

**Challenges, rewards and coping strategies associated with
teachers' well-being in the 21st century**

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ETHICS STATEMENT

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this thesis, has obtained, for the research described in this work, the applicable research ethics approval. The author declares that she has observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria's *Code of ethics for researchers* and the *Policy guidelines for responsible research*.

DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my mother, Miemsie Steyn who has always had faith in me. I have learnt so much about myself and our Heavenly Father's grace as a result of her wisdom and understanding. Her enthusiasm for all aspects of teaching is contagious.

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The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn.

Isaiah 61:1-2

ABSTRACT

Teachers in the South African education system face numerous challenges which negatively impact their well-being, contributing to the high attrition rate in the teaching profession. As few studies in the South African context focus on teacher well-being, this study fills the gap by exploring how teachers experience profession-related challenges and how it affects their well-being. By merging the Force Field Model (Samuel & Van Wyk, 2008) and the PERMA Model (Seligman, 2011) a theoretical framework, four forces, namely contextual, institutional, programmatic and biographical were used as a lens to explore the push and pull factors that impact teachers' well-being. Moreover, this study explored how teachers address their well-being.

Data were collected in three stages by means of electronic open-ended questions, eight semi-structured individual interviews (case studies) and a semi-structured expert interview. A total of 119 participants took part in the qualitative inquiry. The findings have revealed that factors that teachers identified as pushing them away from the profession relate to unsatisfactory remuneration, lack of resources, uninvolved parents, learner diversity and an overwhelming workload. Pull factors that keep them in the classroom despite difficult circumstances involve the stability and convenience of a teaching career, feeling valued and being passionate about facilitating learning. Moreover, the study revealed that, depending on the degree and character of the push factors, some teachers resort to negative coping methods, such as absenteeism, tardiness, lack of interest in learners, or using teaching time for other pursuits. On the other hand, some teachers seek help from colleagues and other educational role players, such as the senior management and parents. As a result, connectivity – its presence or lack thereof - as an overarching theme describes the key coping method used by teachers to address their well-being. Teachers' positive relationships with their colleagues, management, and spirituality support them in dealing with the daily challenges of a school context. Passion and dedication are expressions of a teacher's connection to the profession.

This study provides a more comprehensive understanding of how the current classroom context affects teachers' well-being. If teachers' well-being is not prioritised, by addressing the many challenges in a practical way, the education community may suffer long-term effects as more teachers leave the profession. As a result, recommendations include research into how the idea of connectedness might help teachers improve their well-being as well as how various relationships in teachers' life may contribute to their well-being. A well-being framework also paves the way for the establishment of such a framework to guide teachers in dealing with challenges that may arise during their careers.

Key words: teacher well-being, teaching challenges, teacher coping strategies, teaching profession, teaching rewards.

OPSOMMING

Onderwysers in die Suid-Afrikaanse onderwysstelsel staar talle uitdagings in die gesig wat hul welstand negatief beïnvloed, wat bydra tot die hoë uitbranding syfer in die onderwysberoep. Aangesien min studies in die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks op onderwyserswelstand fokus, vul hierdie studie die gaping deur te ondersoek hoe onderwysers beroepsverwante uitdagings ervaar en hoe dit hul welstand beïnvloed. Deur die Force Field Model (Samuel & Van Wyk, 2008) en PERMA Model (Seligman, 2011) as teoretiese raamwerk te vervleg, is vier kragte, naamlik kontekstueel, institusioneel, programmaties en biografies as lens gebruik om die stoot- en trekfaktore wat onderwysers se welstand beïnvloed, te verken.

Data is in drie fases ingesamel deur middel van elektroniese oop vrae, agt semi-gestruktureerde individuele onderhoude (gevalllestudies) en 'n semi-gestruktureerde deskundige onderhoud. Altesaam 119 deelnemers het aan die kwalitatiewe ondersoek deelgeneem. Die bevindinge het aan die lig gebring dat faktore wat onderwysers geïdentifiseer het om hulle van die beroep weg te stoot, verband hou met onbevredigende vergoeding, gebrek aan hulpbronne, onbetrokke ouers, leerderdiversiteit en 'n oorweldigende werklading. Trekfaktore wat hulle in die klaskamer hou ten spyte van moeilike omstandighede behels die stabiliteit en gerief van 'n onderwysloopbaan, om gewaardeer te voel en passievol te wees om leer te fasiliteer. Verder het die studie aan die lig gebring dat, afhangende van die graad en karakter van die stootfaktore, sommige onderwysers hulle tot negatiewe hanteringsmetodes wend, soos afwesigheid, traagheid, gebrek aan belangstelling in leerders, of die gebruik van onderrigtyd vir ander strewes. Aan die ander kant soek sommige onderwysers hulp van kollegas en ander opvoedkundige rolspelers, soos die senior bestuur en ouers. Gevolglik beskryf konnektiwiteit – die teenwoordigheid daarvan of gebrek daaraan – as 'n oorkoepelende tema die sleutelhanteringsmetode wat deur onderwysers gebruik word om hul welstand aan te spreek. Onderwysers se positiewe verhoudings met hul kollegas, bestuur en spiritualiteit ondersteun hulle in die hantering van die daaglikse uitdagings van 'n skoolkonteks. Passie en toewyding is uitdrukkings van 'n onderwyser se verbintenis met die beroep.

Hierdie studie bied 'n meer omvattende begrip van hoe die huidige klaskamerkonteks onderwysers se welstand beïnvloed. As onderwysers se welstand nie geprioritiseer

word nie, kan die onderwysgemeenskap langtermyn-effekte ly namate meer onderwysers die beroep verlaat. Gevolglik sluit aanbevelings navorsing in oor hoe die idee van konnektiwiteit onderwysers kan help om hul welstand te verbeter. Verder, hoe verskeie verhoudings in onderwysers se lewe tot welstand kan bydra. 'n Welstandsraamwerk baan ook die weg vir die daarstelling van so 'n raamwerk om onderwysers te begelei in die hantering van uitdagings wat tydens hul loopbane mag ontstaan.

Sleutelwoorde: onderrigbelonings, onderwysberoep, onderwyserhanteringstrategieë. onderwyserwelstand, onderwysuitdagings,

**I HATE
MISTEAKS**

TK LANGUAGE SERVICE
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21 May 2022

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the doctoral thesis titled
**Challenges, Rewards and Coping Strategies Associated with
Teachers' Well-being in the 21st Century** by **Maria Gertruida Botha**
has been edited.

It remains the responsibility of the candidate to effect the recommended
changes.



Prof. Tinus Kühn

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

4IR	Fourth Industrial Revolution
CAPS	The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
CDE	Centre for Development and Enterprise
DBE	Department of Basic Education
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
EUSA	Education Union of South Africa
FFM	Force Field Model
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
OBE	Outcomes-Based Education
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PE	Physical Education
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
SACE	South African Council of Education
SADTU	South Africa Democratic Teachers Union
SAPS	South African Police Service
SASA	South African Schools Act
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team
TALIS	Teaching and Learning International Survey
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
TPWB	Teacher Pedagogical Well-Being
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WDR	World Development Report
WEF	World Economic Forum
WHO	World Health Organisation

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Will teachers preserve their commitment to this vocation and continue to be motivated and energised despite being constantly blamed and not being supported? (Long, Graven, Sayed & Lampe, 2017:11).

Communities worldwide have always considered their children's education – whether formally or informally – civic responsibility and cultural priority. South Africa is no exception; parents especially value their children's education as a top priority. They realise the long-term benefits of good quality and high school education standards. Therefore, the current state of schooling and the attendant poor quality of education available to school-going children and youths are major national concerns (Jojo, 2019). The country's political history is primarily to blame due to the previous regime's policy of *apartheid* (an institutionalised system of racial segregation). Bantwini (2019:718) as well as van der Berg and Gustafsson (2019:27) remarks that this political era deprived black children of quality education by favouring white children's education, the offspring of the ruling party. This author also points to the correlation between poor quality education and an "intergenerational cycle of poverty". Despite the many visible challenges and systemic flaws, the media and some education experts seem to be lone voices attempting to raise warning bells and suggesting remedies to ward off the crisis (Aronse, 2016; Steyn & Kamper, 2015; Spaul, 2015; Arends & Phurutse, 2009).

One of the causes of this crisis is the high rate of teacher stress and concomitant annual resignation (Naidoo, 2017; Msila, 2017; Pitsoe, 2013; Arends & Phurutse, 2009). Reasons cited for this attrition include a lack of funding (Carelse, 2018); inadequate teacher qualifications (Fin 2017:24); overcrowded classrooms (Jansen, 2019); unruly, disruptive learner behaviour; learner diversity (where learners from different cultures, population groups and intellectual abilities share a classroom

(Bruwer, 2018) as well as the absence of support from management and parents. Moreover, reports on the sources of teacher stress, such as poor work conditions, discipline problems, excessive workload, as well as time demands are contributing factors that lead to high levels of emotional and physical stress (Rechtshaffen, 2014; Klassen, Perry & Frenzel, 2012).

The South African Council of Education (SACE, 2010) found that teachers cited the following reasons for looking for greener pastures: the distance they must travel to school, their overall job satisfaction, high-stress levels and burnout. These challenges endured by teachers harm their teacher-learner relations, making effective teaching demanding and challenging (Engelbrecht, Oswald, Swart & Eloff, 2003). Furthermore, Dibakwane (2019), reporting on a recent seminar related to teachers' rights, responsibilities and safety hosted by SACE, claims that teachers have to teach amid fears of attacks directed at teachers from learners and parents. The media, such as the Daily News (2018) and News 24 (2018), continually report on acts of violence, physical attacks and even murder that teachers are prone to in what used to be a safe and secure space.

Hansen, Buitendach and Kanengoni (2015:1) report that teachers “often occupy a role far beyond that of educator to their students”. Luthans, Avolio, Avey and Norman (2007:541) agree when noting that teachers are also required to inspire and encourage learners to flourish and live rewarding lives. A policy document issued by the Department of Basic Education (2011) stipulates seven roles of the teacher, namely those of learning mediator; interpreter and designer of learning material; leader, administrator, manager; scholar, researcher and lifelong learner; fulfilling a community, citizenship and pastoral role; being an assessor, and learning area/subject/discipline/phase specialist. Several competencies that highlight the changing role of teachers are embedded in these roles, including being responsible for equipping learners cognitively and being caregivers who must counsel, support, accompany and nurture the learner to maturity. Erdağ and Taviş (2021:1064) argue that because of the education system's rapid transformation, the role of teachers has expanded to include mentoring, communication with parents, being active in the community, and taking on departmental duties. These authors also claim that social ills such as teenage pregnancies, drug and alcohol abuse, and bullying are blamed on

the teacher and the education system, resulting in “the teaching profession being ranked as one of the most stressful professions worldwide”. Priestly, Biesta and Robison (2015:2) point to the impossible situation in which teachers find themselves:

... policy demands that teachers exercise agency in their working practices, then simultaneously denies them the means to do so, effectively disabling them; such policy overtly focuses on the individual dimensions of what it means to be an effective teacher while ignoring or subverting the cultural and structural conditions which play an important role in enabling this to happen.

Another factor contributing to teacher stress is finances (Greenberg, Brown & Abenavoli, 2016). Numerous factors drive the education crisis, and due to the apparent low pay and increasing demands on educators, schools are struggling to employ qualified teachers (Long, 2019). Bland, Church and Lup (2016:1) report that teachers earn 17% less than other educated professions and explain that teachers’ low salary directly influences the supply of new teachers because people will instead pursue a career that pays more. Long (2019) agrees and says it is a cause of concern that all the more people do not want to spend four years to obtain a degree to take on a job that will not pay the bills (Long, 2019). Moreover, Gracia and Weiss (2019) report a correlation between low teacher salaries and teachers quitting the profession. These authors also mention that teachers often take on a second job to combat financial strain. Alson (2019:4) postulates that teachers are under more pressure due to minimal annual salary increases with economic uncertainty and increasing expenses. Therefore, Bland et al. (2016:4) request all stakeholders to pay attention to the financial stress of teachers to keep the profession viable for the next generation and make sure that the demand for teachers is being met.

These additional threats and burdens spawn "widespread concern for teacher well-being, with stress and trauma studies in educational context featuring alongside those of other professions like nursing, policing and firefighting" (Johnson & Naidoo, 2017:23). According to Long et al. (2017), many teachers have lost their way, and some may have momentarily lost their purpose and continuity. As a result, the feeling of vocation or calling, as well as the associated identity of a professional teacher, has been thrown off. The authors continue to ask pertinent questions, such as “Is it fair to make quality education solely the responsibility of teachers? Why is it the case that

teachers are 'bombarded from all directions'?" (Long et al., 2017:11). Does the teacher still have authority, and is the teacher still respected? The final question merits an answer: Will teachers preserve their commitment to this vocation and continue to be motivated and energised despite being constantly blamed and not supported? Frias (2015:2) puts it more blatantly: "So, as a society, why do we neglect teachers' social and emotional well-being?"

This is a relevant question as few studies in the South African context focus on the well-being of teachers and specifically on how teachers can be supported and equipped to deal with these challenges. My study thus intended to address this gap by emphasising key factors that can enhance the well-being of teachers in South Africa, identifying factors that have a negative impact on teacher well-being, as well as answering the question as to why teachers keep on teaching despite the challenges that they are experiencing. In other words, I set out to determine the components that may influence teacher well-being and may serve as the driving force to make teachers stay in the profession.

1.2 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

In this section, I explain the motivation behind the study by dividing it into four sub-sections: personal, professional, conceptual, and lastly, scholarly.

On a personal level, I had been a high school teacher for almost 15 years before taking up a lecturing position in teacher education. Apart from my teaching position, I was responsible for the school's discipline and was appointed as head of staff and teacher and learner well-being. I decided to apply for a lecturer position for promotional reasons and the fact that I wanted to gain academic insight into the well-being of teachers, as I came to realise that teachers do not have a functional support system. I saw some of my colleagues suffering from burnout and once enthusiastic teaching careers slowly deteriorating into mere jobs to meet basic needs. While reviewing the literature, I observed the limited research that had been conducted on the high turnover rate in the teaching profession. I also noted that there seemed to be a lack of awareness of and attention to teachers' overall well-being, which results in so many teachers leaving the profession. In this regard, Royer and Moreau (2016:135) report

that research has "paid little attention ... to the subjective experiences of ... educators".

Being a lecturer at a teacher training institution at present, my professional rationale is drawn from the belief that one of the critical outcomes of any teacher training institution should be to equip students with coping skills, not only to be resilient in the face of numerous challenges associated with teaching but also to thrive in the classroom environment by being effective teachers and ultimately to remain in the teaching profession.

My conceptual rationale for this study was to understand better the concept of *well-being* and *teacher well-being*, and the different factors that influence their well-being. I believed that this understanding would allow me to investigate and document the needs of teachers, their challenges, and the coping mechanisms they employ when teaching in the South African school context.

The above mentioned also elicited curiosity about what teachers regard as motivating factors to remain in the teaching profession, which led to the scholarly rationale for the study. Looking at the stance of education within South Africa, one can comprehend the importance of retaining qualified teachers for quality education as expressed in Sustainable Development Goal 4 by the United Nations on the one hand, and on the other hand, investigating the reasons for the rising attrition rate. Nakidien, Singh and Sayed (2021) as well as Khumalo (2019) underscore the driving force for the failing education system in South Africa when maintaining that there are two systems of education, namely for the privileged and for the marginalised, with which I agree. They further note that affluent schools attract good teachers, whereas learners from poor schools, especially in rural areas, are often taught by unqualified and unmotivated teachers (Du Plessis & Mestri, 2019). Regarding the attrition rate, the Centre for Development and Enterprise (2015) has released a report titled "Teachers in South Africa: supply and demand, 2013-2025" that found that more qualified than unqualified teachers leave the profession. Although the report does not regard the attrition rate of teachers as a cause for concern, they list the key finding of their research that "pumping more newly qualified educators into the system will not improve the average level of qualification among employed teachers. Every effort needs be made to retain qualified teachers as well" (CDE, 2015:20). This means that the well-being of existing

teachers should be catered for. I wanted to explore what challenges impact the well-being of teachers and what coping skills they apply to counteract these challenges so that they have the impetus to remain in the profession. I also wanted to utilise this information to establish a framework for developing a teacher well-being programme. The reasons why teachers stay could act as building blocks in this well-being programme that may empower teachers to address current teaching-related issues and equip them with skills to remain in the profession. My assumption, therefore, is that teachers that have coping skills and therefore are resilient will not opt to leave but will remain in the teaching profession.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND AIMS

Presented below are the primary research question, followed by the secondary research questions, and aims:

How does the current classroom context affect the well-being of South African teachers?

The secondary research questions were posed to assist with answering the above main research question:

- Which push and pull forces influence the well-being of teachers?
- How do teachers address their well-being?

The research study sought answers to the questions mentioned above by exploring the challenges teachers face within the school system and the rewards they receive during their teaching career.

The study's aims can be divided into primary and secondary aims. The primary aim of this study was to identify and explore how the current classroom context affects the well-being of South African teachers.

The following secondary aims were pursued to achieve the primary aim as stated above:

- To identify push and pull forces that influence the well-being of teachers.
- To explore how teachers address their well-being.

Thus, the relevance of my research was to dive deeper into teacher well-being. Furthermore, to investigate why teachers choose to remain in the teaching profession despite several challenges.

1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMING

According to Lederman and Lederman (2015:593), the theoretical framework “is the structure that can hold or support a theory of a research study”. This framework introduces and defines the theory that describes why the research problem exists. Throughout my study, I made use of various graphics and tables.

1.4.1 Force Field Model

The first theory that guided my study was the Force Field Model of professional development, developed by Samuel and Van Wyk (2008).

This model was initially designed to investigate the factors that influence the professional development of student teachers. It can also be used to determine which forces affect the well-being of teachers. The Force Field Model uses “the analogy of an electron in a charged forced field where it is being pulled and pushed by various forces” (Samuel & Van Wyk, 2008:140). Different fundamental forces determine push and pull, factors also known as positive and negative influences in the teaching practice (Samuels, 2008). For my study, this model explains different forces that may determine teachers’ experiences and that may subsequently encourage or deter the decision to retain their positions in the teaching profession. Individual identity is influenced by varying interpretations of the forces’ full effect. These forces can manifest in the following categories: “Biographical, institutional, programmatic and contextual” (Samuel & Van Wyk, 2008:140) and are “both internal and external to the individuals themselves and constitute forces from their lived *experiences*, *theoretical* conceptions exposed in their training programs, the macro-contextual forces of *policy* influencing teacher identity, and the specific world of *practices* in unique schooling sites” (Ibid).

Furthermore, I chose this framework to give a voice to teachers to showcase their teaching experiences and determine the strengths and obstacles embedded in the profession. My goal was to identify what factors energise and motivate teachers to remain in the teaching profession despite numerous challenges. This theory guided me in understanding various factors that enhance teacher well-being and why teachers keep teaching despite the challenges they face. Figure 1.1 provides a short overview of the Force Field Model within the study.

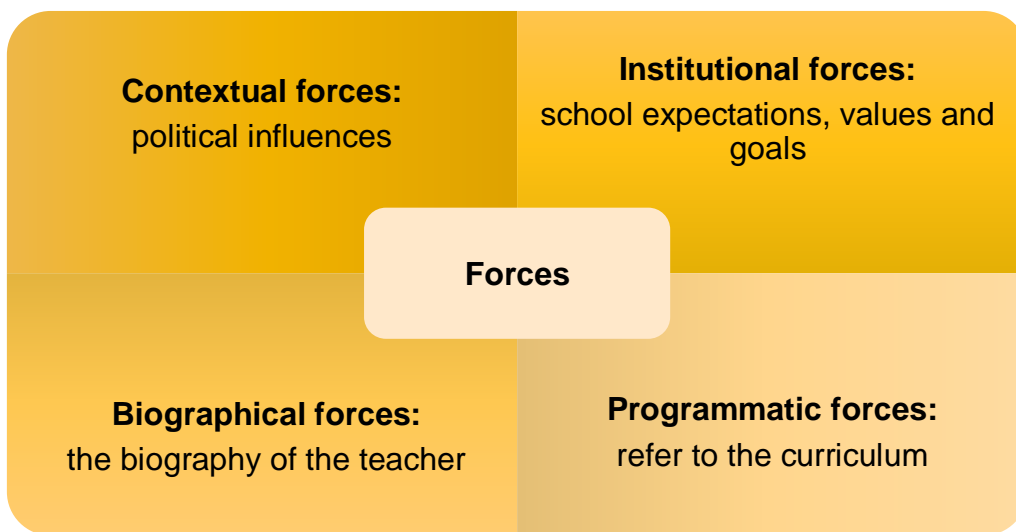


Figure 1.1: Representation of the Force Field Model within the study

Four forces are identified in this model, namely contextual, institutional, biographical, and programmatic forces that may either push or pull a person (teacher) in a specific direction. The push factors represent the restraining forces that discourage teachers from remaining in the profession. In contrast, the pull factors represent the driving forces that encourage a teacher to stay at work or attract potential teachers to the job.

1.4.2 The PERMA Model

The second lens that guided my study was the PERMA Model of Well-being, developed by Martin Seligman (2011). This model uses "a multi-dimensional approach to define what it means to flourish in life" (Khaw & Kern, 2011:263) and identifies five elements that contribute to well-being. According to Lee and Howard (2019:46), these elements are attributes for pursuing happiness. It is also possible to foster greater degrees of these elements that will generate a happier lifestyle. In other words, it implies that the individual is responsible for the level of well-being they desire.

The first is **positive emotion**, which means happiness will follow if a person focuses on positive emotion. This element focuses on remaining optimistic through one's past, present and outlook on the future (Seligman, 2011). The second element is **engagement**, which refers to a psychological connection with a specific cause, activity or job environment (Khaw & Kern, 2011:264). Next is the **relationship** element, which can be explained as a sense of belonging within relationships and is linked to positive outcomes such as less depression and better overall health (Tan, Diener & Gonzalez, 2013). The element of **meaning** refers to "feeling connected to something larger than the self" (Khaw & Kern, 2011:264) and can be seen as a sense of purpose that one feels one has in life. The last element is **accomplishment**, which refers to accomplishing goals and receiving recognition. The latter is also a personal element, as one's achievements create an experience of success (Butler & Kern, 2014).

