on the mentor gradually subsides. In the redefinition phase, the mentor relationship has concluded and is reintroduced as a collegial friendship, where both show mutual support.

This is a natural cycle due to ever-changing personal and professional circumstances for both the mentor and mentee (Kram, 1984).

While the traditional mentoring approach is most known, Mullen and Klimaitis (2019) define nine more types of mentoring from the literature that are more commonly

gravitated towards in businesses, schools, and institutions for higher education. Dawo et al. (2015) support this view by showing the rapid increase in mentoring in educational settings and its use to reform teaching and teacher education.

Mullen and Klimaitis (2019) identified nine distinct types of mentoring, each with unique characteristics and benefits. Informal mentoring involves spontaneous interactions between mentors and mentees, whereas formal mentoring is a structured programme with planned interactions. Diverse mentoring brings together individuals from different backgrounds and interests, and electronic mentoring enables distance interaction through technology. Collaborative mentoring emphasises transformative relationships and development, while group mentoring is based on collective goals that embrace diversity. Peer mentoring strengthens mentees through peer relationships, and multilevel mentoring extends through various organisational tiers. Cultural mentoring, on the other hand, unites people from varied backgrounds to pursue common objectives. These methods serve as alternatives to conventional mentoring, concentrating on career and psychosocial growth but leaning more towards a diverse application of technology, inclusivity, and engagement.

Informal mentoring is the most primitive form used in education. It naturally occurs without any direct interventions from external parties. The mentee seeks to grow professionally and personally and then turns to a more experienced mentor for ongoing support, guidance, and advice. Thereby, knowledge and skills are shared. Although there are advantages to such a relationship, it is not the most effective method and can have detrimental caveats. According to Whitehouse (2016), an informal mentoring approach is only sometimes sufficient for newly appointed teachers, who will only sometimes ask for help or support. The problems with informal mentoring are that there is no structure, it does not establish collaboration, and it transmits the current culture and status quo of the school, which could be good or bad. In addition, other issues can occur with informal mentorships, such as the administration needing to know who is mentoring whom and not knowing who requires support or training. Whitehouse (2016) points out that this approach is more appropriate for NTs with professional experience but must be acclimated to a work environment. Those newly appointed teachers should have a formal mentoring plan to guide them.

The solution proposed is a formal mentoring model, which is similar except that it is guided by a third party that selectively pairs the two teachers and guides the relationship with key objectives. This third party in the school context is the management of the school. Although formal mentoring has benefits, Whitehouse (2016) elaborates that there are some pitfalls with this strategy as well. Whitehouse (2016) argues that mentors and mentees within the formal modality may lack commitment towards each other due to the lack of previous personal commitment. This lack of commitment may cause the relationship between the mentor and mentee to be underdeveloped, with inequality of status and where communication may be one-directional (Whitehouse, 2016). Consequently, the mentee finds it difficult to establish a connection with the mentor. Conversely, Whitehouse (2016) contends that adopting a formal mentoring approach enables schools to deliberately communicate their values and cultural norms, which can then be transmitted to new staff or NTs. While establishing a formal mentoring mechanism alleviates some of the caveats of informal mentoring, there is now a single point of failure in selecting mentors for mentees, which cannot be taken lightly. Yet, despite its advantages, Parker (2010) discovered that NTs showed a preference for the informal elements of mentoring, like having discussions and organising their day, over more formal activities. These formal activities include attending meetings beyond school hours, planning instruction, observing their mentor's lessons, and being observed by their mentor. The impact of engaging with the mentor in an informal setting several times a month rather than meeting in a formal setting less often was more likely to stay in their schools.

Reverse mentoring is when knowledgeable junior members teach senior colleagues particularly relevant in the new age of technology, where young people may be more adept at technology than their senior counterparts (Čiučiulkienė & Mičiulienė, 2019). The mentor transfers knowledge outside of the organisation to the mentee. Peer mentoring is when two candidates of relatively the same level of expertise are used to mentor each other. Both are considered mentors and mentees. Their work and growth complement each other, and they grow simultaneously alongside each other (Čiučiulkienė & Mičiulienė, 2019). Multi-mentoring, defined by Čiučiulkienė and Mičiulienė (2019), goes further to define a few newer models of mentoring that were introduced in response to the current rapid changes to organisational structures and

social environments of teaching. Lateral, developmental networks, multi-mentoring, and mosaic mentoring are proposed for an individual's mentoring need because development depends not on one person but on numerous people through systems and practices. Furthermore, the use of newer models of mentoring, such as multi-mentoring, lateral developmental networks, and mosaic mentoring, as proposed by Čiučiulkienė and Mičiulienė (2019), can help address the constraints of traditional hierarchical mentoring relationships, which is particularly relevant in the education system of South Africa where there is ambiguity and contradictions in the mentoring documentation and design.

While South Africa's education system has unclear definitions and ambiguity of mentoring in the documentation, there are also interesting contradictions in the PAM design and what the literature indicates and recommends. Earlier, Mullen and Klimaitis (2019) stated that a hierarchical relationship may constrain mentoring, and this is important to note because it relates to the education system in South Africa. Throughout the literature, the DH is expected to be the mentor of NTs, but the point made by Mullen and Klimaitis (2019) is that growth is already constrained because the NT is the subordinate of the DH. This could be why an NT should be given a mentor outside their department. Still, it would, on the other hand, constrain their growth toward content knowledge, leaving a delicate balance between the choice of mentoring partners and implementing a formal mentoring model. This edge case seems more prominent and influential in schools with a low number of educators due to a lack of options for mentorship pairing.

#### *2.2.2.2 Role and responsibilities of the mentor in the school context*

The previous section described a mentor and how it is defined in the literature. It presented the definition, functions, and categories of mentorship. For the following section, the role and responsibilities of mentor teachers will be expanded upon, and the functions of mentorship connected to the mentorship responsibilities of DH. What makes a good mentor teacher will determine why a teacher would become a mentor. The types of mentorships practised in schools are also reviewed to see if they align with the industry's current trends.

Iancu-Haddad and Oplatka (2009) outline the mentor's responsibilities within a school setting as offering NTs psychological backing, technical help, and advice on

the institution's rules and policies. Mentors are tasked with aiding NTs in understanding student behaviours and implications, providing immediate support and assistance, and facilitating the PD of NTs. Additionally, mentors are expected to nurture the learning of NTs, cater to their needs, uphold the curriculum, and ensure that learning is both effective and meaningful (Iancu-Haddad & Oplatka, 2009). Bresnahan (2011) emphasises the increasing complexity of being a mentor within the school context. When defining how a mentor should act and pursue mentoring to a specific candidate, Dawo et al. (2015) and Vikaraman et al. (2017) explain that a mentor's role must adapt based on the needs of the NTs. They indicate that NTs' pre-service training and teaching experience be taken into consideration. The shortcoming of the preservice training needs to be addressed and combined harmoniously with the school's vision. When NTs do not have the necessary knowledge to be competent, it falls to the DH to fill the gaps of knowledge and embed the school's culture into them. The sooner an NT learns the essential skills the faster they will become competent and progress. Furthermore, suppose the school's culture and vision are effectively integrated into the NTs. In that case, they will find it easier to connect with their colleagues and students, boosting motivation and fostering strong work relationships. Vikaraman et al. (2017) further elaborate that the support for NTs' needs also depends on authorities, funding, and time. Under all conditions, the mentor should present themselves as a professional aide, not as a supervisor or an assessor. This is consistent with the views of Mullen and Klimaitis (2019) stated earlier in this chapter. The literature indicates that the pre-service training for NTs must be well-designed, providing ample time to fully develop and successfully integrate into the school environment.

The characteristics that a mentor should have, as discussed by Dawo et al. (2015) above, are consistent with their role as a mentor. To effectively execute their role, the mentor needs to exhibit various cognitive coaching skills, including asking well-formulated questions to encourage reflection, rephrasing, inquiring deeply, employing wait time, and gathering and applying data to enhance teaching and learning. Dawo et al. (2015) outline several crucial characteristics for mentors to effectively pursue their role and be considered a "good mentor". These traits encompass understanding the requirements of NTs, possessing strong interpersonal abilities, showing readiness to shield NTs from significant errors by

reducing their responsibility load, and embracing the school's vision. Additionally, a mentor ought to be keen on nurturing other staff members for the school's advantage, display the patience to persist with or redo procedures as needed until NTs are capable of independent work, and demonstrate dedication and perseverance in assisting NTs. Also, mentors need to respect the NTs' potential resourcefulness during the induction process and should objectively evaluate others and give feedback while being willing to be evaluated by others as a feedback mechanism. It is also important that a mentor should be positive, experienced, and mature in nature and should be professional, serving as a role model for NTs, modelling the necessity of life-long learning and exhibiting an openness to learn from others.

Mentor teachers should be confident that NTs can feel comfortable with and not fear embarrassment or repercussions. In addition, a mentor teacher should be approachable, accessible, and available when needed, and possess the skills and ability to provide support for instruction. Lastly, mentor teachers must prioritise the promotion, growth, and development of NTs and serve as emotional support to them in the challenging starting phase of their careers. As a mentor and seasoned educator, the mentor teacher is responsible for nurturing the development of NTs and addressing their requirements, all while adhering to the curriculum and guaranteeing that student learning in the classroom is both effective and impactful. The mentor is tasked with offering continuous on-site support and help to NTs during their initial years in the teaching profession. The literature review indicates that mentorship has not yet been officially required as a fundamental aspect of a teacher's duties. Nonetheless, mentorship is gradually being acknowledged as a distinct professional role and position within schools (van Ginkel et al., 2016). Opting to become a mentor is a voluntary decision, exceeding the standard job duties and expectations, and is a choice made by some but not all. The decision to become a mentor, given its voluntary basis, is greatly affected by the individual's motivation to mentor NTs. Iancu-Haddad and Oplatka (2009) focused on understanding the motives of teachers participating in the mentoring process and the perceived values and contributions the mentor receives. From the study, it was clear that intrinsic and extrinsic factors such as an altruistic desire to help an NT, a viewpoint that mentoring may improve their teaching and learning, and the school system and society itself



impact their motives to become a mentor. The viewpoint of mentors in becoming a mentor is that it helps provide a fresh perspective and manners within the teaching profession. Mentors who view the mentoring process as a challenge and a learning opportunity can help develop new ways of thinking, shift perspectives, and provide valuable insights into teaching and learning. These motives are consistent with the data obtained from van Ginkel et al. (2016) and imply that mentors hold other-orientated and self-development-orientated motives. The other-orientated motives (other-focus) include the desire to help and pass information to another individual to build a competent workforce. Self-orientated motives (self-focus) include the desire of an individual to increase their learning and to experience a feeling of gratification. As described by van Ginkel et al. (2016), these two motives are the two dominant motives teachers have in becoming mentors. According to Iancu-Haddad (2009), a motive to become a mentor is the stage at which the mentor is in their career to obtain recognition and increase self-confidence versus leaving a legacy and renewal.

The role of the mentor and the success of being a mentor go hand in hand with the motives of becoming a mentor, as a successful mentoring relationship depends heavily on the role of the mentor. Van der Nest (2012) describes that the long-term effectiveness of a mentor is significantly impacted by how mentors view their mentoring role to ensure they act as agents of change, breaking down barriers and fostering a culture of collaboration (van der Nest, 2012).

To establish an effective mentoring experience in a school, Smith (2015) expressed that a favourable environment where NTs can approach a more experienced educator as a mentor to develop professionally and learn new skills from the mentor is essential. Smith (2015) argues that it is a whole school attempt to ensure effective mentoring within the school, and the mentoring process and experience are not solely reliant on the school's management team.

When considering mentoring within the context of this study, it is evident that mentoring plays a crucial role in facilitating PD for NTs. Having a positive mentorship experience can amplify the effects of other forms of PD, such as conferences and training. A good mentor can facilitate the continued learning of NTs through positive mentoring relationships, keeping NTs consistently motivated and providing



continual feedback during the learning process. Additionally, mentors can help bridge the gap to any challenges NTs experience in the classroom and provide methods or PD training to help resolve those challenges. Therefore, the role of the mentor greatly enhances the quality of PD experiences and is also a facilitator of PD that can help solve specific challenges that arise in the school context, such as those in low-SES school environments.

#### *2.2.2.3 Novice teachers' mentorship experiences in their professional development*

With the many literature studies that indicated a need for effective and problem-orientated mentorship in schools to improve the experiences of NTs as emerging professionals, the study of Swart (2013) describes that after 20 years of research and recommendation, the experience of NTs is still a dismal picture. The reason for this dismal picture is the prominent role of structured support for NTs within the school. According to Nemaston (2020), it should be mandatory for NTs to be with a senior teacher for a month before they start teaching, as this is a great tool to use to build collegial relationships, bring NTs and more experienced teachers together and reinforce competence and confidence within the NT.

### **2.2.3 Professional development**

Researchers have recognised the importance of PD and its impact on changing classroom practice and improving school and teacher learning. Teachers need to participate in PD activities, as this helps them keep up with the current teaching practice and the profession's challenges.

#### *2.2.3.1 The need for and importance of professional development*

Previous studies on PD reported and yielded results on the importance of PD within the school's context (Bautista & Ortega-Ruiz, 2015; Boudersa, 2016; Postholm, 2018; Smith, 2015). These studies describe the effectiveness of PD in helping teachers improve their knowledge, skills, and teaching practice and ultimately enabling them to become more effective in their duties. Teachers are learning from their own experiences and the experiences of others to develop a more apparent teacher philosophy (Bautista & Ortega-Ruiz, 2015; Smith, 2015). Participating in these PD activities allows teachers to become more confident in their teaching practice and bolsters courage when undertaking calculated risks in implementing

irregular classroom practices that may prove beneficial in the long term. An advantageous application of PD as demonstrated by Smith (2015) is to design and align PD programmes to support educational reforms and changes made within the educational sector. Similarly, Smith (2015) and Njui (2018), from the perspective of a Kenyan school, state that significant changes in social economics, political climate, and technology and a move in global markets have put a demand on lifelong PD of teachers to obtain the relevant skills and competence to cope with these changes. PD is, therefore, an invaluable tool to improve the efficacy and success rate of reforms through active guidance, changes, and sharing experience of the change.

Petrovska et al. (2015) support continued teacher PD and initial teacher training by linking the need for PD to improve the quality of education and the quality of teaching staff. Petrovska et al. (2015) further show how there is a trend in European countries that they're facing challenges in their education systems, and a standard resolution is a need to establish teaching competencies with PD, lifelong learning, and individual teaching philosophies. Ibad's (2016) case study in Pakistan on PD supports the above authors. The study shows that PD is a key component for improving the quality of education and points out that school managers have to instil the idea of continuous lifelong learning into teachers (Ibad, 2016).

### *2.2.3.2 Challenges in implementing professional development*

Although many studies indicated positive results for PD, some researchers identified unacceptable outcomes in the implementation and the effectiveness of PD in the field when supporting teachers with content knowledge and teacher practice. Hill (2009) describes PD as a broken system that is not delivered successfully, which is supported by Smith (2015) who also believes that the PD system is inconsistent and ineffective in its execution. PD needs to reach more teachers for any significant change in the education system to take place. This is a concerning area in the literature because schools around the globe invest in providing PD to their teachers with the expectation that the quality of education and teaching practice will improve. Elaborating on Hill's (2009) description of PD is the opinion of Bautista and Ortega-Ruiz (2015), explaining that PD activities will be successful if it is seen as an ongoing process rather than a once-off event. PD needs to provide teachers with specific,

concrete, and practical ideas directly related to their day-to-day teaching practice (Bautista & Ortega-Ruiz, 2015).

De Clercq and Phiri (2013) outlined that in the context of South Africa and the many challenges within the school system, implementing PD activities for teachers requires a lot of thinking, considering that South African schools are divided into categories based on SES. These categories are defined as quintiles, South African schools are categorised into five quintiles, ranging from quintile 1 (the poorest) to quintile 5 (the wealthiest). This classification is based on the SES of the community around the school, with funding and resources allocated accordingly. This fundamental consideration regarding the specific needs of each quintile of South African schools has to be addressed and focused on individually because the range of needs of the South African schools and their teachers differ vastly. Muthivhi (2019) pointed out the concern regarding the rural school context in South Africa and the quality of teaching and learning. In South Africa and internationally, the rural education system faces a scarcity of qualified and high-quality teachers. The poor outcomes that rural schools achieve due to the challenges associated with rural teaching directly impact the school's capacity to produce quality teachers or acquire qualified teachers who are relevant to the rural context and promote exceptional teaching and learning. Rural schools and administrators find it challenging to employ teachers who are willing and appropriate to work in rural communities and who are willing to stay on the job (Julia, 2019). Since it is difficult to get teachers in rural schools, it is imperative that teachers employed at rural schools are supported continuously through PD and purposefully to enhance their competence and skills in rural schools. This ensures that teachers are retained in their positions and are providing quality teaching within rural schools. With the emphasis on the context of the schools, i.e., rural, or urban, it is crucial to note that although many rural schools are in the lower quintile ranges, their needs differ from the same quintile schools in urban districts. With this observation, there are already ten types of different needs (Q1-5: Rural and Urban) that should be addressed by PD in the South African context, thus emphasising that PD should not be generalised across quintiles or locations.

Looking at the PD within the international school context, it is noticeable that PD programmes and their implementation are still under study. Boudersa (2016)

investigated the Algerian school context. The study showed that there is a need for active engagement and a reflective teaching and learning system of education. Boudersa (2016) explains that the teacher is the most important factor within the school and is a key determinant in teaching and learning outcomes. He elaborates that there is a general claim around the globe concerning the deficit in teachers' capacity and the quality of teaching. This directly impacts the school's learning process, which is also observed in the South African quintile system. Universities in Algeria do not provide and involve students with teacher PD programmes and training; due to the lack of educational programmes, NTs enter the profession without any experience and background from which to work and take the burden to become professional teachers on themselves while confronted by the many challenges of the profession. Boudersa (2016) emphasised that it is not only the readiness of NTs that is a problem. The lack of competence in the subject matter and teaching and assessment skills is another significant factor that influences the confidence of many NTs, which causes them to become negative towards the profession and ultimately, to leave.

### 2.2.3.3 *Types of Professional Development*

Many different types of PD programmes are available for teachers to participate in, and they differ in content and structure. According to Boudersa (2016), the type of PD programmes can be divided into five categories, which are well-spread to help improve teacher practice and for teachers to participate in continuous PD programmes throughout their teaching career. Gulston (2010) identified similar PD activities to the categories of Boudersa (2016), which are helpful techniques for continuous PD to ensure success for reform and change in the classroom. PD programmes for teachers include various types of activities such as in-house training, demonstration, and peer observation to showcase skills and provide feedback. Induction programmes are designed to support new teachers as they transition into their new roles, while mentoring programmes discussed in the previous section pair experienced teachers with less experienced colleagues to provide guidance and support. Workshops, conferences, professional inquiry groups, and seminars are opportunities for teachers to learn from experts, exchange ideas, and network with peers outside of their institution.

More details on the above follow:

- In-house professional development

Teachers participate in this type of PD at the school's site. It occurs weekly and is managed by a staff member in a given school. Staff members can participate in different sessions throughout the year (Boudersa, 2016). This category encompasses PD activities like demonstrations and peer observations, mentorship, induction programmes, job rotation, coaching, teamwork, and group activities, including workshops, conferences, and seminars.

- Demonstration and peer observation

Demonstration, executed by experienced educators, showcases their skills to an inexperienced educator, leaving them more confident in performing the task (Gulston, 2010). Peer observation is used to evaluate teachers and provide formative feedback to assist in the reflective process and provide evidence to substantiate student evaluations (Volchenkova, 2016). By watching each other's teaching techniques and offering positive feedback, teachers can enhance their instructional methods, change their educational views, and foster a sense of collegiality (Bell & Mladenovic, 2008).

- Induction

Induction refers to a process of providing support and training to NTs during their first year of teaching. This support can help them adjust to the workplace and develop the necessary skills to effectively combat the challenges they face. Induction programmes vary in duration, depth of content, and programmes offered (Bloom, 2014). The induction process can be inclusive for all teachers new to the teaching and working environment, including those who were transferred, promoted, or taken on a new position in an unfamiliar school (Nantanga, 2014). To be effective, induction programmes should be integrated into the school system and tailored to meet the unique needs of each NT within their school context (Kempen, 2010).

- Workshops, conferences and seminars

Traditional PD activities, such as workshops and conferences, are subject or learning area-related and often not tailored to meet teachers' needs (Gulston, 2010). These courses are usually short and lack follow-up support.

- Professional inquiry group

These are PD activities where groups of teachers can come together, where all teachers learn and develop something of great interest. These PD activities can happen on-site regularly for an extended period, working collaboratively to share ideas and experiences (Boudersa, 2016). Through this, teacher development occurs, which will help in the teaching practice.

#### 2.2.3.4 *Challenges novice teachers experienced in their professional development.*

The first years of an NT's life were investigated and studied widely by many researchers (Makoa & Segalo, 2021; Räsänen et al., 2020; Sasser, 2018; Swart, 2013), with a more focused viewpoint on the challenges of NTs, the success rate of staying in the profession, the significance of an effective induction programme and the factors contributing to exiting the profession within the first year. After many decades, the attrition of NTs in the teaching profession is still a significant concern, with data indicating in 2013 that 40-50% of NTs leave the profession before they reach their fifth year (Michel, 2013), which is continuing with 50% of teachers having turnover intentions (Räsänen et al., 2020). Bradford (2018) supports the statistics, stating that 15% of teachers exit the profession during their initial year of teaching and 14% change schools after their first year. According to Michel (2013) and Räsänen et al. (2020), teachers leave the profession due to job dissatisfaction, lack of professional commitment, workload, the school environment, the conditions in which they have to teach and the feeling of ineffectiveness of their learners. Bradford (2018) supports the studies of Michel (2013) and Räsänen et al. (2020), expressing that teacher retention is so low due to them feeling overwhelmed, ineffective, and unsupported.

The success of NTs in adapting to the school environment is significantly influenced by the support they perceive and personally receive, as well as by the environmental incentives that play a role in their success (Curry et al., 2016). Further, Bradford (2018) suggests that schools need to help NTs improve their skills, keep them in their position for longer and improve learner performance by effectively addressing these concern areas first. Khalid and Husnin (2019) support the findings of Curry et al. (2016) and that NTs face two main challenges when entering the profession,

which stem from either internal or external sources. The internal factors identified as influencing the integration of NTs into the school include the difficulties NTs face in adjusting to the school setting, classroom management abilities, creative thinking capabilities, and family-related issues. The external factors derived from the study that contributed to the challenges NTs face are the acceptance by learners; learner motivation; learners' performance and the different cultures of the learners in the school. The successful entry and effectiveness of NTs in the profession hinge on their academic and pedagogical competence, their efficiency (which includes their skills, workload management, and dedication), their teaching and learning approaches, the resources available to them, and the support they obtain from their supervisors and school administrators. If these factors are not aligned and at a suitable level, the chance of success diminishes for NTs. The success of NTs is significantly enhanced by their induction and introduction to PD activities. Makoa and Segalo (2021) identified four primary barriers that prevent NTs in South Africa from engaging in PD activities. These barriers include (a) a scarcity of opportunities, (b) the elevated expense associated with PD, (c) an overload of external PD commitments, and (d) the challenge of maintaining changes in teaching methodologies.

Makoa and Segalo (2021) elaborate that NTs in South Africa are overloaded and lack the opportunities to participate in PD activities due to the challenge of finding the time to participate in formal meetings where they can discuss issues related to their teaching practice with their colleagues and that there are limited opportunities to engage in school-based PD. It is further expressed that the South African school context, such as the classroom size of schools is a dominant factor that inhibits NTs from participating in PD. The expectations of the school system have an increased demand for schools to perform academically which places NTs under pressure and is a contributing factor towards low morale; despite this, teacher labour unions have a reluctance towards PD and take away time NTs could focus on PD (Makoa & Segalo, 2021). This is an apparent inaccuracy as PD comes highly recommended for the success of NTs.

With the many challenges NTs experience in the classroom, they have identified their own PD needs that the formal PD experiences could not provide; therefore, they try to fill the gap elsewhere. Unfortunately, they also find this challenging due



to a lack of time and the inability to achieve an effective work-life balance. NTs who enrol in external PD activities have additional stress placed on them and find it challenging to complete their continued training. It is evident that there is a great need for personal PD among teachers to enhance their capabilities and teaching competence, but these challenges provide a reluctance to participate in NTs (Makoa & Segalo, 2021). With rapid changes in the school environment and curriculums, NTs also find incorporating PD knowledge and skills in their daily practice challenging. The skills and knowledge learned by PD programmes require specific resources that are not necessarily available to NTs due to a lack of support from management, this is a contributing factor to the lack of motivation to participate in PD and implement PD in daily practice. NTs who participate in PD programmes find it challenging to incorporate their learnings into practice because they are not given enough time to take in and understand their new knowledge fully. This is due to the short duration of PD programmes and the lack of support from management to give enough time to embed the knowledge into their practice. NTs felt frustrated that some PD programmes are rushed through and provide ineffective teaching opportunities. Makoa and Segalo (2021), further report that the time to apply newly acquired knowledge and skills learnt in PD is a key determinant to successful PD and will result in a lasting transformation in instructional methods. Makoa and Segalo (2021) believe that sustainability is the essence of effective PD for teachers.

Ajani's (2020) study in South Africa revealed that teachers have various opportunities to participate in PD programmes organised by the School Management Team (SMT) or the DBE. These PD activities occur both during the school calendar and outside of school hours. However, despite the mandatory requirement for teachers to participate in PD activities to earn career progression points, the study highlights the need for increased frequency and quantity of PD programmes, particularly in-service activities, to ensure the participation, effectiveness, and productivity of teachers' practices.

Boudersa (2016) points out that resistance to change is another element that hinders the successful execution of PD training programmes. Many teachers are reluctant to alter their attitudes and beliefs about teaching, which is indicative of a wider resistance to change in PD programmes. This resistance is fuelled by several factors, including favouritism, increased workload, lack of personal investment, fear



of losing control, insufficient support, and a perceived lack of advantages. Research conducted by Khalid and Husnin (2019), Makoa and Segalo (2021), Michel (2013) and Sasser (2018) reports that teachers encounter difficulties with PD due to their school environment, particularly in low-SES schools. These challenges complicate the creation and execution of PD programmes tailored to the specific needs of such schools. Al Shabibi and Silvennoinen (2018) also point out that PD programmes are often too brief to bring about long-term change in NTs. Boudersa (2016) characterises the current PD programmes as disjointed, poorly coordinated with the curriculum, and insufficient to address teachers' specific needs. This aligns with Makoa and Segalo's (2021) emphasis that PD activities for NTs must be tailored to their unique needs and challenges to be successful and meaningful. However, NTs often feel disempowered as they prefer to chart their own PD path, resulting in hesitance to participate in PD programmes. Boudersa's (2016) study critiques the ineffectiveness of in-service PD programmes, internationally, in the USA, despite the significant investment of money, resources, and effort. These programmes often lack established knowledge of effective teaching practices, and teachers may resist change due to various factors, such as fear of loss of control, lack of support, and increased workload. Despite this, Nkambule and Amsterdam (2018) noted that high-performing countries invest in mentorship programmes that focus on the induction of NTs, training, PD, and teacher collaboration with varying success. Smith (2015) and Chaaban and Du (2017) also found that schools offer awareness sessions, class visits, observations, workshops, courses, and webinars to support NTs in their first few months, but Al Shabibi and Silvennoinen (2018) emphasise that these programmes typically provide theoretical knowledge rather than practical implementation strategies. Successful PD involves proactive participation, which includes self-reflection, commitment, self-talk, and willingness to gain experience.

#### **2.2.4 The Departmental Head's leadership role in the school context**

To describe the leadership role of DHs it is good to first distinguish between leadership and management because as the literature indicates, there are confounding voices when trying to define the relationship between management and leadership. The terms leadership and management are used synonymously. Bush (2007), Grant (2010) and van Deventer (2016) state that leadership and management are entities that cannot be separated, the duties and responsibilities

of leaders are not independent of managers. Lumby and Heystek (2008) demonstrate that leadership and management are different aspects of the same functions of the head of an organisation. Davidoff and Lazarus (1997) show that leadership and management maintain a balance between movement and stability, with movement being innovation and freedom, and stability being routine and structure. Both leadership and management are arguably important for a successful organisation, irrespective of how the terms manager and leadership are used.

In this study, the DH has a dual role of leader and manager. DHs must be a manager to NTs when they are evaluated, and their performance is assessed but they also must possess leadership characteristics to motivate and drive NTs to excel in the profession. When considering mentoring, it becomes more evident that DH need to balance between these two roles. Mullen and Klimaitis (2019) described that hierarchical relationships constrain mentoring and Vikaraman et al. (2017) point out that the mentor must neither be the supervisor nor evaluator. However, the managing DH inherently takes on both roles. This suggests that the DH as the manager is less effective in mentoring, to be effective in mentoring DH must embrace a more leader-orientated approach.

#### *2.2.4.1 Departmental head as manager*

Within the school setting, the DH is viewed as a "middle manager" of sub-units, such as a specific phase or subject area. The DH serves as a crucial connection between the principal and the classroom teacher, making it essential for the DH to be proficient and skilled in their role. To excel in their leadership roles, DHs need to be well-versed in curriculum development and be competent teachers by consistently enhancing their teaching methods and translating policy intentions into classroom practices. The manager's role is to provide stability, routine, and structure for their subordinates, as well as to plan, organise, direct, control, and evaluate within their role and unit. Consequently, it is the DH's responsibility to ensure that everything runs smoothly (Nemaston, 2020).

#### *2.2.4.2 The importance of leadership within the school*

Many studies compare the success of a school with success and the quality of leadership (van der Vyver, 2021). To establish a world-class system, the focus should be on implementing and establishing effective leaders and managers

(Atkinson, 2013). Leadership can be described as a process involving influence, where one person intentionally influences an individual or group of people to ensure structure in the activities and relationships within an organisation to achieve desired goals.

Lumadi (2017) defines effective leadership as an individual or a group of individuals that influence others to achieve the demands of student outcomes for all learners, to improve student outcomes and to distribute leadership throughout the school and its community. The viewpoint of effective leadership coincides with Seobi and Wood's (2016) vision that instructional leadership should be delegated or distributed to the DHs by the principal. Their findings are an example of the effectiveness of the distribution from DH to the teacher. Lumadi (2017) concludes that to ensure effective leadership, principals must develop staff to become future leaders associated with both instructional and human leadership. The principal guides and diffuses competing leadership values and keeps stakeholders' vision on track. The goal is to foster an environment where principals, staff, and students can share ideas about the needs and services necessary for the school to reach its established objectives. Lumadi (2017) outlines that the proper process to develop and document knowledge must be in place for future leaders to build on foundations laid by those who were leaders before them, building content, material and teaching practice piece by piece, exchanging and distributing ideas and practices with the whole school community. This ensures an open communication platform where future leaders are free to seek support from members or groups of the school community and participate in the effectiveness of the school. Therefore, to summarise, effective leadership is achieved with a shared vision by all stakeholders, and future school leaders empowered by the current climates that support development, collaboration, the upholding of high standards and team spirit within the school community.

In this study, how NTs are mentored and given PD is significantly affected by a school's leadership. Considering that the principal is the driving force of instructional leadership then the DHs will convey the ideology to the NTs through their mentoring. When introducing the unique challenges faced by low-SES schools' effective leadership is arguably even more important in ensuring that NTs are well-supported and empowered to succeed in their roles, with the constraints on resources they have. Leaders must use their influence to be creative, innovative, and resourceful

and immerse themselves in the challenges to find ways to address them in their unique school context. When effective leadership is used, NTs will be empowered to learn and develop themselves. The necessary thoroughness of developing preservice training and PD for NTs will also be used as tools to build new leaders within the school.