Benoit and Gabola (2021:2) report that this model has been adapted to include a sixth element or condition, namely **health**, which gave rise to the PERMA(H) Model. In this context, health can be defined as a critical ingredient of well-being. It refers to "optimal physical, emotional, and psychological health" (Benoit & Gabola, 2021:2), especially in creating good habits at an early stage for long-term health benefits. Although the PERMA(H) model is relevant to the overall well-being of an individual's life, this study focused only on Seligman's original PERMA Model, which refers to the PERMA abbreviation, namely positive emotion, engagement, relationship, meaning and accomplishment.

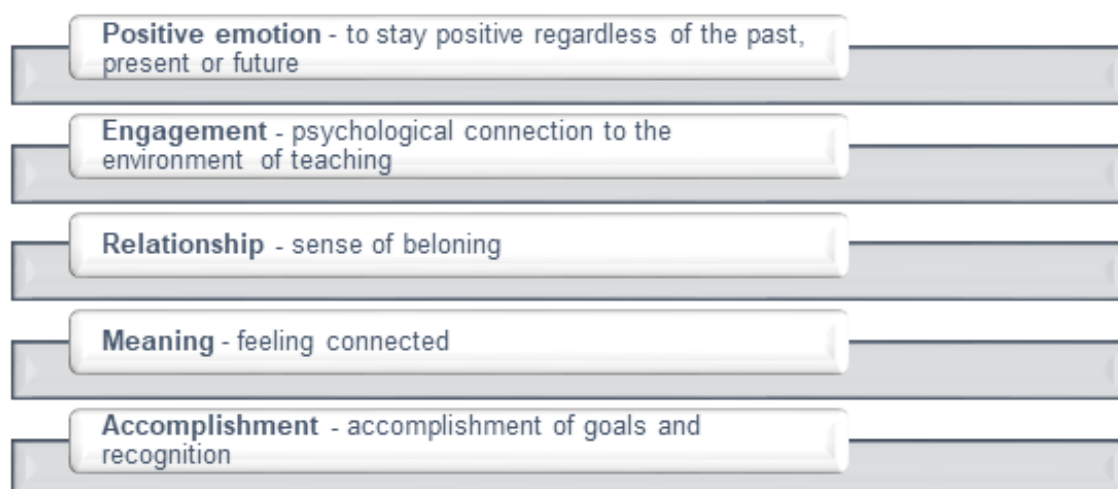


Figure 1.2: Representation of the PERMA Model of Well-being

These elements focus on the emotional or internal forces influencing well-being, whereas the Force Field Model focuses mainly on external forces impacting the wellness of teachers.

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research is a systematic process of planning, collecting, analysing and interpreting information to understand a particular phenomenon (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019:2). These authors regard the research methodology as “the researcher’s general approach in carrying out the research project (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016:8). In line with this explanation, for this study I regard the research methodology to include both plan (research design) and the execution thereof (research methods). A detailed discussion of the methodology followed in this study is provided in Chapter 4. However, a brief discussion is provided in the next section to orientate the reader about the study.

1.5.1 Research Design

There are many ways in which the research design is viewed by researchers (Cohen, Manion & Morris, 2018; Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Battacherjee, 2012; Maxwell, 2012). McMillan and Schumacher (2014:27) regard the research design as a “general plan” of conducting the research.

As a start, I refer to the paradigm that I used. A paradigm can be explained as a way of looking at the world or expressing one’s worldview (Cohen et al., 2018), while Maxwell (2012:44) refers to a paradigm as a philosophical stance that the researcher takes. As my study explored teachers’ subjective experiences, it was situated within the interpretive paradigm that “assumes that reality is socially constructed,” meaning that multiple interpretations of a single phenomenon are possible (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015:9). In other words, the interpretive paradigm reasons from the point of view that different people can attach different meanings to the same phenomenon, which underlies my worldview, namely that teachers may have different experiences in the teaching profession, and that these subjective experiences influence their well-being, whether positively or negatively.

Next, I allude to the research approach that was followed. An interpretive paradigm was followed, and a qualitative approach was deemed the most appropriate. Leedy

and Ormrod (2016:6) postulate that this approach involves qualities or characteristics that cannot be expressed numerically. These authors also mention that a qualitative approach to research is usually used when complex human relationships are being explored. According to Cohen et al. (2018:288), qualitative research “regards people as anticipatory, meaning-making beings who actively construct their meanings of situations and make sense of their world and act in it through such interpretations”. Creswell and Creswell (2018:278) note another distinguishing factor when saying that the researcher is the main instrument when collecting qualitative data.

Although I consider using a phenomenological design, I realised that the phenomenon is not well-being as such, but rather the lived experiences of the participants, hence I found a case study design most suitable. The decision was based on Yin’s (2018:32) guidelines that stipulate that a case study is an appropriate design when the researcher has no control over the relevant events that have a bearing on the topic under investigation and when the focus of the study is a timely or contemporary phenomenon “within its real-world context” (Yin, 2018:32). As I wanted to explore the subjective experiences of eight teachers, a case study was conducted where these participants were interviewed to understand their experiences in the teaching profession. Each participant represented a case based on their teaching contexts. I regarded my design as a multiple case study method, as I concur with Battacherjee (2012:109) that one can understand the world through experience only, and I wanted to mine different teachers’ experiences (cases) thereby exploring how their teaching experiences influence their well-being as teachers.

1.5.2 Research Methods

This section outlines the methods that I used to collect and analyse data. I first explain the role I adopted as a researcher when briefly referring to the selection criteria for participants, protocols for collecting data, and how data was analysed.

Following a qualitative approach requires the researcher to gather relevant data and “probe beneath the surface” of the phenomenon (Cohen et al., 2018:389). This implies that the researcher should be a good listener and prober and be able to read between the lines when participants relate their experiences. McMillan and Schumacher (2014:357) mention the skill of reflexivity, which they explain as the researcher

displaying her own “positionality” or standpoints as “contextual grounds for reasoning”. Therefore, it was essential to keep my own experience as a teacher in mind and not allow my assumptions to influence my probing or how I interpreted their experiences.

Next, I had to consider my participants carefully. Taherdoost (2016:19) states that the sampling process starts with the definition of the sample. Two types of sampling methods were used. I collected data in three stages – the first stage used voluntary sampling, and the second and third stages used purposeful sampling. Voluntary sampling is used when researchers seek volunteers to partake in a research study (Murairwa, 2015:186). I deemed voluntary participation meaningful since involuntary participation, according to Hussain and Griffiths (2009:751), might produce misleading information about the phenomenon under study. In the last stage, I wanted to delve deeper into the well-being of teachers. Therefore, I made use of purposeful sampling, which is based on selecting participants as samples according to the purpose of the study. I chose a sample from whom most information could be gained (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015:74) and gathered data from this pool.

As mentioned earlier, data collection was done in three distinct stages to answer the research questions. I followed a cyclic approach to collecting data. Firstly, I posted the purpose of the study on three different teachings pages on Facebook sites, requesting teachers to participate in the study. All three Facebook pages are multicultural and use English as a communication medium. The first was called “Teachers for Real Change,” with approximately 19 000 members. “Teachers SA” was the second, with roughly 16 000 members. “Onderwysers/Teachers!” was the third one and had a membership of around 37 000 people. These are all private Facebook pages, not public ones, so before putting the link on the pages, I sought permission from the various administrators.

After reading a short description of the study, participants had to click on a link taking them to Qualtrics forms. They were asked to complete a biographical section that I deemed necessary for the study. By clicking on the link, the participants gave informed consent. Thereafter they were asked to complete eight open-ended questions. Open-ended questions are suitable when a researcher wants to understand the phenomenon under study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Okeke and Van Wyk (2016) also believe that an advantage of using open-ended questions is that participants have

free range in answering anything they deem fit. One hundred and nineteen participants completed the biographical information, and 88 completed the open-ended questions.

The second step of data collection, the multiple case study design, involved eight participants that acted as a case. Conducting case studies allowed me better to understand teachers' teaching experiences and allowed me to ask probing questions. After scrutinising the data obtained from the open-ended questions, I contacted eight of the 88 participants based on the different circumstances in which South African teachers operate. Therefore, gender, population groups, type of school, and the geographical area of schools had to be represented in the cases. This part of the study comprised semi-structured interviews to gain relevant data. This data collection technique is appropriate for a researcher to delve deeper into a phenomenon or situation under study (Ruslin, Mashuri, Rasak, Alhabsy & Syam, 2022:22). Lastly, I interviewed an educational expert using semi-structured interviews to cross-reference my data.

After gathering the data, the analysis process started. Data analysis involves a process where data is merged, reduced and then interpreted (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015:226) – in other words, where meaning is derived from the data. Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2018:51) postulate that similarities and differences are identified and grouped into categories. McMillan and Schumacher (2014:395) believe that inductive analysis “is the process through which qualitative researchers synthesize and make meaning of the data, starting with specific data and ending with categories and patterns” to provide explanations for the phenomenon under study. As a result, I transcribed all three data sets (online open-ended questions, semi-structured interviews with eight participants, and semi-structured interviews with the expert) and evaluated each one independently. I began by selecting relevant segments in one data set to identify units of significance. With a thorough understanding of the two theories that underpin my research, I realised that the categories could be related to the FFM's different forces and the PERMA Model's elements. As a result, I sensed a strong connection between the facts and the theories employed. After organising the categories and themes, I reread each data set separately, reflecting on my

categorisation and thematic analysis methods to ensure that my preconceptions did not drive the data into specific categories or themes.

I agree about McMillan and Schumacher's (2014:395) remark that "nothing takes the place of the researcher's inductive analysis of the raw data". Qualtrics provided me with the option to print each question with the relevant responses of all participants. This made the identification of categories and themes more accessible. I first transcribed the interviews for the semi-structured interviews (in Stages 2 and 3). I then analysed the data using a coding system where specific themes became evident. Based on similarities and differences, I then sorted the data into categories. This procedure set the scene for data interpretation to take place.

1.5.3 Quality Criteria

All researchers agree that qualitative research should adhere to specific quality criteria. Merriam and Tisdell (2015:239) mention that these criteria should be considered from the perspective of the particular paradigm the study is situated in. These authors call these criteria validity and reliability. Still, they admit that researchers have different terminology when referring to these. Maxwell (2012:122) reports that some qualitative researchers use trustworthiness, authenticity and quality. Leedy and Ormrod (2019:88) mention that some researchers use concepts such as *credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability* that Lincoln and Guba (1994) first used. Bhattacharjee (2012:110) also prefers this set of criteria, proposed by Lincoln and Guba, and says it "can be used to judge the rigor of interpretive research". Chapter 4 outlines how my study met the requirements of these quality criteria.

1.5.4 Ethical Considerations

In general, ethical issues relate to what is morally right or wrong. McMillan and Schumacher (2014:129) regard research ethics as being concerned with what is "morally proper and improper when engaged with participants or when accessing archival data". Recker (2013:141), however, describes ethics as "those actions that abide by rules and responsibility, accountability, liability, and due process".

As qualitative research is mainly concerned with human participants, it is necessary to define them from a theoretical point of view: “A *human subject* is a living individual about whom an investigator obtains data through an intervention or interaction with the individual or uses identifiable private information” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:135). As my study involved only human participants, I had to be aware of ethical procedures in all stages of my research, which is in line with the viewpoints of Maxwell (2012:22) as well as of Creswell and Creswell (2018:145), who regard ethics as an integral part of the research that should be discernible in every stage of the research process. Merriam and Tisdell (2015:261) believe that ethical dilemmas usually emerge in the data collection stage and when findings are disseminated. These authors specifically mention ethical aspects such as being transparent about the purpose of the study, what informed consent entails, how the confidentiality of the participants is protected, and what measures would be in place when participants may be exposed to any harm. In Chapter 4 the ethical aspects are presented in detail.

McMillan and Schumacher (2014:135) hold that most institutions, including universities, have committees overlooking ethical procedures, as ethical measures are not a natural part of research activities. These committees usually consist of knowledgeable academics that review proposed studies and ensure that ethical guidelines are followed, and ethical principles are adhered to. My proposed research also underwent a rigorous review process by the ethics committee of the Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria (EDU036/20).

An in-depth explanation of the research design, methodology, quality criteria and ethical considerations is provided in Chapter 4.

1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of the study can be seen as the “characteristics that limit and define the boundaries” of one’s research and includes the choices the researcher makes in terms of research questions, objectives, theoretical perspectives and which population they choose to study (Simon & Goes, 2013:2). Theofanidis and Fountouki (2018:155) explains delimitations or the scope of the study as limitations intentionally set by researchers themselves. In other words, as a researcher, I put certain boundaries in place to ensure that the aims of my study could be achieved, which is in line with the

viewpoint of Simon and Goes (2013:2) who believe that delimitations are controlled by the researcher.

My first delimitation was the choice of a research topic. I wanted to investigate the factors influencing the well-being of South African teachers. Having been a teacher for more than fifteen years and after that a lecturer at a teacher training institution gave me sound knowledge of the issues concerning teacher well-being, but what I also found intriguing was why teachers decide to continue to teach despite all the challenges being foregrounded in the media as well as on other platforms.

To make sense of the acquired data, I chose the FFM and the PERMA Model of Well-being as my theoretical lenses. The FFM's push and pull forces appeared relevant in determining whether teachers leave or stay in the profession. Some researchers argue that the model is only valid in some scenarios and that the theory may be less functional in other situations (Conelly, 2020). Exploring the idea, I developed my framework in which teacher well-being can be understood within the FFM. Next, referring to the PERMA Model of Well-being, Sansom (2017) states that each pillar, according to Seligman, exists and is pursued on its own. I disagree about this, as it became evident that each element or pillar interacts with one another (Consult Section 7.4.3).

Another limitation arose in the selection of criteria. Although the requirements were quite broad, I limited the study to South African teachers who had access to a laptop/computer/smartphone and subsequently, the internet. At first, I was uncertain, not knowing whether teachers, especially in the township or rural areas, would have access to essential technology, such as smartphones or computers and data to interact with me. Using technology became very convenient for myself and the participants, seeing that data collection could commence during the lockdown period due to COVID-19. Because one of the limitations was limited contact with individuals during this time, interviews were conducted on the phone. The time frame for data collection extended over eight months, starting in July 2020 and ending in February 2021.

Voluntary sampling made it easy for me to gather data in the first stage, where I posted a link to open-ended questions on Facebook, and participants could complete the

questions in their own time. In the second and third stages, I used purposeful sampling. In the third stage, I chose an expert in the teaching profession to verify data and fill in possible gaps.

The research design and methodology delimitation are explained in greater detail under each sub-heading in Chapter 4.1

1.7 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

The research is divided into seven chapters that are depicted in Figure 1.3 below:

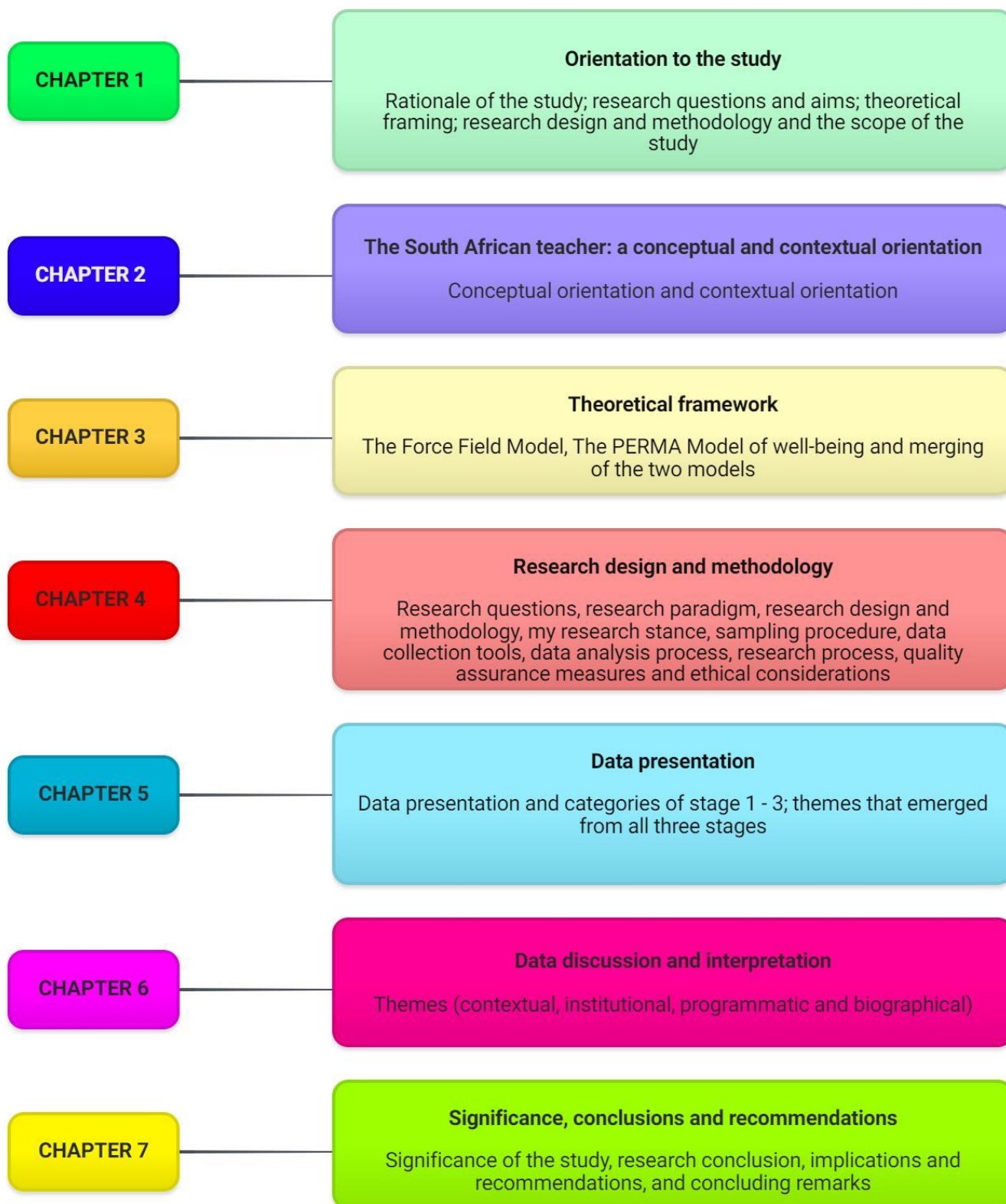


Figure 1.3: Layout of chapters

This chapter served as a road map for my research, as I presented an outline of the various topics covered. The following chapter concentrates on key concepts and context exploration.

CHAPTER 2

THE SOUTH AFRICAN TEACHER: A CONCEPTUAL AND CONTEXTUAL ORIENTATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of my research was to explore how the current classroom environment influences the well-being of South African teachers. Media reports continually highlight the plight of teachers. In a very recent occurrence, the principal of a school in one of the provinces in South Africa was forced to write a letter to parents requesting them to take control of their children's behaviour, citing various incidences of foul language and even violence against teachers, making teaching nearly impossible and adversely affecting the teacher corps. This letter went viral after being shared on social media, and other schools' websites (Netwerk 24, 23 March 2022). The public was shocked that a principal would have to go to such extremes as to seek public support from the parent community. It is therefore imperative that the well-being of South African teachers be researched, and that coping skills be identified to assist teachers in becoming resilient in order to retain them for the teaching profession.

The conceptual and contextual orientation of the study are explored in this chapter, and presented visually in Figure 2.1:

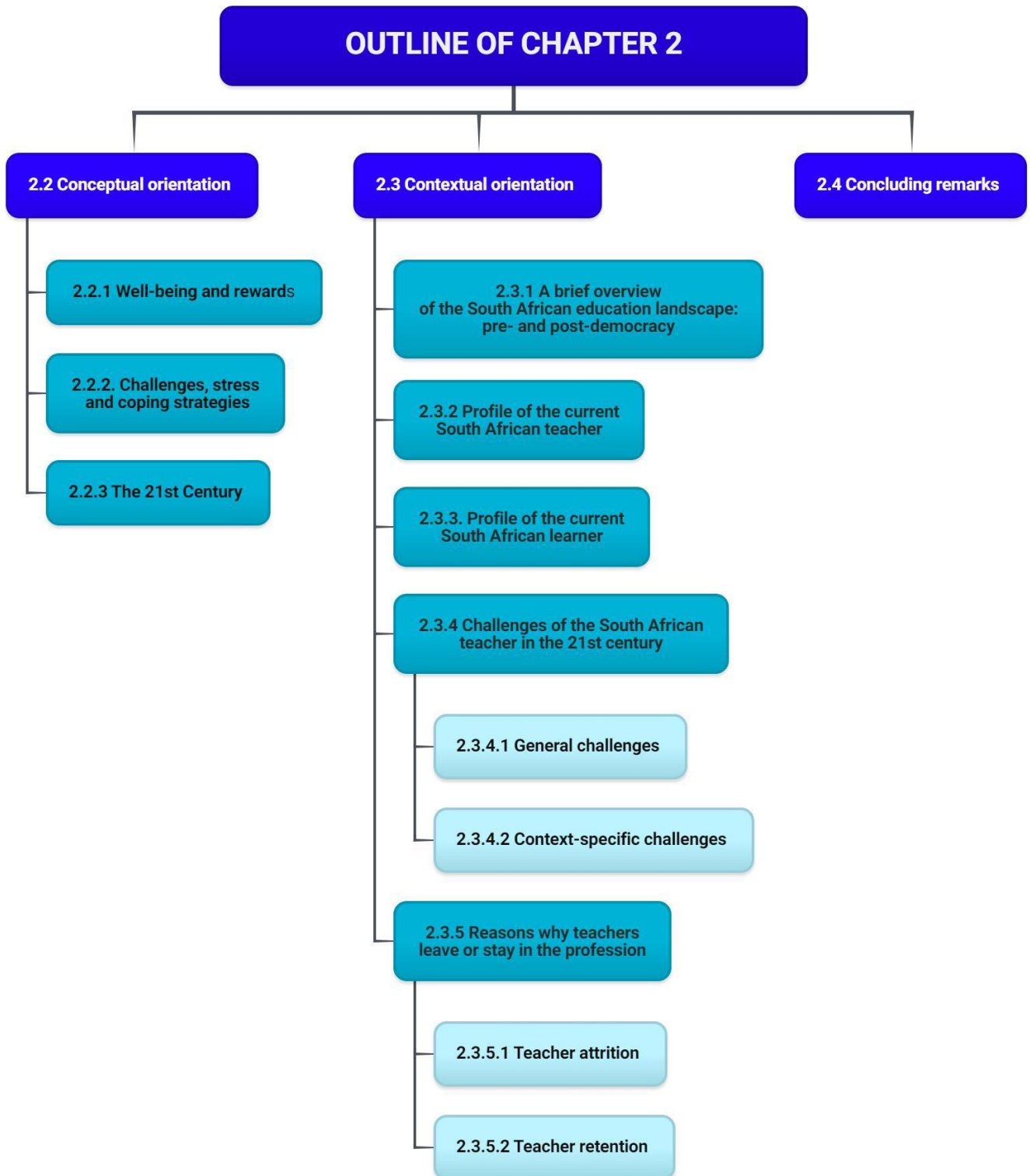


Figure 2.1: Outline of Chapter 2

2.2 CONCEPTUAL ORIENTATION

The following concepts are central to this study and needed further explanation to indicate their relation to the study.

2.2.1 Well-being and rewards

Well-being or wellness is “the experience of health, happiness, and prosperity, including mental health, high life satisfaction, and a sense of meaning or purpose” (Davis, 2019). The Oxford English Dictionary (2017) defines well-being as “the state of being comfortable, healthy and happy”. Street's (1994:172) definition states that “wellness is an interdependent system of systems within the human being (e.g. physical, spiritual, intellectual) all of which interact and affect each other”, with the implication that this synergy between the different domains creates a sense of general well-being, despite various challenges. Well-being is defined as a feeling of health and vitality generated by your ideas, feelings, activities, and experiences (Davis, 2022).

Hence, subjective well-being (SWB) refers to a person's belief or feeling that his or her life is going well. SWB researchers are interested in evaluations of the quality of a person's life from that person's own perspective, which is defined by the adjective “subjective.” (Burger, Hendriks & Lanchovichina, 2022). Van den Vywer, Kok and Conley (2020:88) are more specific and view professional wellness as referring to “individuals’ perception of their qualities needed for professional tasks”. These authors distinguish between general well-being and affective (emotional well-being) and define the latter as the experience of positive and negative emotions and how these emotions influence resilience “and ability to utilise resources”. Marais-Opperman, Rothmann and Van Eeden (2021) use the concept *flourishing* as an umbrella term to refer to emotional well-being (which they regard as having a positive working experience), psychological well-being (developing as a person at work), and social well-being (being an asset to the workplace by contributing and adding value). They further distinguish between three dimensions of emotional well-being, namely job satisfaction, and positive and negative affect that determine the professional’s needs satisfaction.

Moreover, Hurry, Boneel, Carrol and Deighton (2020:1) point to the link between well-being and mental health but also indicate the difference between the two concepts by

referring to the World Health Organisation's (WHO) definition of well-being by explaining it as "a state in which an individual realises his or her abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of everyday life, can work productively and can make a contribution to his or her community". Mental health, however, involves a "broad range of problems with different symptoms ... generally characterised by some combination of abnormal thoughts, emotions, behaviour and relationship with others" (Hurry et. al., 2020:1). Spence (2015:110) specifically refers to workplace well-being and regards it as the ability to pursue one's purpose to gain happiness and enrichment on a professional level. Davis (2019) postulates that it includes various sets of skills that help one pursue what matters to one. Van der Vywer et al. (2020:88) claim that professional well-being refers "to individuals' perception of their qualities needed for professional tasks. It refers to positive emotions towards factors such as self-efficacy and job satisfaction".

Regarding well-being in the teaching profession, one first needs to grasp that teaching is a profession where a whole range of emotions is involved, because of human interaction; in this case, constant interaction with learners. In this sense, emotions are at the heart of teaching (Oplatka & Igor, 2020:92). These authors further distinguish between positive emotions (joy, happiness, enthusiasm, compassion and more) when a teacher experiences fulfillment and negative emotions, such as frustration, irritation, disappointment and so on when feeling threatened by unrealistic expectations or experiencing helplessness because of a situation that they cannot control. Bower and Carroll (2017:183) conclude that positive emotion is an integral part of well-being. Hascher and Waber (2021) also believe that when investigating teacher well-being, the emotions, feelings and self-perception that relate to their work, should be taken into account. In other words, phrases such as "work stress" and "job satisfaction" are part of teacher well-being and Paterson and Grantham (2016:92) also mention burnout and retention.

Murphy, Masterson, Mannix-McNamara, Tally and McLaughlin (2020:588) identify teacher pedagogical well-being (TPWB) that points to the fact that "teacher professional collaboration enhances classroom practice, which in turn promotes a positive sense of well-being". Teacher professional collaboration in this sense refers to the tasks that are specific to teachers, such as planning classroom activities,

interacting with learners, evaluating learners' work, and choosing appropriate resources for their lessons. To put it differently: the active, personal involvement of teachers in their classroom practice determines their sense of well-being, or as Murphy et al. (2020:589) remark, it is understood "as the experience of teacher effectiveness as a classroom practitioner". Based on the research by Tikkanen, Pyhalto, Pietarinen and Soini (2020:544) these researchers developed a TPWB rubric (Consult Figure 2.2).

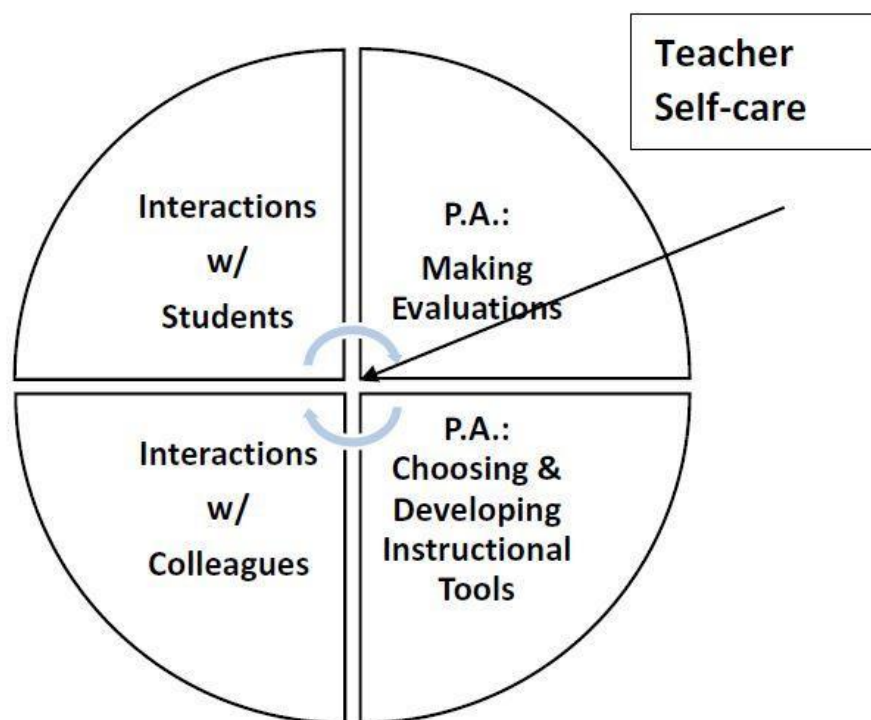


Figure 2.2: Teacher pedagogical well-being rubric (adapted from Soini et al., 2010)

To understand TPWB, three interconnected areas of teacher activity are identified: TPWB and interaction with learners, TPWB and interaction with colleagues, and TPWB and teaching-learning activities. In other words, teacher professional well-being that includes TPWB is a product of relationships with learners and colleagues as well as the experience of professional competence, as they are allowed to make certain decisions about the teaching-learning situation.

Hence, teacher well-being, then refers to a chain of experiences that specifies the successful evaluation and management of various threats and challenges that influence a teacher's career. When this happens, the teacher experiences his/her career as positive, motivating, and rewarding. Unpacking reward as a concept, I refer to the Merriam-Webster dictionary (2014) that defines a reward as "something that is given in return for good or evil done or received or that is offered or given for some service or attainment". Kalsoom, Akhter, Mujahid, Saeed and Kausar (2017:108) view rewards as "powerful modes for encouraging employees' for good performance" and regard factors such as remuneration, appreciation, promotion and job quality, as well as social interaction amongst colleagues as being related to perceptions about being rewarded. Bello and Jakada (2017:1) regard rewards as motivation for outstanding performance and believe that "job performance is carrying out an activity expected from an employee largely influenced by the reward in place".

2.2.2 Challenges, Stress and Coping Strategies

The Cambridge Dictionary (2008) defines challenges as "things that need great mental or physical effort to be done successfully and therefore test a person's ability to find a solution". Accordingly, Beghetto (2018:21) explains a challenge as an invitation or a call to action, which may vary in scope and complexity. Nesland (2017) regards challenges as an important part of life by awarding experience, opportunity to learn and grow, and ultimately shaping one's character. Burns, Fogelgarn and Billett (2020:526) mention the downside of challenges when maintaining that these "can produce emotional exhaustion seriously impairing teachers' emotional well-being. For my study, I agree with the understanding of both Beghetto (2018) and Burns et al. (2020) and view a challenge as any external aspect or incident that may cause emotional hardship, stress or unhappiness, and may impact the decision to leave the teaching profession.

Shiel (2019) defines stress as a physical, mental, or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental tension. Selye (2013:19) provides a generic definition stating that stress is "the non-specific response of the body to any demand". Saeki, Segool, Pendergast and Von der Embse (2018:393) refer to the transactional model of Lazarus and Folkman (1984) when they conceptualise teacher stress as "an interaction

between the person and the environment, in which stress is determined by the persons' evaluation of the demands in the environment as well as their resources for meeting the demands".

Referring to teachers' stress, Farley and Chamberlain (2021) argue that teacher stress needs to be explored from an ecological perspective, and refer to Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (1984) where they highlight how the different systems, ranging from the microsystem to the broader macrosystem, can affect individuals. Ramberg, Låftman, Åkerstedt and Modin (2020:816) refer to the work of Kyriacou (2011) who identified three ways of understanding teacher stress, namely stress associated with their working conditions, stress relating to emotional and behavioural reactions, and lastly, "stress as the transaction between teachers' resources and their work demands".

Kotze, Mouton, Barkhuizen and De Jager (2020) note that although many teachers perceive teaching as highly rewarding, numerous teachers find this profession highly stressful. Greenberg (2018) alludes to findings of a study claiming that 61% of teachers reported that their work is extremely stressful whereas 50% admitted having waning enthusiasm when teaching. In another study, Reinke and Herman (2018) found that at least 93% of elementary school teachers reported high-stress levels. Pitsoe's (2013) study found that more or less 55% of teachers indicated that they would leave the teaching profession if they could, citing stress as one of the most important reasons. Therefore, it is not surprising that Kidger, Brockman, Tiling, Campbell, Ford, Araya and Gunnel (2016) mention that teachers are at high risk of mental disorders when compared to other professions and maintain that teacher stress is associated with poor well-being and elevated symptoms of depression. Furthermore, Jennings (2019) reports on the link between poor mental health and damaging work-related outcomes such as absenteeism, ill-health and presenteeism. Presenteeism is a phenomenon where the teacher is present at work but is unable to effectively perform his/her tasks due to illness or other problems (Jennings, 2019:58).

Marais-Opperman et al. (2021) assert that factors that influence teachers' stress levels relate to the support (or rather lack of) support of management, relationships within the school system, educational policies and lack of resources. Greenberg, Brown and

Abenavoli (2016), however, report that various factors contribute to teacher stress and can mainly be divided into three main categories: learner behaviour, school leaders and finances. Moreover, Amzat, Mun, Kaur and Al-Ani (2021) believe that several factors that are responsible for stress are job-related experiences, policies, smaller budgets, being responsible for learners' performance, lack of managerial and parental support, poor infrastructure, lack of resources, and substandard classroom facilities. Referring to the lack of parental support, Hasselquist and Graves (2020:4) found that unsupportive and antagonistic parents as well as the misconceptions that the public has about the teaching profession have a negative influence on teachers and highlight the "mismatch between teacher motivation and public perceptions". The school management team also plays a major role in terms of how teachers experience stress. According to Bush and Glover (2003:4), management includes any individual who is responsible for the daily instructional leadership and managerial operations within schools, such as principals, HODs and departmental officials. Herman (2018) claims that school leaders play a role in the support of teachers and believes that if school leaders prioritise teacher well-being and acknowledge teachers' contributions, it will greatly help with the feeling of support. Herman (2018) also notes that teachers measure support by having better workplace environments, autonomy in the classroom and a voice in decision making. Mankin, Von der Embse, Renshaw and Ryan, (2018:219) maintain that school leaders often expect teachers to meet unrealistic expectations, such as having to be specialists in various areas as "subject content, developing of lesson plans, delivering evidence-based instruction" and additionally "respond to social and emotional needs of learners, utilize effective assessment tools, and manage student behaviour". The South African DoE further regularly implements various standards that result in teachers being buried in paperwork (Beltman & Mansfield 2018:5) and these authors caution that when teachers experience a sense of unsupportiveness from school leaders, they are likely to move schools or to leave the profession for good.

For this study, I conceptualise stress as context-specific; in other words, dependent on the context in which teaching takes place, and my understanding is rooted in an ecological framework that claims that there is a reciprocal relationship between different systems in the environment.

It is evident from the preceding discourse that numerous factors contribute to teacher stress. Consequently, the coping methods teachers employ to manage stress should be considered. Roeser, Schonert-Reichl Jha, Cullen, Wallace, Wilensky and Harrison (2013:789) explain coping as “those appraisal processes and resources leading to effective regulation under stress, resilience as those leading to effective recovery from stress, and distress as ineffective coping with or recovery from stress due to a lack of resources to meet demands”. Erdağ and Tavil (2021:1604) refer to Folkman and Lazarus (1980) who distinguish between problem-focused and emotion-focused coping, where problem-focused coping is usually employed in situations with low stress and deals with the immediate environment in which one finds oneself and also dealing with one’s challenges, such as addressing the source of anxiety or “developing potential solutions and following an action plan”. Zewude and Hercz (2021:1229) refer to Rebenue et al. (2016) who, similar to Folkman and Lazarus, developed three strategies for coping with stress.

Change corresponds to Folkman and Lazarus’s concept of problem-focused coping that has to do with addressing the problem. Acceptance involves an active decision from individuals to adapt their perceptions, thoughts and feelings relating to the stressful situation, and withdrawal, where individuals distance themselves physically or emotionally from the stressful working environment.

Amzat et al. (2021) believe that problem-focused coping is an active approach by attempting to “adjust factors that manipulate the relationship between an individual and his surroundings while the latter refers to self-distraction or denial coping that normalizes an individual’s emotion”. According to Erdağ and Tavil (2021:1605), emotion-focused coping is employed where “high degrees of burnout” are experienced and focus on minimising negative emotional responses by seeking support, accepting the situation, and so forth.

A study conducted by Oplatka and Iglan (2020) found that teachers coped by sharing their sources of stress with colleagues or applying self-relieving methods. Some teachers chose to withdraw by either looking for a post at another school or by applying for sick leave. Amzat et al. (2021) refer to Kebbi (2018) who distinguishes between two types of support, namely internal and external. Internal support is found within the

individual and includes psychological and behavioural patterns, like finding solace in religion. These authors assert that it is expected of teachers “to adopt a proactive attitude towards work by seeking hope in failure”. They feel that teachers need to have positive attitudes that will help them to deal with stressful situations by identifying the roots of stress. External support has to do with both social and didactic resources. Social support is sought from colleagues and school leadership, whereas didactic resources refer to teaching media that assists the teacher in the teaching-learning situation. Recreation, time management and team building are other sources of external support that assist the teacher in managing stress.

Schäfer, Pels and Kleinert (2020:35) mention four categories of coping methods, namely a focus on positives (such as humour, acceptance of a situation, exercise); support (such as found in relationships and religion); active coping (where an action-based plan is followed to deal with stress) and evasive coping (by avoiding confrontation, venting of emotions or self-blame). These authors also mention other classifications of coping, such as adaptive and maladaptive or functional and dysfunctional approaches to coping. They also believe that each person has a choice to address how a stressful situation is handled and point out that the choice depends on one’s resources such as social skills, positive attitudes and financial situation (Schäfer et al., 2020:36).

Researchers agree that it is the responsibility of schools to curb teachers’ stress levels and ensure their staff’s well-being by offering programmes or training in dealing with stress or providing active support in difficult situations. Kavenuke (2013:171) advises that schools should focus on teachers’ personal and professional achievement and concludes that this is one factor that makes good teachers stay in the profession. In this regard, Marais-Opperman et al. (2021) warn that although there are teachers who cope well with challenges, many of them think about leaving the profession.

2.2.3 The 21st Century

Never, in the history of mankind, has there been such an unprecedented amount of change and progress in the world as in the 21st century. Shafie, Majid and Ismail (2019:24) ascribe this unequalled global advancement in terms of the development of

information and communication technology (ICT) and the expansion of technology in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) that involves “highly disruptive technologies, such as artificial intelligence, the Internet of things, robotics and virtual reality”. These authors claim that this 4IR technology will eventually change every system in the world as we know it, especially job requirements. Therefore, they advise that learners and students be equipped with 21st century skills that will enable them to do work that technology cannot replace (Shafie et al., 2019:25). Vista (2020) reports that the term *21st Century skills* can also be referred to as “transferable/transversal or cross-functional/cross-cutting skills” and regards this as an umbrella term that encompasses those skills necessary for the current century. Tican and Deniz (2019:181) concur when saying “globalization, technology, migration, international competition, changing markets, international environment and political changes” necessitate the acquisition of a set of skills to be relevant in the 21st century. They talk about a form of “universal literacy” consisting of skills such as teamwork, critical thinking, problem-solving and creativity. According to Van Laar, Van Deursen and Van Dijk de Haan (2020:1), 21st century employees must be willing to do job-hopping and be ready to acquire relevant digital skills for specific jobs, being “technical, communication and information”. Bakir (2019:596) points to the fact that “many pieces of existing knowledge become obsolete in as short as three to five years” and concludes that skills are required that enable people to adapt to “rapid changes and developments”, use the information they acquire in their lives, and thus, be able to participate in the society, make the right decisions, be productive and pursue their lives in the society”.

It is therefore crucial that teachers be familiar with various educational approaches and understand how to implement information and communication technologies and integrate technology into their teaching. They ought also to develop these competencies in their learners so they too, can meet the demands of a 21st century working environment.

2.3 CONTEXTUAL ORIENTATION

The World Development Report (WDR) (2018), released by the World Bank Group, highlights that there is a learning crisis in global education and illustrates this statement by asserting that millions of children, particularly in low income and

developing countries, are still unable to do the three Rs, namely reading, writing and arithmetic, despite several years of schooling. Furthermore, UNESCO (2020) confirms that approximately 175 million young people, most of them from poor countries, cannot read. This report calculates that the economic burden of children not learning translates into a loss of \$129 billion, and explains that approximately 37 countries are losing more than half the amount they spend on education. This is all due to children that are not learning or completing their school careers. Montoya (2018) reports that central and Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa are most affected by this learning crisis, with most learners between 12 and 14 years who are unable to read. Climate change, a lack of innovative coronavirus illness vaccines, displacement, school attacks, and a lack of internet connectedness are among the reasons stated by Paul (2021). Hodal (2018) advises that if the world wants to meet educational targets, the key problems such as the lack of access to school, the failure of schools to retain their learners, and literacy levels should be addressed. Hodal (2018) mentions that only half of all developing countries have the metrics to measure learning at the end of learners' primary and secondary school careers, which makes it difficult to evaluate all learners' academic progress.

The education crisis also affects high-income countries. UNESCO (2020) reports that the minimum standard grades in Grade 4 and Grade 8 were achieved by almost all children from moneyed households in New Zealand whereas only two-thirds of poor learners achieved standard grades. Therefore, it seems that educational success is linked to socioeconomic status. To understand the current state of the South African education system, it is imperative first to discuss the historical-political background (pre-democracy) which moulded the education system, and the impact it still has on the current education system (post-democracy).

2.3.1 A Brief Overview of the South African Education Landscape: Pre- and Post-democracy

During the previous *apartheid* regime, the education of white children was prioritised in terms of, amongst others, resources and teacher qualifications, while the education of other populations groups was neglected. Bloch (2011:38) puts it succinctly:

Apartheid was a demand for separation, for racially institutionalized superiority along with the protectionism and affirmative action for whites through the state. This position of privilege was evident in the unequal funding, where for every R10 spent on a white learner, a mere R1 was spent on a black learner.

Spaull (2015:34) therefore remarks that the correlation between education and wealth implies “that generally speaking, poorer learners in South Africa perform worse academically”. Jansen (2009:54) explains that although there were great investments in black education, it still was not nearly enough to give black learners even a quarter of the education that white learners received. Due to this dominant order, schools became a site of struggle and resistance. Instability ruled and deep scars of this open conflict were carried over generationally even after the first democratic government, came to power in 1994 (Jansen, 2009:51).

Due to the inequalities of the apartheid era and the inability of the new government to implement policies, amongst other reasons, the South African education system is presently in dire straits (Cherrington, 2017; Mobius, 2017; Spaull, 2015; De Vos, 2013; De Lange, 2008). South Africa primarily has a system of government education. This implies that the majority of schools are government-supported. i.e.maintained at public expense for the free education of the children of a community or district. This includes primary and secondary schools (DBE, 2010). De Vos and Kirsten (2015:1) believe that the public education system is incapable of producing the skills required for job creation, which without results in a high poverty rate. The instability of this system is manifested in the “inefficient allocation of resources and investments in infrastructure, as well as the failure to retain skilled personnel within the education sector” (Mlambo & Adetiba, 2020:153). These authors also mention overcrowded classrooms and poor working conditions as the main challenges that teachers face (Mlambo & Adetiba, 2020:154). Du Plessis (2019:24) points out, “From its inception, South Africa’s school

system has treated learners differently, depending on their race and social class. Today, despite gains in educational opportunities, significant gaps in academic achievement persist among groups”.