#### 2.2.4.3 *Challenges and difficulties experienced by departmental heads in the mentoring of novice teachers' professional development*

In the South African context, DHs play a crucial role in improving teaching and learning. Alkutich (2017) found that DHs support educators and students in Abu Dhabi by being critical friends, facilitating work, providing advice and feedback, participating in appraisals, overseeing department functioning, and organising extracurricular activities to enhance effective teaching and learning. Du Plessis (2014) and Mpisane (2015) suggest that DHs should conduct meetings, communicate with teachers, perform class visits, monitor teacher and student files, assess moderation, identify needs, and implement mentoring programmes.

Banja's (2016) study in Zambia revealed that NTs perceive mentoring as vital in their PD and DHs acknowledged that NTs need mentoring due to the inadequate initial teaching training they received, which left them unable to perform their duties effectively. DHs in the study indicated that NTs experienced difficulties in professional skills such as lesson planning and lesson preparation, schemes of work, records of work, improving their skills in teaching and developing an understanding of their subject area and the pedagogical approaches in teaching. The DHs believed that through mentoring NTs, they would obtain knowledge and the skills they lack, which makes them face significant difficulties in executing their instructional duties. Du Plessis (2014) found that DHs recognised their role in mentoring NTs for PD, but their actions contradicted their outlook, as they failed to support NTs adequately. Ntsoane (2017) reported that the SMT in her study failed to support NTs on three levels of mentorship, as described by Kram (1984). Kram (1984) suggests NTs should be supported on three levels: professionally by explaining institutional policies and their roles, instructional by helping with lesson planning and assessing learners, and personally and emotionally by offering support and encouragement. TALIS (2009) indicated that DHs provide limited mentoring to NTs due to their workload, recommending allocated time for mentoring

programmes. Supporting this, Mpisane (2015) indicated that DHs in Kwazulu-Natal schools understood their instructional leadership role but faced challenges like administrative and teaching workload, oversized classrooms, teacher absenteeism, late coming, and motivation. DHs provided adequate supervision and ensured teacher punctuality and motivation but lacked awareness about their shortcomings in providing PD to teachers. These obstacles hindered successful leadership strategies to improve teaching and learning.

In contrast, Maja's (2016) study in Durban revealed that the DHs were unclear about their roles within the SMT and as leaders. While they saw themselves as overseers of teaching and learning activities and policy crafting, they didn't consider actual teaching a responsibility, despite the Personnel Administration Measures (PAM) document stating otherwise. Principals believed DHs should ensure quality teaching and provide continuous support and monitoring for teachers. Du Plessis (2014) and du Plessis and Eberlein (2017) highlighted that DHs lack training in providing effective support to NTs and coordinating PD to improve teaching, learning, and management, which explains their lack of awareness.

Furthermore, DHs in low-SES schools experience their challenges amplified by the school context and environment. Challenges include lack of funding, poor teacher retention, underqualified teachers, increasing workload, underpayment, transportation and housing barriers, poor infrastructure, lack of educational materials, and absenteeism contributing to demotivated teachers (Tshabangu & Msafiri, 2013). Consequently, DHs end up spending their time dealing with disciplinary issues from demotivated teachers and students instead of their assigned duties. Disciplinary issues arise from teacher ineffectiveness, which is linked to attitudes, perceptions, and low self-efficacy (Harris, 2010). To improve the situation, DHs need to implement mentorship programmes successfully to ensure that NTs can teach effectively and provide quality education (TALIS, 2009). Smith (2015) argues that the skills and knowledge of DHs will ensure the success of staff development and the support that NTs receive.

Considering that the goal of the DH is to facilitate PD to NTs, another challenge DHs experience is poor implementations of PD programmes. Although the need for and importance of PD programmes is to ensure quality teaching and learning, existing

programmes fall short in offering teachers the required guidance, skills, and experiences to foster enhancements in teaching and learning quality. Boudersa (2016) described the current PD programmes as fragmented, poorly aligned with the curriculum, and inefficient in meeting the specific needs of teachers. Boudersa (2016), continues that in-service PD programmes are being scrutinised as being ineffective. PD programmes in the USA invest significant funds, resources, and efforts into providing practical in-service PD training. However, they often fall short in effective implementation due to the training being intellectually shallow and lacking a solid foundation in effective teaching and improved teaching practices that teachers can apply in their classrooms. Additionally, another barrier to the successful implementation of PD training programmes is the unwillingness of many teachers to alter their perspectives, attitudes, and beliefs about teaching. This is despite a general inclination among teachers to uphold and meet high teaching and learning standards. The resistance exhibited by teachers towards change mirrors the resistance towards change in PD programmes. Boudersa (2016) elaborates that factors such as favouritism, increased workload and pressure on teachers, lack of personal investment, fear of losing control, insufficient support, and perceived lack of benefits lead to teachers resisting change. Nkambule and Amsterdam (2018) observed that high-performing countries invest in mentorship programmes that focus on the induction of NTs, training and PD and teacher collaboration between other countries. The NTs in the study done by Smith (2015), identified that their PD is subject-related and focuses on the assurance that NTs grasp the content to enhance instruction and learning. Chaaban and Du (2017) and Smith (2015) indicated that the school provides awareness sessions, class visits, observations, workshops, courses, and webinars to support teachers in their first few months. This helps NTs to understand what is expected of them and to inform them of their duties. It generates a non-judgemental platform for NTs to ask, comment and make suggestions about their work. In addition, the participants in the study of Chaaban and Du (2017), indicated that attending these programmes helped to improve their PD. However, these workshops provided theoretical knowledge rather than guidance and implementation strategies for the classroom. Contributing to PD, according to Chaaban and Du (2017) and Smith (2015), is being proactive in PD, teachers who are proactive in their PD improve teaching and learning. Proactive participation involved self-reflection, commitment, self-talk, and willingness to



become experienced. Successful PD requires mentors assigned to NTs to be open and willing to share thoughts, experiences, skills, and knowledge.

Banja (2016) shows why NTs experience challenges adapting and performing in their first year. Banja's (2016) findings indicate that NTs experience instructional difficulties due to inadequate initial teacher training and the absence of a supportive working environment through positive interpersonal relationships. Chaaban and Du (2017) and TALIS (2009) showed the advantages a welcoming, positive, warm, and safe working environment brings to the workplace and the impact strong, positive interpersonal relationships have on job satisfaction. Banja's (2016) study indicated that NTs did not feel welcomed and supported by more experienced educators, which led to a slow and stressful process of adapting and adjusting to their new working environment and feeling rejected, unimportant and side-lined.

Al Shabibi and Silvennoinen (2018) emphasised why PD programmes fail to be successful. They state that PD programmes are overly theoretical, have low practical implementation value, and do not meet NTs' needs. Inexperienced teachers present the programmes that cause discrepancies in sharing of knowledge and experiences. Support, courses, and workshops are unable to reflect long-term change because they are too short. The global state of PD and mentoring indicates a need for reform, to address issues which are more practical and related to the needs of the NTs in specific applications. Furthermore, Govender and Ajani (2021) argue that in South Africa, NTs are insufficiently supervised, particularly regarding their participation in PD activities aimed at improving classroom practices. The authors note that the regularity of annual NTs' attendance at PD activities is limited.

#### *2.2.4.4 How departmental heads manage the identified challenges and difficulties experienced by novice teachers*

DHs can promote a culture of support for NTs in their schools by establishing a learning, mentoring and PD platform. DHs have a key responsibility to identify the challenges NTs experience and to provide them with the necessary guidance to combat the challenges they experience within the school environment. Many strategies can be used to support NTs in coping with the school environment, but it is crucial that DHs identify the needs of NTs first and then assist them using an appropriate mentoring strategy based on the NTs' needs. Programmes

implemented to assist NTs, such as mentoring and induction, should be organised to ensure that NTs' development is accelerated. No programme will ensure that NTs are effective and successful teachers (Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017).

Given the challenges that NTs face in the teaching profession, it is crucial to examine the current mentoring strategies that DHs offer to NTs in schools. A study by Nemaston (2020) investigated the mentoring tools employed by DHs in primary schools in the Tshwane South School District to help NTs adapt to the school environment and handle potential challenges. The study identified several tools used by DHs, such as induction and mentoring, observation and feedback sessions, peer support, and PD, which are further discussed in the mentoring section of this literature review. DHs were found to be cognisant of the needs of NTs and had intervention plans in place to support them. A moderation tool proved helpful for NTs in managing deadlines, and DHs provided NTs with term-long planning. DHs played a crucial role in supporting NTs during their initial years to ensure their effectiveness and avoid errors. Observation and feedback were identified as another important tool used by DHs to assist NTs in improving their teaching skills and managing challenges. DHs used class visits to provide feedback and assistance in specific areas if necessary. DHs used a checklist to check NTs' files and moderate documentation. Effective feedback positively impacted the learning of NTs. Collegial support is another strategy used by DHs to provide additional support to NTs. DHs used this strategy to facilitate collaboration between NTs and more experienced teachers, indirectly developing the professional skills of NTs. DHs used this tool due to the workload and work demand expected of them.

PD was the final tool identified in Nemaston's (2020) study. NTs described weekly meetings with DHs as a training session, with topics such as the week's preparations and expectations being the focus. DHs provided different approaches to assessments during these meetings. Nemaston (2020) described this type of mentoring as in-service training, which offered school-specific topics that needed to be shown in a hands-on approach within the school context. Overall, the study identified several mentoring tools used by DHs to assist NTs in adjusting to the school environment and managing challenges.



Du Plessis and Eberlein's (2017) study further revealed that subject and departmental meetings are the most frequently used tool to help NTs navigate their challenges. These meetings serve as a form of PD, a finding that aligns with Nemaston's (2020) study. While the extent to which these meetings are used for PD varies from school to school, they provide an opportunity for the DHs to collaborate and share their experiences and expertise with their teams, particularly with the NTs. Sharing experiences, knowledge, and expertise can aid NTs by preventing mistakes and offering insights on how to tackle the challenges they face. The primary aim of these meetings is to guide the latest concepts and methods in specific subjects, along with policies, student outcomes, and teaching strategies. Moreover, these gatherings serve as platforms for professional dialogue, enabling NTs to learn from their colleagues. Makapolou and Armour (2014) found that teachers learn best from their peers. NTs in Ntsoane's (2017) study noted that participating in meetings is beneficial, but these meetings often occur irregularly and at inconvenient times, leading to disorganised and poorly coordinated collaboration. To ensure NTs gain from these meetings, they should be regular and well-structured, and foster a reflective community of practice where NTs can contemplate their teaching and progress. Attending these meetings can boost moral support, increase efficiency, reduce overload, establish boundaries, enhance confidence, and promote teacher learning, leading to ongoing improvement.

Ali (2017) revealed a similar approach to supporting NTs in Zanzibar, Tanzania, where an orientation session is utilised to help NTs comprehend the school's policy and necessary procedures, with a focus on syllabus analysis. The study suggests that an orientation programme should include a tour of the school, an explanation of the responsibilities and role of new teachers, the school's vision and mission, its policies and activities, and an introduction to mentors and administrative procedures. Offering an orientation session for NTs can be a crucial tool to ensure that NTs can get off to a good start, help them feel more comfortable when beginning their journey, and introduce them to their new schools (Ntsoane, 2017).

With the above strategies to combat the challenges NTs experience, DHs use additional strategies such as teamwork and team leadership, monitoring, supervision and motivation to promote teaching and learning in dysfunctional schools. In conclusion, DHs play an essential role in promoting a culture of support

and PD for NTs in schools. It is an essential role of the DH to identify the needs of NTs and provide them with appropriate mentoring strategies to help them with the challenges they experience. DHs need to be aware of the challenges that NTs experience and to provide them with the necessary guidance and support to ensure their effectiveness and success as teachers.

### **2.2.5 The South African school context**

Although there was a reform in the education system of South Africa, many academic studies enlighten the concern and struggle that South Africa's education system is still facing daily. When analysing the school context of South Africa, with its many educational reforms over the years to be internationally competitive, it is still noticeable that the education system is flawed and has many challenges. South Africa is known as a developing country with a diverse and challenging history that remains in a state of transformation. Mouton et al. (2013) describe South African schools as a school system with underperformed teachers, a lack of good work ethics, community commitment and parental support, poor support and control from education authorities, low support for teachers and low levels of accountability.

These challenges and concerns of the education system have led to South Africa being ranked as the most unequal country in the world (Bryant et al., 2019). Over the past decade of democracy, much change has been undertaken to readdress the inequalities and the quality of education, but there is still a clear stratified division between schools within the public school system.

#### *2.2.5.1 The divide of South African schools along socioeconomic status*

The school quality in South Africa is heterogeneous and is greatly divided according to SES, geographical location, and race within the public school system (Coetzee, 2014). According to Bryant et al. (2019), the schools in South Africa can be characterised by learners living in hazardous environments who experience poverty and language barriers and those who do not. These characteristics enhance the cultural and societal norms challenges that schools in South Africa face. Bryant et al. (2019) opine that the schooling conditions are closely linked to the social context in which the school is situated and the institutional, economic, and social status of the school.

Furthermore, Taylor (2014) conducted a study at the University of the Witwatersrand, which identified several prevalent issues in schools across South Africa. These included low English proficiency from teachers and learners, affecting academic progression. English is the medium of instruction in approximately 90% of schools. Additionally, there is a lack of adequate reading and numeracy pedagogies, leading to illiteracy by Grade 5 and reliance on “stick counting” methods for complex arithmetic operations up to and beyond Grade 7. In addition, the study found that teachers often lack subject knowledge and are not recruited according to their subject specialisation. As a result, many teachers are expected to teach subjects for which they are not qualified, including mathematics and English, across various phases. These conditions are evident in our schools and have a significant impact on the standard of our education system. According to Taylor (2014), qualified NTs need to be equipped to combat and address these conditions when taking a position at a school.

Supporting and adding to the above challenges that are endemic to South Africa are the challenges raised by Taylor and Robinson (2016), stating that South African schools also face difficulties in recruiting enough teachers from suitable demographics to meet specific school needs and ensuring that teachers are sufficiently qualified and have enough content knowledge. Other challenges include poor working conditions and salaries for teachers, low morale and motivation, high attrition rates among teachers, and poor student learning outcomes.

Supporting the challenges, Taylor and Robinson (2016) also highlight several challenges affecting teacher standards in South Africa, including a shortage of qualified African first-language speakers to meet schooling needs, the attraction of students with insufficient content knowledge to Initial Teacher Education programmes, and the spatial inequality that results in low-quality education in African first language speaking regions. Additionally, the teaching profession is often perceived as difficult and poorly paid, and many teachers in South Africa work in overcrowded and under-resourced schools.

Regardless of South Africa’s current school posture, a global trend can be identified in the international and national context that education is still not up to standard and that globally, schools are also struggling to ensure effective teaching and learning.

A large body of research has been published on the results of comparative tests such as the SACMEQ, Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) conducted in countries around the world. The results of these tests performed in South Africa have been extensively analysed and explored in the report of Howie et al. (2017). The study indicates that the quality of education in South Africa is poor, and most learners do not achieve basic literacy by Grade 4. The study suggests factors that contribute to poor performance are many, such as schools not having resources, poor school attendance, discipline and safety, problematic teacher behaviour, classroom sizes and poor parental involvement. Taylor and Shindler (2016) indicated that the poorest 80% of children in Grade 5 are equivalent to two years of learning. These studies and the statistics presented in them clearly outline that the poor communities are the ones suffering the most in our education system, and the rich perform at the same level as most international countries; thus, the poor quality of education is prevalent in low-SES circumstances and most prominent in low-SES schools.

#### *2.2.5.2 The physical division of South African schools*

In South Africa, the DBE is responsible for developing, maintaining, coordinating, and supporting all public schools, independent schools, early childhood development (ECD) centres, and adult literacy programmes for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. South African schools are categorised into three distinct phases. The first phase is Grade R, which includes Grade 000 to Grade 0. The second phase, known as the General Education and Training (GET) phase, ranges from Grade R to Grade 9. This phase is further broken down into three sub-phases: the Foundation Phase (Grades R to 3), the Intermediate Phase (Grades 4 to 6), and the Senior Phase (Grades 7 to 9). The third phase, referred to as Further Education and Training (FET) in South Africa, includes Grades 10 to 12. Public schools in South Africa are categorised into five quintiles to address the issues of SES and access to basic education. The categorisation of schools is to allocate financial support and provide resources based on which quintile the school falls into. The categorisation of schools, Quantile 1 to Quantile 5, according to the study of Ogbonnaya and Awuah (2019) is based on the SES of the school, which considers the average income, unemployment rate and literacy in the geographical area of the school. Quantile 1

schools are classified as the poorest geographical areas, whereas Quantile 5 schools are schools that are in the most economically advantageous geographical locations. Quantile 1-3 is known as non-fee-paying schools that are dependent on financial support from the government, whereas Quantile 4 and Quantile 5 are not dependent on the financial support of the government – due to the assumption that parents can afford to pay school fees. Schools that are categorised within the same Quantile should have comparable SES and standards (Ogbonnaya & Awuah, 2019). Ogbonnaya and Awuah (2019) argue whether the wide gap in the academic achievement of learners from different SES backgrounds is being bridged despite the classification of schools into their quantiles and the funding that they receive.

The division of schools along with SES also divides quintiles in educational achievement because SES significantly impacts educational achievement. The widespread contrast in economics in South Africa is noticeable between the rich and the poor. This imbalance has contributed to the unequal and lack of quality educational opportunities received by learners from a poor SES background. The reform of the education system after the transition to democracy focused on an education system that would enhance nation-building, promote democratic values and provide quality education for the poor, a pathway out of poverty. The reform process focused on the administration, governance, and funding of education; controversial curriculum reform sought to provide inclusive education to all (Taylor & Yu, 2009). This ideal outlook has unfortunately not yet been realised based on the clear divide in educational achievement in South Africa, therefore, others have taken a more scrutinising look into why, which will be outlined later in the chapter.

There is a clear correlation between SES and the physical division of schools in South Africa. In summary, quintiles can be indicative of SES and the phases are determined by the stage of education a learner.

#### 2.2.5.3 *Challenges and impact of socioeconomic factors on educators in schools*

There is a perception that many South African schools are marginalised and under-resourced due to the difficulty of maintaining educational changes (du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). Although the PAM document and the DoE indicate the role and responsibilities of teachers in the school context, the challenges that low-SES

schools face make it nearly impossible for teachers to fulfil these roles. Due to this unfulfillment, low-SES schools are recognised for their poor academic performance and low quality of education and have inherited a dysfunctional legacy (Mouton et al., 2013). An important correlation to make is that this section is primarily focused on the challenges of educators, but some of the challenges that schools and the government face will trickle down to the educators and become problematic as a whole, as explained in more detail below.

When considering the international context, an extreme example of how SES in the economic collapse of Zimbabwe impacted its teachers is that of Angellar et al. (2011), who investigated the socioeconomic challenges that contributed to misbehaviour in Zimbabwean schools. The primary factors contributing to misbehaviour include poverty, excessively lenient home environments, overly permissive school settings, low teacher morale, lack of sufficient teachers, and frequent teacher absenteeism. Teachers in the study experienced a breakdown in discipline, resulting in challenging teaching and learning environments. Factors such as teacher shortages, larger class sizes, teacher absences due to strikes, insufficient transportation funds, and a cholera outbreak worsened the situation. Low teacher morale (78% of participants) led to unmotivated educators seeking additional income sources. Due to Zimbabwe's economic collapse, financial support was lacking, causing schools to operate without books or furniture. Teachers struggled to discipline students without involving parents or principals, often resorting to corporal punishment despite its prohibition. Many teachers were underqualified, with some entering the profession straight out of high school.

This dire example has a few key themes that can be challenging for teachers in low-SES circumstances: poor discipline, low teacher quality, low teacher morale, poor infrastructure, zero career opportunities, low income, and minimal teaching resources. An example of rural South African schools where we can notice how some of the themes overlap is in the study of du Plessis and Mestry (2019). Low-SES rural schoolteachers were interviewed about the challenges they face that cause them to be dysfunctional and ineffective in achieving adequate academic performance and being quality teachers. The seven findings and themes generated were the following: The appeal of rural schools, low status of teachers, limited career opportunities, shortage of qualified teachers, curriculum difficulties, inadequate

infrastructure and facilities, and systemic and administrative issues. Financial constraints and a lack of qualified teachers hinder school recruitment, leading to reliance on underqualified educators and poor academic results. The surplus of underqualified teachers stifles new talent and knowledge sharing. Rural teachers must teach multiple grades and subjects and provide extracurricular activities while adapting to the community and school environment, which is also observed in low-SES schools in urban areas. Not all teachers are capable or willing to fulfil this multidimensional role, and inadequate senior guidance and poor examples from the existing staff make it difficult for NTs to succeed. To address these challenges, du Plessis and Mestry (2019) recommend reviewing conditions and incentives for rural teachers to improve recruitment and retention. Du Plessis and Mestry (2019) show that successful rural teachers come from similar backgrounds or have experience with poor communities. These teachers understand the conditions of the school environment, while others struggle to adjust and avoid rural schools. Additionally, urban qualified teachers are repelled to these positions because of the lack of suitable accommodation near schools and the lack of classroom resources and facilities (du Plessis & Mestry, 2019).

Urban teachers who are well provided in terms of Maslow's hierarchy of basic safety and physiological needs may be unwilling to trade comfort for rural communities. Additionally, the study shows rural teachers have limited PD opportunities, leading to career stagnation and feelings of social, professional, and cultural isolation. These factors make rural low-SES schools unattractive to qualified teachers, highlighting the challenges in sustaining effective education in this school context.

## **2.3 The context of this study**

### **2.3.1 South African school policies related to professional development**

Induction programmes are called orientation programmes within the Primary Education System of South Africa. The South African DBE (2016) states in a new teacher orientation booklet that all teachers who are employed at South African public schools and who have the following characteristics should participate in orientation programmes:

Orientation should be provided to teachers who are employed at South African public schools and who have.



- Qualified at REQV 14, with a B Ed or an academic degree and a PGCE, and who are new to the teaching profession.
- Qualified at REQV 14, with an NQF level 5 ECD qualification and an additional REQV 13, NQF level 6 Diploma in Grade R Teaching qualification.
- Qualified at REQV 14 equivalent in a foreign country and who may, or may not have taught in their country of origin; and
- Qualified at REQV 14 and are returning to the profession after not having taught for five years or more (p. 4).

The aforementioned categories encompass all types of teachers and teaching positions, including teacher assistants, teacher interns, contract teachers, and all individuals responsible for teaching and learning within the public school system. Despite the existence of a well-conceived orientation programme in South Africa, it is not explicitly tailored to and aligned with the specific context of South African schools and the challenges they face. The DBE (2016) emphasises that the successful orientation of NTs and those new to the school environment largely relies on the principal and the SMT. The principal and SMT's role in orienting NTs and newly-appointed teachers include providing on-site orientation and resource support, managing the school environment to ensure it is conducive for teaching and learning, fostering relationships between the SMT and the teachers, offering instructional leadership, and facilitating support within the unique context of the school (DBE, 2016).

The PAM document of South Africa (2016) states that the employer may require South African educators to participate a maximum of eighty hours per annum in PD activities (Government Gazette, 2016). Participating in these programmes should be outside the school day or should be attended during the school vacation period. Participation in seminars and workshops should be continuous as these programmes are not immediately implemented with the skills and knowledge learned.



## 2.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the school context of South Africa was first presented and how the effects of SES can cause severe challenges in schools. The structure of South African schools was detailed, including how they are divided into quintiles based on the SES of the school, as well as the hierarchy of individuals in South African schools and how they are structured with each role in the school. The individuals are DBE, Principal, Educator (DH, Master Teacher, Teacher, NT) and the learner. The ways of providing an effective teaching environment through mentoring, PD, and leadership have been discussed.

The next chapter describes the methodology employed in the investigation of the phenomena.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter discussed the literature on the experiences of departmental heads as mentors and their role in the PD of NTs. This chapter outlines the research methodology, encompassing the research paradigm, approach, design, and data collection and analysis methods. Detailed information on the trustworthiness and ethical strategies employed in the study is provided to demonstrate that the research adhered to the necessary ethical standards.

### 3.2 Research paradigm

This study was rooted in the interpretivist paradigm, which accepts that context is crucial for gaining knowledge and knowing the truth. Krauss (2005) states that a research paradigm can be defined as the belief system or worldview that guides the investigation towards a specific phenomenon. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) describe the research paradigm as a loose collection of logically held assumptions, concepts, and propositions that orientate thinking and research. The research paradigm clarifies how the researcher sees reality (ontology) and generates knowledge (epistemology). This guides the choice of methods used in the methodology. The research paradigm explains how the phenomenon was investigated and presents the view that was used when designing and conducting the study. Every paradigm has its assumptions and these assumptions are opinions based on incomplete information, therefore, a paradigm cannot be proven or disproven, it only drives a different point of view (Scotland, 2012). It is important to outline the research assumptions underpinning this study so that other researchers can understand the research approach and, investigate the phenomenon through a different mindset and be able to generate unique results (Scotland, 2012).

The first aspect of the research paradigm is the assumptions of the ontology. Ontology is the acknowledged concept of reality in relation to the philosophical viewpoint or perspective of the researcher (Sefotho, 2018). The ontological assumption in this study is relativism. Relativism assumes that there are many realities in the phenomenon being investigated and that the perceptions and beliefs of the researcher form part of the knowledge that is generated. Everyone

experiences reality differently and from a different viewpoint, therefore, the multiple realities of the participants in this study were socially constructed based on their personal feelings, environments, and behaviours of the individuals' values.

The second aspect is epistemology, which concerns how knowledge is constructed, obtained and presented, and how it only exists because of us (Scotland, 2012). This study's epistemological assumption is that of subjectivism. It is the assumption that individuals construct knowledge and meaning in different ways due to the world they live in and not existing independently of our understanding of it. The subjectivist epistemological stance was used in this study to guide the acquisition, interpretation, and presentation of knowledge. The knowledge in this study was socially constructed and formed in a social context by the multiple realities that existed. Using the interpretive paradigm, a participatory stance that ensured that a constructor of meaning in the interpretation process of the participants' lived experiences was used. The study focused on understanding the different social realities of DHs as mentors for NTs in their PD; therefore, an interpretivist research approach was used.

### **3.3 Research approach**

The research study was conducted using a qualitative research approach. Alase (2017) describes a qualitative research approach as being participant-orientated, allowing the participants to express their lived experiences without any deformity and holding the desired objective to understand and interpret the experience from the participant's perspective. Furthermore, Jameel et al. (2018) explain that using a qualitative research approach is suitable for examining the experiences, perceptions and perspectives of individuals and communities that are part of the research study to understand the participants and their behaviour within a social, cultural and economic context (Hazzan & Nutov, 2014). Ames et al. (2019) express a similar vision, arguing that qualitative research will ensure an in-depth understanding of the phenomena under study while studying the participants' experiences. It is important to pay attention to the context of the participants' descriptions and the interpretation of these descriptions while understanding the educational, contextual, and historical context of the research site and participants when using a qualitative approach to ensure the trustworthiness of the research findings. There is no structured procedure when using a qualitative research approach; each site and participant

gives unique viewpoints on the study. This is confirmed by Fallon (2016), who argues that obtaining the same results at any other time and place is impossible; therefore, the information obtained within the study may be replicable to the population.

From the above, the nature of a qualitative approach is based on divergent theories and assumptions and focuses on the naturalistic setting of the participants participating in the study. Using a qualitative approach helped me gather meaningful and in-depth data by negotiating the realities with the participants, interpreting, and making sense of the natural world where NTs and the DHs find themselves. The close relationship between the researcher and the participants ensured that information-rich and abundant data was obtained to shape the research study through a subjective and detailed data collection process. However, an in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences is essential.

In this study, qualitative research was advantageous because, through the qualitative research approach, participants' inner experiences could be explored, which helped generate detailed information about their feelings, opinions and experiences and helped interpret the meaning of their actions. The data obtained in this study was from DHs and NTs in two schools who were in their natural setting, their work environment, and who could express their lived experiences. A disadvantage of qualitative approaches is that the findings cannot be generalised and are not quantifiable. The results are not as specific. While it is true that a qualitative approach cannot be generalised, it does allow this study to gather and present an in-depth and nuanced understanding of the phenomena under study and to generate rich and detailed descriptions that cannot be captured or obtained through quantitative methods. Qualitative research is more consuming than quantitative research because the researcher needs to build a trustworthy relationship, live the reality, ensure the research is trustworthy and produce value-driven research while keeping the well-being of the communities being researched in mind throughout the research. Although the sample size was small, a substantial volume of data was gathered from each interview, making the analysis process challenging. The verbatim transcription of the interviews was a time-consuming and arduous task, but it was executed with precision, presenting its own set of difficulties. Although the transcription process was time-consuming, the transcriptions offered a

clear description of the interview's events, facilitating an understanding of the participants' emotions and thought processes concerning the phenomena.

### **3.4 Research design**

Akhtar (2016) describes a research design as the “glue” that holds the parts present in a research project together. This study took the form of a case study design. Coombs (2022) suggested that utilising a case study approach is appropriate for gaining a thorough comprehension and insight into the phenomena under study within its naturally occurring context. Botha's (2019) study also supports Coombs' assertion by demonstrating that a case study can generate knowledge and comprehension of an individual or group in a specific context. Additionally, Maree (2016) defines case study research as a desire to comprehend the realities of a small number of cases within a real-world context, leading to the identification of real-world behaviours and their significance. Consequently, a case study design was a fitting choice to gather reliable and in-depth data while ensuring that the analysis process and interpretation were performed ethically and with trustworthiness.

In this case study design, the data was obtained from two different schools at different periods and events. DHs and NTs are seen as specific cases and, therefore support the use of a case study design. Using a case study design, the researcher had the opportunity to gather a great depth of understanding of the realities of both NTs and DHs and to understand the experiences of NTs PD and DHs as mentors for NTs PD in the mentoring process. The type of case study that was used in this study is of an explanatory and exploratory nature. An explanatory nature of the study was used to identify the causal link between the real-life interventions of the process by which DHs mentor NTs' PD. Through the exploratory case study type, the mentoring process that DHs provide in the PD of NTs can be explored. There is no definite or clear single set of outcomes, so an exploratory case study type was suited to this study (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Both explanatory and exploratory case study types helped me identify the realities of DHs and NTs, and their relationship and explore the mentoring process within the context of the phenomenon.

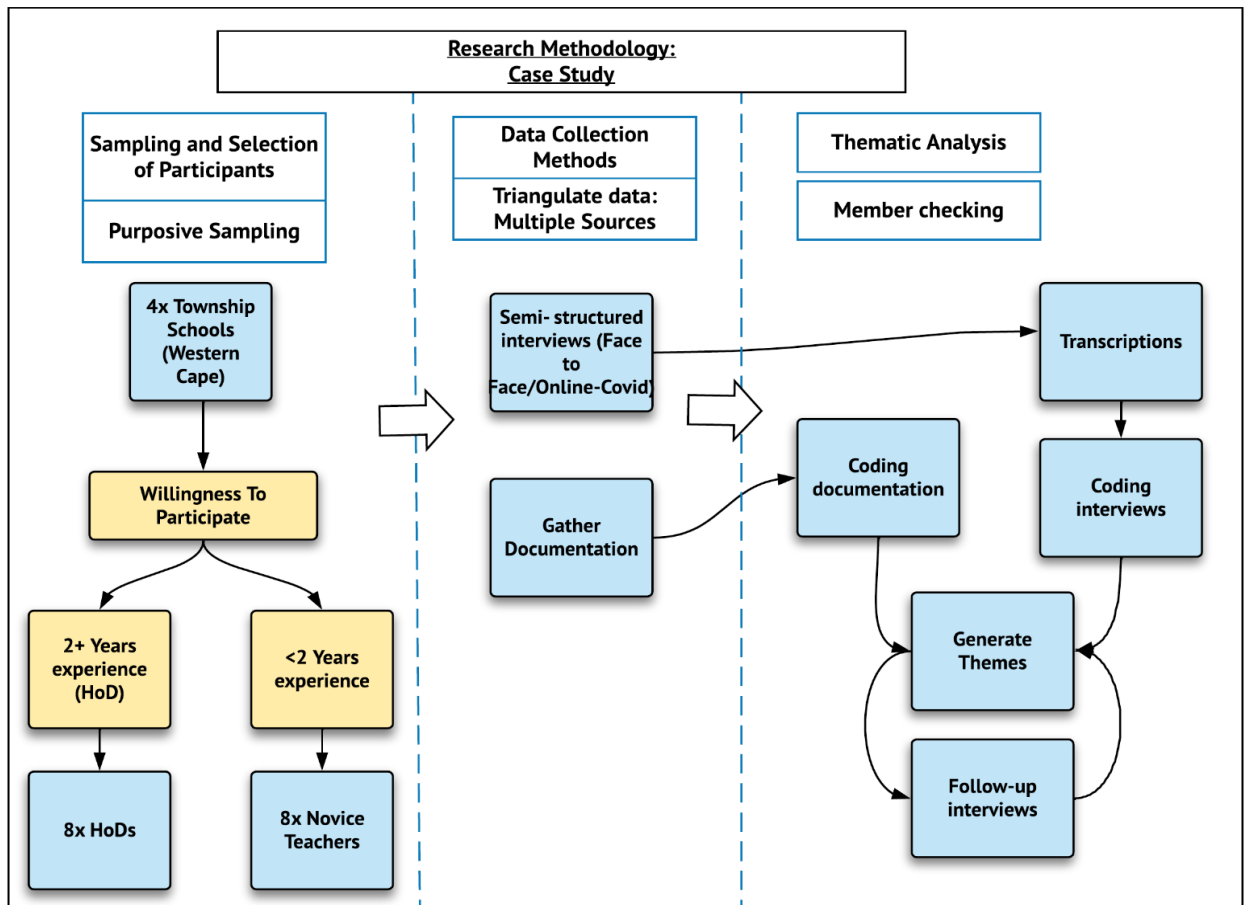
The benefit of employing a case study is that it offers a comprehensive and in-depth depiction and comprehension of the research setting (Maree, 2016). The case study

design assisted me in avoiding any manipulation of the participants' behaviour during the study. However, a drawback of a case study is that intense scrutiny of a single case can lead to bias, potentially hindering the ability to generalise conclusions (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2001). While case study design is not generalisable, it allows the researcher to study complex and unique phenomena with intense exposure, which fits the exploratory nature of this study and the small sample size. Researchers must, however, be aware that the findings of this study can be heavily biased to the specific case of the participants, and more evidence will be needed to make the findings more generalisable. The data derived from a multiple case study is robust and reliable, but the extensive time and resources required to conduct all the cases thoroughly can be costly and time-intensive, hence a single case study was deemed more appropriate for this study (Baxter & Jack, 2008). A case study offers detailed information in a condensed timeframe, allowing for close collaboration between the participants while the NTs and DHs share their perspectives and experiences. The insights gained from the interview discussions provided a perspective through which commonalities and disparities in the participants' experiences could be discerned, thereby enhancing the understanding of the phenomenon and linking the findings to the conceptual framework.

### **3.5 Research methodology**

The research methodology included the research site, sampling, data collection methods, research procedures, data analysis and interpretations.

Figure 2 below describes the key elements of the research design for this study. This includes the sampling and selection of participants, the data collection method, and the thematic analysis. Akhtar (2016) describes a research design as the “glue” that holds the parts present in a research project together. The arrangement of conditions, strategy and structure that relates to the underlying philosophical assumptions. The research design helped me gain a deep and holistic understanding of the context of the phenomena.

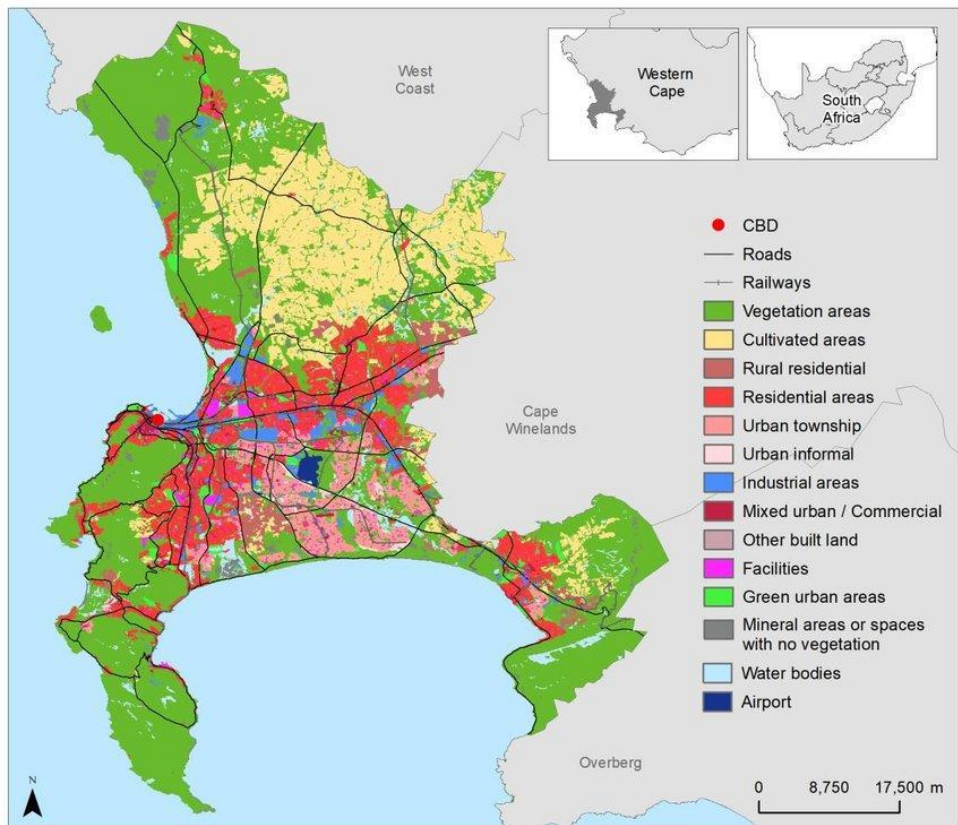


**Figure 2. Research design**

### 3.5.1 Research site

The study took place in a demographic area within the Cape Town Metropolitan district, located in the Western Cape Province of South Africa (see Figure 3 below). Data from the 2011 South African Census reveal that 50% to 58% of households at the research location earn R3,200 or less per month, while 23.8% to 30.1% of individuals aged 20 and above have achieved a Grade 12 education.





**Figure 3. Map of research site (García-Álvarez & Camacho Olmedo, 2021)**

Figure 3 above indicates the different settlements of the Cape Metropolitan. From the above map, it is clear where the low-SES communities reside within the Cape Metropolitan area. Within these communities, the research study was conducted.

Poverty is rife, and the incidence of domestic violence, substance abuse and other societal ills are prevalent (Cheteni et al., 2018). This site served as the location for data collection and execution of the research study. Two primary schools with low SES were purposively and conveniently selected as the research sites. This selection was based on the proximity of the schools to the researcher's location in the district, as well as the need for greater control over research costs and time. Despite the presence of numerous schools in the area, it was challenging to find schools that fell within the Quintile 1/Quintile 3 brackets, which denote low SES. After contacting several schools, only two schools responded and agreed to participate in the research study. Both schools were public, no-fee schools with Quantile 2 and Quantile 3 status, indicating that they were in relatively better socioeconomic communities where minimal school fees could be charged to



learners. The schools involved in this research were identified as no-fee schools, indicating that students were exempt from paying any school fees due to full government subsidies. English was the medium of instruction in both institutions. These schools were selected for convenience sampling as they were the only ones agreeable to participate and fulfilled the study's requirements. Schools in Quantile 1, like those in this study, are usually situated in economically disadvantaged and historically marginalised communities, where students are not required to pay school fees because of complete government funding. On the other hand, quantile 2 and 3 schools are in relatively better SES communities and may charge minimal school fees to learners.

A convenience sampling method was used in conjunction with purposive sampling to gain access to participants in an easy and accessible manner, due to the population size being nearly finite (Etikan, 2016). Participants and schools near the researcher were contacted first, to obtain participants who were easily accessible throughout the data collection process, geographically close, available at any given time, and willing to participate. Convenience sampling is also considered affordable and easy to implement (Etikan, 2016). However, it is important to note that convenience sampling has several limitations, including potential biases in the sample, as the researcher may not be fully representative of the population (Etikan, 2016). Another concern with this sampling method, as highlighted by Etikan (2016), is the possibility of outliers due to self-selection in the non-probability sampling employed in the study.

Furthermore, it is important to consider the context of the schools selected to investigate and establish whether the low SES impacts the experiences of designated mentors in the PD of NTs. Thus, it was deemed necessary to select different low-SES quantile schools for this study to evaluate the impact of the school's SES on the phenomena under investigation and gain a comprehensive understanding of the impact of low SES on schools.

### **3.5.2 Population and sample**

The study's population consisted of DHs and NTs from low-SES schools in the Western Cape. The selection criteria for DHs required them to have over two years of experience as a DH, ensuring they could provide rich and detailed information

about the mentoring process. NTs were chosen based on their willingness to participate and their being in their first or second year of the profession, as the effectiveness of mentoring most impacts them. The sample comprised 12 participants, with School A providing four DHs and four NTs, and School B contributing two DHs and two NTs, totalling six DHs and six NTs. The variation in participant numbers from School A and School B was due to the availability and readiness of participants to participate in the study, even though both schools were approximately the same size. The purposive sampling technique was employed for sample selection.

### **3.5.3 Research methods**

The data collection methods that were used in this study are interviews and document analysis.

#### *3.5.3.1 Interviews*

Alshenqeeti (2014) defines an interview as a focused conversation aimed at capturing the interviewee's perception of reality and accessing comprehensive information to interpret the phenomenon. Utilising an interview as a method of data collection is a direct and uncomplicated strategy for acquiring descriptive, detailed, and rich data about the phenomenon in its natural context (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). This research conducted individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews with the DHs and NTs. The main objective of using interviews as a research method was to gather rich and detailed data that explains the participants' experiences regarding PD and how DHs manage the PD of NTs in low-SES primary schools. A compiled list of questions was prepared beforehand and used to ask questions to the participants, the first set of questions were biographical questions which were common between NT and DH. The other questions were derived from the study's research questions to gain information to answer them. NTs and DHs were asked different questions as per their position. Alshenqeeti (2014) recommends that a checklist is important to ensure that all relevant areas are covered in the interview. A printed checklist for each participant was used to guide the interviews. This ensured consistency in the process and allowed comparisons to be made between interviews. The interview questions for all the DHs and NTs were kept the same and presented in the same order to ensure consistency across the interviews as

recommended by Botha (2019). The interviews lasted between 40 to 60 minutes, depending on the participant, the follow-up questions and the flow of the conversations. The interviews were recorded with permission from the participants to transcribe later. When conducting the interviews, the recommendations of Alshenqeeti (2014) were followed to value the interview itself, participation, and words of the interviewee as well as building trust to ensure objectivity, accuracy, and honesty. The wording of the questions was short and clear. This ensured that the interview flowed naturally, was rich in detail, and created the appropriate atmosphere in which the interviewee felt more at ease and was able to talk freely. Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, it was difficult to conduct face-to-face interviews. Alternative methods were considered such as telephonic, Skype, Zoom or Meet interviews were available and offered to the participants depending on their accessibility but with the changing landscape of COVID-related matters all interviews were able to be conducted in person.

Follow-up informal interviews were requested and done with participants who were willing to be asked more questions for clarity and depth. The advantage of using semi-structured interviews in this study is that it allows the interviewer to probe and expand the responses of the interviewee (Alshenqeeti, 2014). Additionally, being face-to-face is beneficial as, according to Opdenakker (2006), it takes advantage of social cues. The intonation, voice, and body language of the participants will give the interviewer more information that can be added to verbal answers and answers are given more spontaneously.

Semi-structured interviews allowed issues and themes that concerned the study to be covered, ensuring that key information is captured, while still retaining the perspectives and personality of the participants (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). This advantage particularly fits the case study research design and the study's exploratory nature, allowing for deeper investigation into the phenomena and the ability to continue asking questions fluidly in person.. Although this is an advantage, it is simultaneously disadvantageous because it disrupts the interview structure and makes the interview longer, which is tiresome to the researcher and interviewees and difficult to transcribe and process later. Albeit rich and informative data was collected. The transcribing of the interview data was time-consuming, and the information gathered and obtained by the researcher may still be biased, as it is

viewed subjectively. Dedicated hours were spent transcribing, and to address bias issues, the words of the narrative were written down verbatim.

### 3.5.3.2 *Document analysis*

The second method employed to collect data in this study was document analysis. As per Wach (2013), document analysis is a meticulous and systematic approach to analysing written documents. The use of document analysis involves scrutinising and interpreting text or images to extract meaning, acquire understanding, and develop empirical knowledge about the phenomenon under study, all of which is produced without the researcher's interference (Bowen, 2009). The documentation analysis methods in this study helped to provide data within the specific context in which DHs and NTs operate, it provided background information, which helped me as a researcher to understand specific issues and indicates the conditions in which the phenomenon is currently under investigation. When the documents were received, the PD programme documents were analysed to check the content and ensure that PD occurred as described in the interviews. Agendas were analysed to identify workload and specific responsibilities within the school context. The documents helped explore the changes and development of the mentoring process and verify the interview participants' responses.

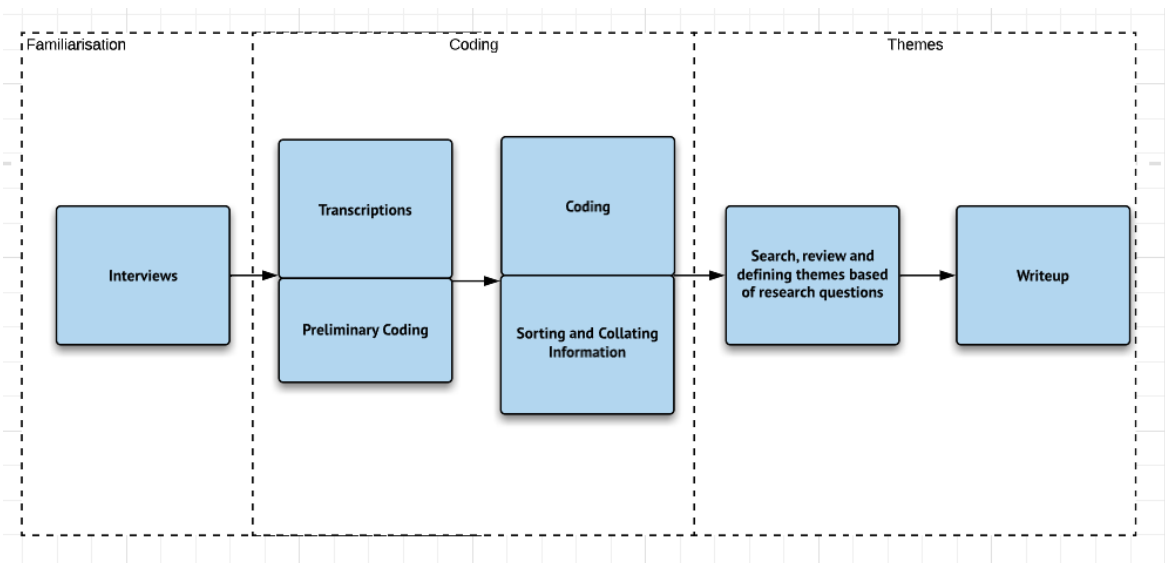
The advantage of using document analysis is that the contents of documents cannot be influenced by me as a researcher, thereby reducing bias (Bowen, 2009). Furthermore, accessing and analysing documents gives the study a better understanding and explanation of the research data obtained in the interviews. During the research process, internal PD documents were analysed to understand the regulation of the PD of NTs. The topics of PD were analysed to see if they correlate with the needs of NTs. Documents such as class visits and book moderation were accessed and analysed to understand how mentorship is provided to NTs and the quality of the feedback provided.

The disadvantage of document analysis is that the documents may not be detailed and contain insufficient information (Bowen, 2009). The document analysis resources also proved extremely difficult to get from the principals or the DHs' tasks with collecting and providing it to me, even though it was agreed upon.

Using documentation analysis together with the interviews sought convergence and corroboration between the data, which improved the study's credibility.

### 3.5.4 Data analysis

The data analysis depicted in Figure 4 below illustrates the steps that were followed from gathering the data in this study up to the analysis of the data, using thematic analysis.



**Figure 4. Data analysis process (adapted, Maguire and Delahunt, 2017)**

In this study, thematic analysis procedures were used as described by Maguire and Delahunt (2017); the six phases to complete thematic analysis were familiarisation, initial coding, theme search, theme review, defining themes and the write-up. These phases were conducted to analyse the data recorded as follows.

As a prerequisite to the thematic analysis, the data must have been collected; therefore, the first interviews were done. For data collection, an audio recorder, notebook, and participant file were used to record and track the information necessary to perform the thematic analysis during participant interviews. These recordings of the interviews with the educators were transcribed to obtain descriptive data.

The first phase and first steps of familiarisation started with immersing me in the data and coming to grips with the participants' responses. The initial collection of data during the conduction of the interviews marked the first instance to become familiar with the information. The second part was while transcribing and verifying that the data was accurate as to the participants' voices. The familiarisation process was to develop a sense of the data.

The next step in thematic analysis was to generate preliminary codes, these codes were used to keep track of information and to connect information to codes to later identify and categorise the information. This step was done during the generation of transcriptions and further refined during coding after multiple readings and allowing the information to be digested.

The coding process was initiated next. Coding is a tool that was used in this study to turn raw qualitative data into a communicative “story” that is trustworthy and reliable (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). Linneberg and Korsgaard (2019) define method coding as a process to identify segments of meaning in one’s data and label it with a code, which can be seen as a short phrase that is symbolic. Coding gave meaning to information in the data and the ability to identify, reference and relate to them throughout the material. Using coding as an analysis and interpreting method helps to reduce the large amount of data obtained in the study, makes the data readily available and accessible for analysis, helps to sort and structure the data, provides transparency, ensures validity, gives a voice to what the participants are experiencing and in conjunction increases the quality of the analysis and findings of the study (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). By using codes, the information could be mapped to meaning, collated, related and sorted, generating an organised, interconnected network of information in the form of a table attached to the appendix. The map guides the next step to generate themes that relate to the research question, capturing concepts that have significance or interest in the data. Themes were then reviewed and diluted to their most common denominators, and a focus was placed on the significance they carry regarding the research.

After themes were identified, the defining stage began to identify the essence of each theme and how they relate to each other to form the findings and conclusions of this study. Significant work and effort went into determining the themes and

generating findings in the large dataset collected from the participants. Linneberg and Korsgaard (2019) were correct in their proposition that the findings and results require deliberate work and effort and do not easily emerge from your transcripts and documents by themselves. It was essential to identify the most important information and construct it coherently, logically, and convincingly to answer the research question and provide insight into the data obtained (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). Analysing the documents was done in the same way, by identifying themes and cross-checking the data obtained by the interviews.

### **3.5.5 Ethical considerations**

Parveen and Showkat (2017) describe ethics as the moral principles that are associated with an individual's behaviour by doing what is morally and legally correct. Throughout the research study, I, as a researcher, complied with the ethical guidelines outlined in the Ethics and Research Statement of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria and the Professional Board for Psychology.

#### *3.5.5.1 Permission for Ethical Consideration*

Approval for ethical consideration was sought and received from the Ethics Committee at the University of Pretoria, and permission to access schools was granted by the Western Cape Research Ethics Committee. Subsequently, written informed consent was secured from the participants involved in the study.

#### *3.5.5.2 Participation and informed consent of the participants*

Involvement in this study was entirely voluntary, with participants having the option to decline participation. They also had the right to withdraw from the study at any point without facing any penalties, and any data collected in such instances would have been discarded (Creswell, 2007:44; Ritchie et al., 2013). In an understanding manner, the participants were provided with sufficient information about the research study, allowing them to base their willingness to participate voluntarily.

#### *3.5.5.3 Confidentiality*

Confidentiality means that the attribution of comments in reports will not be linked to the identity of the participants. According to Vanclay et al. (2013), it is the researcher's responsibility to judge what information should be or not be used in the



study, therefore, only relevant information related to the research questions was used in the analysis process of the study.

To ensure confidentiality in the study, participants remained anonymous throughout the research study. Code names were used to identify the participants. Audio recordings and transcripts obtained during the interviews were labelled using code names therefore, participants can not directly be identified. Audio recordings and other collected data were securely stored on a password-protected storage device for 15 years at the University of Pretoria to safeguard the participants' confidentiality. This measure ensured that the participants were not subjected to any undue levels of risk.

#### *3.5.5.4 The anonymity of the sample and sample site*

Anonymity, as defined by Ritchie et al. (2013), ensures that the participants' identities and the sites remain unknown outside the research team. All participants in this study were guaranteed anonymity. They were informed about who would be aware of their participation and how they would be referenced in the text. To prevent any harm to the participants and schools, both were assigned code names and were never directly referred to by any term that could potentially identify them. Schools in this study were coded, categorised, and referred to in text only by the broad and non-specific location of Cape Town and surrounding suburbs and their SES linked to the low-SES context.

#### *3.5.5.5 The effect and acknowledgement of the COVID-19 pandemic*

The global COVID-19 pandemic has affected how we operate on a day-to-day basis. The ethical concern of conducting face-to-face interviews with participants to gain better information for the study but risk the safety of myself and the participants were considered. It determined that the guidelines of the government and guidelines from the University of Pretoria will be the basis of any ethical decision. Therefore, during the execution of this research study, all the necessary precautionary measures outlined by the government and the University of Pretoria were followed to keep the researcher and the study's participants safe. Depending on the state of the pandemic, the option was open to performing telephonic or video conferencing interviews rather than face-to-face interviews to minimise exposure, but this was never exercised as the interviews were conducted outside of a local COVID peak.



The discussion of the ethical consideration above, if it was conducted, would still have applied when interviewing and analysing documents through an online platform.

### 3.5.6 Trustworthiness of the study

**Trustworthiness** in a study pertains to the reliability of the data gathered and interpreted, as well as the methods employed to guarantee the quality of the study (Connelly, 2016). In qualitative research, trustworthiness is ensured through the following principles: credibility, confirmability, dependability, reflexivity, and transferability.

The **credibility** of a qualitative research study refers to the researcher's capacity to demonstrate that the study's findings align with real-world experiences. This study established credibility through member checking, data source triangulation, and extended engagement with the participants (Cho & Trent, 2006). Member checking involved sending transcripts to the participants for their feedback, ensuring that the information was plausible and confirmed by the participants. Triangulation, a process where multiple data sources and data collection methods are used to arrive at the same conclusions (Korstjens & Moser, 2018), was achieved in this study by using data from semi-structured interviews and document analysis, as well as data from different participants. Extended engagement with the participants was facilitated through the duration of the interviews and subsequent follow-up interviews.

**Confirmability** refers to the degree to which other researchers can corroborate or validate the findings of a study (Anney, 2015). To establish confirmability, strategies like keeping an audit trail and providing thorough, comprehensive descriptions were utilised (Creswell & Miller, 2000). In this study, detailed descriptions were produced from both the initial and follow-up interviews. An audit trail was maintained to ensure credible data by allowing the readers to verify the chronological actions that took place as described in the narrative account of the researcher. In this study, research decisions and activities were documented and provided as an appendix. The thick, rich descriptions of the participants are presented in the findings of this study. Writing critically and descriptively allows the readers to be transported to the setting and into the narrative, which contextualises the participants and the sites studied.

Therefore, it ensured that the narratives were well-documented and detailed in this study.

**Dependability** involves having the participants assess the study's findings, interpretations, and recommendations to ensure they align with and support their perspectives (Anney, 2015). In this study, dependability was achieved by maintaining a comprehensive audit trail documenting the principles and criteria used for participant and sample site selection, the research design, and the methodology and methods employed for data collection.

**Reflexivity** is a self-assessment of subjectivity which can reduce bias in the study. Using reflexivity in the study ensured dependability by increasing the transparency of the research process. In this study, the role as a researcher is guided by the researchers' own beliefs, assumptions, emotional responses and unconscious bias because myself as the researcher is also considered an NT as per the study. To avoid any biased and/or subjective misinterpreting a checklist was made use of as recommended by Alshenqeeti (2014) to keep the interviews as consistent as possible, to allow the data to be comparable between interviews, and to not deviate from the interview questions. Thick descriptions were used to give enough detail to avoid any subjective interpretations afflicting the information. Any misrepresentations were prevented by member checking and allowing the participants to verify their views. For the research study to be successful, it was crucial to build a rapport with the participants and create a relaxed environment where they felt comfortable answering the interview questions. The participants' responses were not swayed by any personal views on mentoring and PD, and they were not compelled to reveal any information they were uncomfortable sharing.

**Transferability**, as per Maree (2016), is the ability not to make generalisations to invite the reader to make connections between their own experiences and the elements that are involved. The researcher is aware that the study's findings cannot be generalised to a different context or population because, in qualitative research, we do not have a standardised measurement like in quantitative research. The findings are thus not generalisable, although they bring an understanding towards the phenomenon being studied in the low-SES school context. In the study, transferability was facilitated by describing the context of the research by providing

detailed accounts of the study's participants and highlighting the beliefs held by the participants. Furthermore, the research process, the context in which the research is conducted and the setting, sample, sample size, strategy and interview procedure enable the reader to assess if the data and findings are described in detail.

### **3.6 Chapter summary**

This chapter offers an in-depth exploration of the research methodology, aiming to elucidate the DH's function as a mentor in the PD of NTs in primary schools within low-SES settings. It covers the research paradigm, methodology, location, and participants, in addition to the methods of data gathering and analysis. Furthermore, it details the steps taken to ensure the study's trustworthiness and the ethical guidelines followed. In the subsequent chapter, the findings of the study and their discussions are presented.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS OF THE STUDY AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 of this study discussed the research methodology applied in this study, including data collection methods and data analysis strategies. Chapter 4 represents the findings of the study followed discussion of the findings. The research findings presented in this chapter relate to and are supported by literature that is available and relevant to this research topic. The main research question was, “*How do socioeconomic factors influence departmental heads as mentors for the professional development of novice teachers in low-socioeconomic primary schools in the Western Cape?*”.

This study's results are organised into four main themes that arose from the secondary research questions aimed at addressing the primary research question. These themes and their sub-themes correspond with the questions posed during interviews and the document analysis conducted to gather data. The presentation of findings is thematic and includes direct quotes from participants for support. An analysis of the findings is conducted, comparing them with pertinent literature to highlight any similarities, differences, or deviations from the study's results.

### 4.2 Biographical information of the participants

Table 1 below contains the biographical information of all the participants in this study.

**Table 1. Biographical Information of the participants**

School (Quintile)	Participant	Gender	Age	Experience	Post level	Experience in current position	Pseudonym/ Code
School A Quintile 3	Departmental Head A1	Female	55	30 years	2	5 years	DH1A
	Departmental Head A2	Female	30	8 years	2	2 years	DH2A
	Departmental Head A3	Female	61	41 years	2	2 years, 4 months	DH3A
	Departmental Head A4	Female	39	10 years	2	4 years	DH4A
	Novice Teacher A1	Female	23	18 months	1	18 months	NT1A
	Novice Teacher A2	Female	30	6 months	1	6 months	NT2A
	Novice Teacher A3	Female	28	17 months	1	17 months	NT3A
	Novice Teacher A4	Male	23	18 months		17 months	NT4A
School B Quintile 2	Departmental Head B1	Female	38	15 years	2	3 years	DH5B
	Departmental Head B2	Female	33	10 years	2	2 years	DH6B
	Novice Teacher B1	Female	24	19 months	1	19 months	NT5B
	Novice Teacher B2	Male	26	6 months	1	6 months	NT6B

The study interviewed DHs with more than 2 years of experience and NTs with less than 2 years of experience. There were two post levels represented—post level 1 and DH. The experience of the DHs in the study ranged from 8 to 41 years; for the NTs, it was below 2 years, being between 6 and 19 months of experience.

### 4.3 Research questions and interview questions

The main research question was: *How do socioeconomic factors influence departmental heads' mentorship for the professional development of novice teachers in low-socioeconomic primary schools in the Western Cape?*

In Table 2 below, the secondary research questions are aligned with the corresponding interview questions to answer the primary research question.

Table 2 indicates the secondary research questions and interview questions that were designed to support and answer the research questions. The alignment between the secondary research and interview questions was used to sort the data and identify the main themes and sub-themes.

**Table 2. Secondary research questions aligned with the interview questions**

Research Questions	Interview Questions Departmental Heads	Interview Questions Novice Teachers
Biographical questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is your age?</li> <li>• Gender</li> <li>• How many years of experience do you have as a teacher?</li> <li>• How long have you been employed in your current position?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is your age?</li> <li>• Gender</li> <li>• How many years of experience do you have as a teacher?</li> <li>• How long have you been employed in your current position?</li> </ul>
Research Sub-question 1: What are the mentorship experiences of DHs in managing the PD of NTs in low-socioeconomic primary schools in the Western Cape?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are your experiences in mentoring NTs' PD?</li> <li>• What are your views on what NTs in low-SES schools need to develop?</li> <li>• How do you develop NTs' PD?</li> <li>• What can you say about the SES of the school and your experience of mentoring NTs?</li> <li>• In your experience, what can you say about the importance of PD?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are your experiences of PD?</li> <li>• Please tell me about your views on the role played by the DH in your PD.</li> <li>• How does your DH mentor you in your PD?</li> <li>• What can you say about the SES of the school and your mentorship as an NT?</li> <li>• In your experience, what can you say about the importance of PD?</li> </ul>
Research Sub-question 2: How do DHs influence the PD of NTs through mentorship?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would you describe the working relationship between yourself and your mentee (NTs)?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would you describe the working relationship between yourself and your DH?</li> <li>• How does the support or mentoring you receive from</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do your efforts in developing NTs contribute to the performance of NTs?</li> <li>• What is your opinion on the professional growth of NTs?</li> <li>• How do you influence the NTs to participate in PD daily?</li> </ul>	<p>your DH help you to develop professionally?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please explain to me if there is a growth or a lack of growth in your PD as a result of the efforts from your DH.</li> <li>• How does your DH influence you daily?</li> </ul>
<p>Research Sub-question 3:</p> <p>What difficulties and challenges do NTs face during mentorship for PD in low-socioeconomic primary schools in the Western Cape?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the personal challenges you experience as a mentor in the PD of NTs?</li> <li>• In your opinion, what are the problems or challenges experienced by NTs during their PD?</li> <li>• In your view, how do the challenges experienced by NTs motivate/demotivate their PD?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the personal challenges you experience as an NT in your school?</li> <li>• As an NT, what are the problems or challenges that you experience during your PD?</li> <li>• How did these challenges influence your perspective and motivation in your PD?</li> </ul>
<p>Research Sub-question 4:</p> <p>How do the DHs manage the identified PD challenges?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What strategies do you use to manage the challenges experienced by NTs?</li> <li>• What do you do concerning the PD of teachers in light of the identified challenges?</li> <li>• Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about the PD of NTs at your school?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What support do you get from your DH to manage the challenges that you experience?</li> <li>• What would you recommend that the DH should do to address the challenges that you experience in your PD?</li> <li>• Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about the PD of NTs at your school?</li> </ul>

#### 4.4 Research questions, themes and sub-themes

Table 3 below shows the themes that were generated from the secondary research questions. The table aligns the themes and sub-themes with the research's secondary questions.

The table represents the themes and sub-themes developed from the answers to the interview questions, aligned with Table 3, to answer the study's primary research question.