De Vos and Kirsten (2015) also mention that most government schools in South Africa are dysfunctional, with Molio (2019:6) estimating that 60% to 80% of schools can be regarded as debilitated. Bloch (2011:52) explains that most South African schools are not producing the necessary outcomes and Roodt (2019:1) states that “children attending South African schools [that] fare poorly on almost every metric and are ill-prepared for the world after school”. This author also claims that most Grade 1s are unlikely to matriculate and that even a smaller number complete their Grade 12 year with good marks in Mathematics. In this regard, Schmidt and Mestry (2019:347) report that in the previous year, approximately 21 000 Grade 1s failed their first school year, which Molele (2020) finds “most worrying” as it leads to over-aged learners that are at least two years older than their cohort in a specific grade”. Misselhorn (2018) postulates that 50% of children do not complete their school careers and mentions that one of the reasons for the high drop-out rate among children is their caregivers who can no longer afford to provide for children’s basic needs.

Bloch (2011:12) furthermore mentions that South-African learners regularly underachieve in global standardised assessment. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) released a report in 2015 that ranked the South African education system 74th out of 76 countries. These rankings were determined by analysing learners’ Mathematics and Science marks. In the Global Information Technology Report (2016), released by the World Economic Forum (WEF) South Africa was ranked last in Science and Mathematics and finished 137th out of 139 countries in terms of the overall quality of its education system (Von Fintel, 2016). Similarly, the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) showed that South African learners consistently scored in the bottom three countries in a range of tests (Writer, 2020). TIMSS is an assessment of the Mathematics and Science knowledge of fourth and eighth-grade learners around the world. In South Africa, the assessment is conducted among Grade 5 and Grade 9 learners in public and independent schools. Furthermore, Mullis, Martin and Sainsbury (2016:14) report that South Africa was placed last out of 50 countries that participated in PIRLS (Progress

in International Reading Literacy Study). Howie, Combrinck, Roux, Tshele, Mokoena and Palane (2017:3) explain that “PIRLS assesses reading comprehension and monitors trends in reading literacy at five-year intervals.

Roodt (2019) notes that numerous South African schools have inadequate facilities and poor-quality teaching, which implies the ill-preparation of learners for the world after school that may lead to vicious cycle of poverty and unemployment. Subsequently, a discussion of the school system in South Africa merits attention to illustrate the inequality that this system perpetuates.

There are two main types of school in South Africa, namely independent/private schools, which are not owned by the South African government, and public schools, which are owned by the government. Summarising the nature of a private school, Baum, Cooper and Lusk-Stover (2018:100) describe these schools as being funded by parents who pay extremely high school fees that are managed by the school governing body (SGB) that determines the annual fees and regulates how the money is spent. These fees are far higher than those of government-funded schools, and classes are smaller, with approximately 15 learners per class. Most classes have a teacher and an assistant teacher, resources are more plentiful and offer a greater range of unique activities, ranging from rock climbing to surfing. De Klerk, Le Grange, De Klerk and Pretorius (2020) regard these types of school, together with some urban/public schools as “well-functioning schools” that are also “culturally inclusive” in terms of diversity in learner population and equipping learners with the necessary skills to become “well-functioning adults”. Because schools are religion-neutral zones and may foster an appreciation of spirituality only, Davids (2019:44, 45) mentions that various faiths make use of private schools to further their doctrines and believes that “all such faith-based schools served apartheid’s segregationist agenda” while they also meet the religious and communal needs of faith-based communities.

According to the DBE (2020), South Africa had 1 922 private schools at the end of 2019. These schools are usually situated in affluent areas, but COVID-19 has also influenced these institutions and some of them had to close. Inner-city schools are generally situated in affluent suburbs. Children who attend these schools have access to high-quality resources and proper infrastructure like halls, libraries, computers and

well-maintained sports fields and facilities. The abundant facilities at these schools contribute positively to higher learner achievement and consistency. These schools' profile has changed profoundly in the democratic era as the schools were initially intended to serve the white community exclusively. Inner-city teachers in the pre-democratic era had generally received proper teacher training, which most black teachers were deprived of. These schools still boast high-quality facilities and well-trained teachers to serve ECEC programmes. These schools are categorised as Quintile 4 to Quintile 5 schools, meaning the parents are expected to pay school fees for the upkeep of facilities and funding for additional academic staff employed by the SCB (Chetty, 2021:115).

The second type of school is classified as public school and entails urban/inner-city schools, township schools and rural schools. Makoelle and Burmistrova (2020) report that these schools are “ranked according to the socioeconomic status of the surrounding community, the physical conditions at the school, and the population census of the area served by the school”. Ranking meant that schools were divided into five quintiles, where Quintile 1 to Quintile 3 schools are the poorest and receive the most financial support from the government, and Quintile 5 schools are situated in affluent areas and receive the least funding from the government (Chetty, 2021:113). Therefore, unlike private schools, public schools receive government funding and parents do not pay school fees. About urban schools, Slabbert and Naudé (2018:363) explain that “the communities of these schools represent families from a variety of low to high-income groups, resulting in a learner-base with varied social-economic statuses”. They are, however, administered and funded largely by the government body i.e. the parents. The school fees vary and therefore these schools have different teacher/learner ratios and facilities. Köhler (2020:3) reports that in general, South African public schools have very large class sizes “even by developing country standards”.

Township schools are located on the outskirts of urban areas and contain large populations with small portions of land. Chetty (2021:113) remarks the following:

The histories of the regions and the housing structures for township residents have created conditions and circumstances of adversity that

continue to the present-day. Young children in these environments usually attend township schools that are dysfunctional because of generally high poverty in the communities. Parents who can afford school fees usually enrol their children at inner-city and city schools. Township settlements suffer widespread unemployment and high levels of HIV infections, violence, crime, and abuse. Schools erected in townships are mostly of substandard quality (Chetty, 2021:113).

Many of these schools are characterised by varying degrees of poverty; therefore, most schools do not charge fees and are allocated a larger amount of funding from the national budget per learner to make up for the fees that would have been charged (Education Policy: School Fees, 2019). Du Plessis (2019:23) mentions that these schools usually lack resources and teachers are often unqualified and deliver poor-quality teaching. Buildings at these schools “are not properly maintained and dusty fields usually serve as playgrounds”. Matika (2021:1) similarly refers to crucial facilities to ensure effective teaching are lacking and mentions libraries, laboratories, and computer rooms. Most township schools do not have sport fields that cater for extra-mural activities and play an integral part in the learning process.

In 2015 there were 11 252 reported rural schools, with the majority in the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, and Limpopo (Gina, 2015). These schools are regarded as the poorest schools in South Africa. According to the Department of Basic Education (2017:15):

...rural refers to areas that consist of the tribal lands controlled by traditional leaders as well as agricultural areas. While rural usually refers to settings that are sparsely populated and where agriculture is the major means of economic activity, the concept also includes areas of dense settlement created by colonial and apartheid-driven land settlements. Several ‘mining’ areas where mining is no longer active also fall into this category (DBE, 2017:15).

Rural schools are attended by mostly black children whose parents are employed as farm labourers (Chetty, 2021:114). The communities in which these schools are located are rife with poverty and economic hardship, largely a legacy of apartheid.

“Before 1994, most rural children lived far away from the school buildings and many had to walk to their schools, causing the daily attendance to be draining and stressful experiences for the children. Consequently, many rural school children never finished their schooling” (Chetty, 2021:114, 115). Evans and Ngatia (2021:705) claim that in developing countries such as South Africa, children face numerous barriers to accessing basic education and found school fees, which include school uniforms, to be among the major obstacles to education. Another barrier is the transportation issue. The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC, 2018) reports that concerns around access, safety, affordability and reliability of learner transportation are looming and continue to make headlines in South Africa. Whether caregivers cannot afford transport or are concerned about safety and reliability, transport problems are one of the key concerns when looking at the education statistics.

This sketches a dim picture of schools where neither teachers nor learners would want to spend their time. The overall low educational achievement level is the main reason for unemployment among youth in South Africa. The youth unemployment rate is 60% or higher in many communities, and this is evidence that without a matriculation certificate the unemployment rate will rise (Bloch, 2011:69). Roodt (2019:11) opines, “As long as South Africa is burdened with poor education, these problems will remain with us”. Van der Berg and Gustafsson (2019:25) points to the reciprocal relationship between poverty and education when explaining that the lack of education results in workers being unable to participate fully in the South African economy and reiterates that education to the poor is characterised by low quality. Jojo (2019) concurs when saying that the majority of South Africans are poor because they are uneducated. In this sense, Sen (2001:506) defines poverty as an inability to function effectively in society. Access to employment opportunities decreases with lower levels of education, and earnings are lower for people with lower education levels (Van den Berg, 2019:3). Although education receives the largest part of the national budget, the lack of accountability and poor quality of teaching influence this investment (Misselhorn, 2018; Bloch, 2011). The DBE acknowledges that 41% of schools are in a poor state and backlogs of maintenance work have been R153 billion (Bloch, 2011:74). Based on the departmental figures the following are mere examples of some of the backlogs (Yates, 2018):

- 269 schools have no electricity
- 8702 schools have pit toilets
- 37 schools are without any sanitation facilities
- 7816 are without piped water
- 70% of schools have no library services
- 81% are without laboratories

Considering the preceding, I ask how do these educational challenges affect teachers in South Africa? The shortage of motivated teachers is one of the contributing factors of the still stance of the education system. This problem is on the increase due to the high attrition rate of teachers (Ingersoll, 2001), which Hong (2011:17) contends, is reported around the world regardless of differences in educational systems. It is not surprising that Bloch (2011:17) highlights the importance of teachers saying that they should be the number one priority in education if the school system is going to succeed. A discussion of the South African teacher is therefore warranted.

2.3.2 Profile of the Current South African Teacher

Creating a profile of the South African teacher is nearly impossible for the following reasons: First, Beckmann and Kulow (2018:117) claim that such a profile does not yet exist and that the Department of Basic Education (DBE) admitted in Parliament that they are “in the process of capturing the full profiles of all educators in South Africa”. Answering another question in Parliament, the Department pleaded ignorance regarding whether teachers are qualified to teach the subjects allocated to them. Venter and Viljoen (2020:268) also lament that data on teachers is scarce, and when available, is often “flawed, fragmented and conflicting”. Considering the level of inequity in the education system in terms of socioeconomic influences, types of schools, qualification levels of teachers as well as demographic and geographic factors, a comprehensive database would allow a bird’s eye view of the general traits of the South African teacher, and is pivotal in drawing inferences and making recommendations for any form of educational advancement.

According to an information piece issued by the DBE, School Realities 2019, the following is available:

Table 2.1: Number of learners, educators, and schools in the ordinary school sector, by province, in 2019

Province	Public			Independent			Public and Independent					
	Learners	Educators	Schools	Learners	Educators	Schools	Learners	As % of National Total	Educators	As % of National Total	Schools	As % of National Total
Eastern Cape	1 770 289	60 462	5 205	73 525	3 811	225	1 843 814	14.1	64 273	14.4	5 430	21.7
Free State	697 334	22 978	1 085	18 746	1 049	71	716 080	5.5	24 027	5.4	1 156	4.6
Gauteng	2 151 095	70 344	2 071	296 282	17 384	742	2 447 377	18.8	87 728	19.7	2 813	11.3
KwaZulu-Natal	2 784 917	93 648	5 821	59 847	3 915	215	2 844 764	21.8	97 563	21.9	6 036	24.1
Limpopo	1 687 376	50 916	3 773	66 443	3 103	158	1 753 819	13.4	54 019	12.1	3 931	15.7
Mpumalanga	1 067 583	35 316	1 679	27 358	1 663	116	1 094 941	8.4	36 979	8.3	1 795	7.2
Northern Cape	293 315	10 185	546	5 573	468	37	298 888	2.3	10 653	2.4	583	2.3
North West	829 336	26 564	1 451	23 253	1 448	85	852 589	6.5	28 012	6.3	1 536	6.1
Western Cape	1 127 510	36 588	1 445	61 416	5 015	273	1 188 926	9.1	41 603	9.4	1 718	6.9
South Africa	12 408 755	407 001	23 076	632 443	37 856	1 922	13 041 198	100.	444 857	100.	24 998	100.0

According to this table, there were 13 041 198 learners in ordinary public and independent schools in South Africa in 2019; they attended 24 998 schools and were served by 444 857 educators. The Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) offers lean information on South African secondary school teachers that indicates the overall profile of the teacher corps in South Africa. Referring to biographical data, they claim that teachers are on average 43 years old, that 32% of teachers are above 50 years of age, which has implications for teacher provision within the next decade. When looking at the gender distribution of teachers, 60% of teachers are female; Armstrong (2019) reckons 64%.

Regarding career choice, teaching was the first choice for only 49% of teachers (the average of countries participating in this study being 69%). When citing reasons for joining the profession, 97% of these teachers cited the opportunity to influence children's development, and many considered the working conditions of the profession as motivating factors in joining. Ninety percent of teachers indicated that teaching offered a steady career path compared to 61% of teachers in other countries. In terms of relationships, 85% of teachers agreed that learners and teachers get along well, and 82% reported that they had good collegial relations.

Moving to teaching contexts, TALIS (2018:2) claims, "Among all countries and economies participating in TALIS, South Africa is the country where school safety incidents occur the most frequently and under several different forms", with reports of

intimidation and bullying amongst learners, use or possession of drugs and/or alcohol on school premises and high incidences of vandalism and theft. Resource shortages were also significantly higher than in other countries, especially shortages of library materials, digital technology, physical infrastructure and support personnel. The diversity of learners, especially regarding their linguistic background, merits more exploration. TALIS (2018) found that 60% of teachers teach in schools where the home language of more than 10% of learners is not the language of instruction and 11 percent of teachers teach in schools where at least 10% of learners are migrants. Additionally, 71% of teachers work in schools with over 30% of socioeconomically disadvantaged learners, which speaks to the poverty and/or inequality in South African society. Both Beckmann (2018) and Armstrong (2015) mention that 81% of teachers are adequately qualified.

These statistics suggest a challenging working environment for teachers and add credence to existing documentation claiming that the education system in South Africa is in a critical state. Bantwini (2019:718) found in her study that teachers, in general, have a “low morale” and attribute it to “the non-conducive environment in which teachers are obliged to work, as well as the high teaching workload”. Vos, Steyn, De Beer, Wolhuter and Persaud (2020:59) add that the poor social status of teachers also has a negative impact, which Armstrong (2015) ascribes to the “unattractive remuneration” of teachers when compared to non-teaching professionals. Spaul, an education specialist, does not agree. In an interview with the Financial Mail (25 February 2021), he says that the common perception is that teachers receive low salaries but claims that according to data from the government payroll (Consult Figure 2.3), the average teacher in South Africa is paid approximately R42000 per month (including benefits) and that teachers over 50 receive a total package of R47 874 per month.

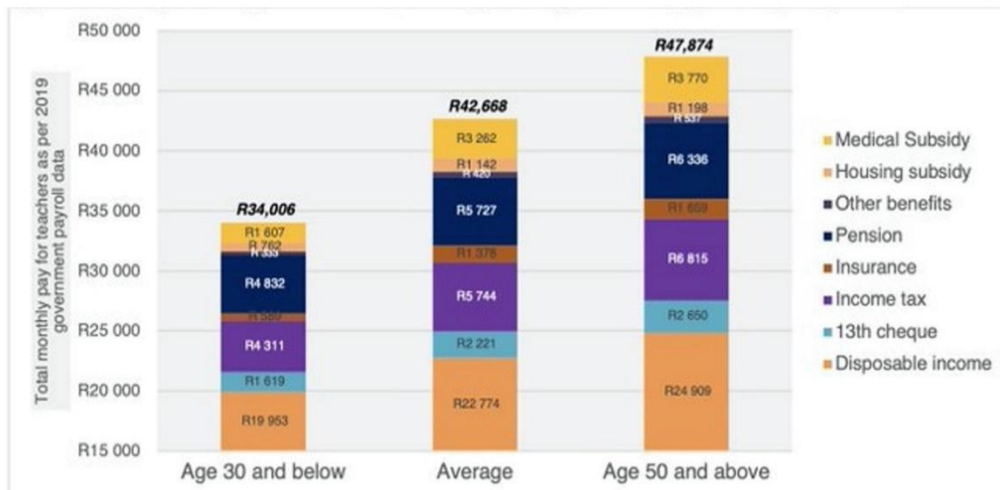


Figure 2.3: 2019 government payroll data: Monthly teacher pay in South Africa (Gustaffson & Maponya in Spaull, 2021)

Although it cannot be denied that numerous teachers should be lauded for their dedication to learners, hard work, and their ability to truly act *in loco parentis*, it is also a fact that many teachers are responsible for the poor image of the profession as well as the low-quality teaching some learners receive. Referring to the poor image of the profession, Vos et al. (2020) point to the increasing incidence of teachers contributing to a very negative image of the teaching profession. Complaints against teachers vary from sexual offenses, violence and fraud to reports of cases of endemic absenteeism (usually on a Monday or Friday). In this regard, Mosa (2020) claims that between 10 to 12% of teachers are absent each day, amounting to approximately 39 000 teachers who are not in class daily. Coupled with absenteeism, Armstrong (2015:12) alludes to “low teacher effort” as a significant challenge to the South African education system. This kind of unprofessional conduct is so rife in the country that Armstrong sets out to generalise when concluding: “Indeed, high levels of absence from classrooms, poor lesson preparation and very low levels of interest in the progress of learners are key signs that teacher effort is critically low in South Africa” (Ibid).

Although it is beyond the scope of this study to delve into the determinants of quality education, it should be stated that it is widely accepted that the quality of education depends on the quality of teachers (Venter & Viljoen, 2020:266). Beckmann (2018:14) aptly remarks that a qualified teacher does not necessarily equate to a quality teacher. It seems as if numerous Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes are well below

par and “that most of the current teaching force has been inadequately educated and trained, whether during apartheid or in the recent past”. Nakidien, Singh and Sayed (2021:3) contend that teachers’ beliefs, more than anything else, impact their educational behaviour. These beliefs are formed by “a long history of separate development, social division, and legally enforced discrimination, particularly in education” and require teacher professional development programmes “to align teachers’ beliefs with the values of citizenship and social cohesion” (Ibid). Beckmann (2018) refers to Hattie (2003) and Hanushek (2011) who believe that neither a new curriculum, nor abundant resources, nor impressive infrastructure or higher salaries have any impact on the improvement of teaching; only the quality of educators can be a determining factor in quality education.

Beckmann (2018:7) contends that definitions of *educator* “locate an educator in a specific place such as a public school, refer to an educator’s appointment in a post, and indicate that an educator teaches, educates, or trains other people, or provides educational services”. The moulding or developing role of the teacher in his/her relationship with learners is also implied in these definitions. I now provide a description of a *South African learner*.

2.3.3 Profile of the Current South African Learner

To explore the profile of the current South African learner, it was deemed necessary to see whether the South African learner corps can be regarded as a specific generation with its accompanying traits.

The Generation Theory, developed by Strauss and Howe (1993) was reviewed, as these authors contend that every generation “has a common set of beliefs and behaviours, a common location in history and a common perceived membership”, which shapes attitudes and values. This theory also postulates that to ensure success in any field, institutions or organisations must accommodate these specific trends that occur in different generations (McArthur-Grill, 2011:1). This author furthermore distinguishes between a generation and a cohort by defining a generation as a specific group that was formed by a set of historical events or cultural episodes, whereas a cohort refers to a group of individuals who were born at the same time and who share the same experiences. In other words, a generation can consist of a few cohorts. Duh

and Struwig (2015:190) note that cohorts “are [thus] defined by the external events that occurred during formative years”.

According to DelCampo, Haggerty, Haney and Knippel (2011:5), generations are defined as a group of people who share similar experiences during the first 20 to 23 years of their lives, which results in developing attitudes and core values that distinguish them from other generations. Cilliers (2017:189) mentions that generally five general trends can be distinguished in the generation typology, namely (1) The traditionalists (1928 - 1944); (2) The baby boomer generation (1945 - 1965); (3) Generation X (1965 - 1979), (4) Generation Y (1980 - 1995) and (5) Generation Z (1995 - 2010) who are currently still at school.

This typology lists the major distinguishing characteristics of these cohorts. The last cohort relates to this study. Most learners who are populating the school desks today are those who were born from 1995 to 2010, being referred to as Generation Z – learners whose worlds have “completely been shaped by the Internet” – also referred to as “digital natives, the Net Generation, or iGeneration” (Seemiller & Grace, 2016:26). Cilliers (2017:189) also calls them “digital natives” since they were the first generation born into a world of the Internet where they are globally connected, therefore “living and breathing technology”. The implication is that this generation has been born in a highly technological era, where they need only one device to transfer them from a physical to virtual reality (Seemiller & Grace, 2016:27). Rothman (2016:190) mentions that the brains of Generation Z differ from those of other generations in the sense that “the part of the brain responsible for visual ability is far more developed, making visual forms of learning more effective”.

Various authors attempted to develop a particular educational profile by which to classify this generation. The single distinguishing trait in comparison with other generations is their digital proficiency. Tolman (2019:9, 19) explains that Gen Z learners demand immediate access to all information, with an expectation to “provide and receive real-time feedback” and to have access to feedback from their peers. This generation values their institutions and authority figures such as teachers. Rothman (2016:4, 5) presents an extensive educational profile of these learners and postulates that they want fast and exciting delivery of learning content and prefer interactive

multimedia to keep their interest. They prefer continuous assessment, immediate feedback, rewards, challenges, and positive reinforcement. Because of their acquired skill of multitasking, they have a short attention span, becoming easily bored and therefore challenging to teach. Their experience with online games equips them with problem-solving skills and they find solutions by trial and error. Because of the availability of numerous data sources, they tend to give quick answers and are not willing to go for the lengthier problem-solving approach. They are victims of false facts as they rely on search engines for their information, rather than visiting a library, which requires too much effort. They do not want strict rules that may constrict them but prefer a flexible approach where their creativity can be expressed. They can be regarded as independent learners and are more reflective than other generations – therefore they need options to choose from to personalise their learning.