**Table 3. Themes and sub-themes aligned with research sub-questions**

Research questions	Themes and sub-themes
<p>Research sub-question 1:</p> <p>What are the mentorship experiences of DHs in managing the PD of NTs in low-socioeconomic primary schools in the Western Cape?</p>	<p><b>Theme 1:</b> Mentorship experiences of DHs in managing the PD of NTs in low-socioeconomic primary schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sub-theme 1: Preparedness/ Readiness of NTs</li> <li>• Sub-theme 2: Constraints experienced in the mentorship of DHs in schools within low SES.</li> <li>• Sub-theme 3: Lack of or inadequate understanding of the needs of NTs</li> <li>• Sub-theme 4: School environment and resource constraints</li> </ul>
<p>Research sub-question 2:</p> <p>How do DHs influence the PD of NTs through mentorship?</p>	<p><b>Theme 2:</b> The influence DHs have on the PD of NTs through mentorship.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sub-theme 1: Support, guidance, and assistance from DHs</li> <li>• Sub-theme 2: NTs' perceptions of mentorship of PD provided by DHs</li> <li>• Sub-theme 3: NTs' perceptions of their PD needs</li> </ul>
<p>Research sub-question 3:</p> <p>What difficulties and challenges do NTs face during mentorship for PD in low-socioeconomic primary schools in the Western Cape?</p>	<p><b>Theme 3:</b> The difficulties and challenges NTs face during mentorship for PD in low-socioeconomic primary schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sub-theme. 1: Low-SES environment: Overcrowded classrooms and classroom management</li> <li>• Sub-theme 2: PD provided is often not hands-on and does not meet needs.</li> <li>• Sub-theme 3: NTs feel overworked and overwhelmed: Admin load and difficulty completing curriculum.</li> <li>• Sub-theme 4: Lack of follow-up programmes and/or feedback</li> </ul>
<p>Research sub-question 4:</p> <p>How do the DHs manage the identified PD challenges?</p>	<p><b>Theme 4:</b> Managing NT's PD challenges.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sub-theme 1: The understanding of the PD needs of NTs</li> <li>• Sub-theme 2: Effectiveness of PD in developing NTs is crucial for the success of the school.</li> <li>• Sub-theme 3: Recommendations on improving PD of NTs</li> </ul>



## 4.5 Research findings

The research findings, which correspond with the research and interview questions, are organised into themes and sub-themes. The data gathered from the participants' responses is showcased as findings and discussed in the context of the literature review on the subject. A summary is provided following each theme.

### 4.5.1 Theme 1: Departmental heads' Mentorship experiences in managing novice teachers' professional development in low-socioeconomic primary schools.

This theme answers the research question: *What are the mentorship experiences of DHs in managing the PD of NTs in low-socioeconomic primary schools in the Western Cape?* In this theme, the researcher explored the experiences of DHs in mentoring NTs. It is evident from the DHs' responses that mentoring NTs is a challenging process. The six DHs who participated in the study mentioned that NTs struggle in their first year of teaching and that they need continuous support. The interview questions, derived from the research sub-questions designed to answer the main research question, are presented in sub-themes.

#### 4.5.1.1 Sub-theme 1: Preparedness/readiness of novice teachers when entering the profession.

This sub-theme is based on the interview question - What are your experiences in mentoring NTs' PD? This study found that the NTs are not prepared for the transition from their tertiary studies to classroom teaching and that universities do not adequately prepare NTs to be able to fulfil teaching expectations. This finding is reiterated by the DHs and NTs.

*... they don't prepare you for the reality that is happening in our school, you know? It's just books. And you do observation lessons but the reality is, they are really dumbstruck when they come here. (DH2A)*

*I've noticed, they quite... they struggle... as the year started. Because it's as if the university don't prepare them adequately to what is expected of them when they start. (DH6B)*

*... the four years on university was only to get a piece of paper. It's four years of writing essays and all those things, just for a piece of paper, ...,*

*but it's nothing compared to what you actually face when you are at the school. (NT4A)*

It appears from the above quotations that NTs are expected to be ready and have the necessary skills and knowledge when entering the classroom as a teacher for the first time. This finding shows that NTs are not prepared for what is expected of them in the classroom, but quickly realise that they are out of their depth. The DHs have a good understanding beforehand that NTs are inadequately prepared, indicating that the theory-based learning during NTs studies and observations made during their teaching practical are not efficient to ensure a successful transition into the school environment where additional challenges compound to make life difficult for NTs. The participants' voices suggest that there is a misalignment between how NTs are trained during their pre-service at university and the practical in-service expectations of teaching in a real classroom.

The findings are consistent with the observations made in the study done by Botha and Rens (2018), which stated that there is a misalignment between preservice training and what is required in the classroom which leads to a misaligned expectation, causing stress and frustration within NTs. The finding is also in line with the literature of Bulut Albaba (2017) who argues that transitioning NTs into the classroom is a great challenge. Bulut Albaba (2017), Uushona (2018) and Öztürk and Yildirim (2013) emphasise that the training that NTs receive at university is not sufficient to ensure a positive and even transition and that there is a lack of preparedness to teach after the completion of their tertiary education programmes. Moreover, according to Chaney et al. (2020), only 20% of first-year teachers felt adequately prepared to select curriculum materials, manage a variety of classroom situations, and evaluate students. The findings above indicate that NTs face challenges globally when they enter the teaching profession. This issue is not unique to South Africa's schools alone. NTs often lack the necessary preparation and exposure to handle the various challenges inherent in the profession, which contributes to their attrition rates. To address this, emphasis should shift towards enhancing and reforming pre-service training for NTs, providing them with a more realistic view of the profession. Exposure to the field during pre-service education aligns their expectations with the actual role of a teacher.

Because of the unpreparedness, it is expected of the school to assist in the training of NTs to fill the gap by having DHs, grade heads and other experienced teachers mentor as well as teaching NTs how to manage the responsibilities of being a teacher.

*So, it's expected of the school and the grade heads and the departmental heads to mentor them and to take them by the hand to help them. (DH6B.*

*Starting as an NT is frightening and I think all NTs are shocked when you step into the school for the first time. Especially if they come from the university. They throw you into the deep end and then you have to swim. (DH1A)*

From the findings, it appears that the schools involved in this study are aware that NTs are unprepared when entering the profession and expect DHs and grade heads to assist NTs through mentoring. Therefore, Additional help is delegated to onboard NTs and ensure they are prepared. Assigning DHs and grade heads to mentor the NTs affirms that the mentors are aware of the knowledge and skills that are inadequate in NTs. Such knowledge could be shared with pre-service institutions to fill in the gap between the pre-service and in-service experiences of NTs.

Fantilli and McDougall (2009) suggest that for NTs to be prepared for the classroom, it is important to ensure that they are emotionally and practically prepared. The success of NTs can largely hinge on the personal and perceived support they receive, as well as the environmental factors that contribute to their success when immersing themselves in the school environment (Curry et al., 2016). Miya's (2022) study contradicts the DHs in this study, saying that DHs are unclear about their roles and act as overseers of teaching instead of mentoring the NTs. Ensuring the allocation of DHs to mentor NTs is a crucial step in guaranteeing the preparedness of NTs. Failing to do so could leave these NTs ill-equipped to navigate the challenges of their profession. The importance of this mentorship selection process is amplified when preservice training is inadequate, underscoring the need for careful consideration in choosing mentors. Addressing the shortcomings in preservice training emerges as the most effective solution to tackle the issue at its root. Furthermore, DHs often grapple with the ambiguity surrounding their roles, as they may serve as both managers and mentors, creating potential conflicts in their

objectives. Clarifying these roles is essential to providing practical and effective guidance and support to NTs and ensuring their success in the profession.

#### 4.5.1.2 *Sub-theme 2: Constraints experienced in the mentorship of departmental heads in schools of low socioeconomic status*

The findings of this study show that a demanding workload is experienced as a burden among NTs especially administrative duties and time management causing them considerable stress and discouraging them from seeking guidance from their DHs.

*Yes, and obviously the workload is stressing them [NTs] out. And I just think sometimes for them, to ask questions is that they are scared of what you will think ... I don't think they really know that it's so much work I don't know that they have the perception that teachers are just coming in and going home, they really struggle with the workload ... Because you don't have time management. So that, because you don't have time management and you're struggling with the workload you are going to face great challenges. (DH1A)*

*There is a lot... I just feel as a teacher, I never stop working, because I'm going home with my books and I am going to mark it at home and I'm not going to get done, because I have my FAT's and I have my books and I need to find time to prepare for the next day and prep my books. It is a lot of workloads; I feel that the curriculum is also so packed... But at the moment, I feel I'm just... I'm tired and overworked. I don't spend time with my friends... So, I, now school is just so draining, but I love teaching. (NT2A)*

*I think a lot of us actually struggle with the amount of work that we've been given to do especially now with COVID as well... (NT4A)*

The reluctance to seek assistance stems from an absence of an open professional relationship between the NTs and their mentors. Excessive workload and inadequate time management can introduce stressors that potentially undermine NTs' motivation, confidence, and overall work experience. Counterintuitively, while NTs are afraid of posing questions, doing so would be essential for their growth and progress. It is important to note that while workload is a notable factor, it may not be the sole contributor to their reluctance to pose questions.

In addition to the challenges identified in the findings, the South African schooling system, as outlined by Mouton et al. (2013), is marked by issues such as underperforming teachers, a lack of good work ethic, a lack of community commitment and parental support, and poor support and control from education authorities. Uushona (2018) also highlights that stress, exhaustion, illness and too many responsibilities placed on NTs may lead to despair and divert focus from their accomplishments. Furthermore, Banja's (2016) study supports the finding, indicating that NTs who do not feel welcome and supported by more experienced educators, results in NTs having to adapt and adjust to their environment, they feel rejected, unimportant, and side-lined slowly and stressfully. These negative effects felt by NTs can be overcome with a change to a more supportive work environment. Chaaban and Du (2017) and TALIS (2009) provide additional support for the finding underscoring the benefits of a welcoming, positive, warm, and safe work environment for NTs, along with the impact that strong, positive interpersonal relationships have. It is important to initiate and maintain reliable professional mentoring relationships at an early stage to ensure that NTs have the necessary support and trust to rely on mentors for assistance during challenging times and have the confidence to participate in PD that will improve their skills to better handle their workload.

Furthermore, while NTs are struggling with workload, DHs anticipate that NTs work beyond their contracted hours to complete their duties.

*If a teacher refuses to stay after contract time, it will be noted down, saying that you are unwilling to stay after hours. (NT3A)*

*I think at one stage there was an even time of leaving the school half past five in the afternoon of everything that we needed to get done. So it is very difficult in terms of workload sometimes, hmm... if I think of certain time last year, probably left school five minutes before 12 in the evening, because you had to get done what they wanted to get done. Doesn't matter if it's locked down, curfew or anything. (NT4A)*

*You know sometimes we are here until after six or they will call us in on a Saturday, or Sunday to come and then I am on the beach or whatever, and then I have to come to school to change a file, are you serious, like, but we have to do it. (NT2A)*

The work culture poses a risk to the well-being of NTs, as they perceive adverse outcomes for not exceeding their contracted hours, leading to a heightened probability of burnout, heightened stress levels, and a disturbance in maintaining a healthy work-life balance, although this is seemingly harsh it is common for NTs, and some do eventually overcome the challenges.

This finding corroborates the work done by Naegle (2002) which shows that during the survival phase of the NTs experience, the day-to-day classroom operations become overwhelming for NTs and they find themselves working endless hours each week, struggling to cope with and endure the mounting pressures. According to Uushona (2018), this experience of reality shock can result in stress, fatigue, and health issues. The finding is further reinforced by Naegle (2002), who states that NTs experience a phase of disillusionment that impacts classroom management. However, after progressing through challenges, they gain confidence, improve teaching strategies, and feel renewed enthusiasm for their work. In the reflection phase, NTs seek guidance from experienced colleagues and engage in teaching and planning with less exhaustion.

The NTs in the study struggled to complete all their administrative duties which resulted in NTs feeling overwhelmed and ill-equipped. The mentors are also overworked as stated in the quotations.

*...I think also time management is a problem. Because they [NTs] have so many workloads, admin and...marking books, class visits, stuff like that. (DH2A)*

*I think the admin is a lot the admin is probably the biggest thing in teaching for me, that's a very negative aspect of it. (NT5B)*

*I do not have any off periods. I don't have and, and, and I have to do my work and see through if they are doing their work. I have to do my work and the admin and sometimes it's meetings, meetings, meetings and meetings. And that is why I go home late. (DH1A)*

The experiences of NTs regarding administration duties and time management are consistent with those of DHs from both participating schools. The workload experience highlights a negative perception of the administrative responsibilities

that the NTs as well as the DHs are expected to fulfil. NTs express that the administrative aspect of teaching can be stressful and overwhelming, overshadowing their core purpose and passion for teaching, leading to a demotivating and negative experience. The findings indicate an imbalance in the distribution of responsibilities between administrative tasks and teaching duties. There are multiple ways to approach the solution, which would be different for each school context depending on the constraints imposed. For instance, targeted PD to improve time management can assist NTs in resolving admin more effectively. Teaching assistants can be hired to assist in administration duties. Administrative load can be eliminated if unnecessary steps are involved. The significance of identifying and mitigating factors that lead to overwhelming experiences for NTs should take priority to ensure a balanced workload.

This finding affirms du Plessis and Mestry's (2019) finding that low-SES rural schoolteachers face a range of challenges impacting their effectiveness and academic outcomes. The challenges include curriculum obstacles, inadequate infrastructure, and system/administrative issues. These factors collectively contribute to their struggle to achieve satisfactory academic performance and provide quality education. Kyriacou and Kunc (2007) also noted the impact of time constraints and school management on NTs' commitment. Likewise, Mpisane (2015) argues that DHs are challenged with excessive workloads in both administration and teaching as well as mentoring NTs.

This finding suggests that administrative duties significantly hinder the mentoring and growth of NTs, and it also diverts essential time from DHs who could otherwise support these NTs.

In low-SES settings, it seems that some of the administrative obligations are from the community setup and factors inherent to low-SES environments.

*...I feel like that not even the teacher's job to do certain admin activities or responsibilities they ask of us, which I find that ridiculous to think because right in the middle of my class I am being interrupted by the HOD coming in, because they now want a new updated list of the learners information, which I find like, or they missing the children's parents ID numbers on the system, which I think that is something, when the child enrolls to the school,*



*this stuff needs to be loaded up on the system. So why does it come five years later now that the child is Grade 5 it becomes my problem as to why the document it is not right. (NT4A)*

*They want regular house visits; they want us to like go to their houses. And so there you would have it if I can relate it to the situation? Yeah, like outside the area, we are mentored quite a lot with them and their background, and where they are coming from and the houses that they live in and everything like that. And I do have sympathy for them. I mean, they can't help it. So, with the kids and their background and where they're coming from.... we are being mentored quite a lot. (NT3A)*

The above finding appears to indicate that the administrative responsibilities of teachers in low SES surpass those detailed in the PAM document and are more extensive compared to other urban schools falling within quintiles 4 and 5. The participant responses shed light on the challenges teachers in low-SES settings face due to increased administrative obligations. NTs voiced frustration with administrative tasks interrupting teaching and questioned the appropriateness of certain responsibilities falling on teachers. NTs also discussed the need for house visits, reflecting an extended role in understanding students' backgrounds and circumstances. These accounts highlight the intricate balance between administrative demands that relate to teaching and learning and other administrative needs that fall under a different department like Social Services. There seem to be no clear boundaries between teachers' and social workers' responsibilities.

According to the Government Gazette (2016), the role of teachers has always been to facilitate administrative tasks in coordinating academic activities and various non-teaching related duties such as first aid, fire drills, accidents, and collection of monies and staff meetings. Although it is part of a teacher's duty to do administrative tasks, respondents in this study argued that these duties interfere with academic time and are a contributor to teachers' heavy workload. This raises the question of whether the administrative responsibilities initially outlined in the PAM (2003) align with and cover the tasks undertaken by teachers in this study.

In conclusion, the findings of this sub-theme highlight the substantial stress arising from increased workloads, especially due to extended administrative duties



expected of the DHs and the NTs in this study, which influences NTs' teaching experiences. It is therefore important to delve into the personnel mentoring relationships between mentor and mentees and to ensure that mentoring relationships are reliable and effective to alleviate the constraints that limit the quality of work experience.

#### 4.5.1.3 *Sub-theme 3: Lack of or inadequate understanding of the needs of novice teachers*

From the responses of the NTs in this study, it became evident that NTs sometimes feel misunderstood, and have a perception that their mentorship or PD is not aligned with their needs and/or the school and classroom environment. The NTs who participated in the study shared their views and experiences below:

*...So, I would definitely say just be a little bit more open-minded for discussion. And don't, because she does easily get offended, if you talk to her about like the meetings and stuff like that, because then it would be said but the principal can call a meeting at any time of the day. And I get that he can, but then just understand where we're coming from. And that is the problem, so the communication can be a struggle. Because we can't always have an open communication with her. (NT3A)*

*For me, personally, I just feel like, if they can be more vocal in whatever sessions they have in front, I know it's difficult with the leadership style that is at this school, to be vocal, because if you are vocal, you're being seen as a challenging person in some way ... being vocal about challenges and stuff like that. It's not my place, as a post-level 1 teacher to go to the office and say this is my struggle, but I have a DH that should be able to do it. And I find it very strange in some way that they don't have the voice, or they are in a position, but they're not, they don't have the authority to actually do what I expect from DH to do. (NT4A)*

The findings above suggest that the expectations of the DH are not always aligned with NTs' expectations. The findings in this study suggest that DHs may encounter challenges when it comes to being open-minded about the needs of NTs and their ability to enact change from concerns raised. The role of the DH is to support NTs, not only monitoring work, in this case, they need to be able to listen to NTs and communicate challenges to the SMT effectively as they are the exclusive conduit of

communication between NTs and SMT. Should DHs lack an open-minded approach, they may potentially disregard the issues raised and fail to effectively relay information. It is important for DHs as leaders to establish a working environment for NTs to ensure that they feel valued and respected and to establish a trustworthy environment and relationship within the department. Open communication seems to be lacking as described in the above quotation. This can result in an uncondusive relationship between NTs and their mentors.

From the literature, Bradford (2018), Michel (2013), and Räsänen et al. (2020) indicated that NTs tend to leave the profession due to feeling unsupported and overwhelmed and the effect that the school environment has on them. From the above finding, it can be deduced that more support is needed from DHs through open lines of communication, an open-minded attitude by DHs, and a measure of reasonability to establish a more positive working environment for the success of both the NTs and the schools. This recommendation aligns with the study of Curry et al. (2016) who argue that the personal support NTs receive, and the environmental inducements are great contributors to the success of NTs.

Although DHs can be open to hearing NTs' challenges, the commands given are from higher management within the school and DHs are not solely accountable for the decision-making when it comes to NTs and their responsibilities.

*I think hmm, she personally would be open to hear some of our struggles and to take it into consideration. But hmm, then again, they (DHs) are being judged by other people. So, all they get is the information that they must carry over, and then we just have to perform it. So even if we come back with our struggles, the only answer we get is what she's been told to tell us. (NT4A)*

*I am grade head for Grade 5. So, in some way, we get to speak up for the grade, but hmm... at the end of the day, it's down to the departmental head for correct criticism. Or the feedback to the office in that sense and writing the reports. So, the grade heads in some ways do help, but like I said, final say is from the DH. (NT4A)*

The findings indicate that DHs have a role to fulfil and have their own set of responsibilities and even if they are willing to listen to the struggles of NTs, they

seem to be constrained by external judgement and instructions. The DHs seem to follow a top-down mode of instruction making them have limited flexibility in the decision-making process if they need to assist NTs in coping with the difficulties or challenges, they may experience. This top-down power dynamic extends to grade heads as well, who provide support for NTs and represent teachers' voices, although their suggestions can also be overridden by the DHs and SMT.

According to the PAM (2003), DHs are tasked with offering and coordinating guidance on innovative ideas, methods, and techniques within their field, effectively sharing these insights with colleagues. Additionally, DHs are responsible for guiding and supporting both other staff members and NTs in the department. The PAM outlines its role in overseeing teachers and learners, ensuring timely report submissions to the principal, and managing administrative tasks such as mark sheets, tests, and exams. This underscores DHs' dual function: managing NTs to ensure task completion and serving as leaders who provide guidance and support. While the middle manager role takes priority over that of a leader, it is crucial to recognise that DHs continue to balance their dual duties of supervising NTs' task fulfilment and offering crucial guidance and support.

For DHs to be effective leaders and mentors as well as to guide and support NTs adequately, DHs need to identify the needs of NTs by using relevant strategies and support methods. DHs do not have the necessary skills and systems in place to support NTs' challenges. This is evident in the following quotation:

*Okay, for example, for the discipline. What the DH did, most of the time, is kick the learner out of the class, and the learner must sit at her class. But this really is not so much effective, because now the learner is sitting there doing nothing, and is missing out on work. So that's why I didn't, I didn't call her [the DH] in...for a discipline problem. (NT1A)*

The finding suggests that while DHs attempt to contribute to discipline, their chosen strategies proved ineffective in this specific case. As a result, alternative solutions were sought by the NT involved, highlighting a potential shortfall in the decision-making abilities of DHs. The findings imply that the assistance provided by DHs might not consistently meet the requirements of the NTs they are trying to support. It appears that DHs may lack a comprehensive understanding of the specific needs

of NTs, which in this case involve both instructing and maintaining discipline in the learning process simultaneously. Otherwise, additional challenges may surface later, as is evident in the quotation. This deficiency in understanding potentially contributes to the ineffectiveness of the DHs' approaches, as highlighted by the situation. Smith (2015) expresses that the skills and knowledge DHs share, will ensure the success of staff development and provide the support NTs need. Hence, DHS must employ appropriate strategies to address the challenges faced by NTs. The SMT occasionally makes decisions without fully assessing their potential consequences, unintentionally amplifying challenges for educators and disregarding their needs.

*And then long story short, our Grade 4s only did class teaching because they [school management] thought that would help because we had so many kids that we had let stay behind from last year. And then that didn't work at all. And then from term two the principal decided, but we can't do class teaching anymore. So, then we had to change our subjects, so that we could help the Grade 4 teachers so that some of us could go down and teach Grade 4, some of those teachers could come up to Grade 5, so we had to change everything again. (NT5B)*

The findings suggest that the decision-making from SMT was not effective, instead, it placed more pressure on the teachers as the whole system had to change. It is suggested that before decisions are made it needs to be thoroughly thought through to ensure that extra stress is not placed on the teachers and learners. The SMT has a lack of awareness and understanding of the true needs of NTs.

The responses above highlight some of the situations at school that not only required NTs to adapt but left them with a sense that their inputs are not often considered and/or their actions to assist are sometimes misunderstood. Some of these situations also required different skill sets that NTs may not have had. Those who have been teaching for many years have managed to gain knowledge and build a set of skills to navigate some of these challenges that NTs face. Albeit the lack or inadequate understanding of the needs of NTs as they navigate their profession can have an impact on how they perceive the mentoring from DHs and the teaching professional in general.

#### 4.5.1.4 Sub-theme 4: School environment and resource constraints

The findings in this category show that DHs and NTs teaching in a low-SES school environment have challenges which are amplified due to the environment. This study found that teachers in low-SES schools have a far bigger role to play than just teaching, due to the circumstances of the learners present in the school and the environment that the school is in. This impacts the workload of teachers, their time management and their ability to teach effectively. The participants said:

*Okay, so many of our learners come from poor impoverished communities. I know many of them... And I know, the things that these children see on a daily basis, whether it's drugs, alcohol, growing up in a single parent household. Parents having to work two jobs. So, they do face a lot of struggles. And for me, as a teacher, I try to be that shoulder too. If you want to talk, it's fine you can come talk to me, you can cry if you have to. So that's also a challenge...they don't, they don't prepare you for that as well. Where a child comes in, cries immediately you don't know what's going on. So that's also something I had to get used to. (NT6B)*

*And as you see the area that the school is in, it is a very poor area. So it's, it's very challenging to teach a kid that is hungry. So, most of the kids that comes from home, only come to eat at school, they don't come to learn and they... some of them, they are just here, they are very disruptive and so forth. But they are our kids, we have to teach them... the parents are on drugs, or they drink or whatever, so we have kids where the parents are on drugs, or they drink or whatever. So, we have a very poor, a poor area, one of the biggest challenges that we have as teachers. (NT2A)*

*The socioeconomic status of our schools, obviously we are quintile two school. So, we have very poor kids. And the thing is just, they are academically really not on standard, that you would expect. (DH5B)*

The findings above reflect a noticeable trend, i.e., teachers are not only there for teaching and learning but they face various challenges in the school environment on top of teaching to which they need to attend. It is evident from the findings that teachers in low-SES schools face far different and concerning challenges than teachers in urban schools. Therefore, preparing teachers beforehand and offering ongoing PD to address these challenges is crucial. Failure to do so could hinder

teachers from fulfilling their teaching responsibilities effectively (du Plessis & Mestry, 2019).

Moreover, an additional obstacle that hampers teachers' efficiency and restricts the facilitation of effective teaching and learning is the scarcity of resources in low-SES schools. The participants said:

*We are responsible to get our resources for our class of our own. They don't provide it for us... Now all five of those classes leak. So, when it's raining, it's leaking. So, then what happens is that your posters and your stuff get wet. But then if you take it off the walls, then it would be a problem. (NT3A)*

*...but we are being told but this is our school, this is how we do it here. Whether we have the resources or not...you've overworked yourself to get up to that point to be on target with other schools, which have the resources to do that.... (NT4A)*

*I was the only one doing Afrikaans home language. Everyone else was doing first additional language, there was no resources, there was nothing available. So, in terms of that, I struggled a lot. (NT5B)*

From the above quotations, it appears that NTs are struggling with the task of acquiring resources essential for effective teaching, without sufficient financial support to procure these resources. Participants in the study conveyed that assistance in locating resources was restricted, presenting a significant challenge.

Bryant et al. (2019) refer to schools in South Africa that are characterised by learners living in hazardous environments that are usually poverty-stricken. Both the schools in this study are located in low-SES communities and present their own set of challenges, especially for NTs. The literature reveals that the lack of resources may result in poor academic performance and low quality of education (Louq et al., 2013). The DBE (2016), in its guidelines on New Teacher Induction: Guidelines for the Orientation Programme policy and the Minister of Education in terms of the Employment of Educators Act (No 76 of 1998) stipulates that it is the responsibility of the principal and SMT to provide the necessary resources to NTs and is it the responsibility of the DH to provide and coordinate guidance to NTs and to ensure that the latest ideas, techniques, methods, and approaches are conveyed, but they

often fail to do so. There is a challenge in low-SES schools to provide NTs with the necessary resources.

From the above sub-themes, it becomes evident that the mentorship experiences of DHs in managing the PD of NTs in low SES are influenced by many factors. Having said this, PD programmes cannot be a “one fit for all”. Considering the sub-themes discussed above, PD programmes need to be flexible and adaptable. There also needs to be an openness to include the views and inputs of NTs in the design and development of PD programmes for NTs.

#### **4.5.2 Theme 2: Influence of departmental heads on the professional development of novice teachers through mentorship**

This theme presents the findings on the research sub-question, *How do DHs influence the PD of NTs through mentorship?* The findings are presented in the following sub-themes:

##### *4.5.2.1 Sub-theme 1: Support, guidance, and assistance from departmental heads*

This study found that the DHs are aware of the necessity of mentoring NTs, especially during their initial months, to help them adapt smoothly. NTs often lack adequate prior preparation, which makes the DHs undertake the responsibility of supporting them as part of their role of providing them with essential information and guidance.

*So, what I do find is that, obviously, they need lots of support. So, you basically have to take them under your wing and hold their hand, especially in the first few months, so that they can find their feet. (DH2A)*

*Somebody needs to be there to guide an NT ... we need to take them by the hand and help them ... So, it is important for, for NTs to have somebody to assist them, to guide them and to teach them, because they still need to be taught. (DH1A)*

*But what we also do is we try to help through, through how things work at the school, to help and guide them also to develop as, as a teacher as to, okay, how do I manage myself? How do I organise my admin? (DH6B)*



The findings imply that NTs require significant support and guidance when starting their career. Notably, NTs are inexperienced, and they require mentoring to ease the transition phase. The phrases “take them under your wing”, “hold their hand”, and “take them by the hand” imply that NTs need a caring and supportive approach to adapt and become confident in their role as teachers. DHs have established strategies aimed at effectively managing and encouraging NTs. These strategies, rooted in their intuition gained from years of experience, play a vital role in their overall mentoring approach. Their methods are used to ensure a supportive and nurturing environment for the growth and development of NTs but are worked against because of school-level goals, upper management decisions, resource constraints, time management and low-SES school environmental challenges faced daily.

Khalid and Husnin's (2019) study is in line with the findings which state that NTs highly value support from their mentors or more experienced teachers. Fantilli and McDougall (2009) further explain that due to the low level of support given to NTs, there is short-term retention in their teaching post. The research highlights that in the absence of adequate support, only the most determined and resilient teachers are likely to succeed (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). Additionally, the literature indicates that NTs who lack a mentor experience increased levels of stress and anxiety, leading them to seek alternative sources of guidance and support, often turning to their colleagues for assistance (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). Nemaston (2020) says that it should be mandatory for NTs to be with a senior teacher at least a month before they start teaching, although this is not expressed by the DHs, their view of nurturing them when they start is in line with Nemaston. Smith (2015) concurs with the finding that a favourable environment must be cultivated to ensure NTs can learn new skills and points out that the mentoring process is not solely reliant on the SMT but the DHs indicate that they play a pivotal role.

Van der Nest (2012) shows that a good mentoring experience is when a mentor breaks down barriers and fosters a culture of collaboration. These findings reinforce the significance of DHs' support in facilitating the well-being and success of NTs in the workplace. It is therefore essential that DHs provide NTs with the necessary support, by taking them under their wing or taking them by the hand to ensure their success in the first few months.



This study found that DHs play a pivotal role in NTs' success, enhancing their skills and practices through effective methods. Aiding NTs with the necessary documentation needed for the department was one supportive strategy that DHs used in this study. The participants said:

*I really try to support them [NTs] from A to Z with things that have to be in, for when we get visits from the department... (DH6B)*

*I'm not so good with the admin and the technical part. So, I will support them where I can. And if I don't know, I will kind of refer them to someone else or I will find out. But in this post, we have very, very new young teachers coming in. So I had to step in there and help them with the support of some of the other staff as well. (DH5B)*

It is evident from the findings that the DH showcases a comprehensive approach to support NTs by ensuring that they comply with the requirements of the DBE and ensuring that they understand what is required and needed. It indicates the commitment of the DH to prepare NTs for departmental visits and ensure that the NT maintains a high standard for both the school and department.

In this study, a DH's confidence in performing administrative tasks was lacking, resulting in challenges in providing adequate support to NTs in this domain. The DHs suggested supporting NTs by limiting their workload to ensure they are not overwhelmed and can do the task at hand.

*...we looked at assisting the NTs by taking the load or the weight of them and giving them more easier subjects... (DH6B)*

*... The departmental heads also, they give you a lot of responsibilities. Okay, that that puts you in a place of it's either you going to swim, or you're going to drown. (NT4A)*

The finding implies that DHs in school B are providing support to NTs by reducing stress and pressure as they begin their new career by giving them fewer challenging tasks to complete, however, this is not the case for school A. This strategy implies that NTs can focus on developing themselves and gaining confidence without feeling overwhelmed by the possibility of making a mistake and limiting the severity of mistakes.

The finding is consistent with the characteristics that Dawo et al. (2015) suggest a mentor has, protecting NTs from making major mistakes by limiting their exposure to responsibility. In this way, it will help them to gain confidence and experience before a more challenging task is entrusted to them. However, the finding indicates that DHs are looking out for NTs, which is in contrast with the findings of theme 1 where DHs stated that NTs are not prepared and are thrown into the deep end and need to swim. Providing personal support through encouragement and being available is another strategy used by DH, as well as providing critical feedback.

*The one teacher didn't have a lot of confidence in herself, she was like stressed the whole time... And I'm reassuring, don't worry, because she's worried about the discipline, I'm like, don't worry, we've got a discipline file, we've got a system in place, we need to use it. (DH6B)*

*I tried to kind of just be there for everyone all the time; make sure there's no mistakes and everything. (DH5B)*

The findings suggest that NTs' lack of confidence and experienced stress can be due to concerns about maintaining discipline in the classroom. The findings also suggest that the NT was not aware of the discipline system in place at the school to support her in this regard. From the DHs' response, it is important to alleviate NTs' worries and to offer the necessary support by sharing experiences and guiding NTs through the established methods available to combat the challenges. NTs must know and trust their mentors are available to support them. This method of DHs being vigilant and ready to aid can contribute to NTs being confident and provide them with a safe place, which helps to navigate NTs' professional challenges effectively. DHs need to be proactive in their mentoring of PD as Chaaban and Du (2017) and Smith (2015) suggested, as being proactive in PD improves teaching and learning. DHs in this study do not proactively seek out and anticipate NTs' challenges and needs but handle them as the challenges occur. It can be suggested that there is a lack of PD in the form of induction to support NTs.

Providing feedback to NTs is another effective and familiar method used for PD.

*So, the way the feedback she gives you is always uhm... It, it's like she's criticising you, but she is building you up by criticising you. So, whether it is on a moderation sheet or whether it is her telling you in a meeting, it is like*

*it's always that constant constructive criticism, constructive feedback, where she will tell you something, like listen, this is what you do wrong, but this is how you can improve it, this is how you can do it. So, I feel like uhm... in that way um, she, she builds, builds you up to be, to be a better teacher at the end of the day. (NT5B)*

*Ja hmm... we usually do have feedback sessions every day, after school, if that's what we call reflective sessions. Either it will be some information that he brings back from the office or it will be regarding the days work, what we did, how it went. I remember actually last term we had reflective session every day, where actually hmm.. spoke about hmm... the challenges of the day. What to improve for the next day, because at this point we were working with two groups, one group, one half of the class today here tomorrow it is the other group. So it's always challenging to have two groups so it's a repetition of one thing twice a day, or two days in a row. (NT4A)*

The above strategies used by DHs shed light on the important role DHs play in the success of NTs, by giving NTs the necessary support and guidance. The above strategies provide insight into the value that DH adds to the success of NTs and the impact they have on NTs PD in the profession.

Providing feedback is a method used globally, as it is an instant and direct method to use. The findings suggest that providing constructive criticism in the form of feedback ultimately fosters growth and improvement in NTs. The feedback approach builds trust and encourages teachers to strive for continuous development. Alkutich (2017) and Nemaston (2020) concur with the findings and indicate that DHs support NTs by providing advice and feedback which has a positive impact on the learning and PD of NTs. However, care must be taken in how feedback is given as it can discourage NTs and contribute negatively to the mentoring relationship. The efforts of the DHs above and the impact it has on the development of NTs are consistent with the literature that suggests that the practice of PD can ensure that teachers improve their knowledge, skills and teaching practice and help them to become more equipped in the workplace (Bautista & Ortega-Ruiz, 2015; Boudersa, 2016; Hudson, 2013; Postholm, 2018; Smith, 2015;).

However, it is the responsibility of the DH to support NTs, there is a concern that DHs are unable to fulfil their role as mentor because of their workload. Together with the workload it is the responsibility of DHs for the actions and mistakes of NTs which place additional pressure on DH.

*I was told that as the mentor, I am responsible for their mistakes. I have to take responsibility for their mistakes. And that was, that was kind of harsh for me. And then I tried to kind of just be there for everyone all the time; make sure there's no mistakes and everything. (DH5B)*

There is a need for DHs to help NTs but this often happens under heavy workload pressures imposed on DHs and the own challenges faced by DHs. Often the DHs do not have the necessary skills and as one participant from the study responded previously, they would refer NTs to others who can assist. Another view is that mentoring is not only imposed but DHs are “told that they will take responsibility for the mistakes of NTs” as one participant commented. These factors all have an impact on the approach to the PD of NTs and how DHs influence the PD of NTs through mentorship. This statement is consistent with the findings of Mpisane’s (2015) study, stating that although DHs are aware of their role as mentor and their responsibilities, a big challenge that they experience is their workload. As TALIS (2009) described and recommended in his study, time should be allocated to DHs between academic work and their responsibilities so that they have time for the successful implementation and execution of mentoring.

DHs in the study used class visits, internal moderation of learner's books and observations as a strategy to support and guide NTs, where feedback was provided to NTs through a tick-off list, recommendations, and comments.

The collected documents from the document analysis of this study revealed that DHs conduct classroom visits, thereby offering valuable and constructive feedback to NTs. This feedback is a means to foster professional growth and improve their levels of confidence. It is therefore up to the NTs to take the feedback provided and reflect on their own teaching and their teaching approach, which will foster a positive learning and growth opportunity for NTs. This is consistent with du Plessis (2014) and Mpisane (2015) suggesting that DHs should conduct meetings, communicate

with teachers, perform class visits, monitor teacher and student files, assess moderation, identify needs, and implement mentoring programmes.

However, School B could not provide the study with proof of NTs' participation in external PD programmes. It is not compulsory to attend these programmes, although DHs do motivate NTs to attend. It is evident that School A controlled and kept track of all teachers who attended PD programmes, and it was seen as compulsory.

*Our school kind of makes it compulsory. So, we have like someone that is in charge of the workshop and your name gets ticked off. If you attend so there is, everything is on file. So, they have a yes and a no column. (DH1A)*

The findings suggest that NTs do not have a choice if they want to participate in PD programmes or not. This method appears to be a strategy used by SMT to ensure that all the teachers are participating in PD, continuously develop the teachers, and ensure growth within the school. The finding is consistent with Ajan's (2020) study which revealed that teachers have various opportunities to participate in PD programmes organised by the school's SMT or the DBE.

#### *4.5.2.2. Sub-theme 2: Novice teachers' perceptions of mentorship of professional development provided by department heads*

The overriding perception shared by NTs in terms of mentorship of PD provided by DHs in this study is that positive reinforcement is crucial. In their responses, all NTs highlighted that the positive attitude and approach of DHs influenced their perceptions of mentorship, most NTs in this study mentioned that the efforts of the DH have helped them to grow professionally.

*The planning and stuff like that, that really helped. So that support and that timeframe from when things should be done, that feel like a growth for me, because I manage my time now better than I did last term. (NT1A)*

*I think it's nice...to know that if there is something I struggle with, I have the option to go to someone and she can help me, or she doesn't know she can guide me. (NT5B) She's my go to girl if I can call her that. I, the role that she plays in my life is not only as my departmental head but also as a friend, a mentor, somebody that I can go to whenever I have a problem, or*

*if I just want to share some good news with her. She really plays a positive role in my life at the school as a teacher... (NT2A)*

*I mean, just the way she does it, she, will motivate us a lot with doing like workshops, and, and stuff like that and training then we have, like here in... at school, when we have those meetings and things like that, she would encourage us with that. Quite a lot. (NT3A)*

The findings suggest that NTs see the efforts of the DH as a key part of their own PD the main perception among NTs regarding mentorship provided by DHs is the importance of positive reinforcement. According to the responses of all NTs, DHs' positive attitude and approach towards mentorship influenced their perceptions of the mentorship experience the most. Positive reinforcement helps to create a conducive environment for NTs to grow and improve their teaching practices. As noted by the NTs, DHs play a vital role in providing guidance and support, which has helped them improve their teaching practice. In particular, DHs that offer PD with support in planning accompanied by guidance and support when NTs struggle, motivate and encourage NTs through workshops, and play a positive role in the NTs' lives as a mentor and friends have been instrumental in enhancing the mentorship experience for NTs. Finally, DHs' positive attitude and approach towards mentorship can significantly impact on the development of NTs. This finding is in line with Tarman's (2012) finding which emphasised that individuals aspiring to teach and shape future generations hold a crucial, positive view of the teaching profession and that their positive perceptions allow them to be better teachers. According to Miles and Knipe (2018), it is essential to acknowledge NTs' achievements and provide support during challenges through mentorship, enhancing professional growth, and honing their skill set. Alkutich (2017) also discovered that DHs fulfil a role as critical friends, aiding educators and students through task facilitation, guidance, feedback, and engagement in appraisal processes that review achievements, skills, and contributions. Ultimately DHs need to be effective motivators that keep NTs' motivation levels high.

NTs commonly mask their difficulties from DHs as a result of a lack of strong relationships with their mentors, which prevents them from feeling comfortable enough to share their struggles openly.

*And people are not, or teachers that I've seen are not always they don't want to admit that they're struggling. So, if you have a relationship with them first, and then they can trust you with information that they are struggling, then you can come help with them. And so, yes, yeah, so building a relational relationship of trust, because I've also worked under many DHs before and. But I just feel that there is another route; build a relationship with them [NTs] – trust they'll come to you. And I always tell them, whatever you struggle with, that is why I'm here. I'm here to help you. (DH2A)*

*She is a little bit shy, she never speak, uhmmm I need to ask her first, then she will come. (DH1A)*

*Because I feel you can actually learn so much from people that have experience. A problem that you have can quickly turn into something big, because you are scared or too proud to ask. You could have just go to the person and just ask for help ... but that's also about relationship. (DH5B)*

The finding highlights the importance of establishing strong, trust-based relationships between mentor DHs and NTs. While NTs might not readily admit to their challenges, DHs can foster a connection and build trust, thereby creating an environment where NTs feel at ease sharing their difficulties. This approach contrasts with the autocratic leadership style observed in certain DHs, underscoring that DHs' relational and supportive approach can motivate NTs to seek assistance, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of the mentoring process. To this end, a senior teacher who has less administrative work and more patience to mentor NTs is suggested, as outlined in the PAM document and supported by Mullen and Klimaitis (2019). Nemaston (2020) aligns with the finding that NTs with senior teachers help them effectively cultivate collegial bonds, unite novice and experienced educators, and enhance the NTs' competence and confidence. Whitehouse (2016) supports the finding that if the mentor-mentee relationship remains insufficiently developed, characterised by unequal status and unidirectional communication it poses a risk to the mentoring experience.

The process of selecting mentor-mentee pairs seems to occasionally result in ineffective matches. NTs experiencing ineffective mentor-mentee matches hold the



viewpoint that mentors might lack the requisite reliability to effectively guide them through their daily challenges.

*She is actually in foundation phase with us being in intermediate/senior phase ... It's challenging...Not one of the departmental heads is in the actual grade that they are the departmental head. Which I find weird because hmm... I almost want to say how can someone else in another grade then judge what we are doing in the specific grade even though they have experience of the grade ... will be more valuable. So, I don't know what the view of the school is, but maybe they look it like someone from outside the grade can now give me more honest feedback or criticism. (NT4A)*

*I fulfil a more supporting role as supposed to. I think, checking what are you are doing wrong as to kind of how I can help you to do things right from the start? (DH2B)*

The findings imply that NTs face challenges with their appointed mentors. The main issue is that the mentor and mentee belong to different teaching phases. According to the NTs, this mismatch is concerning because the mentor lacks the skills needed to effectively guide them, whereas a mentor in the same phase could provide more value and have a better understanding of the challenges they face and context on daily activities to provide better support.

Additionally, considering the selection of the mentor-mentee pair is a crucial step in fostering a healthy mentoring relationship, as noted by Whitehouse (2016). A formal selection process may cause a lack of commitment and result in one-directional communication. Furthermore, the classification of mentor and DH in the South African education system is generally the same person, but the PAM document shows that a senior or master teacher can also fulfil the role of mentor. It is essential to differentiate between the role of DH as an appraiser of performance and that of mentor, which requires a different skill set. Hierarchical mentor relationships, where the NT reports directly to the DH (supervisor), can be detrimental to the success of the relationship, as noted by Mullen and Klimaitis (2019). However, the sentiment of NT4A is not shared by other NTs, as seen from quotes in the next subtheme, which contributes to the importance of the mentor-mentee selection.



#### 4.5.2.3 *Sub-theme 3: Novice teachers' perceptions of their professional development needs*

This sub-theme reports that NTs have taken a positive view of their PD needs. The NTs recognise the need for additional PD, particularly in the form of concise courses. They resort to alternative methods, such as online searching, to seek solutions and are inclined to seek guidance from more experienced colleagues. Furthermore, they outline that in their low-SES schools, they find it necessary to teach fundamental concepts often assumed to be common knowledge.

*I had to go and do my research before I had to come to class every day. So, at night, I would sit and I have to go through Natural Sciences and Maths and then go Google stuff. Yeah. And then I had to so I had to come and go learn myself before I can come teach. (NT6B)*

*So, I feel that we...need even if it is short courses on what to do, how to do whatever, why is this important? Most of the people that I know don't even know how to use a computer or how to use a printer and in the end it is important. It's not just about teaching and being in class and whatever but is a lot of things that we as teachers need to be updated about on a daily. So, I feel that we do need uhm... training and courses and things to do, to uhm... help us with that. (NT2A)*

The finding suggests that NTs place significant importance on PD. This is evident as they exhibit a positive perspective towards their PD needs, indicating a strong awareness of the value that continuous learning holds in enhancing their teaching practices. Moreover, NTs actively engage in seeking out additional PD opportunities when faced with challenges. This proactive approach highlights their commitment to self-improvement and the dedication they hold to refining their teaching skills. Notably, NTs recognise the necessity for more specific and tailored PD experiences that align with their individual needs and the unique context of their schools. Particularly in low-SES schools, they grapple with distinctive challenges and, to address these, strive to cater their teaching methods to encompass fundamental concepts that might be otherwise assumed as common knowledge. In this pursuit, NTs demonstrate their resourcefulness by turning to various avenues such as online research. Their motivation to continuously develop themselves underscores their

professionalism and their genuine desire to provide quality education to their students.

Boudersa's (2016) research is aligned with the finding that the existing PD initiatives are disjointed, lacking alignment with the curriculum, and insufficient in addressing the unique requirements of educators therefore they seek further guidance from other sources. Smith (2015) and Hill (2009) are in alignment that PD implementation in schools is not effective and inconsistent. While it is widely held that inadequacies characterise the implementation of PD, the NTs in this study might not be fully aware of this issue, they do encounter challenges and seek assistance from other sources. However, it is worth considering that had these NTs received comprehensive and effective initial PD, their reliance on external support might have been less pronounced. Bautista and Ortega-Ruiz (2015) emphasise that PD should furnish instructors with distinct, tangible, and hands-on concepts intricately associated with their daily teaching procedures, which is in line with the finding that challenges are evident in the day-to-day teaching and special circumstances arising from low-SES school learners.

DHs are tasked with the responsibility of enhancing their support for these educators by offering an increased and improved array of PD initiatives. While it remains good for NTs to engage in independent research, this approach could potentially lead to a prolonged investment of time and a divergence in instructional practices. Conversely, if DHs establish a standardised framework for the educational content that NTs access, they can ensure consistent documentation and provision of a uniform calibre of PD across all NTs.

DHs expect that NTs will take the initiative to develop themselves when identifying inefficiencies in their skill set. In contrast, NTs tend to anticipate receiving clear direction from DHs regarding their developmental paths.

*Yes, of course. You cannot get everything from the school. Say for instance, you need to equip yourself as well. That is what I told them, always. Listen here, you are in a school... our school is mostly education and sport, because there is education in sport as well. So, you can't just equip yourself in doing well in education, you need to get some stuff... some uhm... participation in sport. Like for instance, if you know they are going to put*

*you at netball, do an online course, do courses, get yourself equipped with whatever you need to know. Do not wait for the school to equip you. (DH1A)*

*And some of them do not have the willingness to learn. (DH5B)*

*I think it is, because at the end of the day, they are going to have to do everything without the constant monitoring and the constant guidance. Because they also have to learn themselves. So they have to out of their own be willing to register for workshops, because it's for myself, I'm not doing it for the DH, I'm not doing it for the school. I'm doing it for myself and the children because I want to grow, I want to become a better teacher... (DH6B)*

NTs often anticipate clear directions from the school regarding their PD paths. However, DHs emphasise a different perspective. They encourage NTs to take initiative and independently seek growth opportunities. DHs suggest that relying solely on the school's guidance is limiting. Instead, NTs should proactively identify areas for improvement and pursue relevant courses or training, whether it is related to sports, first aid, or other skills. This proactive approach enriches the NTs' skill sets and positions them for potential advancements, showcasing their commitment and self-driven nature. However, some challenges must be considered. NTs often lack experience and may struggle to identify areas for development or recognise gaps in their skills, which DHs do not realise and time to participate is limited. This uncertainty can lead to a sense of being overwhelmed which is exacerbated by their inefficiencies. As a result, NTs might find themselves consumed by the demands of their current tasks, leaving them with limited bandwidth to proactively seek out professional growth opportunities. These challenges underscore the importance of a balanced approach, where effective communication from DHs and targeted support can guide NTs toward areas where improvement is most needed, fostering a culture of continuous learning and development. There is a need to provide dedicated time for PD, otherwise more pressing demands take precedence.

The research by Chaaban and Du (2017) and Smith (2015) strongly aligns with the findings underscoring the value of proactive PD. Their findings indicate that teachers who take the initiative in their PD witness improvements in teaching and learning. This alignment supports the notion of self-driven growth, reinforcing the importance

of NTs' active involvement in their own development. Mullen and Klimaitis (2019) support the idea that effective guidance is crucial for NTs, which may be lacking in the approach of the DH. They emphasise mentors' role in providing psychosocial functions like counselling and bolstering self-confidence. DHs should offer a clear and personalised path, guiding NTs in their PD journey. Recommending relevant courses and opportunities aligned with NTs' growth goals is essential for effective PD support.

#### **4.5.3 Theme 3: Difficulties and Challenges Novice Teachers Face During Mentorship for Professional Development in low-socioeconomic primary schools**

This study highlighted many challenges and difficulties that NTs face during mentorship, as discussed above. This theme presents findings that show the impact that crowded classrooms, the curriculum and lack of resources have on mentorship for PD in low-SES schools. This theme presents the findings to the research sub-question - What difficulties and challenges do NTs face during mentorship for PD in low-SES primary schools in the Western Cape? The findings are presented in the following sub-themes:

##### *4.5.3.1 Sub-theme 1: Low-socioeconomic environment: Overcrowded classrooms and classroom management*

The findings indicate that classroom management is perceived as a crucial aspect of teaching in the context of overcrowded classrooms. Participants highlighted the need for improvement in classroom discipline and general administrative tasks, the challenges posed by overcrowding and its impact on workload and motivation, and the importance of sharing ideas and strategies for effective classroom management. These findings underscore the significance of addressing classroom management challenges to create conducive learning environments in overcrowded classrooms.

Given the often overcrowded classrooms in low-SES schools, classroom management was perceived by both NTs and DHs as crucial for the success of the learners and the school. Discipline emerged as a common issue highlighted by the participants in this study that affects classroom management.

*But I think with regards to classroom, discipline, and general admin stuff, I think that needs improvement. (NT3A)*

*I think that's another issue is like the overcrowding of classrooms. So, I also even now now I'm like, just so overworked and so tired that it's kind of like you want to do this for the sake of working with kids and all of that but all the other things like the admin and that takes that passion away from you, where you're like, Is it even worth it? (NT5B)*

*So, I feel like the classroom management part was always the, because the content we know and sometimes, yes, it challenges the teacher, but the classroom management was the biggest challenge I faced I feel like. (NT6B)*

The findings suggest that addressing discipline concerns within overcrowded classrooms is crucial, especially when parental assistance is limited. The socioeconomic conditions that many of the learners come from were seen as a contributing factor, with the absence of parents from homes posing additional challenges.

This finding aligns with the study of Howie et al. (2017) indicating that low-SES schools often face overcrowding and inadequate resources, which adversely affect education quality and teacher well-being. Overcrowding exacerbates the impact of classroom management, administrative tasks, and workload on NTs, leading to stress and potential difficulties in managing the classroom. Botha and Rens (2018) report that inadequate classroom management skills and the inability to establish communities contribute to classroom challenges. The finding is consistent with Kyriacou and Kunc (2007) as they highlight additional NT challenges such as inadequate management, learner behaviour, time pressure, and school management. In support of the findings, Angellar et al. (2011) conducted a study delving into the socioeconomic challenges that contributed to the emergence of disruptive behaviour in schools within Zimbabwe. The main determinants of misbehaviour, which aligned with the findings, included poverty, permissive home and school environments, low teacher morale, and the constraint imposed by insufficient parental involvement in disciplinary actions, these factors cause challenging teacher and learning environments. Du Plessis and Mestry (2019) further corroborate this finding, stating that these factors lead to teachers becoming ineffective and dysfunctional in achieving satisfactory academic performance and maintaining their quality as educators.

Furthermore, persistent budgetary shortfalls and increased learner demand in low-SES schools make it challenging to address class size issues effectively. Research by Laitsch et al. (2021) suggests that reducing class sizes by 20 learners benefits test scores. However, budget constraints often prevent low-SES schools from maintaining smaller class sizes, leading to larger configurations. As a result, classroom management and teacher workload increase, leading to more discipline issues.

Although classroom management and discipline are an issue in low-SES schools, the DHs are providing NTs with techniques from their own experiences to assist them. DHs exhibit strong initiative and creativity in guiding NTs to overcome challenges, while also remaining receptive to communication.

*I remember that was Mrs. X and she came in here and gave me all this voice level stuff. And this is a reward system, which came in with a reward chart. And so, she came to me, and she gave me ideas on what she did and what worked for her. And I remember I took a few. So now I have the voice levels and say, listen, we are on level one. And they all of us are level one. So, by giving me ideas and telling me about things they did that worked for them, I feel like that is the way that she helps me. (NT6B)*

*The principal also arranged workshops for us as well which the school then pays because she wants us to grow. The one that we had the beginning of the year was positive reinforcement in the classroom ... I don't want them to feel like you're going to be in trouble if you ask me for help. Or if you can't manage your classes, uhm... discipline, for instance, you also want them to use their own methods in how to manage their classroom. Because every class is also different from each other as well. (DH6B)*

In larger classrooms, NTs hold a significant responsibility for classroom management, where the increase notably influences factors like discipline, workload, and administrative tasks in classroom size. DHs show strong initiative and creativity in guiding NTs to combat these challenges. They provide support and understand the need for personal approaches to discipline that work for each class. DHs stress using personalised methods that fit each class, showing they understand how complex classroom management is and how important it is to adapt. To further tackle these obstacles, alternative approaches like workshops, utilising teaching

assistants or learning from experienced mentors in such environments should be explored to support effective classroom management and enhance the learning experience.

Similarly, Angellar et al. (2011) found negative effects of classroom sizes and teacher absenteeism on teacher morale in low-SES schools in Zimbabwe. The overwhelming workload and disillusionment experienced by NTs during their transition phases can lead to stress, exhaustion, and a potential impact on their ability to effectively manage the classroom, indicating that struggles with classroom management are common among NTs in various settings (Naegle, 2002). These challenges are not exclusive to overcrowded classrooms but are experienced by NTs in different contexts. Overcrowded classrooms can, however, amplify these challenges faced by NTs, impacting their classroom management skills. Additionally, Curry et al. (2016) caution about attrition rates in challenging environments like low-income schools. Thus, focusing on PD opportunities becomes crucial for improving outcomes in low-SES schools.

Moreover, not all NTs struggle with discipline, and they do not always require assistance from DHs. It is crucial to recognise that while some NTs face challenges, others can manage classroom discipline effectively without seeking support from DHs.

*I do have discipline challenge in my class, but I'm a very... not strict, but I can handle my kids, they listen to me. But uhm if I'm not around, so for instance break and I leave then they will take their chances, but as soon as I am there then they will, you know they will start behaving. So, I can't say that they are uhm...disrupting my class. There is always that one student that puts on a show, but I will quickly sort him out and then I will go on. So, I can say that classroom management discipline, I know how to handle my students, but I don't know if I'm gonna have the same class next year, you know, the same stuff. (NT2A)*

The finding suggests that there are additional factors outside of PD and mentoring that influence the success of NTs regarding classroom management and discipline. Du Plessis and Mestry (2019) demonstrate that effective rural teachers often share similar backgrounds or possess prior exposure to disadvantaged communities.



Such educators grasp the nuances of the school environment, unlike their counterparts who face difficulties adapting to and evading rural school placements.

External factors, especially those affecting students from low-SES backgrounds, can indeed influence learners. Considering this, DHs diligently work to delineate challenges originating outside the classroom from those within it. They recognise the classroom as a distinct environment that should remain shielded from the impacts of external factors, to ensure an undisturbed learning atmosphere.

*I came into my shoes as a teacher the moment I stopped trying to impress people, and just going on what my kids need. That's, that is my sole goal in my classroom, I don't worry about what's going on outside of these four walls. I'm here for the kids in my classroom. If they are okay, then I'm okay.*  
(DH5B)

Issues arise from sources external to the classroom, indicating that the root of these problems is situated outside the classroom environment and that these need to be clearly distinguished from internal issues so that they can be ignored or addressed effectively. Mouton et al. (2013) highlight the lack of community commitment and parental support in low-SES schools, further exacerbating discipline difficulties.

In conclusion, the findings of this subtheme underscore the critical importance of effective classroom management in the context of overcrowded classrooms within low-SES schools. The challenges posed by discipline issues, administrative tasks, and motivation, exacerbated by overcrowding and socioeconomic conditions, highlight the need for proactive strategies. The collaboration between NTs and DHs emerges as a significant aspect, with DHs guiding through personalised techniques and workshops. While some NTs exhibit adeptness in managing classroom discipline, external factors affecting students from disadvantaged backgrounds emphasise the necessity of distinguishing between internal and external issues.

#### 4.5.3.2 *Sub-theme 2: Professional development provided is often not hands-on and does not meet needs*

This section presents the findings on the nature of PD provided. This study found that online courses or videos do offer assistance, yet their effectiveness compared to the time invested remains uncertain. Furthermore, prolonged duration or an

excessive workload can potentially impede motivation among teachers to participate. The participants said:

*... the school organises online courses in things. I feel like it really helped me whether it was at classroom management, or just the way to structure a lesson, because nothing really prepares you for when you have to come stand in front of the learners. So, I feel like the things that the school did put in place at the beginning of the year it really, really helped. (NT6B)*

*To be honest, most of the sessions have been online, which I feel is not so engage as it would be to go somewhere. (NT4A)*

The findings suggest that PD that is provided using an engaging and hands-on approach is more effective than doing it online. Nemaston (2020) concurs with the finding by suggesting that a hands-on school-specific approach to the school context is needed. The challenge emerges from the fact that online PD covers numerous schools broadly rather than focusing intensively on a specific area, leading to a wide yet shallow approach. Green et al. (2013) confirm the finding that PD cannot be provided as a “one-shot” workshop and should be embedded in the context of the school, the context in which teaching and learning take place, need to represent the needs of teachers and their work lives and their routine of teaching.

The findings of this study further show that NTs face difficulties in applying learned content, particularly when it comes from online courses.

*Yes, it's always a hmm... challenge to bring specific content to the, to the class context, because in a community like we are in, our children are not always exposed to all these examples that they might be using in that context. So now you have to bring it down to the children's level. You sit with children that have never been to the airport, or they've never been out of (location) in any case. So you try and broaden their minds, or try to draw it to something, but there is no reference point for them. So now is to break it down to what's happening in the community. Yeah, so it is difficult, sometimes to bring that content specifically to this child. (NT4A)*

*Yes it is sometimes difficult to practice it in, but most of the time you can work with it. And if it is not for you, then it is not for you, then you take only*

*those things that work for you. Our head is very nice, you know we are on a group, and if you do not understand she will also assist you. (DH1A)*

*Uhhh ja, it depends on the type of.... it depends again whether that is suitable for your school and... but I think your creativeness as a teacher also should come in how do I how do I adapt this to make it work for me. (DH6B)*

Implementing changes from PD programmes demands that educators extract valuable components and apply them creatively which is an endeavour facilitated by experience and achievable for DHs, though proving more challenging for NTs. For PD to be effective and applicable, PD programmes should link the content studied during the PD programme to practice and real-life situations related to the school's context and the specific setting of the school. Lee (2005) aligns with the findings suggesting in her study that PD programmes for teachers from the same school, department or grade level have several advantages over providing PD for teachers from different schools, departments, and grade levels. NTs struggle to apply the content as it is not directly related to the challenges that they face in a low-SES school environment. Implementing PD knowledge in classrooms and school settings is a challenge, given the varying reference points of learners, particularly in low-SES schools. Boudersa (2016) aligns with the finding that the current stance of PD programmes in South Africa, can be described as fragmented, poorly aligned with the curriculum and inadequate to meet the specific needs of teachers, therefore it is important to delve into what the needs of the teachers are and implement PD programmes that are engaging, relevant to the specific needs of the school or teachers and to encourage reflection and follow up programmes to ensure successful implementation in the school. Subject advisors have a complementary function in supporting DHs with PD assistance for NTs, wielding significant influence. The participants said:

*In yes, yes, especially with the mathematics. So the subject advisor, he was very hands on so we get, get weekly emails from him, tell us exactly. This is what we're going to do for this week. This is what you should focus on, with a lot of detail to his lesson plans that he actually sends out to teachers, which is also an active thing. Where we can make changes, according to the school's context so for mathematics specifically, So, mathematics*

*specifically he is a really good subject advisor. So, we had good leadership and guidelines as to how to work. So ja... (NT4A)*

*In the beginning of the year, yeah, that came in, she also did this, this kind of if you're looking at our staffroom there is a big poster up of the discipline system that she kind of introduced to us. So she did a course on that also. So she's, she used to be a subject advisor. And then she went on her own, do these enrichment courses with teachers and development courses. So she came in and she kind of helped them in the beginning of the year, all the CA's do NT training. (DH5B)*

*And then... meetings every Wednesday we have a phase meeting. They check in. How's everything going? What are you struggling with? So meetings every Wednesday we have those. We have a phase meeting and then Thursday's a grade meeting. (NT6B)*

The finding aligns with Nemaston's (2020) study that continued support played a pivotal role. NTs participate in weekly meetings with DHs for training, focusing on topics like weekly preparations, expectations, and innovative assessment approaches. This mentoring is akin to in-service training, catering to school-specific needs and offering hands-on solutions within the school context. The finding extends the views of Mdabe (2019), who states that subject advisors are individuals who work in the district office and are employed by the department. Subject advisors possess expert knowledge in both content and teaching methods, with their primary responsibility being to offer educational support to schools and teachers to facilitate effective instruction. They oversee curriculum implementation and work to ensure that teaching and learning processes are successful. The findings clearly indicate that subject advisors can significantly assist DHs and NTs through the support and guidance they receive to enhance their PD. While some teachers benefited from their subject advisors, others had less favourable experiences due to advisor absences. The availability of subject advisors is crucial for NTs' PD to implement curriculum content and teaching strategies effectively. Subject advisors and DHs should be available to ensure NTs receive vital support for their development in implementing curriculum and teaching by aligning it to the specific school context. This alignment underscores the significance of tailored support for NTs, bolstering their teaching skills and contributions within the school environment. Additionally, it

was noted that in-service training was being conducted by subject specialists, and not by the DHs. However, subject advisors are not always available to all NTs.

In summary, online PD's broad scope across multiple schools contrasts with tailored, hands-on approaches that suit specific school contexts. NTs and DHs highlight the challenges and benefits of online PD, including self-discipline for video courses and the value of face-to-face interaction. Different learner backgrounds, especially in low-SES schools, hinder the application of PD content, requiring inventive teaching methods. Effective PD involves linking content to practical school situations, addressing specific issues, and collaborating with subject advisors and DHs for personalised support.

#### 4.5.3.3 *Sub-theme 3: Novice teachers' workload - Administrative load and curriculum completion*

In this study, the participants and those in leadership like the DHs recognised the overwhelming nature of their workload which negatively impacted the completion of the annual curriculum.

*It's probably workload, I don't think they really know that it's so much work. I don't know... they have the perception that teachers are just coming in and going home, they really struggle with the workload. (DH2A)*

*I feel so overwhelmed with everything that's expected of me on top of everything else, that I'm like, as a, as a teacher, with some experience, I feel overwhelmed. I don't even want to know how the NTs feel with all of this. This is almost an overload of information. So, I think they are good. But I think the expectancies are maybe too high. (DH5B)*

*...because you get into the school, and you are so overwhelmed with the work... And now you have everything, and you do not know where to touch, where to leave. ...they have to also learn how to juggle time and how to manage the time because the curriculum and the admin is a lot. (DH1A)*

NTs and DHs express an overwhelming perception of their workload and teaching responsibilities. Many of the participants in the study, including DHs and NTs, commented on feeling overwhelmed with the amount of work they must complete. They noted that the curriculum is often too packed and that planning and scheduling can help to alleviate the stress. The finding suggests that the high workload is

impacting negatively on the ability of teachers to complete the curriculum and meet the expectations set for them.