Rothman (2015:5) furthermore notes the challenges involved in teaching this generation, as they are “digital” and their teachers are often “digital immigrants” who are not apt in facilitating but still tend to “put knowledge into students’ heads” (Rothman, 2015:5). Perensky (2009:1) explained digital immigrants as “a way of understanding the deep differences between the young people of today and many of their elders.” He highlights the problem that often teachers are not as proficient as learners when using technology and experience discomfort as they should prepare these learners for the future, but they often do not have the same knowledge and experience as their learners have in this domain. “There is a need to provide meaningful, tech-focused, professional development for instructors as they transition from a traditional learning model to one that is transformational (Ibid). Cilliers (2017:195) believes that this generation expects “a teaching environment in which they can interact in a similar way they do in their virtual worlds. This implies a demand for instant information, visual forms of learning and replacing “communication” with “interaction”. Rothman (2016:190) posits that teaching styles such as lecturing and group discussions are strongly disliked, as they prefer interactive games, challenges and collaborative projects to keep them interested.

The question can be posed whether the typical Generation Z that is portrayed in international literature – mostly in American literature – can also be found in South Africa. Can such a diverse population, especially in terms of race and class

distinctions, be generalised in terms of a specified description? More specifically, can a general profile of the South African learner be established? McArthur-Grill (2011:15) refers to Nattrass who states that South Africa's "long history of informal and formal racial segregation has left the country deeply divided into spatial, economic, cultural and attitudinal terms along racial lines" and that any deliberation on South African society should take cognisance of these differences.

Duh and Struwig (2015:91, 92) doubt that the South African society can form generational cohorts based on the whole population when measured against the following conditions as set by Schewe and Meredith (2004):

- Coming-of-age-events: similar experiences of groups of individuals during their formative years. Examples are what type of music these individuals listen to, the kind of clothes they wear, and so forth.
- Mass communication: All individuals have to have access to mass media such as radio, television and newspapers to experience the impact of an event or circumstances. If not, it "reduces the credibility and the impact of the events on sentiments, attitudes and values" (Duh & Struwig, 2015:92).
- Literacy: Education has a profound effect on the development of cohorts. Therefore, illiteracy can prevent comprehending the impact of significant events, and therefore is unlikely to influence attitudes and values.
- Social consequences: "An event will qualify as a cohort-defining one when it has societal consequences" (Duh & Struwig, 2015:92).

South Africa is considered the most unequal society in the world (Scott, 2019). Due to this inequality of South African society, the country only meets the fourth condition for cohort formation since the impact of apartheid still lingers. This divisive system continues to have a devastating effect on the livelihood of millions of South Africans. The ramifications of this former ideology still impact education and heighten the challenges that teachers experience as it has created an enormous divide in many learners' circumstances and consequently also their abilities. Hendricks (2020:217) quotes Jabbar and Menashy (2021:2) who poetically remark the following:

South Africa is a land of hope, opportunity, and most manifestly, a land of unadulterated inequality. This inequality is most prevalent in the education system. Leafy suburbs boast world-class institutions and top-of-range facilities, whilst neighbouring township schools are often victims of violence, poor infrastructure and a lack of resources (Jabbar & Menashy, 2021:2).

Spaull (2012:14) puts it differently when he claims: “South Africa is still a tale of two schools: One which is functional, wealthy, and able to educate students; with the other being poor, dysfunctional, and unable to equip students with the necessary numeracy and literacy skills they should be acquiring in primary school”. These statements also encompass the South African learner, whose profile is defined by the antitheses embedded in the context in which they are situated – with specific reference to the socioeconomic background and quality education. Although learners can choose which schools they want to attend, Maistry and Africa (2020:1) contend that “the more economically able have greater latitude to exercise this choice, while the poor (mainly Black-African) learners remain in poor schools with poor infrastructure”. Ogbonnaya and Awuah (2019:107) report on research indicating that learners in better-equipped schools performed significantly better than those in poor areas and that these schools also have a much higher dropout rate than affluent schools.

Macha and Kadakia (2017:11) mention that any progress by the current government is “uniformly viewed as insufficient to the needs of the country” and “by any objective standard, failing”. Supporting attestation has already been presented in the literature review, but just to illustrate once again, the TIMMS report (2016) discloses that “a shocking 27% of pupils who have attended school for six years cannot read. After five years of school about half cannot work out that 24 divided by three is eight”. The disparity between rural and urban settings is also noticeable. Macha and Kadakia (2017:12) refer to a report claiming that 41% of all Grade 6 rural learners are functionally illiterate, compared to 13% of learners attending urban schools. Spaull (2015:36) furthermore refers to 2014 statistics when he claims that up to Grade 9, there were approximately one million learners in each grade, but in Grade 12, only 532 860 learners wrote the matriculation examination. This means that 50% of learners dropped out of school during the preceding years.

Amnesty International (2020) also reports that apart from lack of quality education, other barriers that many learners face relate to transport. Numerous children in low-income groups must spend between 30 to 60 minutes walking to school. In KwaZulu-Natal, more than 210 000 learners must walk for more than an hour to school and another back home, and 659 000 between 30 minutes to an hour. Learners in the lowest income groups are also more likely to walk to school than those in the highest income group. In KwaZulu-Natal alone, where more learners walk to school than in any other province, more than 210 000 pupils walk to school and back for more than an hour, and 659 000 walk for between 30 and 60 minutes. When arriving at school, they are often taught in overcrowded classrooms.

Another factor impeding learners' performance concerns parental involvement. Although this topic is also discussed as one of the challenges that teachers experience (Consult Section 2.3.4) as well as an institutional force (Consult Section 3.2.2), it also has an impact on the academic life of learners and needs mentioning here. The benefits of school-home partnerships and parental involvement are well documented. Many teachers complain of uninvolved parents; especially in rural areas illiterate parents cannot assist their children academically as they do. They do not have the academic capacity. Munje and Mncube (2018:81) make the important point that learners should also be supported socially and emotionally and that too much focus is placed on academic standards. They believe that parental involvement is an untapped resource that schools do not utilise and blame teacher training for not preparing teacher students in dealing with "family-school-community partnerships". This results in schools that "are unable to delineate parental roles from those of the school, thus introducing conflict where there ought to be a collaboration" (Munje & Mncube, 2018:82).

Having discussed the current position and status of the two main role players in the teaching-learning situation, the challenges that teachers face daily need to be explored.

2.3.4 Challenges of the South African Teacher in the 21st Century

The education system in South Africa (SA) is perceived to be expensive, inefficient, and underperforming when compared to the education systems of other developing

and even under-developed countries. Even worse, the system has not lived up to the problems of the day nor benefited from international developments (Booyse et al., 2011). Despite the large amounts spent on education, a multitude of problems have been identified that undermine the success-level of the South African education system and these include: a shortage of skilled and well-trained teachers, lack of community aid and parental support as well as a shortage of resources (South African Government, 2015). Moreover, classrooms remain overcrowded while the dropout rate is increasing at an alarming rate (Naape & Matlasedi, 2020).

To get an indication of the working conditions of teachers, Kyriacou (2001:30) advises that the education system of a particular country, the school environment in which the teacher teaches as well as the personal surroundings of the teacher be taken into account. In other words, working conditions in a specific sector are not a universal phenomenon but are informed by contextual factors that determine the type of challenges that teachers experience.

Teacher challenges can be divided into two categories: general challenges and context-specific challenges. General challenges refer to challenges that are experienced by the vast majority of teachers in a specific country, regardless of the context of the school, whereas context-specific challenges refer to the challenges a teacher experiences due to the context or specific geographical area of the school.

2.3.4.1 General challenges

South Africa is a particularly violent country. Steyn and Moen (2019:80) hold that schools can be regarded as microcosms of the broader communities in which they are situated and conclude that “the social ills prevalent in communities are known to permeate the school environment to various degrees”. Cornelissen (2016:34) warns that violence and disruptive learner behaviour are on the increase in South African schools, which is echoed by Netshitangani (2018:162) when arguing that “schools have inadvertently become territories for crime and violence, which poses a threat to the success of educational goals”.

Daily media reports on pupil-on-pupil/teacher violence, homicide and rape are common, raising the question whether South African schools are safe (Zuze, Reddy,

Juan, Hannan, Visser & Winnaar, 2016:1). These incidents most commonly take place on the school premises. Focusing on the safety of teachers within the school environment, Masuka and Monama (2019) report on learners attacking teachers. An incident was reported on 4 February 2022 where a learner together with his parents assaulted a teacher for reporting bad behaviour experienced from the learner (IOL, 2022). Another incident was reported on 13 March 2018 where Grade 11 learners assaulted teachers and the school principal (Modupe, 2018). In a video that went viral in 2019, one can see a group of boys taking turns attacking a teacher in class (Mokgolo, 2019).

The Education Union of South Africa (EUSA) reports that at least 50 teachers are attacked or threatened by learners per month. From May 2018 to June 2019, more than 600 cases of violence in schools had been reported to the EUSA offices. The South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) reports that their offices handle up to 72 000 incidents of school-based violence every month. These incidences refer to physical violence, verbal violence, cyberbullying, and are both learner and teacher-based violence. It is with good reason that South African teachers feel unsafe while teaching.

In addition to feeling unsafe, teachers have been taking on more social responsibility by stepping in for a generation of learners enduring depression and other mental illnesses as well as abuse on various levels (Devon, 2016). Teachers also need to deal with teenage pregnancies, which, together with sexual abuse, are a reality in South Africa with the Gauteng Health Department recording more than 23 000 teenage pregnancies between April 2020 and March 2021 (News 24, 2021). Referring to sexual assault, the Annual Crime Statistics of 2019/2020 presented by the South African Police Service (SAPS) stated that more than 24 000 children were sexually assaulted in this period. It should then not be surprising that teachers' mental health is jeopardised.

Together with the increasing social responsibility of teachers, discipline problems have also become a serious reality. In an extensive research study, it was found that South African teachers reported that the most common difficulty they face in class is

disruptive behaviour that includes acting out, cheekiness, disrespect, cheating, bullying, hyperactivity and physical fighting (Robarts, 2011:17).

Teachers also struggle to teach effectively in overcrowded classrooms. South African schools struggle to keep the legislated learner-teacher ratio of 40:1 (primary schools) and 35:1 (secondary schools) and end up with the number of learners per class being between 50 and 70 (Marais, 2016:1). The challenge increases with the shortage of textbooks where e.g. only 31,26% of learners in Mpumalanga received textbooks in the academic year of 2018 (Govender, 2019). The Mail and Guardian (2012) reported that 80% of a sample of 200 schools were not provided with enough textbooks in the year 2012. The fight continues where numerous provinces reported that they did not receive enough textbooks for 2019 to teach their learners effectively (Govender, 2019).

Moreover, learner absenteeism challenges teachers to ensure that content is being conveyed to all learners. The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) reports that in 2016, about 74% of public school learners walked to school. Walking to school as well as fatigue poses a risk to personal safety when the learner needs to concentrate. When bad weather or a sick parent/caregiver or sibling arises, many learners stay at home, which leads to many learners being left behind academically. Beyond this, additional barriers include insufficient transport, which influences the learners' access to education as well as to safety (Amnesty International, 2020). Another reason for absence, particularly among boys, is initiation schools. Initiation school is a two- to six-month program that causes learners to fall behind academically (Mdluli, Kugara, Matshidze & Mawere, 2020).

Teaching in the middle of the global coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic was another recent issue for teachers. Although this study did not focus on the different challenges that COVID-19 brought to the teaching profession, a short overview is necessary to give a holistic view of the additional pressure that teachers face. In South Africa, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced a national lockdown on 23 March 2020 to minimise the spread of COVID-19 infection. One of the new regulations was to shut down all social activities including schools to prevent the spread of the virus (Akintolu, Dlamini & Olabedo, 2021:61). No-one expected the lockdown to last longer than the

initially announced (21 days), Teachers had to develop new teaching strategies and be adaptable and creative in order to teach learners virtually (Jansen & Framer-Phillips, 2021:12). In a study conducted by Jansen and Farmer-Phillips (2021), 65 teachers presented their teaching experience in the form of narratives by focusing on how their teaching was framed during the pandemic conditions and the challenges they encountered. The predominant three challenges included balancing schoolwork and family life; blended learning and the socioeconomic challenges (that include the lack of technological materials to continue online classes) and lastly, unqualified parents (Jonathan & Framer-Phillips, 2021:24).

Relating to the first challenge, data collected in April 2020 by Del Boca, Profeta and Rossi indicated that COVID-19 inflicted a considerable burden on parents/caregivers (Del Boca & Rossi, 2020:1013). The COVID-19 pandemic forced families to maintain a semblance of work-family balance with little support as stated by Fisher, Languilaire, Lawthom, Nieuwenhuis, Runswick-Cole & Yerkes (2020:249). Especially parents who were also teachers, not only had to attend to their regular teaching load, but also became responsible for their own children's education using home-schooling. This increased the difficulty to manage a healthy work-life balance (Fisher et al., 2020:250).

Exacerbating this challenge of remote teaching from home the socioeconomic hardship of households proved to be a major setback for teachers (Chogyel, Wangdi & Dema, 2021:3). Oyedotun (2020:1) explains that "online education was the only platform to keep the continuity of the education system during the pandemic despite difficulties". Stats SA (2017) reported that 75,9% of households had access to a smartphone, 36% to tablets, and 61,2% to laptops. These could be used for online teaching, but one needs data for online teaching to take place and this has financial implications on a household (Jansen & Farmer-Phillips, 2021:57).

Furthermore teachers had to take cognisance of unqualified parents. *Unqualified* in this sense means not having the relevant qualifications or skills to help or support their children with learning content. Parental levels of qualification differ in what they can offer, which made it difficult for some learners to master the content teachers provided, because their parents could not assist (Fisher et al., 2020:247).

2.3.4.2 Context-specific challenges

These challenges are specific to the context where teaching takes place; therefore the types of schools in the South African education system merit a discussion. The South African Schools Act (SASA, Act no. 84, 1996) lists two types of school, namely independent and public schools. In my discussion, I distinguished between private (independent) schools and public (government) schools, which include urban schools, township schools, and rural schools. The challenges that teachers experience are also specific to these two main types of school.

First, private or independent schools generally attract learners with different attitudes, needs and expectations. As the majority of these learners come from affluent families, they tend to regard the teacher as the service provider with them being clients – and in this context, the client is always right, and therefore the teacher is treated with minimal respect and acceptance (National School Public Relation Association, 2020). Although not all independent schools can be seen as financially strong or privilege, Ditch (2019) does report that private schools have to deal with more helicopter parents than government-owned schools do and refers to these parents as having their children as the sole focus of their attention. Frey and Tatum (2016:1) add that these parents tend to be over-protective and struggle to let their children “go”. Other than government-owned school teachers, who struggle with a lack of parental involvement or support (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019:2), private school teachers have to deal with helicopter parents daily. Baker and Di Carlo (2020) describes how teachers from private schools are bombarded with overinvolved parents who tend to micromanage their children, causing difficulties when discipline needs to be enforced or tasks need to be done individually at school.

Secondly, concerning teachers at public schools, Munje and Jutta (2019:25) postulates that aspects such as poverty, dysfunctional schools, and the inability of the government to supply the necessary teaching and learning resources, “exacerbates learner behaviour, which consequently shapes teacher professional conduct”. Munje (2019) furthermore mentions that teacher absenteeism had the result of approximately 40% of learning time lost annually. Another challenge, as mentioned by Du Plessis and Mestry (2019:1) refers to household poverty. Gardiner (2017:13) reports that

parents cannot afford necessities such as stationery, school uniforms and more, all of which impacts negatively on teaching. Preston and Barnes (2017:7) highlight that many parents are illiterate, therefore often not valuing learning or are unable to support their children academically.

Looking specifically at rural schools, Mlambo and Adetiba (2020:160) claim that “the ratio of teacher shortages in urban areas compared to rural areas is very significant and this undeniably contributes to a huge disadvantage for learners in rural areas”. Because of teacher shortages, or teachers being unqualified, multigrade teaching is also common in rural and township schools. Naparan and Alinsug (2021:101) define multi-grade teaching as one teacher teaching various grades in one classroom at the same time. The challenges of teaching a multi-grade class are complex, but the most relevant challenge is the delivery of the curriculum (Matshoba, 2011:41). Dube (2020:142) rightly remarks that it is not possible for one teacher effectively to teach different curricula in such a way that learners are empowered and meet the prescribed assessment standards (Dube, 2020:142). Disciplinary problems are therefore at the order of the day.

Another challenge that rural schools face, is the inability to attract and retain qualified teachers. Du Plessis (2019:24) concludes that learners attending rural schools do not receive quality education. Another challenge that Du Plessis and Mestry (2019:1) list, is insufficient funding from the state, which results in lack of resources, varying from no textbooks to inadequate classroom facilities where basic needs are not met. Moreover, the poor infrastructure and facilities complicate the teaching component as teachers need to find other means to communicate content effectively. Yates (2018) reports that the educational infrastructure in rural areas has been a crisis for multiple decades; Jansen (2009:34) claims that the lack of basic services and substandard infrastructure are barriers to quality education (Jansen, 2009:34). Du Plessis and Mestry (2019:6) conclude that many schools “lack the essential infrastructure to function as safe, efficient and effective schools”. De Klerk, Le Grange, De Klerk and Pretorius (2020) also report that teachers working in dysfunctional school systems are “less motivated and committed” “and point in this regard to the connection between teacher professionalism and poor learner performance in South Africa.

Furthermore, many learners go to school on an empty stomach and struggle to concentrate and then tend to disrupt the class (Hartman, 2017). Learner absenteeism is another challenge. Gardiner (2017) explains that learners are expected to carry out certain domestic tasks that interfere with the routines or timetables of schools. Kabanga and Mulauzi (2020) explain that many learners need to look after siblings or take care of a sick parent or caregiver, a practice that prevents them from attending school.

It is no wonder that Mendoza-Castejon, Fraile-Garcia, Diaz-Manzano, Fuentes-Garcia and Clement-Surez (2020:222) claim that rural and township teachers' emotional well-being is significantly impacted. Their study found that these teachers had considerably higher heart rates than their colleagues at independent schools, thereby indicating that they experience teaching as a high-stress profession. Hence, teaching in a South African school, regardless of its context, generate challenges that influence teachers' well-being.

2.3.5 Reasons why Teachers Leave or Stay in the Profession

The next section discusses the reasons why teachers decide to leave or stay in the teaching profession.

2.3.5.1 Teacher attrition

Because of numerous challenges as well as the status and position of teachers in society, many potential teachers do not want to enter the profession (Steyn & Kamper, 2015:265) and numerous teachers leave the profession (Shibiti, 2020). According to Räsänen, Pietarinen, Pyhälto, Soini and Väisänen (2020:838) teacher attrition has serious implications for learners and their learning, as well as for the school community.

Ingersol, Merril, Stuckey and Collins (2018:21) warn that the rate at which teachers are leaving the profession is much higher than any other profession, which Busby (2019) ascribes to teaching being one of the most stressful occupations worldwide. Agreeing with these authors, Shibiti (2020:1) reports that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) predicts that Sub-Saharan Africa will face consequential shortages of teachers in the near future.

Looking at the South African situation, the increase of learners demands 25 000 to 30 000 teachers every year, where the tertiary system supplies between 6 000 and 8 000 teachers only (Ibid).

Considering why teachers leave the profession, Samuel (2008:9) asserts that teachers today are under a great deal of social pressure, because of unrealistic expectations and demands, which he rightly attributes to "... the responsibilities being placed on teachers becoming increasingly unrealistic and unattainable". Dell'Angelo and Richardson (2019:362) mentions that in-depth studies have found that most teachers cite similar reasons for leaving – high levels of stress, absence of support, poor working conditions and negative teaching environments. She remarks, "This is particularly true in areas of high economic distress, as teachers in high-poverty rural or urban areas are more likely than their suburban counterparts to leave the profession". Packard (2020:13, 14) agrees and raises another point when claiming that when teachers leave "low-performing" schools, the quality of teaching remains poor, whereas the needs of learners are high. He reiterates, that these low-performing schools serving academically disadvantaged students have difficulty retaining teachers and furthermore mentions the correlation between teacher attrition and learner achievement.

Mlambo and Adetiba (2020:161) report the findings of their study and list factors such as low salaries, working conditions and inadequate job satisfaction as major causes for teachers leaving the profession. From their study, Kotze et al. (2020) cite several reasons why teachers leave the profession; these are listed in Table 2.2.

Table 2:2: Drivers of educator turnover (Kotze et al., 2020:306-311)

Rewards	Unpleasant work environment, lack of managerial support, low salaries, lack of recognition.
Career progress	Lack of investment in staff development programmes.
Job-person mismatch	Teaching subjects one is not qualified for or teaching in a phase that one is not trained for.

Private “corporate” culture	Disrespect for staff, minimal employment involvement; rigid policies.
Work-life balance	Not allowing teachers to do “justice to their maternal and other family responsibilities if they continue in their jobs” (Kotze et al., 2020:311).
Performance management	Promotion being based on seniority rather than on productivity, innovation and outcomes.

The literature refers to numerous reasons why teachers find the teaching profession intolerable, which will further be alluded to in the following chapter. However, many teachers find the teaching profession rewarding, and therefore remain, despite the challenges. I now address some of the reasons why teachers choose to stay in the classroom.

2.3.5.2 Teacher retention

When considering why students decide on teaching as a career, Richards (2012:299) claims that they want to make a difference in learners’ lives and want to experience meaning in their own lives. Many teachers regard teaching as a calling where they want to have a purpose and be relevant in children’s lives. A study conducted by Sanger and Osguthorpe (2013:184-186) also focused on the reasons why people initially choose teaching as a career. They identified four reasons, namely the desire to make a difference in a child’s life, being a positive role model, the desire to teach because they feel it is a calling and lastly because teaching is rewarding and challenging. Calling includes a sense of purpose, direction, the desire to be helpful and personal fulfilment (Dik, Duffy & Eldridge, 2009). “Teachers who report a presence of calling have a good sense of their interests and abilities, they are more likely to be mature in their career development process and they are more comfortable in making career decisions” (Willemse & Deacon, 2015:2).

Shibhiti (2020) mentions six retention factors identified by Döckel (2003), namely compensation (satisfactory salaries and alluring benefits); job characteristics (flexibility, autonomy); training and development opportunities (prospects for professional development); supervisor support (praise and appreciation, support when

challenges are experienced); career opportunities (career development opportunities) and work-life balance, which refers to the ability to manage work and life commitments. Similarly, Hughes (2012:245) reports that vacation time, working conditions, and helping learners are some of the reasons people choose teaching as a career. “Once in the workforce, teachers continue to assess the benefits of teaching compared with other employment options with a new understanding of the working conditions in teaching” (Hughes, 2012:245).

Furthermore, Van Stone (2019:22-24) found that working with children, supportive colleagues, and management together with a positive school climate all lead to experiencing job satisfaction and therefore lead to teacher retention. Teachers gain job satisfaction through meaningful interaction with learners and colleagues, professional autonomy, work conditions and salary.

This necessitates the question whether teachers who have been in the profession for years, would still cite these motives as plausible. Anderson (2020:23, 24) conducted a study on the reasons why long-serving teachers remain in the profession, and reports that teachers highly appreciate working in environments that value their experience and knowledge and therefore allow them to participate in decision-making processes where their contributions are respected; this adds to longevity in the profession. The physical environment also plays an important role where sufficient resources and a stable educational infrastructure form the basis of teaching.

Hugh (2012:247) divides reasons why teachers remain in the teaching profession into three categories:

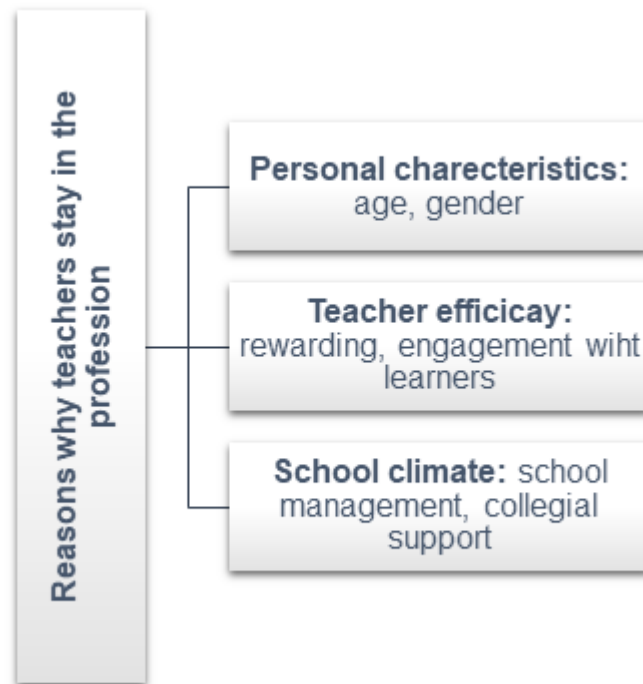


Figure 2.4: Reasons why teachers stay in the profession (Hughes, 2012:247)

The first category alludes to the teacher's biographical characteristics of age and gender. Findings from a study conducted in Zimbabwe by Gomba (2015:59-62) found that women stated that teaching is a career that allows them to spend time with their families owing to regular holidays. They also mentioned that no other profession would give them this opportunity. Women apparently also tend to be more committed to their jobs than men and compose the majority of the teaching workforce (Hughes, 2012:246).

The second category is teacher efficacy. Mackenzie (2012) postulates that teachers continue to teach because of the unique rewards in terms of making a difference in someone's life. In another study conducted by Burke, Schuck, Aubusson, Buchanan, Louviere and Prescott (2013), various themes became evident when they analysed the question why teachers stay in the profession. Firstly the participants reported on engagement with learners, which mirrors other themes that appear in the literature, namely that teachers stay in the profession to make a difference in the lives of the learners that they teach. Secondly, the participants reported that teaching is a challenging and satisfying profession, which is a primary reason for staying in the profession (Schuck et al., 2013:12).

The last category relates to the school climate. Teachers will continue to teach when they “work in a school where they have greater autonomy, higher levels of support, and communicated expectations” (Hughes, 2012:247). Another study conducted in Zimbabwe by Gomba (2015:59-62) indicates that school management and collegial support play a role when teachers decide to continue to teach. Participants reported that if the school has a principal who sacrificed his/her resources to improve staff morale and the school as a whole, they are more prone to stay in the profession. Another factor that Johnson (2017:22) identified, is that if teachers receive support from management and their colleagues, teachers are more prone to continue to teach.

Hence, although evidence in literature and media highlights the education crises that constitute the stress factors of teachers that ultimately influence their well-being, there are teachers who decide to stay in the profession.

2.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter broadly reviewed literature pertaining to teacher well-being. Concepts related to this phenomenon were defined and scrutinised and the correlation between the educational context of the 21st century, the challenges and rewards the teaching environment offers, and the impact it has on teacher well-being was discussed. The South African teaching context is a product of the political history of the country that still has a determining influence on teachers’ working conditions. Teacher attrition and retaining quality teachers is a concern; therefore, the well-being of teachers should be high on the agenda of teaching authorities. Research indicates that teachers face several challenges and must be empowered and equipped to deal with these. As a result, it is reasonable to conclude that a personal well-being management plan is an essential component for teachers as they embark on their careers. The following chapter presents the theoretical framework that was utilised as lens to explore the factors impacting the well-being of teachers.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter reviewed relevant literature to shed more light on the plight of South African teachers. The political history as a main contributor to the existing educational hazards that the country experiences, as well as the failure of the current government to improve access to education for all learners has been alluded to as a backdrop to the general and context-specific challenges that teachers face in their careers. Sadly, there is evidence of a “broken system” (Workman, 2020) where only 6% of the nation’s children are well-educated, and the “vast majority remain semi-educated” (Ibid).

This chapter presents the theoretical framework that served as lens to analyse and interpret the data. Imenda (2014) postulates that research cannot be conducted without a theoretical framework as it will result in a study that lacks accurate direction to investigate the literature. According to Swanson (2013:122), a theoretical framework "is the structure that can hold or support a theory of a research study"; Bruwer (2018:13) believes that it introduces and defines the theory that describes why the research problem exists (Bruwer, 2018:13). According to Kivunja (2018:44), the theoretical framework is essential for various reasons: it allows the reader to evaluate the theoretical assumption, serves as a connection between the researcher and existing information, forces the researcher to ask questions, and helps identify the limits to generalisations. Grant and Osanloo (2014) add that the theoretical framework provides a definite structure to the researcher's understanding of the study, manifesting on four levels: philosophically, epistemologically, methodologically, and analytically. I sought to understand fundamental truths about the phenomenon under scrutiny by reviewing relevant literature (philosophically) and allowing the theoretical theory to determine the nature, origin and limits of the study (epistemologically) by making use of specific research methods (methodology) and

analysing all gathered information to draw conclusions (analytically). I did the latter by employing the different forces as themes to analyse the data. Adom, Hussein, Agyem et al. (2018:439) concur that the theoretical framework “aids the researcher in finding an appropriate research approach, analytical tools, and procedures for his/her research inquiry”.

In this chapter, my focus is on two philosophical views that constituted the theoretical framework, namely the Force Field Model (FFM) as adapted by Samuel and Van Wyk (2008) and the PERMA Model, developed by Seligman (2011). The outline of this chapter is illustrated in Figure 3.1:

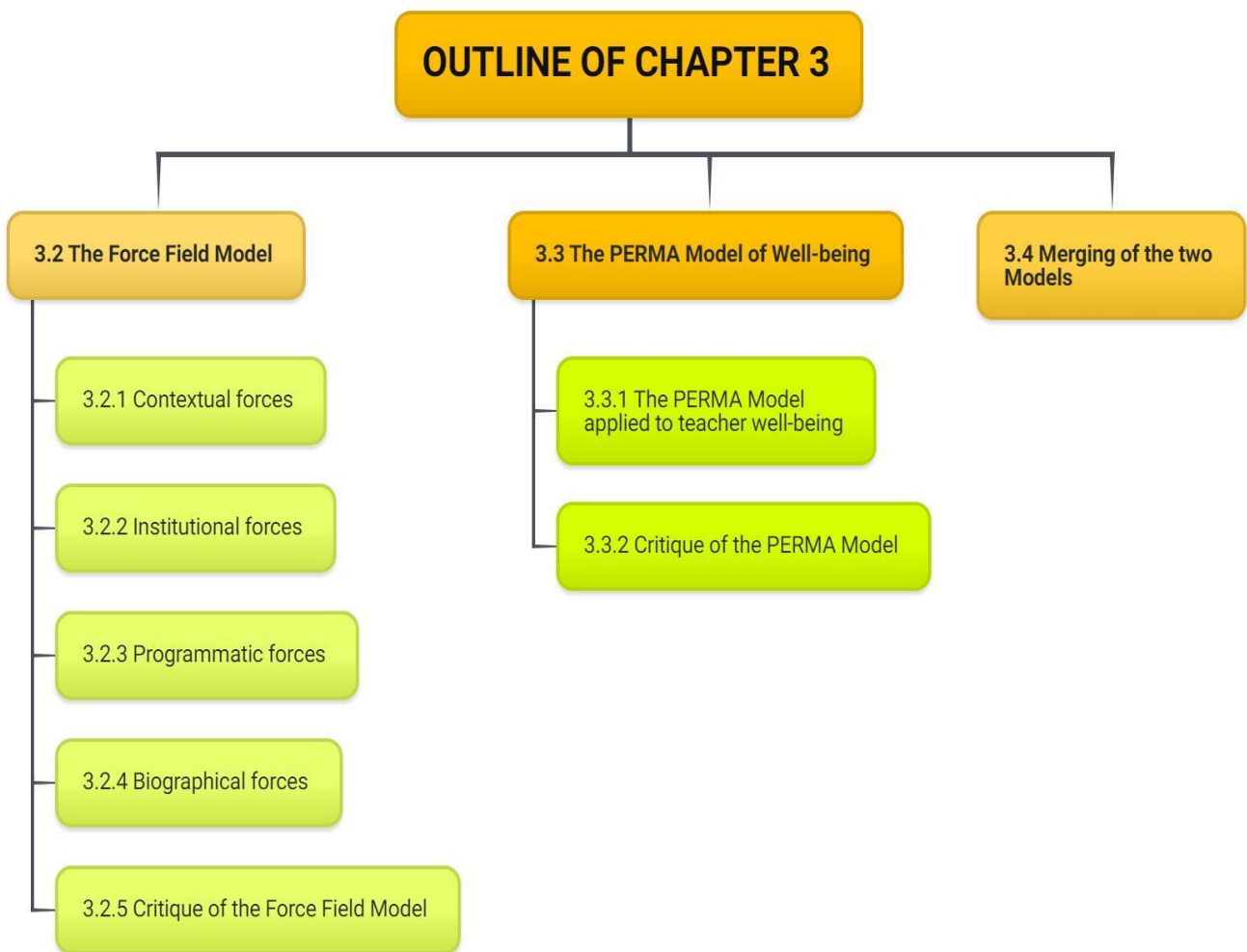


Figure 3.1: Outline of Chapter 3

The chapter commences with a discussion of the FFM, followed by the PERMA Model. The merging of the two models is then presented.

3.2 THE FORCE FIELD MODEL

Kurt Lewin developed a “force field analysis model” in the 1940s and initially used it in his work as a social psychologist (Lewin, 1942:215). De Villiers (2017:71) explains that Lewin based his model on early Chinese civilization that discovered stones containing iron that was able to attract iron in other objects, thereby serving as magnets. Lucas (2015) explains magnetism “as a physical phenomenon arising from the force initiated by magnets, which produce fields that attract (positive reaction) or repel (negative reaction) other objects”.

Applying this model to human behaviour, the FFM defines behaviour as being determined by the totality of forces that influence a person or group and make up the “life space” in which behaviour occurs (Burns, 2020:32). According to Kaminski (2011:1), Lewis assumed that driving and restraining forces could influence any situation. This researcher further asserts that human behaviour is determined by different forces, such as beliefs, expectations, norms and culture. These driving forces can be either positive or negative. Furthermore, driving forces push in a given direction, and restraining forces are forces that reduce driving forces.

Samuel and Van Wyk (2008) adapted this model for educational purposes to investigate the factors that influence the professional development of student teachers, stating that the journey to becoming a teacher is characterised by various push and pull forces. In 2014, Steyn, Harris and Hartell explored the FFM by using it as a lens to investigate the enrolment and retention of black B.Ed. students at a tertiary institute of learning. Their research identified three forces that pushed/prevented these students from finishing their degrees: students needed access to practical information, application processes and financial aid, as well as support for academic success (Steyn, Harris & Hartell, 2014:5). Another study in the educational sphere was grounded on the FFM by investigating the perspectives of music education lecturers regarding the different forces influencing their teaching practice (De Villiers, 2021:1).

In line with the preceding, I believe that the FFM can be used to determine which forces influence the well-being of teachers. Transposed to my study, this model explains different forces that may determine the teachers' experience, which may subsequently attract or deter the decision to retain their positions in the teaching profession. As already mentioned, these forces manifest in a number of categories, namely biographical, institutional, programmatic and contextual that can be expressed internally or externally to "constitute a person's lived experiences, theoretical conceptions exposed in training programmes, the macro-contextual forces of *policy* influencing teacher identity and the specific world of *practices* in unique schooling sites" (Samuel & Van Wyk, 2008:140).

Although this model was developed and applied in German society, the forces can be used elsewhere owing to the changing nature of each force. I therefore found this model appropriate as the different forces provide a platform for teachers to explore their teaching experiences and to determine strengths and obstacles embedded in the profession. My goal was to identify what factors energise and motivate teachers to remain in the teaching profession amid numerous challenges. The FFM further guided me in understanding the various factors that enhance teacher well-being and gave me insight into why teachers keep on teaching despite the challenges they may face. I was also interested in the push factors, namely the restraining forces that negatively impact teachers' well-being and discourage them from remaining in the profession. Exploring the four forces, it was clear that a one-dimensional view would not suffice, but that depth was needed to investigate the impact of each force and the interaction between the various forces.

The FFM is a model that evaluates the forces impacting a specific phenomenon. For this study, the phenomenon was teacher well-being, specifically why teachers remain in or leave the teaching profession. This model allowed me to analyse all the forces that influence teacher well-being by examining the internal and external forces impacting the well-being of teachers to ascertain how these four forces enable or constrain (push or pull) teachers' professional practice. The following figure outlines the FFM.

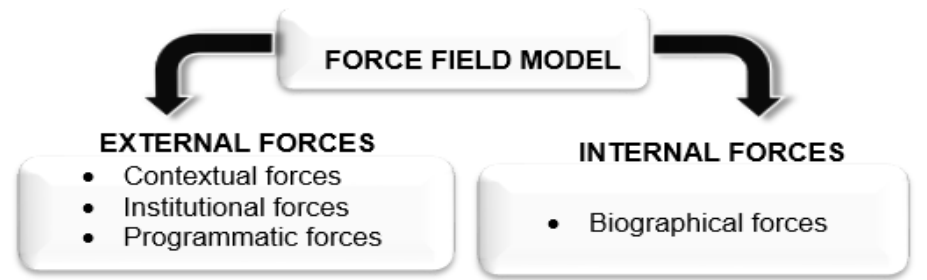


Figure 3.2: Representation of the Force Field Model

The following section delves more deeply into the FFM forces, beginning with the external forces and concluding with the internal force linked to the PERMA Model that will be examined as the second theory.

3.2.1 Contextual Forces

Contextual factors are critical when phenomena are researched where dissimilarities are involved, such as people from different backgrounds, socioeconomic strata, and abilities (Coles, Wells, Maxwell Harris, Anderson, Gray, Milner & MacGillivray, 2017). Cheuk, Baskarada and Koronios (2017:194) refer to Dixon-Woods, Bosk, Aveling, Goeschel, Pronovost (2011) who define these factors as a “set of characteristics and circumstances or unique factors that surround a particular implementation”. Closer to home, Mudzielwana and Maphosa (2013:176) explain South African contextual factors consisting of macro-social, political and historical forces.

Although a contextual orientation to this study has been provided in Chapter 2, the all-pervading impact of contextual forces on the South African education system begs further probing. A report recently released by Amnesty International, titled *Broken and unequal: the state of education in South Africa* (2020:7), presents a dire picture of the context where teachers have to transmit knowledge and learners have to internalise learning. This report postulates that “the state of education must be seen within the wider context of one of the most socioeconomic unequal countries in the world” (Amnesty International, 2020:7).

The following quotation illustrates the inequality:

Children in the top 200 schools achieve more distinctions in maths than children in the next 6 600 schools combined. More than three-quarters of children aged nine cannot read for meaning; in some provinces, this is as high as 91% (Limpopo) and 85% (Eastern Cape). Of 100 learners that start school, 50 - 60 will make it to matric, 40 - 50 will pass matric, and only 14 will go to university.

Long, Grave, Sayed and Lampen (2017:5) note that “South Africans have a long history of resistance to domination, injustice, and inequality that countered both colonialism and apartheid and culminated in establishing a democracy in 1994”. Documenting the history of education, Hannaway, Steyn and Hartell (2014:389) describe how education pre-1994 was characterised by segregation between the different racial groups, enforced by specific laws and policies. The white population was financially favoured, which led to enormous disparities in funding, resources, buildings, teacher qualifications, and evidently, teaching quality. Teacher training followed a similar track and was also racially divided. According to Sayed, Badroodien, Salmon and McDonald (2016:57), the demand for and supply of teachers were based on “the need to maintain racial and ethnic segregation”. Hannaway (2014:38) quotes Mattes (2002) who opines that “although ‘political Apartheid’ has been defeated, ‘educational Apartheid’ is still present in the lives of many”. Another factor that one needs to consider when wanting to understand the education system, is the role of politics. Heffernan (2019), in her study, mentions that politics is used as an instrument to further ideology, whereas Samuel (2008:6) mentions that teachers “often act as agents to carry out the current government’s transformation policy”. This kind of education “offered to learners should prepare them for lives as active citizens, instead of enabling them to participate in the current job market that hires so many graduates” (Nyawo & Mashau, 2019:35).

Another set of forces that may impact the teaching-learning situation are forces that influence institutions, which vary from management strategies to the vision and mission of the institution.

3.2.2 Institutional Forces

These forces include the “lived biography of a particular institutional setting” with different ethos sets and other historical periods that affect the institution itself (Samuel, 2008:13). Scott and Lane (2000:143) maintain that institutions are open systems, which means that they are affected by their environment. In this regard, Parker (2006:2) lists, as an example, the diverse culture of an institution that directly influences decision-making and formal structures. In other words, institutional forces refer to specific factors that impact the institution – in this case, the institution where teaching and learning occur, namely the school.

Dangara (2016:27) reckons that the purpose of a school is “to provide the society with the requisite manpower for the development and to enhance the quality of the living conditions of their products” – in other words, the learners. To ensure these educational goals are met, resources, which refer to “all materials and non-material factors” are fundamental and non-negotiable. Dangara (2016:30) concludes that “without adequate and efficient utilization of the available resources, the system may fail to achieve its desired results”. To illustrate, Ahiaku, Mncube and Olaniran (2016:25) found that a lack of resources erodes the efforts of teachers who have sound pedagogical content knowledge. The implication, therefore, is that the performance of learners from schools that lack resources, is lower than that of their counterparts in more affluent schools. Le Roux (2016:1) notes that although South Africa is almost thirty years into democracy, a robust racial aspect still exists regarding the differences between poorer and more affluent communities. Spaul (2015) reports that between 75% and 80% of schools are low-performing, and learners come from low-income families, mostly black, whereas middle-class and wealthy families account for 20% to 25% of schools that perform well. Teachers are required to develop each learner’s potential, which is also fundamental to the challenge, seeing that teachers in low-income schools do not have the same resources as those who teach in wealthier schools (Le Roux, 2016:1).

Infrastructure is another major force impacting quality education. In the report issued by the Department of Basic Education (NEIMS, 2018), it was revealed that

out of a number of 23 471 public schools, only 19% had illegal pit latrines for sanitation with another 37 schools having no sanitation facilities at all; 86% had no laboratory; 77% had no library; 72% had no internet access, and 42% had no sports facilities; 239 schools lacked any electricity. Fifty-six per cent of South African head teachers reported that a shortage of physical infrastructure (compared to an OECD average of 26%) hindered their school's capacity to provide quality instruction. Seventy per cent reported a shortage of library materials compared to an OECD average of 16%.

Samuels (2008:13) mentions that forces influencing the institution vary from management strategies to the vision and mission of the institution, which can also refer to the ethos of an institution. All South African schools fall under the National Department of Education, which acts as a regulatory body to govern all schools, in line with Lander and Heugens' (2017:1574) perspective, namely that institutional forces arise from the presence of expert bodies. They are based on the overall appearance of solid norms and accepted beliefs within the industry. For this study, *industry* can be translated as *education*, and the collective mission and vision of the Department of Basic Education (2011) is:

... of a South Africa in which all our people will have access to lifelong learning, education, and training opportunities, which will, in turn, contribute towards improving the quality of life and building a peaceful, prosperous, and democratic South Africa. Our mission is to provide leadership in establishing a South African education system for the 21st Century.

When looking at the ethos or vision and mission of various schools, it should be apparent that they echo the NDBE's vision and mission.

Research on school effectiveness refers to the ethos of a school that is influenced by a variety of factors (Strand, 2016:108). Samuel (2008:7) explains that the school ethos could incorporate the fundamental and overt mission and ideological underpinning. When a teacher enters a specific school, s/he needs to endorse its ethos even though they may not agree with it. On the other hand, those who do accept the existing ethos embrace it and allow it to influence their idea of the self, and role as school members

(Samuel, 2008:8). Teachers working in different institutions are affected by the specific institution's ethos, vision and mission. Husu and Tirri (2007:390) explain that the characteristics of a school's expectations, values and goals create particular conceptions of a professional teacher. Meier and Hartell (2009:180) mention teachers' experience that creates a pedagogical environment with numerous individual backgrounds. Changes in the education system and the school as an institution have brought significant challenges for teachers. For example, the heterogeneity of the learner population has increased, and the curriculum has frequently changed (Meier & Hartell, 2009:180). The teacher is faced with these challenges, but most school management teams have to rethink their management style to incorporate all cultures and religions (Meier & Hartell, 2009:190). Teachers are now faced with managing and facilitating diversity effectively. Therefore, parental involvement has become increasingly essential and is viewed as a "non-material" resource (Dangara, 2016:27).