Michel (2013) and Räsänen et al. (2020) contributed to the finding that workload affected teachers and caused them to leave the profession. The finding of this study aligns with Boudersa's (2016) findings which indicated that increased workload is a contributing factor to the inefficacy of in-service PD. TALIS (2009) also found that DHs provide limited mentoring to NTs due to their workload.

NTs perceive that school leadership prioritises adherence to departmental guidelines over what might be more beneficial for the school's unique context.

*...our leadership would always try to be to the point with that, so they sometimes don't take into consideration the context of the school they just want us to do what the department wants us to do...you're being told to do the one thing today, and while you're still trying to do that the next thing is coming. While you are getting to the next thing, the first thing is now, again, being asked where is it? So, it's always difficult to keep up. Not everyone can flourish under the leadership or under this style. (NT4A)*

It appears leadership in schools tends to fulfil the department's demands without considering the school's unique context. This approach often leaves teachers feeling overwhelmed and unable to keep up with the constant tasks and expectations. Leaders need to support teachers and take into consideration the specific school context. Leaders need to reflect upon their approach and implement strategies that can promote a more balanced and supportive work environment between the expectations of the DBE, DHs and NT. Makoa and Segalo (2021) outline the heightened academic performance expectations within the school system create added pressure on NTs, leading to decreased morale.

The participants in this study also indicated that the combination of meetings and inadequate planning leads to extended working hours and necessitates participation beyond regular working hours. They said:

*I think for me, like I think it's good to be prepared, always like to be prepared with your planning and everything at least a few weeks in advance. Yeah, and just to always like to stick to a timetable in a sense because if you're gonna leave that for later and that for later and the next day, then you're*

*going to get overwhelmed and you're not going to have any clue what you need to do ... I think a lot of the times there will be meetings or discussions held with us but then you leave there and then you almost forget it. So, it's like there's nothing concrete or like a handout or something necessarily, there's a lot and it is very overwhelming. We have meetings every week, like three times a week, if there's no extra murals, and it carries on like half past five. (NT5B)*

*And then we went straight to class we have meeting and then you have to sit to moderate your FAT's, then it's already like I said now it's five o'clock then it's still expected of you okay, but if you've go and mark, and then if you're like, Okay, but I'm going to leave the marking for tomorrow or whatever the case may be, then it will be like an issue (NT3A) meetings every Wednesday we have a phase meeting. They check in? How's everything going? What are you struggling with? So, meetings every Wednesday we have those. We have a phase meeting and then Thursday's a grade meeting. (NT6B)*

*I think some of it can be implemented, I just always feel when I walk away from the meetings, that I feel so overwhelmed with everything that's expected of me on top of everything else, that I'm like, as a, as a teacher, with some experience, I feel overwhelmed. I don't even want to know how the NTs feel with all of this. This is almost an overload of information. So, I think they are good. But I think the expectancies are maybe too high. (DH5B)*

From the findings, it appears that meetings are a regular part of the participants' work routines, with both positive and negative effects. Participants stress the importance of planning and sticking to timetables to manage work effectively, preventing overwhelm caused by meetings and other duties. These meetings facilitate problem-solving, collaboration and communication but can extend working hours, taking away time from other duties and disrupting work-life balance. Weekly phase and grade meetings, along with impromptu meetings that can unexpectedly pull teachers out of the classroom impact work-related stress. While they aid communication and problem-solving, they demand extra time and energy. The complexity of meetings without clear agendas and follow-ups results in inexperienced NTs not comprehending the context and forgetting the points



discussed, leaving them feeling overwhelmed, a feeling mutual with some DHs as well.

The finding is aligned with Parker's (2010) study that NTs preferred informal mentoring, such as discussions and daily planning, to formal engagements like off-hour meetings. Makoa and Segalo (2021) delved into the situation of NTs in South Africa, highlighting that they face a heavy workload and limited chances to engage in PD activities, although these meetings are seen by du Plessis and Eberlein (2017) and Nemaston (2020) as PD. Nemaston (2020) describes these meetings as tailored instructional sessions addressing the school's specific needs. This practical, hands-on approach benefits NTs. Similarly, du Plessis and Eberlein (2017) highlight the importance of these meetings for DHs to collaborate and share experiences and expectations within their team. These interactions not only help prevent mistakes but also provide valuable insights into the challenges they face. The overwhelming workload makes NTs perceive that their meetings are time-consuming and contribute to them not getting through their work.

The administrative load extends beyond conventional teacher expectations, encompassing duties like home visits, in-person letter deliveries to parents' doors, direct calls to parents, and investigating prolonged student absences. This often involves entering areas that are not consistently safe due to crime, particularly during the COVID when teachers felt uncomfortable due to health concerns.

*We also do home visits, to go look at what circumstances the house is or to write up learners to be part of the X sponsorship, for clothes or food parcel or whatever. (DH1A)*

*And then this letter you need to send to the parents, okay? If you don't know where the parent lives, or whatever you need to call, if the phone number is not working, they need to go around the house, but you need to get there, because that's part of the admin. And then if you don't know, then I will go with, I go with... because I am from here... and I will go with and talk to the parents and whatever and then they sign the letter and then we'll come back and then you put it in the file. (DH1A)*

*It's specific children and it will be under a specific situation. We were unhappy about it or we are unhappy about it because also it is COVID and*

*not to judge or anything like that. But the area is not always safe for us to go. But they tell us that we can use the school Combi and we can take someone with us, we don't have to go alone. But because like it's COVID you don't always want to go but in, in certain situations like last year, I went a few times, but this year not, but it would be when, like maybe like one of the parents passed away. Like the child hasn't been at school for maybe a week or two and you can't get hold of the parents. You go there and ask what's going on. (NT1A)*

The finding implies that these administrative duties are important and consume a lot of time and energy. Teachers might have to invest significant time and energy into these tasks, which might shift their focus from other important teaching activities. This necessity arises from insufficient parental involvement and the challenges posed by the circumstances prevalent in low-SES environments that impact the learners. This intricate juggling act between administrative duties and teaching responsibilities highlights the many aspects of a teacher's role and the difficulties they encounter in fulfilling diverse requirements in their domain. Du Plessis and Mestry (2019) demonstrate that accomplished rural teachers share similar backgrounds or possess familiarity with poor communities, teachers who grew up in the same communities have experience within the communities and, therefore find it less challenging to operate outside the school and in the community. Teachers' willingness to go the extra mile to engage and attempt to involve parents showcases their remarkable dedication and compassion. These teachers understand that a learner's academic success is tied to parental involvement and are ready to navigate challenging situations, be it visiting potentially unsafe areas or adapting to circumstances like the COVID-19 pandemic. Their commitment extends beyond teaching to address non-academic factors affecting learners, such as poverty and family issues, emphasising the significance of overall learner well-being. Rees (2015) says that teachers with altruistic motivations, selfless dedication to their profession, a strong desire to support those in need, and a belief in the significance of education as a societal force are more likely to achieve success in their teaching careers. Although challenging, the NTs in this study have characteristics of these altruistic motives that will go beyond their responsibilities for the sake of the learners and to make a difference in society. However, these duties

that reflect those of social workers come at the cost of impacting the teachers' working conditions.

#### 4.5.3.4 *Sub-theme 4: Lack of follow-up programmes and/or feedback*

There is a global need for teachers to be supported and motivated in the classroom and therefore follow-up programmes are a key aspect in supporting and motivating teachers effectively. The findings of this study suggest that there is no formal feedback or follow-up sessions of PD programmes and courses attended.

*We have when we, especially when we take the kids outside to wait for the transport, then we will kind of stand together in little clusters and have a chat about a topic. So sometimes the information we got from those workshops will be there, or when we have subject meetings, we will give feedback about it. (DH5B)*

*Our head is very nice, you know we are on a group, and if you do not understand she will also assist you. ... Yes, she is from the department. She will assist you. I can send her a WhatsApp now, I can ask her call me back and then she will. But ja, then she will. (DH1A)*

*I didn't from the principal, really, she just quickly say, that's good, or whatever. But she didn't give like a formal feedback and subject advisors came, but we never received the feedback ourselves. They gave it to the DH, but they never got the opportunity to share it with us. Because every time there was something, and even with IQMS we haven't even had our discussion yet so (NT5B). It was informative for me, but I didn't, I didn't try to implement it in my classroom yet. (NT1A)*

The finding of this study suggests there is a lack of formal follow-up sessions that solidify the understanding of the PD courses in practice, which makes it hard to apply the knowledge gained to the classroom and school context. Furthermore, when PD programmes are effectively implemented, they can transform and improve the quality of teaching and learning if teachers are supported and participate in follow-up programmes to ensure the successful implementation of what they learn. The finding is supported by Bautista and Ortega-Ruiz (2015) who clarify that the effectiveness of PD activities hinges on perceiving them as continuous processes rather than isolated occurrences. Furthermore, the finding aligns with Ajani and

Govender (2021) that effective monitoring of PD programmes and the attendance of follow-up programmes allow teachers to identify classroom challenges for support. This measure is taken to guarantee the application of knowledge and skills acquired through such training. The finding is consistent with Gulston (2010) that these courses are typically brief and lack subsequent assistance.

Just as it is important to follow up on PD activities and to ensure its success, DHs follow up on NTs' responsibilities and PD activities to ensure growth in their application of PD, as this impacts their own work ethic and responsibilities. The participants said:

*... if you tell them to do something, and they didn't, and then because I also have someone that I work for, my deputy principal I have to report to my deputy principal and then my work is not completed because you didn't complete something. But then that's again in following up, you need to follow up. (DH2A)*

*I feel like the only thing I can say is like, the checking up maybe or just to check in, is it working, this is something else you can try if it's not working? So maybe just the checking up. (NT6B)*

The above finding suggests that NTs need to reflect on PD programmes that they attended and participate in follow-up programmes to ensure what they have learnt is executed correctly and implemented properly. Teachers need to engage and reflect on the specific PD programme attended as a school, phase, grade or subject-orientated to implement a plan to use the programmes' content and adapt it to the specific school environment and the classroom, especially in low-SES schools. This finding supports the study of Al Shabibi and Silvennoinen (2018) who reported that PD initiatives commonly deliver theoretical understanding instead of practical implementation tactics. This means that achieving successful PD implementation requires active engagement through introspection, dedication, self-dialogue, and a readiness to acquire practical experience.

#### **4.5.4 Theme 4: Managing novice teacher's professional development challenges**

This theme focuses on the PD needs of NTs in schools, which is divided into three sub-themes that include the need for a greater understanding of the PD needs of

NTs, the importance of effective PD in developing NTs, and recommendations for improving the PD of NTs. Quotes, and insights from both NTs and DHs support the sub-themes.

This theme presents the findings to the research sub-question - How do the DHs manage the identified PD challenges? The findings are presented in the following sub-themes:

#### 4.5.4.1. *Sub-theme 1: Understanding the professional development needs of novice teachers*

This section of the dissertation highlights the understanding of the PD needs of NTs.

NTs are required to participate in PD sessions but frequently, there is insufficient communication about the outcomes of these events.

*Uh... uhm... okay they do get.... I was never.... When I was a younger, younger, younger version of a teacher, I never.... we never had that. We had to do our own PD. Nowadays, they call all.... call upon all the NTs that have to go to whatever they give and then, nobody come back and said this is what we did there, never. But last year people went, having this year they still must go, but they never came back and said this is what they did. I only got from them that it was really nice and they treated them with the utmost of respect, but never went into what they really did. Because I do not have time to sit with you and ask you... (DH1A)*

*.If you're responsible for a subject, develop yourself in that subject, by making sure that, you know when is there a workshop or training online and, and be part of it, and then come back with feedback, or teach us what did you learn there, because sometimes we've got different workshops for a subject, but there's more than one teacher, so then we would say, okay, you do that workshop, I'll do that one, then we will then discuss it in our subject meetings, or we will try to give feedback to each other of important things that needs to be in place (DH5B)*

The finding suggests the challenge of insufficient communication between DHs and NTs, with historical context indicating that NTs used to manage their own PD whereas today it is provided. DHs are prompting NTs to attend workshops and training and to follow up and provide feedback to other teachers. However, there is

no formal subsequent mechanism to ensure knowledge transfer into the school context or to other teachers who may find it useful. This gap in communication results in a limited grasp of session content and its practical application in classrooms. Additionally, time constraints prevent comprehensive discussions between DHs and NTs, echoing previously noted time-related obstacles. The absence of effective communication can cause the NTs to feel disconnected and unsupported, which can lead to a lack of motivation and ultimately impact the quality of education in the school.

Supporting the finding, Renbarger and Davis (2019) argued that if challenges and barriers such as time are eliminated, it could have a positive impact on NTs by encouraging them.

This study also found that there are communication gaps between DHs and NTs that lead to unclear expectations from the DHs towards the NTs.

*Hmm... mistakes are inevitable, we are going to make mistakes in any case, but you cannot hold me accountable for mistakes I made. If I wasn't told it is not that way. That's what I'm trying to say. So there's a lot of mistakes that we do make as NTs and then the way we are treated on that is almost to say, how could you make this mistake, but I didn't know what I had to do. (NT4A)*

*...admit when you are wrong, say you are sorry. Uhm. Ask forgiveness when you did something and let's move on because... uhm...because we are working with children here, other people's children, leaders of tomorrow. (DH1A)*

The above finding suggests that there is a need for more transparent communication and more support and guidance from DHs towards NTs, particularly during the initial stages of their teaching careers as it is expected of NTs to be ready and able to apply these tasks in practice. Many NTs expressed the need for more support and guidance from DHs when they first started teaching in previous themes. They also reported feeling overwhelmed by the workload and expectations placed upon them, with some NTs expressing frustration that they were not given clear guidelines or instructions on how to handle certain tasks. NTs expressed that mistakes are

inevitable and that they learned from their mistakes only after they had made them but felt frustrated by the way they were treated for making mistakes.

Whitehouse (2016) supports the finding by stating that an underdeveloped mentor-mentee relationship, often due to a lack of commitment, results in one-way communication, preventing the mentee from connecting with the mentor. Iancu-Haddad and Oplatka (2009) add a related point, emphasising that effective mentoring requires frequent, open communication and a mentor with sensitivity and strong interpersonal skills. Any communication breakdowns or gaps can lead to an ineffective mentoring process. Nemaston (2020) further strengthens this finding, noting that NTs often struggle with effective communication within the school community due to a lack of necessary skills and insufficient instruction to develop these abilities. Dawo et al. (2015) and Vikaraman et al. (2017) argue that it's crucial for DHs as mentors to adapt to the needs of NTs and consider the pre-service training and education NTs have received when mentoring them. They suggest that DHs should fill any gaps with guidance and mentoring, and help NTs integrate into the school culture to ensure a smooth transition. The notion from DHs that NTs should admit their mistakes and move on implies a potential lack of support, sensitivity, and understanding from DHs towards NTs. This contrasts with Dawo et al.'s (2015) literature, which suggests that mentor teachers should shield NTs from errors by limiting their responsibilities.

The findings of this study suggest that NTs are feeling frustrated due to the excessive workload and the lack of attention to the well-being of teachers. NTs entrust DHs to provide them with guidance and solutions in challenging situations and expect the DHs to be more aware of their well-being and personal life beyond school.

*... the time that's given to you is not enough, you're still expected after school to have your meeting to have your extra murals to do this to do that fundraiser all of that. ... then you come home, and then you have like four to five hours that you now just need to mark you can't even eat you can't spend time with family. ... -the stress and the pressure is a lot and there's not any focus from the department side or whoever side on the wellbeing of teachers and like this whole year and last year, we don't even come out*



*early on Friday. We leave here every day at 3 the earliest. So that's very difficult. (NT5B)*

The findings reveal that NTs often experience frustration and being overwhelmed due to their heavy workloads, combined with insufficient attention to their well-being. They are expected to manage a multitude of tasks, including meetings, extracurricular activities, fundraising, and teaching responsibilities. Consequently, they find themselves with limited time to fulfil crucial duties such as grading and data analysis. The pressure and stress they face are significant, and there appears to be a lack of necessary support and attention from the Department. This demanding workload not only affects their professional responsibilities but also impacts their ability to attend to basic needs like eating and spending time with family. These insights underscore the urgent need for improved support and a stronger emphasis on teacher well-being to effectively address NTs' challenges. Curry et al. (2016) suggest positive reinforcement as a requirement to keep NT morale high.

The interview with the participants in this study showed that NTs greatly benefit from feedback to refine their teaching. They often seek guidance, as they are unsure about the correctness of their teaching methods and whether assessment difficulty is correct.

*I started without any guidance or mentorship, so because of that, I didn't know did I do it right or wrong. And I think for me, the biggest challenge was, especially with languages and setting up question papers, is finding resources to use for your assessments and then to determine whether your assessments are on the correct standard, like whether it's too easy whether it's too difficult. ... sometimes more experienced teachers can say, listen, this is how you teach poetry more effectively, or rather do it this way. So there's, there was no guidance and last year, there were no class visits. (NT5B)*

Providing NTs with feedback from observations is a well-known strategy used by mentors to support and guide NTs in their classroom practice and to help them manage their challenges. The findings from Nemaston's (2020) study underscore the importance of observations and feedback to assist and support NTs in their teaching practice and the challenges that they encounter in the classroom.

Nemaston (2020) opines that with classroom visits, the DH can guide and assist NTs in specific areas where they also provide recommendations through feedback. Providing effective and thoughtful feedback to NTs has a positive effect on them and helps to improve their teaching practice. However, the importance of observation and feedback is clearly stated in the literature. An NT in the study mentioned that she did not receive any formal feedback from class visits. An NT with a tenure of 6 months in the study also indicated that she received no guidance or mentorship when she started at the school and was not confident when she tried fulfilling her teaching role according to the standard of the school. Feedback sessions were held, but the results of these sessions never reached her.

The DH must support an NT's need at the start of their teaching career to ensure that NTs adjust firmly and with confidence in the classroom. From the literature, it was evident that NTs tend to leave the teaching profession within the first five years of teaching (Michel, 2013). To combat these challenges experienced by NTs, they need to receive the necessary support according to their needs and in a way that is suitable for the school environment.

#### 4.5.4.2 *Sub-theme 2: Effectiveness of professional development in developing novice teachers is crucial for the success of the school.*

The effectiveness of PD in developing NTs is crucial for the success of the school. Participants in this study stress the need for ongoing education, mentorship, and adaptability to changing circumstances. They emphasise the importance of PD opportunities and the need for NTs to stay current with changing curricula and teaching methods. Overall, mentorship and ongoing PD are seen as essential for the success of NTs and the quality of education.

*Well, I think obviously, I think it's very important, because, I mean, I saw what would happen and what are the consequences if it's not there hmm.. and if you're not guided through it, I am definitely a supporter of PD and like in every aspect, especially since the world is changing so fast, the kids we're working with, the way they learn is changing every year. So I believe that teachers can't say I studied, I got my degree and I'm finished, never going to learn again. So I think PD is definitely very important. (NT5B)*

*I think it's really important. Like I've said, no one can teach you or prepare you for what's going to happen that first day you come in. So I feel like in*

*this last few months, I have improved so much, whether it is just standing in front of the class room, talking and whether to raise your voice and shout, it's like I have improved so much. So I feel like it is really important. And yeah, I feel like I just want all the old, that's why when they came up, I said sign me up with this idea or that because I want that development. (NT6B)*

The above quotations suggest that NTs recognise the importance of PD for teachers. They agree that ongoing PD is necessary to keep up with the changing world and the evolving needs of learners. The finding implies that PD improves NTs' classroom management and communication skills. They emphasise the importance of being able to adapt to changing circumstances and are eager to participate in PD opportunities. NTs understand the consequences of not having PD and believe that teachers must continue to learn throughout their careers and the path to becoming effective teachers. These NTs emphasise the value of ongoing PD for teachers and the benefits it provides for both educators and students.

DHs highlight the importance of continued development and a mentor to guide and assist NTs.

*I think it's very important to have someone to to guide you, as I say, we're coming out of varsity and you don't know what's happening. You need that hand to hold you. Like I had a brilliant mentor when I came here. She wasn't my departmental head. She was my grade head. But she literally was everything that I needed at that time. And I mean, if I didn't have that I don't think I would have been as successful as I would have been coming in. So that I feel is very important. And I really need to develop NTs more professionally now that I'm thinking of it. (DH2A)*

*Nothing is standing still, we are moving. We have had like five, six curriculums, since I have started my teaching career. So, stuff is moving every day, so you need to... to move with the change otherwise you are going to be behind. So, it is important for, for NTs to have somebody to assist them, to guide them and to teach them, because they still need to be taught. Some learners... some NTs come from a university, I come from a college, where I had to uh, uh, uhm... on every Friday need to sit in front of a school. A school come in then we have to prepare lessons and give class to them, so then and then my teachers sat there and watch us. (DH1A)*

The findings suggest that mentorship is important for NTs and their PD. Having someone to guide and assist NTs is essential for their success in the classroom. DHs recount previous mentors who provided invaluable support when they first started teaching. DHs express a desire to help develop NTs and provide them with the same kind of support that they received. Staying current with changing curriculum and teaching methods is aided by PD. DHs agree that attending workshops and seminars is important for PD. They highlight the importance of a passion for teaching and the need to have an open mind to learn and adapt to changing circumstances.

The literature on PD suggests that effective PD can have a significant impact on teacher practices and student outcomes. Studies by Bautista and Ortega-Ruiz (2015), Boudersa (2016), Garet et al. (2001), Hudson (2013), Postholm (2018) and Smith (2015) found that high-quality, sustained, and focused PD can lead to improvements in teacher knowledge, skills, and practices, as well as improvements in student achievement. These findings support the participants' beliefs that ongoing education is necessary to keep up with the changing world and the evolving needs of learners. The participants also stressed the importance of mentorship and guidance for NTs, which is consistent with the literature's focus on the importance of ongoing support for teacher implementation. McCollum (2014), Sasser (2018), and Thomas-Alexander and Harper (2017) also outlined that PD, positive environments and effective communication contribute to NTs staying in the profession, which is especially important for low-SES schools.

Workshops and PD sessions appear to disregard the time limitations faced by NTs, while the SMT fails to allocate adequate time for PD. The time-intensive nature of PD activities clashes with these constraints, leading to a preference for focusing on vital school duties and responsibilities like grading assignments for NTs, instead of attending the PD opportunities.

*There is sometimes, there is one or two workshops that they want us to do, and then we don't always find the time that we need to do it, as much as you like to do it. It will be time-consuming actually hmmm... to look at the videos, because I remembered last term, hmmm or earlier in this term where the thing on abuse, child abuse, there was a workshop on that, and, because about 10 to 12 videos that needed to be watched, which is all 42*

*minutes long. So, we, I know a lot, a lot of teachers say they don't have time to watch videos as much as they would like to watch it. It is just we don't have the time to for that too. 42 minutes, it could have been five classes work, you could have mark in that time... Sometimes it feels a lot as if it's time wasted, it's just they have to like, give you time to do that. (NT4A)*

*You have to be disciplined to go sit and watch all those videos. Someone coming in doing it face to face, I feel like that's just the way ... Uhhh... a few, I remember the no bullying course we did, but then I remember the school had one with (name), I can't remember the name. But it was the lady's name was (name) and she came in and she did a whole thing, especially with the NT is where she took us and it was about classroom management and things we can do to help us to manage our class. (NT6B)*

*For example, if I sign up like the other day, I signed up for a seminar. So, then they call us in for meeting. It was a grade head, yeah, a grade head, meeting, or something like that. Then they call us in and, I kept on telling them that I signed up for a meeting that I must attend. But we must now first finish this meeting, then I could attend that. Yeah, so that is like really a problem, if you are signing up for something, like you can't plan your life here at this school. Because if you plan something, you don't know what's going to happen this afternoon, they will call you in for this or that or that. Then you miss out that whole opportunity to attend a meeting or virtual online something. (NT1A)*

It appears that schools should prioritise the participation of teachers in PD programmes and allocate sufficient time for their PD activities. Furthermore, to show consideration for teachers' schedules, it is important not to plan meetings that clash with PD activities. These workshops and programmes are specifically crafted to assist educators in addressing potential challenges throughout their careers, ultimately enhancing the quality of teaching, and learning within the school environment. PD programmes and workshops should be mindful of NTs' time constraints and consider carefully what to include. The finding supports Ajani and Govender's (2021) finding that teachers in South Africa are not monitored adequately and not monitored on their attendance in PD activities to enhance classroom practice and indicates that teachers do not attend PD activities frequently

every year. The finding is also supported by the study of Makoa and Segalo (2021) indicating that there is a lack of time for teachers to participate in PD activities and teachers are overloaded with work and would rather spend the time catching up on work that needs to be done than to attend PD activities.

#### 4.5.4.3 *Sub-theme 3: Recommendations on improving the professional development of novice teachers*

Through interviews and data analysis, this study set out to investigate the challenges NTs experience and the importance of PD in their development as teachers, and through the responses of both NTs and DHs, identify and make recommendations to improve the PD of NTs. In this research study, the researcher identified two major aspects that could potentially hinder the improvement of PD for NTs. These are seen from the perspective of DHs and NTs who participated in the research.

DHs are uncertain if the mentoring and PD they provide have the desired effect on NTs because of the lack of feedback they receive from NTs, although NTs found that continuous feedback and check-ins were lacking and desired it to improve their PD.

*...I mean, you [one] would like to hear that you're doing a good job. Because it keeps you positive and you know that you're doing a good thing. And you're on the right track and your hard work and dedication to what you're doing in your class is seen from a management perspective. (DH6B)*

*I think communication is my personal thing, how I would do it. I would, in conversations, try to find out what do they [NTs] struggle with. And then if I know you struggle with this. (DH5B)*

*If you keep quiet. You can't say that I didn't I can't...I am telling you [in reference to NTs] know it is your own fault that [if] you gonna be quiet. ...sometimes if I think about myself as a NT; you are so scared...because you might not know what this person is going to think or am I getting it right. You are scared to go and ask. (DH3A)*

The finding suggests that DHs need to be confident in the PD they provide and continue to do so, NTs in previous themes have indicated the effectiveness of PD and how it benefits them. DHs should continue to probe NTs to find out and have a



view of what they are experiencing to provide further feedback or training as this is what NTs indicated that they were not receiving. DHs should not expect feedback from NTs as they are scared and inexperienced, they should create a safe environment. Furthermore, it is essential to be persistent in support of NTs in their initial stages of entering the profession. The finding is supported by Thomas-Alexander and Harper (2017) who argue that providing NTs with the necessary support when entering the profession, will have a significant effect on their initial performance, and confidence and will generate a positive attitude towards their work and school. The finding is also supported by Banja (2016) that NTs often feel unwelcome and unsupported by more experienced educators, which can result in a slow and stressful process of adapting to their new working environment. This lack of support can cause NTs to feel rejected, unimportant, and marginalised, which can impact their confidence and ability to thrive in their new role. Whereas in this study DHs are willing to help but a breakdown in communication causes a misalignment between DHs and NTs.

In this study, it is evident that it is important for any school to implement an induction programme, to discuss basic responsibilities and expectations of the teacher. NTs are set up for failure before they start teaching, which is preventable if proper planning is introduced, and an induction schedule is followed to inform teachers of their role and expectations.

*I think like in the beginning, or just like maybe like two weeks before the school start on one week, take the time to just properly go through everything made sure everyone understands it, because that's what happened when I started teaching, I only received the textbooks that I needed, the first day that I came to school. So I wasn't able to plan or do anything, I didn't know what subjects I'm going to teach. And then you have one meeting after school for two hours, and they try and squash everything in there. And now you can't remember everything. ... But nothing is in place because we don't know what to do. We don't know how to write SNA any of that. So she helped us from the beginning of this year, to really get all of that in order. (NT5B)*

*It's just by sharing and by checking in, but also I think we in the beginning of the year, we had a person coming in, that did a kind of a NT training. And*



*I also know the CAs from the department, they do subject-specific novice training, where they introduce them to certain things. (DH5B)*

*My experiences it's quite challenging. I found it challenging at first. But the school organises online courses in things. I feel like it really helped me whether it was at classroom management, or just the way to structure a lesson, because nothing really prepares you for when you have to come stand in front of the learners. So I feel like the things that the school did put in place at the beginning of the year it really, really helped. (NT6B)*

The finding highlights the importance of providing teachers with proper support and training at the beginning of their teaching career to adequately prepare, as teachers are already under pressure on day one due to not receiving the necessary support needed to have a successful transition into the teaching career. Providing ample time to thoroughly delve into essential information rather than hastening through it. The emphasis lies in ensuring a comprehensive understanding among all participants, as opposed to attempting to cover everything within a single meeting or overwhelming NTs with an excessive amount of information all at once. The finding is consistent with Dawo et al. (2015) and Vikaraman et al. (2017) explaining that the role a mentor pursues must adapt based on the needs of the NTs, therefore new teachers should be especially catered for and cannot be handled the same as teachers already established within the school. The finding is also supported by Guirguis and Dias-Lacy (2017), saying that programmes implemented to assist NTs, such as mentoring and induction, should be organised to ensure that NTs' development is accelerated as not all programmes will ensure that NTs are effective and successful teachers.

Nemaston (2020) supports the finding, recommending that it should be made compulsory for NTs to spend a month with a senior teacher before they begin teaching. This would serve as an effective strategy to establish collegial relationships, bring NTs and experienced teachers together, and enhance the competence and confidence of the NTs. Dawo et al. (2015) explain the characteristics of a good mentor, of which one point explains that mentors need to have the willingness to protect NTs from major mistakes by limiting their exposure to responsibility, which consists of adequately preparing NTs before teaching starts. To address these challenges, the NTs recommend a more systematic and

structured approach to providing information and training, with a focus on breaking down the information into manageable pieces and providing clear guidance and support. By taking the time to prepare and support NTs properly, schools can help ensure that they are set up for success and able to effectively manage the demands of their role.

The DBE (2016) outlines that the effective orientation of NTs and teachers new to the school environment depends primarily on the principal and the School Management Team (SMT), whereas in this study the NTs do not receive effective initial training. It is therefore the responsibility that DHs, as part of the SMT, who are in leadership positions provide NTs with effective, ongoing induction support, before when school starts, to eliminate NTs feeling ill-equipped.

DHs recommend specialising and focusing on PD within a chosen area that offers a valuable opportunity to distinguish skills among teachers and address teaching challenges. Furthermore, when NTs encounter difficulties, DHS need to oversee their progress toward resolving these challenges and try again if the challenges persist.

*I think it's, uhm... it's very important, but it's not a one size, one shoe fits everyone thing. It's... you need to find that place, where's your spot in education, we can't be all good at this. And we can't all be good at that. So find your kind of niche, and do your professional, PD in that direction. Also, maybe if you are struggling with something, you can go do something to see if you can improve that. But if it's just those one size fits all type, PD, I don't see the sense in that. (DH5B)*

*Just continuous support and to monitoring, they need to be monitored, daily, actually, to see if that challenge is persisting, or improving. Yes, to monitor on a regular basis and to support continuously. (DH2A)*

*Uhm... with PD, it's very important the way that you set goals for yourself. It is also about trial and error and how you grow because what I also asked of, or how I tried to help the new teachers is to say that set goals for yourself, achieve it. But don't set goals too high yet, because you're still learning and we don't expect you to get everything right the first time. (DH6B)*

The suggestion to identify a specialised area and prioritise PD in that domain is a valuable approach, as teachers can become subject experts that foster a culture of learning. They should also prioritise their PD based on their current workload and responsibilities, focusing on areas that will have the biggest impact on their students and their ability to manage their workload. Additionally, providing opportunities for PD that are directly related to a teacher's current responsibilities can be more effective and valuable, as it provides them with skills and strategies that they can immediately apply in the classroom. This is supported by Makoa and Segalo (2021) who argue that it is important that PD activities provided for NTs are aligned and address the specific needs and challenges that they are experiencing, which also provides the participation experience to be successful and meaningful rather than being viewed as a burden and waste of time. However, identifying the needs of NTs should be assisted by the DH that oversees, guides and recommends areas of development.