In an attempt to define parental involvement, Henderson, Williams and Bradshaw (2020:340) believe that this construct refers to "the many ways in which parents work with their child's school to improve educational outcomes", which include assistance with homework, being involved at the school by attending meetings, events, or volunteering to assist at functions, getting to know the staff and other parents and maybe most importantly, the way parents communicate their attitudes and expectations regarding education in general, and the school or teachers specifically to their children.

Aguiar, Richards, Bond, Brunick and Calvert (2019:221) points to the strong correlation between parental involvement and learners' achievement and mentions parental engagement benefits, such as cultivating the right attitude to the school, assistance with homework, language competence and psychological well-being.

In a recent research study, Henderson et al. (2020:340) found that South African teachers identified the absence of parental involvement as one of the main problems of the education system. Wood and Olivier (2011:399) believe that what aggravates this problem is that teachers and parents "often seem to be delivering contradictory messages regarding behaviour and what is to be valued". In other words, instead of

working together with the learner's well-being at heart, parents and teachers often seem to be in conflict concerning critical educational issues”.

Another set of forces similar to institutional forces is programmatic forces. When referring to the context of the teaching environment, questions such as the following arise: *Is the current curriculum appropriate for the diverse identity of South Africa's learners? Is the teacher exclusively responsible for quality teaching?*

3.2.3 Programmatic Forces

The programmatic forces in education, also called the “curriculum intervention force” (Samuel & Van Wyk, 2008:141) refers to “the formal (official), non-formal and hidden curriculum, the espoused curriculum and the experienced curriculum of the school” and the impact it has on the experiences within the teaching-learning situation, overtly as well as covertly. Lebeloane (2017:3) differentiates between three forms of curricula: explicit, hidden, or null. He explains the detailed curriculum as the planned learning content that exposes learners to situations from the past, present and possible future. It also develops critical thinking through learners having the opportunity to critique content. Sources include prescribed textbooks and assessments. Abroampa (2020:71) refers to Emile Durkheim's observation “that more is taught and learned in schools than specified in the established curriculum of textbooks and teacher manuals”. Moreover, Baykut, Ozbilgin, Kamasak and Baglama (2022:160) defines the hidden curriculum as a is a phenomenon in which a variety of learning outcomes related to political ideology, ethics, sustainability, equality, and diversity can occur in prejudiced, stereotyped, stigmatized, utopian, and superficial ways. In other words, the hidden curriculum has to do with what learners learn from attending school, and not what is contained in educational objectives. Assemi and Sheikhzadeh (2013:83) explain the null curriculum as the content, either intentionally or unintentionally excluded, which gives learners the message that the excluded material is not essential in their learning or civilisation.

These various views on the curriculum can therefore be regarded as forces impacting and constituting the curriculum that guides the teaching and learning in an educational environment. Therefore, it is essential to review the curriculum changes that have taken place in the South African education system.

Since the dawn of democracy in 1994, various curricula have been prescribed for the education system, each with its educational modifications as set out in Figure 3.3:

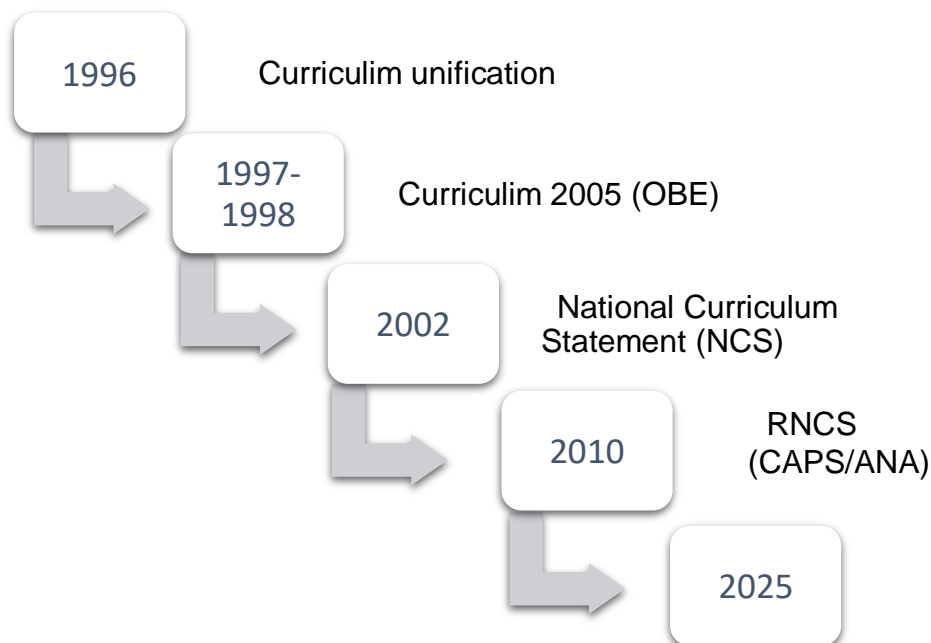


Figure 3.3: Curriculum changes in South Africa since 1996 (adapted from Marishane, 2014)

The unification of the national curriculum represents the stage that began in 1996 with the amalgamation of 17 racially and ethnically designated education departments into one Department of Education with a single curriculum free of sexist and racist rhetoric (Marishane, 2014). The following stage denotes the beginning of outcomes-based education (OBE) in 1997 for implementation in 1998. OBE aimed to change teaching methods from teacher-centred to learner-centred (Maharajh, Nkosi & Mkhize, 2016:372), which demanded a shift from teacher input through syllabi and a focus on learning outcomes. “In an attempt to successfully implement OBE, principals and teachers faced many administrative burdens. Many of them felt pressured and struggled to make sense of all the new terminology and jargon in the curriculum” (Govindasamy, 2018:36). Then followed the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), which overwhelmed teachers with tedious administration, continuous reporting, and attention to recording (Mamabolo, 2021:16). Govindasamy (2018:36) reports that teachers “were ill-prepared and lacked sufficient knowledge and skills to implement

the new curriculum”. She also refers to Jansen (2001), who argues that the curriculum “was more political in nature rather than having much pedagogical influence”.

The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) is currently the official curriculum. It is aimed at narrowing the gap between well- resourced schools and under-resourced schools through assessment methods, new teaching approaches, and the amount of time learners spend in the classroom (Maharajh et al., 2016). Like Jansen (2011), Molapo and Pillay (2018:1) report that the shift to the new (democratic) curriculum was “highly politicised” and included significant educational changes such as “minimising rote learning, textbook bound and exam-driven learning and an increased spotlight on a learner-centred pedagogy that would promote active learners and critical thinkers”. Mamabolo (2021:16) postulates that teachers were unprepared to implement the new repackaged curriculum statements as they still struggled with the previous curriculum. CAPS, therefore, has several challenges, which Molapo and Pillay (2018:2) claim the DBE is well aware of and includes “irrelevant and outdated content”. They also refer to Manphalala et al. (2019) who believe that a large number of under- and unqualified teachers in South Africa “adversely influences the quality of curriculum coverage and the delivery of content”.

Mlambo and Adetiba (2020:153) underscore the constant changing of the school curriculum as a significant problem in South Africa’s education system. Khuzwayo (2019) agrees that continuous curriculum reform in South Africa has caused numerous challenges and cite Cross, Mungadi and Rouhani (2002:171) who summarise these as follows:

... the vision vis-à-vis the country’s realities; symbolism vis-à-vis mass expectations; the curriculum framework vis- à-vis applicability, conditions of implementation, and actual practice in schools; expected outcomes vis-à-vis the capacity of teachers to translate them into reality; and budget concerns vis-à-vis commitment to values such as equity, redress and massification, and so on.

Samuel (2008:13) argues that programmatic forces compel teachers to interpret their role and identity uniquely; in other words, these forces bring along pressure due to the changing nature of the curriculum, which may impact the function and uniqueness of

the teacher, and which can result in an increased workload as teachers constantly need to prepare new lesson plans, materials and assessments (Putwain & Von Embse, 2019:3). Long et al. (2017:9) also mention that the changing curricula, “which would have led to empowered teachers, have instead opted to create a ‘teacher-proof’ curriculum, making teachers feel unimportant”. Another factor impacting teachers’ professional confidence is having to differentiate the curriculum to accommodate learner diversity. Hlalele, Jiyane and Radebe (2020:145) claim that “curriculum differentiation to accommodate diversity relies profoundly on teachers’ possessing essential and in-depth know-how”. The reality is that most teachers do not have training in curriculum differentiation, as this aspect is not included in the training programmes of most institutions.

The three forces that have been discussed, all consist of external elements impacting the experience of teachers. The biographical force is the only internal force that affects the teacher.

3.2.4 Biographical Forces

A biography is a detailed narrative of one’s life and involves one’s experiences of basic education, work, death and relationships. It highlights various aspects of one’s life and may include an examination of one’s personality (Casper, 1999). Relating to this study, Samuel and Van Wyk (2008:140, 141) explain biographical forces as “... including different individuals’ cultural, racial, ethnic and religious identities which predispose them to think, act, or behave in particular ways with learners, school authorities, and school subjects”. This force can be regarded as an internal force, as it forms part of the individual's culture, upbringing and background. Social learning theory (Bandura, 1997) specifies that past experiences considerably influence efficacy and teaching behaviour beliefs. Samuel (2008:120) regards this force as the most potent force since it draws its energy from the teacher’s personal lived experiences, teaching history and schooling background. When considering the latter, it is apparent that teachers have a rich supply of experiences based on racial, cultural, religious and social backgrounds. Haynes, Quinn and Miller (2020:49) remark that teachers pull their energy or resources from past personal experiences of how they have been taught and how they learnt, which they assimilate with how they judge their current

experiences in the classroom. In other words, “in essence, the personal and the pedagogical cannot be separated and one affects the other: what teachers do is tied to aspects of their identity” (Ibid).

In the South African context Samuel and Van Wyk (2008:231) distinguish between six biographical forces, namely gender roles such as gender identity; ethical and racial forces relating to racial identity; cultural forces referring to cultural and ideological philosophies on teaching and learning; linguistic forces involving language status; educator forces that relate to the teacher’s biographic characteristic and the influence on the learner’s identity; and lastly the collegial forces that determine how the biographical characteristics of other teachers affect teaching and learning. These forces guide the outlook of teachers from different cultural backgrounds regarding their well-being and whether they decide to leave or stay in the profession.

Barber, Walters, Chartier and Temertzoglouc (2022:350-352) in their research with student teachers in Physical Education (PE), identified three areas in which teachers’ biographies may influence their perceptions of and attitudes to teaching. These areas can be translated to teaching in general. The first area relates to a teacher’s experience of teaching when they were a learner at school; in other words, how teaching per se was experienced. The second area is closely related, and has to do with the course of a teacher’s socialisation process, which starts when being very young, and develops throughout childhood into adolescence and proceeds throughout adulthood. Socialisation is a complex and multifaceted process, and is believed to “provide a bridge to how they will teach in their classes” (Barber et al., 2022:351). The third biographical determinant refers to a teacher’s belief about their own capabilities to succeed in the profession. These beliefs determine how teachers see themselves – in other words, their self-concept, what they regard as their strengths and weaknesses, and so on. The aim of these authors’ research project was to develop a “non-competitive, inclusive course” to turn around negative perceptions about teaching by supporting the student teachers in developing “self-confidence and self-perceived competence” in teaching (Ibid). This resonates with what I hope my study can contribute to the field of educational knowledge, namely to propose a framework for a well-being programme to assist teachers in addressing various forces impacting their teaching experience.

In the South African framework, one should understand the context in which teachers currently work and the pressures they face – that is, their work realities. Skerrett (2010:60) explains that “the pressure of the formal situation and the force of the inner private definition of the situation enable us to see relationships and tensions that contribute to thoughts, actions and the shape and shaping of a teacher’s knowledge”. This author furthermore points to the importance of realising the merging process of personal (historical) experiences with professional experiences, and the new biographies that can develop when these experiences are combined with social class, race and gender, and more complex biographies are being shaped (Skerrett, 2010:81). Biographical forces are therefore complicated and complex forces, as they are internal, and very difficult to detect and to understand. Because of their personal nature, these forces are subjective and cannot be generalised.

As the PERMA Model focuses on internal forces of well-being, it is possible to draw a connection between PERMA and the FFM, as both contain biographical elements.

3.2.5 Critique of the Force Field Model

Because the FFM aims to assess the forces at work in certain phenomena or ideas accurately, all stakeholders must participate to ensure accuracy of data collection (Kapisa, 2021). On the one hand, generalisation and subsequent recommendations are nearly impossible, especially if the target group is very large. On the other hand, even if this model is the most suitable to a study, if there are not a sufficient number of participants, the model cannot be used. When many people report on a single force, it is impossible to make any assumptions or make relevant recommendations. Moreover, these forces might change if more or fewer participants participate in a study. One force may even change from a push force to a pull force or vice versa. Therefore, the FFM cannot be regarded as a set theory but rather a *living* model that changes with the involvement of participants and the topic under study.

3.3 THE PERMA MODEL OF WELL-BEING

The second model constituting the theoretical framework is the PERMA Model of Well-being. This model explains "a multi-dimensional approach to defining what it means to flourish in life" (Khaw & Kern, 2011:263) and is regarded as a “starting point for

living a fulfilled life” (Matthewman, Jodhan-Gall, Nowlan, O’Sullivan & Patel, 2018:68). Seligman’s original model (2002) distinguished three types of life that constitute a happy life, namely a pleasant life, an engaged life and a meaningful life. In 2011 this model was adapted to include five elements of well-being, namely Positive emotions, Engagement, positive Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment (PERMA as acronym).

The focus on well-being has increased worldwide. This is not surprising, seeing that the COVID-19 pandemic took its toll on humankind (Groarke, Berry, Graham-Wisener, McKenna-Plumley, McGlinchey & Armour, 2020:2). COVID-19 continues to impact the mental health of the global population significantly. During these exceptional times, when populations have been forced to modify their day-to-day way of life significantly, many people experience an increase in mental distress symptoms, such as anxiety and despair (Armour, McGlinchey, Butter, McAloney-Kocaman & McPherson, 2021:174). These authors state that the increase in mental distress is reaching clinically significant levels, affecting daily functioning. Therefore, the emphasis on well-being has become a universal focus point.

Positive Psychology, in which the PERMA Model is embedded, focuses on positive aspects and therefore has the improvement of well-being and happiness at heart. The PERMA Model highlights the positive side of mental health and is much more than the mere lack of negative psychological states (Seligman, 2011). Butler and Kern (2016:2) put it differently: “The lack of negative constructs, including loneliness, depression, and insecurity, does not necessarily mean that there is a presence of positive effects like happiness, wellness, and trust.” Kun and Gadanecz (2022:187) hold that Positive Psychology uses the individual’s existing internal resources and assets, such as resilience, hope and optimism as building blocks to improve and sustain mental health.

The advantage of the PERMA Model relates to the integrating of components of eudemonia (the development of one’s potential and the presence of meaning) and hedonia (the experience of satisfaction, desire and the reality of meaning) into a single model, whereas other models include only elements of eudemonia or hedonia (Goodman, Disabato, Kashdan & Kauffman, 2018:324). The PERMA is therefore a

multidimensional model that enables various facets of psychological functioning (Friedman & Kern, 2014; Huppert & So, 2013).

The PERMA Model has been applied to various sectors, such as education (Kern, Waters, Adler & White, 2015), sport (Doyle, Filo, Lock & Funk, 2016) and music (Ascenso, Perkins & Williamson, 2018). The study conducted by Kern et al. (2015) measured learner well-being using the PERMA Model. Their findings indicated that the PERMA Model was informative in assessing the well-being of learners and focused on the degree to which schools serve their purpose to prepare learners for adulthood (Kern et al., 2015:269). In another study by Bazargan-Hejazi, Shirazi, Wang, Sholbin, Karunungan, Shulman, Marzio, Ebrahim, Shay & Slavin (2021:9) it was found that the PERMA Model enabled teachers to “thrive, engage, commit and find meaning,” therefore experiencing professional well-being, as opposed to burnout.

By applying the PERMA Model in the sport sector, Doyle et al. (2016) investigated how four of the five elements of the PERMA Model were activated by sport spectator experiences. The results indicated that sports organisations could influence well-being. In the music sector, the research found that music plays a role in well-being and contributes to the literature by showing that music in different forms influences one’s well-being in all five elements of the PERMA Model (Croom, 2016:16).

Referring to overall well-being, Seligman (2011) suggests that well-being consists of five elements as already mentioned, namely positive emotion, engagement, relationship, meaning and accomplishment. Goodman, Disabato, Kashdan and Kauggman (2018:321) opine that these elements are individually rewarding by enabling one to accomplish “anything”. These elements are illustrated in Figure 3.4.

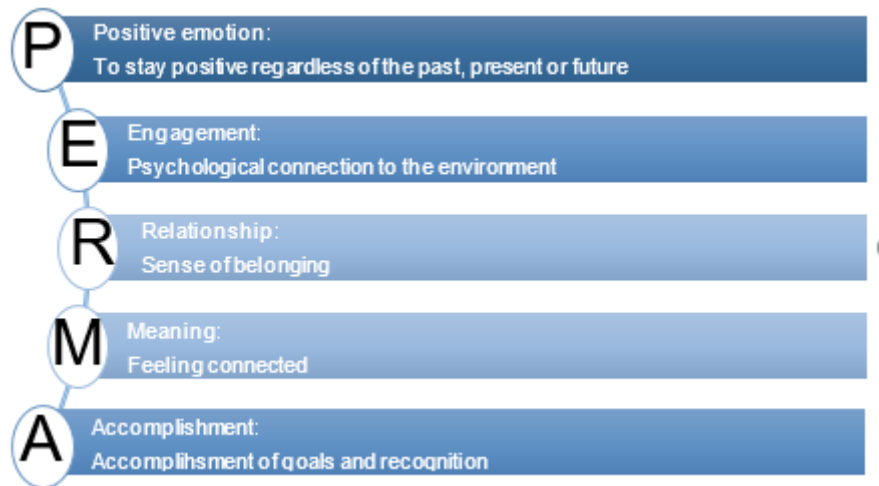


Figure 3.4: The elements of the PERMA Model

Lee, Krause and Davidson (2017:78) note that these elements can function on their own to contribute to well-being, but that interaction between these elements offers a greater impact on well-being. “Thus, as a model, PERMA offers a range of elements and levels of engagement that may produce well-being” (Ibid). Hollweck (2019:329) notes that according to Seligman, each element has three characteristics: it contributes to well-being, it can be pursued individually without considering the other elements and it is exclusive. In other words, it functions and can be measured independently from the other elements. Furthermore, Turner and Thielking (2019:938, 939) mention that Seligman suggests that the first element, namely positive emotion, is the “subjective measure of happiness” and engagement is the “subjective measure of being absorbed in a task”. Positive relationships are experienced when one is being supported; meaning is the “subjective experience of belonging to or serving something which you believe is bigger than yourself” (Turner & Theilking, 2019:939). Accomplishment is experienced when one accomplishes something or achieves success. “High PERMA is a state of optimal well-being, which is termed ‘flourishing’” (Ibid). These elements need further probing that will be accomplished in applying it to teacher well-being.

3.3.1 The PERMA Model Applied to Teacher Well-being

Positive Education (PE), of which the PERMA Model forms part of, offers several reasons why the education sector should follow this approach. Seligman, Ernst,

Gillham, Reivich and Linkins (2009:293) explain PE as “education for both traditional skills and happiness”. Beniot and Gabola (2021) add that PE provides a solution for both learners and teachers by reducing depression, promoting education and creativity, and improving social cohesion.

Drawing on the PERMA Model of Well-being, I took a closer look at the five elements with a specific focus on teacher well-being. As mentioned earlier, this model explains multi-dimensional components that may contribute to teachers’ well-being.

Considering the first element, namely **positive emotions**, Keller, Frenzel, Goetz, Pekrun and Hensley (2014) comment that human life is characterised by emotions, whereas Keller et al. (2014:71) consider teaching as the most emotionally rewarding profession. Coetzee and Jansen (2007) regard education as a work of heart and believe that teaching is deeply rooted in emotional experiences. Schutz and Lanehart (2002:67) add that emotions “are intimately involved in virtually every aspect of teaching and learning and, therefore, an understanding of the nature of emotions within the school context is essential”. Especially in teaching, where this profession is based on the relationship between teacher and learner, positive emotions play a very important role in the classroom situation. These emotions, according to Hollweck (2019:32), are subjective and can therefore be measured through self-report only.

Lee et al. (2021) hold that positive emotion is the “cornerstone of the well-being model” and mention positive emotions, such as “hope, compassion, contentment, empathy, gratitude and joy” and lastly add love, which they regard as the most essential component in well-being experiences. Translated to the teaching profession, a genuine love for children coupled with the desire to assist them in reaching their full potential is pivotal in experiencing professional well-being.

Elaborating on the benefits of positive emotions, Dreer (2021:102) suggests that positive emotions may enhance cognitive performance, engagement, creativity, the use of effective teaching strategies and a welcoming attitude towards learners. Moreover, positive emotion improves employee well-being, according to Cotton and Hart (2003). Optimism forms part of positive emotions and is critical to building resilience. In this regard, Kingsley (2020:18) stipulates that optimism is the belief that

one will generally experience good outcomes in life and believes that optimistic people are more likely to be resilient when confronted with stressful life events.

Positive emotions can be classified as an emotion that leads to pleasure (Trigwell, 2012). For instance, a teacher will experience positive emotions when making progress toward a goal, such as a 100% pass rate. Sutton, Mudrey-Camino and Knight (2009:130) agree that teachers may experience a sense of positive emotion when learners follow directions or when instructional objectives are met. Hagenauer, Hascher and Volet (2015:385) claim that teacher-learner interaction is the determining factor in experiencing positive emotions in teachers; in other words, the highest form of emotional reward for the teacher is finding fulfilment and joy in their relationship with learners. In this regard Trigwell (2012:338) believes that positive emotion is necessary for self-motivation and identifies love and care as the emotions most frequently experienced by teachers.