PD should be focused specifically on the school environment, low-SES schools must prioritise and focus on what's immediately troublesome and find solutions to problems so that they can move forward to a well-balanced work environment. Fischer et al. (2016) support this argument that PD should be given in the context of the environment it occurs by showing how the same exams in low and high-SES schools differ in student results due to gaps in PD. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) insist that less high-quality PD events and mentoring are more beneficial than more of low quality, therefore choosing the events NTs are exposed to should be thoroughly thought through and aligned with NT needs.

In certain instances, concentrating on a niche can enhance efficiency and effectiveness, enabling teachers to excel as experts in specific subjects and consequently deliver more impactful instruction, or become adept at a sport or other gap that the school requires to fill. However, demanding workloads can come in the way. This can be supported by Davis and Renbarger (2019) argument that when some challenges and barriers, such as time, money or relevance, to PD, are eliminated it will have a positive influence on NTs by encouraging them to participate in PD activities. The finding is tangentially supported by Makoa and Segalo (2021) who state that NTs have a reluctance to engage in PD programmes because they are not empowered to choose their PD journeys and how they are professionally

developed. If the needs of NTs are not addressed by their current PD programmes their voices should be heard and their specific needs of PD should be catered for ahead of time before they can manage to request specific PD.

PD consistently and objectively brings forth advantages for teachers. Addressing any impediments that hinder PD's consistent improvement is paramount.

*I would say, it's very important to develop, especially in a school, because we are new teachers, we are still learning every day, the administration work, you must keep track of all the things, you must record miles, you must do that and must do that. So I really think time management and planning to professionally develop in that also, because it is a main challenge. So the focus is really on that to develop, and also, to attend meetings, virtual meetings, subject meetings, everything that you can do to improve your knowledge or on a specific subject or a specific topic or whatsoever how you can implement in your classroom, in the school, in the community etc. (NT1A)*

*I would also like to see is that or what helped me was those workshops that I had in the beginning when I started as a teacher. At the department. ...Come together as a school to do brainstorming, and just like talk about PD in the school itself have PD. (DH2A)*

*The power of being an example. I will always do first and then I will lead you and then I will show you how to do. Then you have to do it by yourself and see if you did it right and so I take your hand. (DH1A)*

NTs propose that DHs may not be well-suited for mentorship roles due to their responsibilities, suggesting that senior teachers with lighter workloads could be more appropriate mentors.

*Personally, I don't think the DH should be the mentor. I think it should be another senior teacher with a little bit more patience and a little bit more less admin stuff that they need to handle, like someone that actually has the time that it can be like their portfolio is mentorship because the DHs don't always have the temperament to be a mentor, this or there is a special kind of person that can do that mentorship. So personal opinion, find someone else to do the mentorship. (DH5B)*

*...it's difficult with the leadership style that is at this school, to be vocal, because if you are vocal, you're being seen as a challenging person.*  
(NT4A)

It appears from the findings that NTs encounter difficulties in fulfilling departmental expectations, as DHs frequently burden them with additional requests before allowing them to complete their initial assignments. Improving this requires prioritising trust and strong relationships with NTs to establish a basis for better guidance. However, NTs may struggle to communicate their problems effectively, so building good relationships can help break down communication barriers and create an open platform for expressing concerns. A suggestion to improve the mentoring experience is to have a senior teacher, who has less administrative work and more patience, mentor NTs, rather than DHs. This is consistent with the PAM document, which outlines the role of senior and master teachers as mentors, and also with Mullen and Klimaitis (2019), who argue that mentoring fails under hierarchical structures. Considering this, it is evident that workload is an issue for both DHs and NTs, with the former overloaded with administrative tasks and the latter taking longer to do standard procedures. This lack of time from both sides has negative effects on the mentoring experience, making it challenging for NTs. While DHs try to help and show the ropes to NTs, NTs are often reluctant to ask for help and fall further into disarray.

The above quotations show that PD is a crucial component of supporting and developing teachers and can take many different forms as outlined in the literature. A range of approaches can be effective, including goal setting, workshops, meetings, and ongoing support and monitoring. Workshops and meetings can be effective in providing more structured and formalised learning opportunities, where teachers can gain new knowledge and skills, share best practices, and learn from one another. These sessions can be particularly helpful for NTs who are still learning the ropes, as they can provide a foundation of knowledge and expertise from which to draw.

## **4.6 Chapter summary**

This chapter presented and discussed the findings of this study. The findings is presented in themes and subthemes to answer the research questions of this study and to further interpret the findings compared with the literature.

Chapter 5 summarises the findings, presents the conclusion of the study, and makes recommendations based on the findings of this study.

## **CHAPTER 5:**

### **RESEARCH FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

Chapter 4 presented the research findings of this study. This chapter gives a brief reflection on the research journey. The purpose of this study was to identify, through the experiences and challenges of NTs and DHs, how socioeconomic factors influence DHs as mentors in the PD of NTs within selected low-SES primary schools in the Western Cape. This chapter discusses the research's limitations and delimitations and concludes by providing recommendations informed by the findings.

#### **5.2 Reflection of the research journey**

My research journey commenced in January 2020, beginning with selecting a research topic of interest and formulating a valid research question. Upon solidifying the research topic and articulating the main research question, an extensive literature study was conducted on the subject matter. This informed the construction of sub-research questions intended to address the main research question comprehensively.

The first nine months of the study focused on the research proposal, which was presented to the Management Law and Policy Education Department on 29 September 2020. Following a successful proposal defence, ethical clearance from the University of Pretoria's Ethics Committee was sought and granted on 19 February 2021. Subsequently, an application was submitted to the Western Cape Education Department for clearance to access participants from low-SES primary schools for the study.

The targeted population comprised DHs with a minimum of two years' experience, to ensure they could offer valuable insights on the mentoring process, and NTs in their first or second year who were willing to participate. Challenges were encountered in data collection, such as document retrieval, interview scheduling, and attaining the cooperation of schools.

Despite initial concerns about finding willing participants, the process turned out to be simpler than expected, thanks to the Western Cape Education Department's



publicly available school information. About 20 emails were sent from an initial list, receiving only three responses. Two schools eventually contributed significantly to the study, providing all the participants needed. Creating a comfortable atmosphere for participants to share candidly during the interviews was paramount. As the study progressed, it was discovered that there were, contrary to my expectations, sufficient NTs to participate, which rendered research at only two schools necessary.

Conducting interviews during the COVID-19 pandemic presented unique challenges, including participants' reluctance to meet face-to-face and restrictions prolonging the interview process, resulted in requesting an extension for the dissertation submission. In consultation with the supervisors, it was decided to limit the number of participants to twelve. Transcribing the rich data from the interviews was a time-intensive task, but it proved worthwhile, enabling the completion of the dissertation amidst various obstacles in March 2024.

### **5.3 Summary of the findings**

This study attempts to extend existing literature by exploring the influence that socioeconomic factors of low-SES schools have on PD within this context. The following sections present the summary of the research which is aligned with the research questions.

#### **5.3.1 Mentorship experiences of departmental heads in managing the professional development of novice teachers in low-socioeconomic primary schools**

This summary focuses on the mentorship experiences of DHs in managing the PD of NTs in low-SES primary schools. The findings revealed that NTs often feel ill-prepared when entering the profession. DHs also experience constraints in their mentorship roles due to a lack of understanding of the needs of NTs and limitations due to the low-SES school environment and resources.

The study further reveals that NTs' excessive workload leads to stress and fatigue, particularly from administrative tasks and inadequate time management skills. Such demands prevent NTs from seeking support from DHs, thereby hindering the development of open mentorship relationships. DHs and NTs in this study agree that administrative tasks add considerably to their workloads, with NTs finding that

such duties disrupt their teaching practices. Moreover, the study posits that NTs' needs are frequently misunderstood and that their mentorship and PD are misaligned with their actual requirements, considering their specific school and classroom contexts.

### **5.3.2 The influence of departmental heads on the professional development of novice teachers through mentorship**

This summary delves into the impact that DHs have on the PD of NTs through mentorship. The findings illuminate DHs' support, guidance, and assistance, and explore NTs' perspectives on how this mentorship shapes their PD. Additionally, the theme examines NTs' views on their own PD needs. This study reveals that DHs understand the critical nature of mentoring NTs, particularly against the backdrop of their unpreparedness. DHs are thus committed to offering the necessary guidance and information to bolster the chances of NTs succeeding in their roles. DHs play a pivotal role in NTs' success by enhancing their skills and practices through strategic means. DHs initially assign simpler tasks to mitigate stress and pressure on NTs during their early career stages, gradually increasing task complexity as NTs gain experience and confidence.

The study also underscores the influence of DHs on NTs' well-being and success, particularly in the initial months of service. Personal support, encouragement, and critical feedback from DHs were shown to help NTs overcome challenges and grow professionally. Feedback emerged as an effective tool for PD. However, DHs are also tasked with heavy workloads, leading to stress that can hamper their mentorship effectiveness and leave them accountable for NTs' actions and errors. NTs perceive those DHs who offer positive reinforcement and maintain a positive attitude as significantly beneficial to their PD journey.

NTs lacking robust relationships with mentors may not comfortably share their struggles. Trust and well-established mentoring relationships enable open communication of difficulties. The selection process for mentor-mentee pairings is critical and not always effective, with some mentors lacking specific knowledge in the NTs' areas, leading to diminished support. Conversely, NTs who are paired well with mentors express satisfaction, underlining the importance of the selection process.

The study revealed a universal appreciation among NTs towards PD, acknowledging the need for ongoing professional growth. When facing challenges, NTs proactively sought out alternative PD methods, such as online resources or advice from seasoned colleagues. While commendable, this raises questions about whether NTs would have been as reliant on external sources had their initial PD been more effective.

### **5.3.3 Difficulties and challenges novice teachers face during mentorship for Professional Development in low-socioeconomic primary schools**

Regarding the difficulties and challenges NTs encounter with mentorship for their PD in low-SES schools, with a particular focus on the overwhelming classroom environments and the subsequent impact on PD, this study's findings show that in low-SES schools, overcrowded classrooms intensify the complexity of classroom management, identifying discipline as the most formidable challenge resulting from the socioeconomic conditions of learners. Despite these obstacles, the study discovered that DHs are nevertheless equipping NTs with strategies to overcome them. Interestingly, not all NTs struggle with discipline, suggesting additional factors beyond PD and mentorship contribute to NTs' success in managing classrooms effectively.

Furthermore, external factors from learners' low-SES backgrounds add to the complexity of challenges DHs must address in classrooms. Understanding the source of difficulties allows DHs to involve parents in the educational process better or alter strategies to overcome these challenges. The study also examined the format of PD, finding that NTs were sceptical about the value of time-consuming online courses, particularly when high workload pressures prioritise completing immediate tasks over PD engagement. Subject advisors play an essential supportive role alongside DHs in NT PD, acting as an alternate resource for NTs seeking guidance, although responsiveness can vary. The heavy burden of administrative tasks, such as home visits and safety concerns associated with COVID-19, reveals that educational responsibilities in low-SES schools can extend into areas more typical of social services. Given these wide-ranging demands, NTs and DHs often work longer hours than planned, exacerbated by inefficient scheduling and meetings. This leads to the study's conclusion that PD programmes

should include follow-up and feedback mechanisms to ensure that NTs successfully integrate new knowledge into their teaching practices.

#### **5.3.4 Managing novice teachers' professional development challenges**

The findings of this study highlighted how DHs are managing the PD challenges associated with NTs, including an understanding of the PD needs specific to NTs and the impact of effective PD on the success of a school, as well as recommendations for improving the PD for NTs. The study found that whilst NTs are obliged to partake in PD sessions, the outcomes of these events frequently go undiscussed. This lack of dialogue between DHs and NTs means that NTs often fail to comprehend the material fully, making it difficult to implement what they have learned in the classroom. Additionally, the study revealed that a communication gap between DHs and NTs results in ambiguous expectations. The NTs articulated a need for more support and guidance at the start of their careers and when mistakes are made. Although learning occurs through these errors, NTs reported frustration with how they were handled, particularly when expectations were not effectively communicated.

Furthermore, the study recognised NTs' frustration with their workload, feeling that DHs fail to pay sufficient attention to their well-being or consider the multitude of tasks they must juggle, such as attending meetings, organising extracurricular activities, participating in fundraising, and fulfilling teaching responsibilities, while still attending to critical duties like grading and data analysis.

The study also highlighted that NTs greatly benefit from feedback to refine their teaching, actively seeking advice on the appropriateness of their teaching methodologies and assessment difficulty. Additionally, the study noted that DHs may be unsure of the impact of their PD and mentoring due to a lack of feedback from NTs, while NTs themselves expressed a desire for regular feedback and continuous check-ins, which they found lacking. Given the inexperience of NTs, DHs should be proactive in providing consistent support and ensuring a safe, communicative environment for mentorship to thrive. The study also suggested the lack of education for NTs regarding basic school responsibilities and expectations that could be addressed through a comprehensive induction programme.

Moreover, the study revealed that DHs recommended NTs focus on specialising in PD areas where the school has skill deficits, helping them stand out and meet specific challenges within the school context. While specialisation is advantageous, the need to prioritise PD areas where the most challenges are faced by NTs should not be overlooked. Lastly, the study found that while NTs acknowledge the value of PD for their career advancement, they question whether DHs are best positioned for mentoring roles and suggest that more experienced or master teachers may be better mentors due to their lighter workloads and direct reporting relationships. This highlights a potential conflict in the dual role of DHs as both supervisors and mentors, where their intentions towards NTs can sometimes be misaligned despite the expectation of support.

#### **5.4 Delimitation of the Study**

Delimitations of the study are the aspects of the research that were excluded and not considered within the scope of the research study. The study focused primarily on DHs within low-SES primary schools and their influence on the PD of NTs. The study examines the PD process exclusively from the perspectives of DHs and NTs, with the collected data reflecting their viewpoints. As a result, other potential insights, such as those from school principals or experienced teachers who do not hold DH positions, are not considered. Additionally, the focus of the study was not on directly evaluating the PD activities and their contents. Instead, the study confirmed the occurrence of PD by examining relevant documents and communications with participants. This means that a more comprehensive understanding of the actual content of PD activities, which could have been achieved by direct analysis, was not within the scope of this study.

The research was geographically restricted to the Cape Town Metropolitan District, chosen for its accessibility to the researcher, and it intentionally omitted schools in Quintiles 4 and 5 to maintain a focus on low-SES environments. The selection criteria also excluded DHs with less than two years of experience and NTs with more than two years in the profession to limit the potential influence of vast experience on their perceptions and to ensure a more focused exploration of the mentoring role of DHs and the experiences of NTs at the early stage of their careers.

## **5.5 Limitations of the study**

The limitations of any study are mainly concerned with the weaknesses within the research study that are out of the researcher's control but closely associated with the research design chosen for the study. According to Theofanidis and Fountouki (2018), it is important to identify and acknowledge the limitations of any study as they have a great effect on the study design, results, and conclusions. The following are the limitations of the study:

The limitations of the study are aspects or factors that are outside of the researcher's control. Considering that this study collected data from a limited sample of DHs and NTs, a research study involving a larger sample could yield a broader range of data. The constraints of time and resources, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, limited this study. The COVID-19 pandemic caused participants to feel uncomfortable meeting or participating in person, causing delays in the data collection process. The transcription and analysis of interviews also proved time-consuming, leading to a reduction in the number of participants. Despite the reduced participant count, the participants still managed to address the research questions and contribute valuable data.

The data collection method was semi-structured and was supported using document analysis. Not all participating schools and participants had the necessary supporting documents throughout the study. The available documents did not provide the anticipated data to support answering the research questions in this study.

The study was also limited because of its small geographical setting in the Western Cape Province of South Africa. The study does not investigate DHs and NTs' experiences of PD and mentoring in other areas within Western Province or other provinces in South Africa. The findings of this study should not be generalised but may in future be transferable to investigating the experiences of DHs and NTs from other areas or other provinces.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

This research explored the role and influence of departmental heads as mentors and in doing so, attempted to gain an insight into the mentorship experiences of DHs in managing the PD of NTs within low SES.

From the research findings, it seems that greater work needs to be done to develop and implement PD programmes that suit the socioeconomic context of the school and its learners. The PD of NTs is not a 'one-size-fits-all' and should be chosen to cater to the specific needs of NTs to combat the challenges they face in low-SES areas. This study therefore argues that mentoring has a significant influence on the well-being of NTs and that strong mentoring relationships provide a platform to further guide and influence NTs in their PD. This further emphasises the importance of the selection of the mentor-mentee pair. More research needs to be done on context-specific PD programmes for NTs.

The research study set out to understand the PD of NTs in low-SES primary schools and will help to contribute to the knowledge and current research in this field.

## **5.7 Recommendations from the findings**

In this section, recommendations that emanate from the research findings are presented.

### **5.7.1 Recommendations related to department heads as mentors**

- From the findings of this study, there is a pressing need for the DBE to involve schools from low-SES environments in developing and implementing PD programmes to incorporate training on the needs of NTs within these schools. These PD programmes should be well-structured but flexible enough to adapt to the evolving school environment and consider the time constraints and daily operational overhead of DHs and NTs.
- DHs in low-SES schools should be evaluated by their SMTs to ensure they are knowledgeable and have the necessary skills to be effective mentors to NTs, and if they do not meet the criteria, they should be provided training with regard to the specific needs of the school they are in.
- The DBE should provide additional assistance to DHs in sourcing tailored courses for school management and classroom discipline, designed explicitly for low-SES settings.
- School SMTs should afford DHs more time to effectively guide and mentor NTs. This allows DHs to provide crucial guidance and ensure that NTs are well-prepared and feel adequately supported.



- The school SMTs should place more emphasis on the process of matching mentors with mentees, and this should be approached with careful deliberation.
- Additionally, DHs should engage in more reflective sessions to ensure that the knowledge they acquire is effectively shared and implemented, considering their schools' unique context and needs. Providing NTs with constructive feedback is of great significance, as this promotes their PD, boosts their confidence, and ensures that they feel supported.
- It is further important that DHs follow up on NTs progress throughout their career and check in on NTs frequently to provide feedback and commend their progress.
- Moreover, DHs should mentor NTs on time management and take up the role to ensure that NTs workloads are manageable and that tasks are completed to standard and on time.

#### **5.7.2 Recommendations related to professional development for novice teachers**

- School SMTs need to have a specific policy in place about NTs PD and mentoring.
- NTs should commit to mentoring programmes for the specific school context to ensure an improvement in teaching and learning.
- SMTs or DHs should implement a clear induction and orientation programme for NTs to ensure that their needs are fulfilled.
- NTs need to provide feedback and guidance on what PD they require to satisfy the needs they have in the classroom.
- DBE should provide school context-specific PD to teachers to ensure that the learned content can be applied to their school context. PD programmes should not be generalised and should be more personal to school and quantile specific.
- Pre-service Teacher training institutions should design practical courses that focus on managing learner discipline and time management.
- SMT and DHs must ensure the accountability of NTs in attending PD programmes which is necessary to guarantee NTs meet the expected standards and requirements.

### **5.7.3 Recommendations for future research**

Further research needs to be conducted concerning the curriculum at the tertiary level. Future studies should focus on exploring ways of assisting NTs with issues of discipline and also how to manage possible childhood trauma related to abuse, neglect and malnutrition among other things, experienced by children in low SES. Also, future research should investigate how NTs can be better supported by their mentors, considering the context of the school. Research should also identify school stakeholders who may facilitate in-service training for NTs that focuses on the challenges that NTs experience in low-SES schools.

### **5.8 Final word**

This study highlights the universal need for support among novice teachers during their initial months in the teaching profession, widely known as the survival phase. As a fellow NT, the feeling that resonates with the participants' experiences and expectations underscores the critical importance of support in navigating the challenges inherent in this early stage of one's teaching career. The shared narratives of both NTs and DHs have provided invaluable insights, broadening my understanding of the initial stages of the teaching profession. This research revealed the challenges that I have encountered are not unique, emphasising the collective nature of the NT experience. Furthermore, the study highlights a gap in the professional development provided to NTs, indicating a need for a more tailored and robust support system during the beginning stages of an educator's career. For new, early-career, novice teachers, this study argues that professional development must be engaging, relevant, easily accessible, and available. By supporting their development and well-being from the very start of their careers, schools may have the opportunity to enable and inspire the novice teacher to succeed, thereby improving the quality of teaching and learning outcome. This study argues for structured professional developmental programmes for the growth and success of novice teachers such as, compulsory orientation, onboarding, classroom management, alternative forms of discipline strategies, and technology integration into teaching and learning. Moving forward, it is imperative to address these findings to ensure that NTs receive the necessary support and PD required for their sustained success in the teaching profession.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE WESTERN CAPE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT



Directorate: Research

[Audrey.wyngaard@westerncape.gov.za](mailto:Audrey.wyngaard@westerncape.gov.za)

tel: +27 021 467 9272

Fax: 0865902282

Private Bag x9114, Cape Town, 8000

woed.wcape.gov.za

**REFERENCE:** 20210301-1297

**ENQUIRIES:** Dr A T Wyngaard

Ms Chantelle Antoniadis  
21 Hillcrest Way  
Hillcrest Estate  
Kraaifontein  
7569

Dear Ms Chantelle Antoniadis

#### RESEARCH PROPOSAL: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF NOVICE TEACHERS IN LOW-SOCIOECONOMIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators, and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners, and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **04 March 2021 till 31 August 2021**.
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:  
**The Director: Research Services  
Western Cape Education Department  
Private Bag X9114  
CAPE TOWN  
8000**

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards,  
Signed: Dr Audrey T Wyngaard  
Directorate: Research  
DATE: 03 March 2021

## APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT PERMISSION AND CONSENT LETTERS TO SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

### LETTER TO SCHOOL PRINCIPAL



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education

0002 Pretoria

Dear Principal,

#### **Departmental heads' experiences as mentors for professional development of novice teachers in schools**

My name is Chantellé Antoniadis, I am a MEd student at University of Pretoria. I am conducting research on the experiences of Departmental Heads as mentors for professional development of novice teachers in schools in the Western Cape. My project is supervised by Dr T.A. Ogina, senior lecturer at the University of Pretoria. The Department of Education (Tshwane South District) has approved my research and a copy of the approval letter is attached to this document. The study has also been approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria with reference number [EDU157/20](#) and the Western Cape Ethics Committee which is also attached.

I have to complete a research module and one of the requirements is that I conduct research and write a research report about my work. I would like to ask you whether you will be willing to allow me to conduct this research in your school. In the following section I will describe my study and how it will be conducted.

The topic of my research is: **Departmental Heads' experiences as mentors for professional development of novice teachers in schools**. This study intends to explore the professional development of novice teachers who work in schools. The focus point of

this study will be how Departmental Heads mentor the professional development of novice teachers. Data will be collected through interviews with novice teachers and Departmental Heads as well as document analysis of professional development programmes.

If you agree to allow me to conduct research in your school, I will interview novice teachers who are willing to participate in the study and have one to two years teaching experience. I will also interview willing Departmental Heads with more than two years of experience in the leadership position.

I have attached a copy of the interview schedule for your information. The interviews will be conducted at a venue and time that will suit the teachers and do not interfere with teaching time. The data will be collected through electronically recorded interviews and document analysis. The semi-structured interview will take 30-45 minutes and will be done through either video, telephonic or face-to-face depending on the state of COVID-19 regulations of South Africa. If a video recording is necessary and used during the interviews, the faces of the participants will be edited out to ensure anonymity and only the audio will be used to obtain information for the study. The recordings will be transcribed by me for analytics purposes and the data collected will only be accessible by myself and my supervisor for the privacy and confidentiality of the participants.

An analysis of professional development related documents forms part of the research. I will require copies of any documents that pertain to professional development procedures between Departmental Heads and novice teachers. This information will also only be accessed by myself and my supervisor and will be regarded as confidential and anonymous. Data collected from this study will be handled in strict confidentiality, and neither the school nor the participants will be identifiable in any report. The teachers who are participating may withdraw at any time during the research process without any penalty. Pseudonyms will be used for your school and teachers during data collection and analysis. The information that will be collected will only be used for academic purposes. Collected data will be in my possession or my supervisor's and will be locked up for safety and confidential purposes. After completion of the study, the material will be stored at the University's Management, Law and Policy Education Department according to the policy requirements.

We also would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property



of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

If you agree to allow me to conduct this research in your school, will you please be able to put me into contact with any willing participants. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact my supervisor or me at following numbers given below, or via E-mail.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact me or my supervisor.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information.

Yours sincerely,

Chantellé Antoniadis

---

Ms C. Antoniadis

Tel: 083 292 868

Dr T.A. Ogina

Tel: 082 374 9618

Email: [teresa.ogina@up.ac.za](mailto:teresa.ogina@up.ac.za)

## APPENDIX C: LETTERS TO PARTICIPANTS

### LETTER TO SCHOOL DEPARTMENTAL HEAD



Faculty of Education

Department of Management, Law and Policy

Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria

0002 Pretoria

Dear Teacher,

#### **Departmental heads' experiences as mentors for professional development of novice teachers in primary schools**

My name is Chantellé Antoniadis, I am a MEd student at University of Pretoria. I am conducting research on the experiences of Departmental Heads as mentors for professional development of novice teachers in primary schools in the Western Cape. My project is supervised by Dr T.A. Ogina, senior lecturer at the University of Pretoria. The Department of Education (Tshwane South District) has approved my research and a copy of the approval letter is attached to this document. The study has also been approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria with reference number EDU 157/20; and the Western Cape Ethics Committee which is also attached.

I have to complete a research module and one of the requirements is that I conduct research and write a research report about my work. I would like to ask you whether you will be willing to participate in this research. In the following section I will describe my study and how it will be conducted.

The topic of my research is **Departmental heads' experiences as mentors for professional development of novice teachers in primary schools**. This study intends to explore the professional development of novice teachers who work in low-SES primary schools. The focus point of this study will be how Departmental Heads mentor the professional development of novice teachers. Data will be collected through interviews with novice teachers and Departmental Heads as well as document analysis of professional development programmes.

If you agree to participate, you will be interviewed about this topic. The interview will take place at a venue and time that will suit you and do not interfere with school activities or teaching time and will take between 30-45 minutes. The interview will be electronically recorded and transcribed for analytic purposes. Depending on the state of COVID-19 regulations of South Africa the necessary precautions and arrangements will be made such as performing the face-to-face interview over a video or telephone call. If a video recording is necessary and used during your interview, your face will be edited out to ensure anonymity and only the audio will be used to obtain information for the study.

An analysis of professional development related documents forms part of the research. I will require copies of any documents that pertain to professional development procedures between you and the novice teacher(s) you are mentoring. This information will only be accessed by myself and my supervisor and will be regarded as confidential and anonymous.

Data collected from this study will be handled in strict confidentiality, and neither the school nor the participants i.e. yourself will be identifiable in any report. You do not have to participate in this research if you do not want to, and you will not be penalised in any way if you decide not to take part. If you decide to participate, but you change your mind later, you can withdraw your participation at any time.

Pseudonyms will be used during data collection and analysis. You or your school will not be identifiable in any report. The information you give will only be used for academic purposes. In my research report and in any other academic communication, your pseudonym will be used and no other identifying information will be given. Collected data will be in my possession or my supervisor's and will be locked up for safety and confidential purposes. After completion of the study, the material will be stored at the University's Management, Law and Policy Education Department according to the policy requirements.

We also would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

It is hoped that this research will enable Departmental Heads to benefit from the insights in professional development and mentoring gained through the findings of this study. The findings might also be useful to Faculties of Education to fill the gap in research that exists of professional development in low socioeconomic primary schools. It has the ability to also help the School Management Team in low socioeconomic primary schools to encourage their Departmental Heads and novice teachers to focus on quality professional development and mentoring to assist them in improving their schools.

If you agree to take part in this research, please fill in the consent form provided below. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact my supervisor or me at the numbers given below, or via Email.

Thank you for taking time to read this information.

Yours Sincerely,

Chantellé Antoniadis

Ms C. Antoniadis

Tel: 083 292 868

Email:

[chantelle.antoniadis@gmail.com](mailto:chantelle.antoniadis@gmail.com)

Dr T.A. Ogina

Tel: 082 374 9618

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## LETTER TO SCHOOL NOVICE TEACHER



Faculty of Education

Department of Management, Law and Policy

Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria

0002 Pretoria

Dear Teacher,

**Departmental heads' experiences as mentors for professional development of novice teachers in primary schools.**

My name is Chantellé Antoniadis, I am a MEd student at University of Pretoria. I am conducting research on the experiences of Departmental Heads as mentors for professional development of novice teachers in primary schools in the Western Cape. My project is supervised by Dr T.A. Ogina, senior lecturer at the University of Pretoria. The Department of Education (Tshwane South District) has approved my research and a copy of the approval letter is attached to this document. The study has also been approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria with reference number EDU157/20; and the Western Cape Ethics Committee which is also attached.

I have to complete a research module and one of the requirements is that I conduct research and write a research report about my work. I would like to ask you whether you will be willing to participate in this research. In the following section I will describe my study and how it will be conducted.

The topic of my research is: **Departmental heads' experiences as mentors for professional development of novice teachers in primary schools.** This study intends

to explore the professional development of novice teachers who work in low socioeconomic primary schools. The focus point of this study will be how Departmental Heads mentor the professional development of novice teachers. Data will be collected through interviews with novice teachers and Departmental Heads as well as document analysis of professional development programmes.

If you agree to participate, you will be interviewed about this topic. The interview will take place at a venue and time that will suit you and do not interfere with school activities or teaching time and will take between 30-45 minutes. The interview will be electronically recorded and transcribed for analytic purposes. Depending on the state of COVID-19 regulations of South Africa the necessary precautions and arrangements will be made such as performing the face-to-face interview over a video or telephone call. If a video recording is necessary and used during your interview, your face will be edited out to ensure anonymity and only the audio will be used to obtain information for the study.

An analysis of professional development-related documents forms part of the research. I will require copies of any documents that pertain to professional development procedures between you and your Departmental Head. This information will only be accessed by myself and my supervisor and will be regarded as confidential and anonymous.

Data collected from this study will be handled in strict confidentiality, and neither the school nor the participants i.e. yourself will be identifiable in any report. You do not have to participate in this research if you do not want to, and you will not be penalised in any way if you decide not to take part. If you decide to participate, but you change your mind later, you can withdraw your participation at any time.

Pseudonyms will be used during data collection and analysis. You or your school will not be identifiable in any report. The information you give will only be used for academic purposes. In my research report and in any other academic communication, your pseudonym will be used and no other identifying information will be given. Collected data will be in my possession or my supervisor's and will be locked up for safety and confidential purposes. After completion of the study, the material will be stored at the University's Management, Law and Policy Education Department according to the policy requirements.

We also would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property

of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

It is hoped that this research will enable Departmental Heads to benefit from the insights in professional development and mentoring gained through the findings of this study. The findings might also be useful to Faculties of Education to fill the gap in research that exists of professional development in low socioeconomic primary schools. It has the ability to also help the School Management Team in low socioeconomic primary schools to encourage their Departmental Heads and novice teachers to focus on quality professional development and mentoring to assist them in improving their schools.

If you agree to take part in this research, please fill in the consent form provided below. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact my supervisor or me at the numbers given below, or via Email.

Thank you for taking time to read this information.

Yours sincerely,

Chantellé Antoniadis

Ms C. Antoniadis

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Email:

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## APPENDIX D: CONSENT LETTERS FROM PARTICIPANTS



Faculty of Education

Department of Management, Law and Policy

Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria

0002 Pretoria

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the interviews.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.



## APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

### DEPARTMENTAL HEAD'S SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS



Faculty of Education

Department of Management, Law and Policy

Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria

0002 Pretoria

The teacher interview protocol

**Departmental heads' experiences as mentors for professional development of novice teachers in primary schools.**

Time of interview:	_____	Duration:	_____
Date:	_____		
Place:	_____		
Interviewer:	_____		
Interviewee:	_____	Pseudonym:	_____
Male/Female:	_____		

The topic of my research is **Departmental heads' experiences as mentors for professional development of novice teachers in primary schools**. Novice teachers all over the world are struggling and are at risk of dropping out of the profession. The literature in my study has indicated that Professional Development and mentoring has the potential to motivate novice teachers and improve the quality of education in South Africa. Departmental Heads are obligated by policy to facilitate instructional learning to novice teachers by means of mentoring and professional development, but they are overwhelmed by the effects that socioeconomic status has in the school context. My study will explore the professional development of novice teachers who work in low socioeconomic primary schools. The focus point of this study will be how Departmental Heads mentor the professional development of novice teachers. The research will include an analysis of novice teachers and Departmental Heads, by means of interviews and document analysis of professional development programmes.

Pseudonyms will be utilized in the interviews, data analysis and the findings. The data collected in this study will serve in research purposes only and treated as confidential. Access to the data will be granted to the researcher and the supervisor only. Please sign this form as additional consent for participating in the interview. Thank you for your participation.

Interview Questions:

Biographical questions:

1. What is your age?
2. Gender
3. How many years' experience do you have as a teacher?
4. How long have you been employed in your current position?

Interview questions based on the study:

5. What are your experiences in mentoring novice teachers' professional development?

6. What are your views on what novice teachers in low socioeconomic primary schools need to develop?
7. How do you develop novice teachers' professional development?
8. What can you say about the socioeconomic status of the school and your experience of mentoring novice teachers?
9. In your experience, what can you say about the importance of professional development?
10. How would you describe the work relationship between yourself and your mentee (novice teacher)?
11. How do your efforts in developing novice teachers contribute to the performance of novice teachers?
12. What is your opinion on the professional growth of novice teachers?
13. How do you influence novice teachers to participate in professional development on a daily basis?
14. What are the personal challenges you experience as a mentor in the professional development of novice teachers?
15. In your opinion, what are the problems or challenges experienced by novice teachers during their professional development?
16. In your view, how do the challenges experienced by novice teachers motivate/demotivate their professional development?
17. What strategies do you use to manage the challenges experienced by novice teachers?
18. What do you do with regards to the professional development of teachers in light of the identified challenges?
19. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about the professional development of novice teachers at your school?

Thank you for taking time to read this information.

Yours sincerely,  
Chantellé Antoniadis

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Ms C. Antoniadis

Tel: 083 292 868

Email:

[chantelle.antoniadis@gmail.com](mailto:chantelle.antoniadis@gmail.com)

Dr T.A. Ogina

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---

Participants Details

Tel:

Email:

## NOVICE TEACHER'S SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS



Faculty of Education

Department of Management, Law and Policy

Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria

0002 Pretoria

The teacher interview protocol

Dear Teacher,

**Departmental heads' experiences as mentors for professional development of novice teachers in primary schools.**

Time of interview:	_____	Duration:	_____
Date:	_____		
Place:	_____		
Interviewer:	_____		
Interviewee:	_____	Pseudonym:	_____
Male/Female:	_____		

The topic of my research is **Departmental heads' experiences as mentors for professional development of novice teachers in low socioeconomic primary schools**. Novice teachers all over the world are struggling and are at risk of dropping out of the profession. The literature in my study has indicated that Professional Development and mentoring has the potential to motivate novice teachers and improve the quality of



education in South Africa. Departmental Heads are obligated by policy to facilitate instructional learning to novice teachers by means of mentoring and professional development, but they are overwhelmed by the effects that socioeconomic status has in the school context. My study will explore the professional development of novice teachers who work in low socioeconomic primary schools. The focus point of this study will be how Departmental Heads mentor the professional development of novice teachers. The research will include an analysis of novice teachers and Departmental Heads, by means of interviews and document analysis of professional development programmes.

Pseudonyms will be utilized in the interviews, data analysis and the findings. The data collected in this study will serve in research purposes only and treated as confidential. Access to the data will be granted to the researcher and the supervisor only. Please sign the consent form at the back of this document. Thank you for your participation.

### **Biographical questions:**

What is your age?

1. Gender
2. How many years of experience do you have as a teacher?
3. How long have you been employed in your current position?

Interview questions based on the study:

4. What are your experiences of professional development?
5. Please tell me about your views on the role played by the DH on your professional development.
6. How does your DH mentor you in your professional development?
7. What can you say about the socioeconomic status of the school and your mentorship as a novice teacher?
8. In your experience, what can you say about the importance of professional development?
9. How would you describe the work relationship between yourself and your DH?
10. How does the support or mentoring you receive from your DH help you to develop professionally?
11. Please explain to me if there is a growth or a lack of growth in your professional development as a result of the efforts from your DH?

12. How does your DH influence you on a daily basis?
13. What are your personal challenges you experience as a novice teacher in your school?
14. As a novice teacher, what are the problems or challenges that you experience during your professional development?
15. How did these challenges influence your perspective and motivation in your professional development?
16. What support do you get from your DH to manage the challenges that you experience?
17. What would you recommend that the DH should do to address the challenges that you experience in your professional development?
18. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about the professional development of novice teachers at your school?

Yours Sincerely,

Chantellé Antoniadis

Ms C. Antoniadis

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Participants Details

Tel:

Email:

## APPENDIX F: SAMPLE OF INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

### School A

#### Interviewee: Departmental Head 3

**RESEARCHER:** Baie dankie Juffrou \*Name\* that you are willing to participate and thank you for your time. I know it is valuable. I appreciate it a lot. Just from the start the topic of the site is the Departmental experience as novice teachers in primary schools and specifically in low socio economic status schools, no fees schools and the bar of the study is just to see what the challenges are from the Departmental point of view and the novice teachers and at the end hopefully the study will contribute in the system the schools that is in the same situation. Okay so the first questions are just questions, are biographical questions and then we will go to the research questions. Okay so question one what is your age?

**DH3A:** I am thirty-nine.

**RESEARCHER:** Thirty-nine and your gender?

**DH3A:** Female.

**RESEARCHER:** How many years' experience do you have as a teacher?

**DH3A:** Ten years.

**RESEARCHER:** Question four how long have you been employed in your current position?

**DH3A:** This is my second school that I am at and I only been here now for four years so four years I have been as Department Head at this school.

**RESEARCHER:** Okay perfect so it is six years at the school and four years here, great. Okay question five what are your experiences in mental novice teacher's professional development?

**DH3A:** Okay so my experiences as I there is a part of last year there was not really capational development in place where our teachers could go out to workshops or there wasn't really much therefore basically nothing. Only the first term when they had IPMS training and so teachers will actually get out and attend the workshops where they were explained how to do it. Other than that we have had our internal where we at school where I as HOD stepped in and wherever there were teachers struggling certain things for example class ward management then I will step in. So I would do class visits. I would assist the teacher who is struggling with all with teaching the kids a certain concept or how they were managing their learners while they were sitting at their table. Then from my side I do step in and I assisted I have assisted most of the teachers because most of my teachers work many years on novice teachers. So I would go in really at the top end to go see what they were doing what are they struggling, I will see if they were not in canvas with the learners the discipline in the class I assist them with that. And the learners that come to my class I will reprimand them or if it's learners with really bad behavior then we have a system at our school that we follow. We have got a Disciplinary Committee where I am in the foundation phase so if the children has very bad behavior where they are fighting and they are swearing, they keep walking up and down and not completing their work then I step in and we send outreach to the parents. The parents need to come to the school and then we will have a chat with the parents if it doesn't.

**RESEARCHER:** Improve.

**DH3A:** Ja if it doesn't improve and then we will take the program where we report it to the Eastern school that is the school they supporting and if the behavior is really really that bad then the teacher and I cannot control the SB then refer them to the psychologist and the psychologist actually comes and. The only thing with the psychologist is that he only sees there people or three or four children at a time in both terms so ja so if it is that term that a child have very bad behavior then they will send him over to the next step. But he will come out and come and assist us with it. If he assisted that learner and finds that he needs to go on Ritalin maybe and then he will refer it to the day hospital and then but it all goes through the school.

**RESEARCHER:** Ja.

**DH3A:** So that the learner get help. So that is for the behavior. For listen planning I now sit with my kids, with my teachers where we do the ATP's with them. We explain to them exactly how it works and how they need to set out the lesson planning. I am one of those nitty gritty HOD's so I would and if you do your listen planning I want it in such a way if you are absent the day and somebody else has to come in to your class then they can really listen planning is actually so clear to them if they read it they will know exactly what to do. So they do thorough listen planning and so and that is what I assist them with. The same with the assessment process every day. They we gave them the ATP they know exactly how the assessments had to be done. After that we did a what is what do I call it the like a supervision type of thing I am not sure now.

**RESEARCHER:** Is it not assess madarind.

**DH3A:** Madarind nou kan ek nie op die woord kom nie maar the moderation process and this is also where we come in to these. So we had a discussion so I will sit with a age and you were the person who is not behaving you will sit opposite me and then we will discuss your firstly the debating of the paper and out of how many marks are. And I will go check if you divided the marks up properly. Then you we assist with the paper go and check everything that is in your question paper these are the things in the ATP and in your portal. These are these things you are going to teach so that your assessment can be exactly what you want to do now.

**RESEARCHER:** Ja.

**DH3A:** And it is normally in the foundation phase it is easy because your term one it overflows into term two the only problem with term two comes in is your mandarins are higher. So that is actually for us to try one. So that is where it come in with lesson planning as with your classroom, your resources that you should have in a classroom. That is what been handed out to them so that they can exactly see what is it that what needs to be on my walls and so we gave them typed up, we typed up the page for them so that they can actually tick off to see okay I do that, so when I do my cross visit that I can see that they prepared it.

**RESEARCHER:** Ja.

**DH3A:** So then I will have them make a dot next to that so then next time when I do come through then I would expect that you sit like a dot because it didn't have it previously. So we do mentor them, we do support them with every single work possible and with reading the as well. Praat ek te veel?

**RESEARCHER:** Nee nee.

**DH3A:** Ek is een wat te veel praat.

**RESEARCHER:** Jy moet juffrou.

**DH3A:** Ek praat meer konteks ja. So with because our reading with the learners at the school so that we started with because I have grade two's and three's we started with a comprehension booklet because we find the DBE does have comprehension but I think we just need that extra push so every time we start with a new word. So we will start with what questions, so what is this. And then they will have like the what word that there is a wall with a picture next to it so then when the child see what they should exactly know okay it is based on something.

**RESEARCHER:** Ja.

**DH3A:** Or if it is a new question then there is a face next to it then they will then know okay it has to be a person or something. So really and every so often the first two readings it might be real questions and thirdly the forth story will be a who question and a what question so that is what we are really and I is not long stories. It is short stories.

**RESEARCHER:** Ja.

**DH3A:** So that the child don't loose interest.

**RESEARCHER:** Yes.

**DH3A:** And all of the, whatever they are looking for is in those rules so that they can know actually how to attach a comprehension.

**RESEARCHER:** A comprehension.

**DH3A:** Because they do struggle with that a lot.

**RESEARCHER:** Ja.

**DH3A:** And they understand what they are doing as well.

**RESEARCHER:** So they pick up what is there?

**DH3A:** Ja and also the mental maths program we have started with the grade two and three's where they do a mental maths every single morning and it is a minute test that they do. So that the children and we do build a clock we did bring the clock in so that the child can actually see in sixty seconds it has been done maths with and it is not difficult that they must do it is like two plus three but experience it.

**RESEARCHER:** Ja.

**DH3A:** So they must still be able to so we have implemented that and then we brainstorm and the teachers actually love it. The kids love it.

**RESEARCHER:** Ja.

**DH3A:** Because at the end of the week so it is a Monday register to Friday so at the end of the week we mark it and if it is up to fifty the week it is up to fifty so we will write okay she got forty out of fifty and she got maybe seventy percent and then the teacher will write the comments send it home with mom has it said so they have that we have a good relationship with the parents as well and the parents are actually eager to see okay my child do this.

**RESEARCHER:** Ja.

**DH3A:** Because you know what it is so important that you have that little support and the most of their support is with our English ones. The Afrikaans kids are mostly founded passive so I don't know why that is but the English support of the parents are always so good but we do take the parents with the Afrikaans classes ons is heeltemal op hulle soos wat hulle is nou al hulle weet nou al van my afrikaanse skool die onderwysers is heeldag betrokke hulle stuur boodskappe en hulle wil weet hoekom antwoord jy nie.

**RESEARCHER:** Hoekom antwoord jy nie.

**DH3A:** Hoekom reageer jy nie. Yes some of their writing books we implemented was they were supported there because we saw that children was struggling and because there is not parental support from home and we want the parents to be interested in the process and we want them to be aware what the kids actually do. We got this in December writing book down twice a term so they and then we will maybe put a small letter in there that the teacher actually writes a comment of that learner. And then when the books comes back we will expect that the parent write comment.



**RESEARCHER:** Do they write a comment?

**DH3A:** Then you lead them to comment what is happening did you or did you not look through the book did you look at the homework of through the bag or what is happening. So the parent can actually know okay they are struggling with this and it is important for us to have that. So I am supporting them a lot with or developing them so that they can...

**RESEARCHER:** With the parents.

**DH3A:** With the parents and yes with in class the management and the only thing is and this is what I always tell them I can tell you what to do and how to do it but it is up to you to do it in your class. That is so important that you must manage your time and you must you must be able and you will do the things every single day what you want to do when.

**RESEARCHER:** Ja.

**DH3A:** That is that with my kids that they sit close to each other, if it didn't work today you need to split them the next day.

**RESEARCHER:** Ja.

**DH3A:** And.

**RESEARCHER:** Definitely

**DH3A:** Ja and so.

**RESEARCHER:** I think the support that you are giving them if it doesn't necessarily work they have to come to you again.

**DH3A:** Yes.

**RESEARCHER:** Ask please help.

**DH3A:** Help.

**RESEARCHER:** Ja.

**DH3A:** It is that open conversation.

**RESEARCHER:** Ja okay I said about the lesson plan I remember on university that they taught us how to do it but like you said it is very important to do it is so much detail cause...

**DH3A:** Ja.

**RESEARCHER:** You have teachers that are quite absent often.

**DH3A:** Ja.

**RESEARCHER:** You have difficulty with that and usually some of the classes just don't do anything.

**DH3A:** Yes.

**RESEARCHER:** So you have a teacher that are that is able to teach the lesson you are not gonna be...

**DH3A:** Ja

**RESEARCHER:** Time will help a lot.

**DH3A:** That is so important especially with the system that we got into our schools so when the teacher was absent then the assistant had to be there. That assistant wasn't trained to

be a teacher so that if you do a listen planning it is so thorough you will know exactly Okay this is the one that I must do. This is on the song or on the beat that I must set so ek verstaan persies daai juffrou ek is baie puntenerig.

**RESEARCHER:** No but it is good.

**DH3A:** And so with the lesson planning and they know already also if it comes through to me just and they what they also need to do is they need to reprove okay this comes from equal on this page and it need to be so I can actually help them.

**RESEARCHER:** Ja so that you can check.

**DH3A:** What exactly needs to be done.

**RESEARCHER:** I think I just think about it I am not sure how long is your lessons are for some but ours is for example half an hour.

**DH3A:** Ja.

**RESEARCHER:** So if you have a double lesson of an hour and you are absent you lose quite a lot of teaching time.

**DH3A:** You do.

**RESEARCHER:** So if there is a teacher that can stand in for you that will be great.

**DH3A:** Ja.

**RESEARCHER:** Get their workload.

**DH3A:** Ja.

**RESEARCHER:** Not pile up ja.

**DH3A:** Ja and it is so much because when ours comes to the school in alternative days and you know they already lose two days already or sometimes three days a week and the amount of work you need to get into this in that one day that they are there.

**RESEARCHER:** Yes.

**DH3A:** Is so much.

**RESEARCHER:** Ja.

**DH3A:** That we stretch it out and we stretch it out, we do give homework so that the minute that they are at home they already got at school and they have work and they understand their work. That is important because sometimes if I think my mom look when I look at myself she wont understand the mathematics now.

**RESEARCHER:** Yes.

**DH3A:** How they have to do it now.

**RESEARCHER:** Yes.

**DH3A:** So some of the parents don't understand as to get them to come to school anyway.

**RESEARCHER:** Ja.

**DH3A:** And then I will send a WhatsApp to the parents to exactly explain to them maybe the topics because they will teach a child a, b, c, d, e, f then we will come and then we will have our Saturday session and actually give them a workshop on this is how you must teach your kids they advocate there so we actually do a lot.

**RESEARCHER:** Ja they obviously now have guidance.

**DH3A:** And the child actually need to understand when they go home.

**RESEARCHER:** No I think you are just giving a sense of response how to learn responsibility how to do do homework.

**DH3A:** Yes.

**RESEARCHER:** That once they go home they have that responsibility.

**DH3A:** This is why I think time management is such a factor because it is so much work that you need. You can't and you know sometimes it is difficult like it is over and it is difficult to want to work in your class and you also monitor another class.

**RESEARCHER:** Ja that is hard but I take my hat off for you.

**DH3A:** Ja.

**RESEARCHER:** Because I am currently only a teacher.

**DH3A:** Ja.

**RESEARCHER:** And I don't know how the Department Heads does it.

**DH3A:** Ja.

**RESEARCHER:** No I take my hat off for you. Okay question six Why do novice teachers in primary schools need to develop?

**DH3A:** Okay we need to develop they need to develop discipline skills and to develop that yes die hartjies gaan uit aan ons kindertjies né en omdat ons a naskooltjies vol is en omdat jy weet die omstandighede as jy hier deur onse gemeenskap ry en jy sien waar die

kindertjies kom sjoe dat breek jou hart regtig. Maar daai kinders kry tuff love en as jy hier by die skool gaan somtyds kyk sien die kinders deur jou want jy is dan 'n softy so dan gaan ek my kanse vat saam met jou.

**RESEARCHER:** Ja definitief.

**DH3A:** But you need to come into your classes you can show them all the love in the world. My kids also now that I am strict teacher so then I step in and we work we work.

**RESEARCHER:** Ja.

**DH3A:** So you need to okay what you are talking and walking up and down and not concentrate you can't be doing that so you sit down, do your work and concentrate. There is a time for everything.

**RESEARCHER:** Ja.

**DH3A:** You need to stick it to your class because they know your name there are more peace for now because they are in your class there should be order and there is rules and there is doubles and the schedule that you are following.

**RESEARCHER:** Ja.

**DH3A:** So this time there are going to read. You need to get them into reading.

**RESEARCHER:** Ja.

**DH3A:** It is important for them to have that routine because if you don't have routine in your class then your class is going to be chaotic. So that is what a teacher should manage and how they should develop also themselves by taking there is lots of courses coming out. There is CTLI courses and they will they sometimes it is about behavior or sometimes if you Google even you will find these workshops out there that will teach you about behavior or teach you or show you and that you can read up on and I think especially the novice teachers they should really go and read up and they should reflect a lot and the reflection is important that is what they need to do every afternoon.

**RESEARCHER:** Ja.

**DH3A:** And they need to go and reflect this my class might have been quiet or my class might have been this doing this or that or that but your class is your class and people and they should stop moaning and say that maybe the previous teacher did not do something or die kinders baie sê as jy hulle bel die kinders is so dom en hulle weet nie wat aangaan nie maar ek is dood ernstig as ek dit sê.

**RESEARCHER:** Ja.

**DH3A:** Maar dit is nou jou klas so nou moet jy sit en dit uitwerk vir hulle.



## APPENDIX G: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS PROTOCOL



Faculty of Education

Department of Management, Law and Policy

Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria

0002 Pretoria

### Document Analysis Protocol

**Departmental heads' experiences as mentors for professional development of novice teachers in primary schools.**

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The topic of my research is **Departmental heads' experiences as mentors for professional development of novice teachers in Primary schools**. This study intends to explore the professional development of novice teachers who work in low socioeconomic primary schools. The focus point of this study will be how Departmental Heads mentor the professional development of novice teachers. Data will be collected through interviews with novice teachers and Departmental Heads as well as document analysis of professional development programmes.

An analysis of professional development-related documents forms part of the research. I will require copies of any documents that pertain to professional development procedures between you and the novice teacher(s) you are mentoring. This information will only be accessed by myself and my supervisor and will be regarded as confidential and anonymous.

School:
Document Title:
Created Date:

Release Date:	
Document Description:	
Document Relates to Theme: (Check/choose one)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Professional Development Participation Programme (External)</li> <li>○ Professional Development Participation Programme (Internal)</li> <li>○ Professional Development Event Documentation</li> <li>○ Meeting schedule between Departmental Heads and Novice Teachers</li> <li>○ Meeting minutes between Departmental Heads and Novice Teachers</li> <li>○ Class Room Visit and Evaluation Schedules</li> <li>○ Class Room Evaluation/Feedback Document</li> </ul>
Questions Related to Document Theme:	(Each document theme has a separate question list that is attached to the last page of this document, which will be inserted here)
Contributors:	
Signed off by: (Person(s) accountable for making sure process is adhered to)	
Preceding Document: (If document is preceded by another document)	
Following Document: (If document is followed by another document)	

Metadata/Questions/Context of Document Related to Document Theme:

- Professional Development Participation Programme (External AND Internal)
  1. How often are PD programmes presented?
  2. Does the school provide internal PD events?
  3. What is the topic of PD events?
  4. Is PD compulsory for NTs
  5. How are the PD programmes selected?
- Professional Development Event Documentation
  1. What is the topic of the PD event?
  2. What is the purpose and objective of this program?
  3. Is event internal or externally presented?

Is an evaluation done on participants?

4. Was this event in the PD schedule?
  5. Why was this topic chosen?
  6. Who chose this topic? (i.e. Department of Education/The school/The teachers)
- Meeting schedule between Departmental Heads and Novice Teachers
    1. How often do DH/NT have formal contact sessions?
    2. Topic of discussion in contact sessions?
  - Meeting minutes between Departmental Heads and Novice Teachers
    1. Topic of discussion?
  - Class Room Visit and Evaluation Schedules
    1. How often do classroom visits/evaluation sessions occur?
    2. Is feedback presented after a classroom visits/evaluation session?
  - Class Room Evaluation/Feedback Document
    1. What is evaluated during the classroom visit of the Novice Teacher?
    2. What feedback was presented to the Novice Teacher?
    3. Was there a follow up on the feedback given to the Novice Teacher?

Aggregated Documents for Printout:

Professional Development Participation Programme (External AND Internal)

School:	
Document Title:	
Created Date:	
Release Date:	
Document Description:	
Document Relates to Theme:	○ Professional Development Participation Programme (External/Internal)
Questions Related to Document Theme:	
1. How often are PD programmes presented?	
2. Does the school provide internal PD events?	
3. What is the topic of PD events?	
4. Is PD compulsory for NTs	

5. How are the PD programmes selected?	
Contributors:	
Signed off by: (Person(s) accountable for making sure process is adhered to)	
Preceding Document: (If document is preceded by another document)	
Following Document: (If document is followed by another document)	

Professional Development Event Documentation:

School:	
Document Title:	
Created Date:	
Release Date:	
Document Description:	
Document Relates to Theme:	<input type="radio"/> Professional Development Event Documentation
Questions Related to Document Theme:	
1. What is the topic of the PD event?	
2. What is the purpose and objective of this program?	
3. Is event internal or externally presented?	
4. Is an evaluation done on participants?	

5. Was this event in the PD schedule?	
6. Why was this topic chosen?	
7. Who chose this topic? (i.e. Department of Education/The school/The teachers)	
Contributors:	
Signed off by: (Person(s) accountable for making sure process is adhered to)	
Preceding Document: (If document is preceded by another document)	
Following Document: (If document is followed by another document)	

#### Meeting schedule between Departmental Heads and Novice Teachers

School:	
Document Title:	
Created Date:	
Release Date:	
Document Description:	
Document Relates to Theme:	<input type="radio"/> Meeting schedule between Departmental Heads and Novice Teachers
Questions Related to Document Theme:	
1. How often do DH/NT have formal contact sessions?	

2. Topic of discussion in contact sessions?	
Contributors:	
Signed off by: (Person(s) accountable for making sure process is adhered to)	
Preceding Document: (If document is preceded by another document)	
Following Document: (If document is followed by another document)	

Meeting minutes between Departmental Heads and Novice Teachers

School:	
Document Title:	
Created Date:	
Release Date:	
Document Description:	
Document Relates to Theme:	<input type="radio"/> Meeting minutes between Departmental Heads and Novice Teachers
Questions Related to Document Theme:	
1. Topic of discussion?	
Contributors:	
Signed off by: (Person(s) accountable for making sure process is adhered to)	
Preceding Document: (If document is preceded by another document)	

Following Document:  (If document is followed by another document)	
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#### Class Room Visit and Evaluation Schedules

School:	
Document Title:	
Created Date:	
Release Date:	
Document Description:	
Document Relates to Theme:	<input type="radio"/> Class Room Visit and Evaluation Schedules
Questions Related to Document Theme:	
1. How often do classroom visits/evaluation sessions occur?	
2. Is feedback presented after a classroom visits/evaluation session?	
Contributors:	
Signed off by:  (Person(s) accountable for making sure process is adhered to)	
Preceding Document:  (If document is preceded by another document)	
Following Document:  (If document is followed by another document)	

#### Class Room Evaluation/Feedback Document

School:
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Document Title:	
Created Date:	
Release Date:	
Document Description:	
Document Relates to Theme:	<input type="radio"/> Class Room Evaluation/Feedback Document
Questions Related to Document Theme:	
1. What is evaluated during the classroom visit of the Novice Teacher?	
2. What feedback was presented to the Novice Teacher?	
3. Was there a follow up on the feedback given to the Novice Teacher?	
Contributors:	
Signed off by: (Person(s) accountable for making sure process is adhered to)	
Preceding Document: (If document is preceded by another document)	
Following Document: (If document is followed by another document)	

## APPENDIX H: DATA ANALYSIS EXCERPT

Excerpt from the full data analysis table:

Data analysis: Mentorship experiences of Departmental Heads in managing the professional development of novice teachers in low socioeconomic primary schools.					
Research question	Interview question	Response from the participant	Code / segment of the transcript	Category	Theme
<p><b>Sub question 1:</b></p> <p><b>What are the mentorship experiences of DHs in managing the professional development of novice teachers in low SES primary schools in the Western Cape?</b></p>	<p><b>Question 5:</b></p> <p><b>DH:</b></p> <p>What are your experiences in mentoring novice teachers' professional development?</p>	<p><b>DH2A 1:28</b></p> <p>"Okay, so what I found was that the <b>type of teacher, if I can say be introduced, now, finds it quite challenging in our school.</b> I know as, <b>as a student, they don't prepare you for the reality that is happening in our school, you know? It's just books.</b> And you do observation lesson. <b>But the reality is, they are re-ally dumbstruck when they come here."</b></p> <p>"So what I do find is that, obviously, they <b>need lots of support.</b> So you basically have to <b>take them under your wing and hold their hand, especially in the first few months,</b> so that they can</p>	<p><i>type of teacher, if I can say be introduced, now, finds it quite challenging in our school.</i></p> <p><i>as a student, they don't prepare you for the reality that is happening in our school, you know? It's just books.</i></p> <p><i>But the reality is, they are re-ally dumbstruck when they come here."</i></p> <p><i>need lots of support</i></p>	<p>Novice teachers <b>struggle to adapt</b> to low SES schools.</p> <p><b>Preparation</b> to teach in low SES schools are not up to standard.</p> <p>Novice teachers are "<b>dumbstruck</b>" when they enter their first year in a low SES school</p> <p>Novice teachers need a lot of <b>support.</b> Departmental heads need to take them by the hand for the first few months to find their feet.</p> <p>Being a DHs during COVID was even more challenging.</p>	<p>Mentorship experiences of Departmental Heads in managing the professional development of novice teachers in low socioeconomic primary schools.</p> <p><b>Identified Sub Themes:</b></p> <p><b>Sub theme 1:</b> Preparedness/ Readiness of NTs</p>

		<p>find their feet. And it's quite obviously, to building experience in your first year as a teacher. And when I was now HoD, I've done it in COVID period, which is even more challenging. So it was quite difficult. Being their mentor or guiding them into a situation like that. So yeah, my experiences in mentoring a novice teacher for professional development has been challenging."</p> <p>"Okay, so what helps is obviously, you, you build an relationship, first of all you build a relationship with them so that they can feel that if they are struggling with it with something that they can come to you, because I know if I'm, if I'm going to be scared of my superior, whatever I would want to just I don't want to show that I'm struggling. And I want to prove that I'm obviously the best candidate that they chosen, whatever. But that isn't always the case. And people are not, or teachers that I've seen are not always they don't want to admit that they're struggle. So if you have</p> <p>a relationship with them first, and then they can trust you with</p>	<p>take them under your wing and hold their hand, especially in the first few months, so that they can find their feet.</p> <p>when I was now HoD, I've done it in COVID period, which is even more challenging."</p> <p>my experiences in mentoring a novice teacher for professional development has been challenging."</p> <p><i>build an relationship</i></p> <p><i>they can feel that if they are struggling with it with something that they can come to you</i></p> <p><i>I don't want to show that I'm struggling.</i></p>	<p>Mentoring NTs are challenging.</p> <p>Building a relationship is extremely important, before trust can commence in the relationship.</p> <p>The nature of NTs is that they don't want to show that they are struggling and wants to prove that they are the best candidate that were chosen.</p>	
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		<p>information that they are struggling, then you can come help with them. And so, yes, yeah, so building a relational relationship of trust, because I've also worked under many HoDs before and that feel, or you know, that autocratic leadership that they want everything right and everything. But I just feel that there is a other route, build a relationship with them, trust, they'll come to you. And I always tell them, what ever you struggle with, that is why I'm here. I'm here to help you."</p> <p>"Okay, so obviously, the trust and then they can come to me, problem they ask quite, I've got three novice teachers underneath me at the moment, is discipline. And I'm actually quite scared because I told them now you really need to get this under control, because you're going to go back to full capacity and you guys are not really coping with 17 kids in your class, how are you going to cope with a full class? So I tell them they can call me into their class that is, well I am coming speak to the child. Or, I'll take the child out of that environment</p>	<p><i>I want to prove that I'm obviously the best candidate that they chosen</i></p> <p>I've got three novice teachers underneath me at the moment, is discipline.</p> <p><i>So if you have a relationship with them first, and then they can trust you with information that they are struggling, then you can come help with them.</i></p> <p><i>building a relational relationship of trust, because I've also worked under many HoDs before and that feel, or you know, that autocratic leadership</i></p>	<p>DH Leadership Style</p>	
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		<p>first and just feel what's the problem. But what I could, like discipline on its own is a whole other thing that they need to learn. And I feel that only comes with experience. I've always tell them the child is acting out because something is something wrong, if the child is bored, or the child there's something, he just didn't have a good day or he can't do it or whatever.</p>	<p>that they want everything right and everything.</p> <p>I've got three novice teachers underneath me at the moment, is discipline.</p> <p>going to go back to full capacity and you guys are not really coping with 17 kids in your class, how are you going to cope with a full class? So I tell them they can call me into their class that is, well I am coming speak to the child. Or, I'll take the child out of that environment first and just feel what's the problem. But what I could, like discipline on its own is a whole other thing that they need to learn. And I feel that only comes with experience.</p>	<p>DH's workload is a lot – have three NTs</p> <p>Challenges of NTs: Discipline of learners (worried that in Covid it is halve the capacity – don't know how they going to manage with full capacity). Discipline according to the DH comes with experience</p> <p>Managing Discipline Challenges</p> <p>Mentoring strategies</p> <p>Lesson Planning</p>	
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				<p>Passion For Teaching</p> <p>Motivation and passion for the job affects performance</p>	
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## APPENDIX I: PLAGIARISM REPORT

Chantelle\_Antoniadis\_MEd\_TII.pdf

### ORIGINALITY REPORT

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