The second element refers to **engagement** that Seligman (2012:111) defines by using a metaphor as “being one with the music, time stopping, and the loss of self-consciousness during an absorbing activity”. The author adds that when one is engaged in things that one loves doing, one tends to live in the present moment, and thus one is entirely focused on what is busy happening. In other words, one is emotionally involved when being engaged. Butler and Kern (2016:3) believe that engagement involves not only the emotional but also cognitive and social domains. Matthewman et al. (2018:86) have a slightly different take on this component and believe it to take place when an individual has a deep personal or professional interest that allows opportunity for growth. Hollweck (2019:332, 333) gives a comprehensive account when describing engagement as “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterised by workers who are full of energy (vigor), strongly involved in their work (dedication) and often fully concentrated and happily engrossed in their work activities (absorption)”. Klassen, Yerdelen and Durksen (2013:34) mirror this viewpoint, stating that work engagement is underpinned by energy and involvement with the three mentioned domains (emotions, social and cognitive) present. Additionally, vigour, absorption and dedication describe engagement in the work domain (Schaufeli, Bakker & Salanova, 2006). Christian, Garza and Slaughter (2011:90) succinctly state that work engagement refers to “the voluntary allocation of

personal resources directed at the range of responsibilities required by a specific work-related role”.

Translating these viewpoints to the teaching profession, engaged teachers can be described as people who have discovered their purpose in life by rendering a service that is rewarding and fulfilling. Love and dedication underpin this service, and successful teachers apply all their faculties to reach their goal, namely to accompany the child on its way to adulthood. Challenges are met with resilience and courage as such teachers have the end result in sight. Dreer (2021:103) mentions that the teaching profession requires much engagement, with a focus on social engagement. In other words, in teaching, engagement is not a personal element, but is aimed at the betterment of the child. Dreer (2021) refers to Cardwell (2011) who said, “Engaged teachers strive for the best ideas and teaching practices, with the aim of providing the best possible conditions for student learning and for achieving positive effects on the engagement levels of students”.

Recent discussions on improving the education system have focused on teachers’ critical role (Klassen et al., 2013:47). Rimm-Kaufman and Hamre (2010:2988) believe that the psychological make-up of effective teachers has never before received so much consideration. For a good reason effective teaching relies on thoroughly engaged and motivated teachers, emotionally, cognitively and socially (Klassen et al., 2013:47). Teachers’ motivational levels and attitudes are transferred to learners, and therefore it is vital to building an understanding of teacher engagement (Roth, Assor, Kanat-Maymon & Kaplan, 2007:761). Teachers need to establish relationships – specifically with learners – that involve a demand for social engagement that is rarely found in other occupations (Klassen et al., 2013:35). Guthrie and Davis (2003:59) remark that in many work settings, employees must engage socially with colleagues. Still, the amount of energy spent forming meaningful connections with learners is far more intense, characterising a teacher’s job. Klassen et al. (2013:47) add that social engagement with learners is a vital element of teacher engagement together with the emotional and cognitive elements. Additionally, research links teacher engagement and classroom achievement (Roth et al., 2007:762). Bakker and Bal (2010:189) also point to the correlation between teacher engagement and teacher retention because an engaged teacher is more likely to stay in the profession. Guglielmi, Bruni, Simbula,

Fraccarolo and Depolo (2016:326) furthermore report that interpersonal relationships have an influence on teacher engagement, which is twofold: “Support from colleagues and frequent interaction increase teacher engagement and, through external validation, teachers gain certified recognition as role models, and this improves their sense of belonging”. Lauermaann (2014:77) adds another aspect influencing teacher engagement, namely a clear policy on teachers’ various roles and personal responsibility, which has significant motivational effects as it fosters commitment, investment and persistence.

Looking at the benefits of engagement, Rath, Harter and Harter (2010) believe that engaged people are happier, stress less, and are less likely to be diagnosed with depression. Research conducted by Klassen, Yerdelen and Durksen (2013:34) also suggests that engaged people are less likely to experience burnout. Additionally, literature indicates that engagement is linked to learner performance (Chirstians, Garza & Slaughter, 2011:91).

The third element in the PERMA Model refers to **relationships**. Seligman (2012) explains these as various interactions with people close to one, such as a partner, friends, family, colleagues, children and the community. “In these relationships, we feel loved, supported, and valued by others, which has an imperative impact on our well-being” (Seligman, 2012:131). Diener and Tay (2017:90) point out that more than 18 000 articles have been published on health and its connection with social relationships, as the latter is fundamental to a balanced life. Within healthy relationships, one gets support linked to positive outcomes such as lessening depression, healthier behaviour, and lower mortality risks. Butler and Kern (2016:3) report that the relationship element featured in all major existing well-being surveys underpins the importance of this element within the PERMA Model (Butler & Kern, 2016:3). Littman-Ovadia (2019:1958) alludes to numerous studies that indicate the importance of the role of meaningful relationships in human flourishing. “These studies have shown that people who are more socially integrated and who experience more supportive and rewarding relationships achieve better mental health, higher levels of subjective well-being, lower rates of morbidity and mortality, and higher levels of physical health (Ibid). Matthewman et al. (2018:186) point to the connection between

positive relationships and positive emotions, and assert that relationships with others cultivate connectedness, friendships and a sense of belonging.

Dreer (2021:103) opines that “teaching is a profession that is fundamentally based upon relationships”, and that these relationships can be preventative in teacher burnout. Relationships manifest in two ways in the teaching profession – those with colleagues, and those with learners. Referring to the former, Hollweck (2019:334) regards collegial relationships where “reciprocal professional support” is the result as the most valuable asset in the teacher’s professional resource bank. Lee et al. (2017:77) consider these relationships as pivotal in experiencing a sense of belonging and support in overcoming challenges. Dreer (2021:104) also regards relationships with colleagues “as a resource for coping” when experiencing specific work-related demands. Having another person in a similar situation confronted with similar challenges and experiencing the same working conditions is therefore emotionally comforting and encouraging. No wonder that Rath, Harter and Harter (2010:121) assert that work relationships significantly impact one’s physical and psychological health and that workgroups are more successful when employees are friends.

The heart of teaching, according to Guglielmi et al. (2016:325), is to work closely with learners, and is one of the main reasons teachers enter the profession. Aldrup, Klusmann, Ludtke, Gollner and Trautwein (2018:126) found that the bond between teacher and learner can contribute to a teacher’s job satisfaction level and positive emotional state. Additionally, Gastaldi, Pasta, Longobardi, Prino and Quaglia (2014) found that teachers who experience close relationships with their learners tend to feel more optimistic, enjoy a higher level of work engagement, and experience less burnout and irritation. Dreer (2021:104) adds that teachers with good relationships with their learners remain motivated in their work and experience higher levels of well-being and less stress and burnout. Not only do teacher-learner relationships benefit teachers, but learners as well. Davis (2003:208) mentions that in the last two decades of the previous century, “there has been considerable research on the importance of relationships between students and teachers in shaping the quality of students’ motivation and classroom learning experiences”. Klassen et al. (2013) also report on a teacher’s positive influence on learners’ social and intellectual abilities when a positive relationship exists between the teacher and learner.

Meaning is the fourth element of the PERMA Model. In 1959 Frankl made the profound statement that a human's primary motivation is to find meaning in life. Seligman (2011) adds that searching for meaning is based on the human's need to feel valued and worthy, including serving something that we believe is greater than ourselves. Similarly, Matthewman et al. (2018:186) believe that meaning implies "believing in something that transcends ourselves and provides a valuable way to find meaning in our lives". Seligman (2011) furthermore argues that when a person has a broader purpose in life, it helps to focus on what is essential when challenges are experienced. Qadir and Ghuari (2021:425) describe meaning in life as "the extent to which people comprehend, make sense of or see significance in their lives, accompanied by the degree to which they perceive themselves to have a purpose, mission or overarching aim in life". They also refer to studies that rank relationships as the most important factor to give meaning to life. Kashdan and McKnight (2009) add that the phenomenon of meaning is different for each individual and can be pursued through a cause that one is passionate about, such as one's profession, a philanthropic cause or religious beliefs. These authors also state that people who have a great purpose in life are healthier in all spheres of life. Rosso, Dekas and Wraesniewski (2010:91) hold that people strive to find meaning through a career, while Di Fabio (2017:1534) feels that meaningfulness is essential for sustainability; people need to experience well-being to recognise the most profound meaning of the self, which leads to a sense of success. Bailey, Madden and Alfes (2017:32) explain that people can experience meaningfulness in work and meaningfulness at work. The first refers to the nature of the work, and the latter to the atmosphere in which work is performed. The importance of one's work characterises meaningful experiences; permits independence to decide how, when and where to work; supports one's values and individuality, and provides a sense of community that includes trusting and respectful social relations (Bailey et al., 2017:33). Lips-Wiersman and Morris (2009) add that one experiences personal growth and fulfilment when doing meaningful work. Lepitso and Pratt (2017:99), however, conclude that when one does not experience meaning, one can feel powerless, self-estranged, and not committed to work.

Closely related to meaning is a calling, which Rosso et al. (2010:92) define as "a meaningful passion for a specific career that one perceives as the purpose of life"

(Rosso et al., 2010:92). Although some claim that meaning and a calling are distinct entities (Humphrey, Nahrgang & Morgeson, 2007:1332), others state that they are connected because both lead to meaningful work (Duffy & Dik, 2013:430). A research study on final year teaching students by Steyn and Kamper (2015) found that most aspirant teachers enter the profession because they regard the profession as a calling and believe that they contribute to making the world a better place. Moreover, teachers with a sense of a calling reported that they found teaching meaningful and were more likely to have a positive attitude. Turner and Thielking (2019:72) add that “it appears that having a calling orientation is closely linked with Seligman’s (2011) well-being dimension of M in PERMA (meaning), in that deriving a sense of purpose at work makes work a meaningful activity and may contribute to well-being”.

Teachers find meaning in their work by positively influencing learners’ lives, providing learners with meaningful learning opportunities, ongoing improvement in their academic practices, building constructive relationships with learners, and providing support for colleagues (Willemse & Deacon, 2015:8). Combining these sources of meaning leads to an increased feeling of meaning. If one source is momentarily absent, teachers tend to focus their attention on another basis (Ibid). Similarly, Rosso et al. (2010) and Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2009) report that meaning is improved through multiple sources of meaning. Pedagogical practices change when teachers look for meaning in their work. Teachers tend to focus more on their relationship with learners, spend more time on individual activities, and make sure that activities and learning are fun and relevant (Willemse & Deacon, 2015:8). These authors add that teachers feel much more accomplished when learners enjoy their classes and feel welcome and valued than when they merely tick off the curriculum requirements. Thus, when teachers find meaning in their work, their overall well-being improves. Teachers should receive support to find meaning to buffer the effect of the stressful nature of teaching (Turner & Thielking, 2019:71). Hollweck (2019:334) affirms that service is part of teachers’ professional anatomy and that meaning is experienced when they feel that they contribute to the future of the learners. Dreer (2021:104) reports that most teachers’ meaning stems from supporting learners, presenting the lesson content in such a way that learners understand, and by discussing topics that they can identify with.

It is interesting to note that Qadir and Ghuari (2021:425) claim that religious people experience more meaning in their careers than non-believers. This may explain why some people regard their chosen career as a calling and feel that their careers represent their purpose in life. It is therefore understandable that such people see challenges in a different way, and are more resilient than their counterparts. Lee et al. (2017:77) concur when saying that “meaning refers to one’s purposeful existence in the world, while purpose is related to feeling a sense of accomplishment and success”.

The last element of the PERMA Model is **accomplishment**. Evans, Kelley and Sikora (2014:1573) regard accomplishment as a Western concept as these societies frequently recognise and acknowledge superior performance. Therefore Forgeard, Jayawckreme, Kern and Seligman (2011:1) explain accomplishment as referring to achievement, mastery or success at the highest level possible within a specific sphere. Matthewan et al. (2018:186) postulate that attempting to improve oneself leads to a sense of achievement that can be either personally rewarding or beneficial in the professional domain. Accomplishment, according to Forgeard et al. (2011:87), can be measured on both a professional and an individual level. In the professional sphere, accomplishment is measured through agreed-upon standards, such as awards and assessments. On an individual level, accomplishment can be defined as reaching an anticipated goal (Seligman, 2011). Personal accomplishment may lead to higher feelings of fulfilment relative to one’s work and informs how one feels valued, but individual accomplishment relates negatively to job stress (Richards, Gaudreault & Woods, 2018:78). Hollweck (2019:335) reports on a finding of her study, where accomplishment emerged in three ways – experiencing success, competence and having influence. In contemplating competence as an indicator of accomplishment, Nalipay, King, Mordeno and Wang (2022:24) focused in their study on “implicit mindsets” about teaching ability as predictors of teacher well-being. Their findings indicated that “a growth teaching mindset would positively predict all aspects of well-being, whereas a fixed teaching mindset would negatively predict all dimensions of well-being”. In other words, teachers’ beliefs about their own abilities influence their sense of accomplishment; moreover, if teachers do not evolve or mature in their teaching, their well-being will be negatively impacted. In this regard Qadir and Ghauri

(2021:425) believe that “Accomplishment is to excel in all fields of life, whether academic, social or career related and gaining satisfaction and contentment in return”.

In the teaching domain, accomplishment is closely related to the behaviour of teachers in the classroom. Teachers’ behaviour is demonstrated in their goals, such as developing competence in their subject field, effective teaching, and maintaining good relationships with their learners (Dreer, 2021:105). Butler and Kern (2016:227) define accomplishment in the teaching setting as “working toward and reaching goals, mastery and efficacy to complete tasks”. According to Mansfield, Beltman and Price (2016:357), accomplishment is also a prerequisite for teacher resilience. Resilience is the ability to bounce back and recover quickly from a stressful situation (Schussler, Greenberg, DeWeese, Rasheed, DeMauro, Jennings & Brown, 2018:2). Beltman, Mansfield and Price (2011) believe that a school environment that supports teachers and helps them to derive a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment is more likely to promote resilience, whereas Richard et al. (2018:90) note that resilient teachers can more effectively manage their stress and focus on the needs of their learners. Thus, teachers should strive towards accomplishment or competence to teach effectively, build resilience, and manage learning activities positively.

Although these five elements can be pursued individually, their collective presence in the makeup of a teacher is necessary for optimum well-being. These five elements complement one another, and it is also possible to magnify their incidence in one’s life.

3.3.2 Critique of the PERMA Model

According to Seligman, each pillar of the PERMA Model exists alone and can be sought for its own sake (Sansom, 2017) because it leads to the other pillars of the model (Sansom, 2017). I disagree since it has become clear that each element or pillar interacts with the others (Consult Section 7.4.3). For example, one values or appreciates a relationship because it adds meaning to one’s life, creating a positive emotion.

In a study that Khaw and Kern (2015) conducted in Malaysia, three elements suited their data better than the proposed five elements. While the PERMA elements were

well-represented, other constructs like religion and security went beyond the PERMA Model (Khaw & Kern, 2015:1). Therefore, the PERMA model is not fixed and cannot be used across all states and culture groups. Elaborating on the preceding, Ugwuanyi (2015:520) detailed some of the challenges that arise when defining what happiness means in an African setting, emphasising that happiness is not a fixed concept of reality and may be interpreted differently across cultures. A researcher should therefore consider that other elements may surface during data presentation and incorporate these into their analysis and recommendations. Culture-based modification may be necessary when researchers choose this model as a lens to understand the phenomenon. Hollweck (2019:330) agrees when referring to Wong and Roy (2017) who claim that the PERMA Model is not a formal model, “but rather a listing of phenomena that have been shown to be related to well-being”. To be useful across other cultures, apart from Western ones, Wong (2011) pleads “for a more balanced and inclusive approach in positive psychology, which integrates the complex interaction between both negative and positive phenomena in order to optimize positive outcomes across situations and cultures”.

3.4 MERGING THE TWO MODELS

When I delved into the FFM, I realised that this model focuses mainly on external forces that may influence teacher well-being – factors that are beyond the control of the teacher. Even the biographical force of the FFM entails fixed phenomena, such as culture, religion, race and so on. Therefore, it provided space for a second model that could address the potential gap; hence the PERMA Model was added to make provision for subjective, personal factors that the teacher can manage. In Figure 3.5 I suggest a merger of the two models to act as a lens to evaluate and gain insight into teacher well-being.

Force Field Model

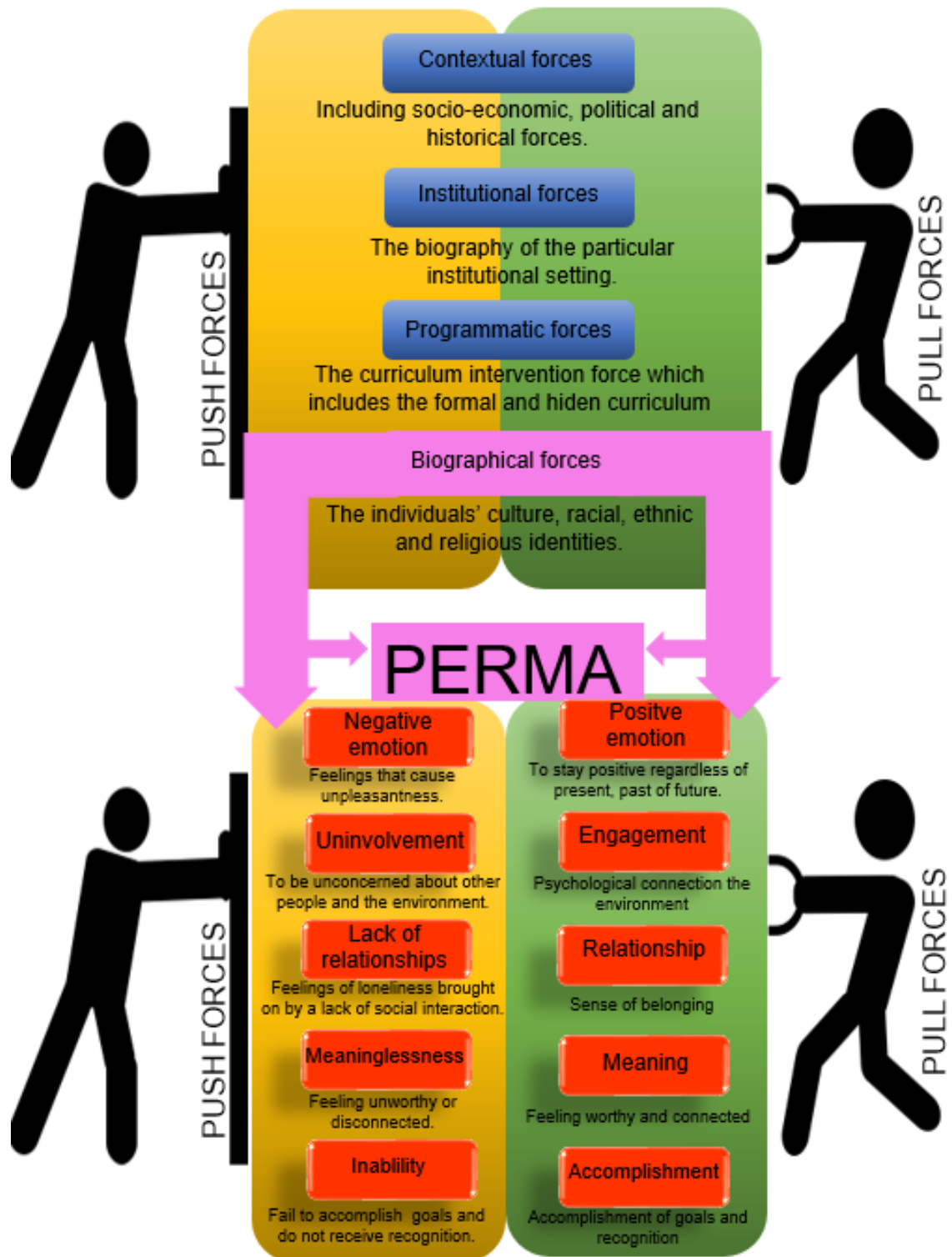


Figure 3.5: Internal and external factors influencing teacher well-being – a merger of the FFM and PERMA Model

In studying the theoretical framework, one can clearly distinguish between the two models. The two opposite sides of each model represent push forces (yellow) and pull forces (green).

Four forces are present in the FFM and they extend beyond both push and pull fields, implying that they can either enhance or inhibit teacher well-being, as discussed in Section 3.2. The last force, the biographical force, flows into the PERMA Model, indicating that these forces are internal aspects that influence the teacher's well-being.

The PERMA Model addresses internal factors, positively affecting a teacher's well-being. It focuses on five elements: positive emotion, engagement, relationship, meaning and accomplishment. Although the opposing elements are also stated in line with the FFM being embedded in Positive Psychology, the focus is solely on positive elements that serve as pull factors (to use FFM terminology).

This representation of the integration of the two models suggests a constant interplay between the models and the different forces. Moreover, when these two models are merged, a holistic view is formed of all forces influencing teacher well-being. A detailed discussion can be found in Chapter 7, Section 7.4.3.

3.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

There are only a few theories that capture the elements of well-being. However, the FFM and PERMA models of well-being complement each other, creating a better understanding of the internal and external forces influencing teacher well-being.

In this chapter, the two theories provided me with a theoretical point of departure for analysing and interpreting my findings as presented in Chapter 5. The FFM's different forces were discussed and applied to teacher well-being. Next, I offered a detailed overview of the five elements of the PERMA Model. Chapter 3 concluded with Figure 3.4, which shows the merging of the two models. The discussion following the figure outlines the interface between the two.

The next chapter presents the research methodology that have been followed in the collection, analysis and interpretation of the data. The ethical aspects that were considered were also alluded to, as well as the trustworthiness of the data.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the study's research paradigm, design and tools. The research paradigm and design are addressed first, followed by the sampling procedure and the research process followed to gather and analyse the data. Finally, I discuss the quality assurance measures used in my research. The outline of the chapter is presented in Figure 4.1.

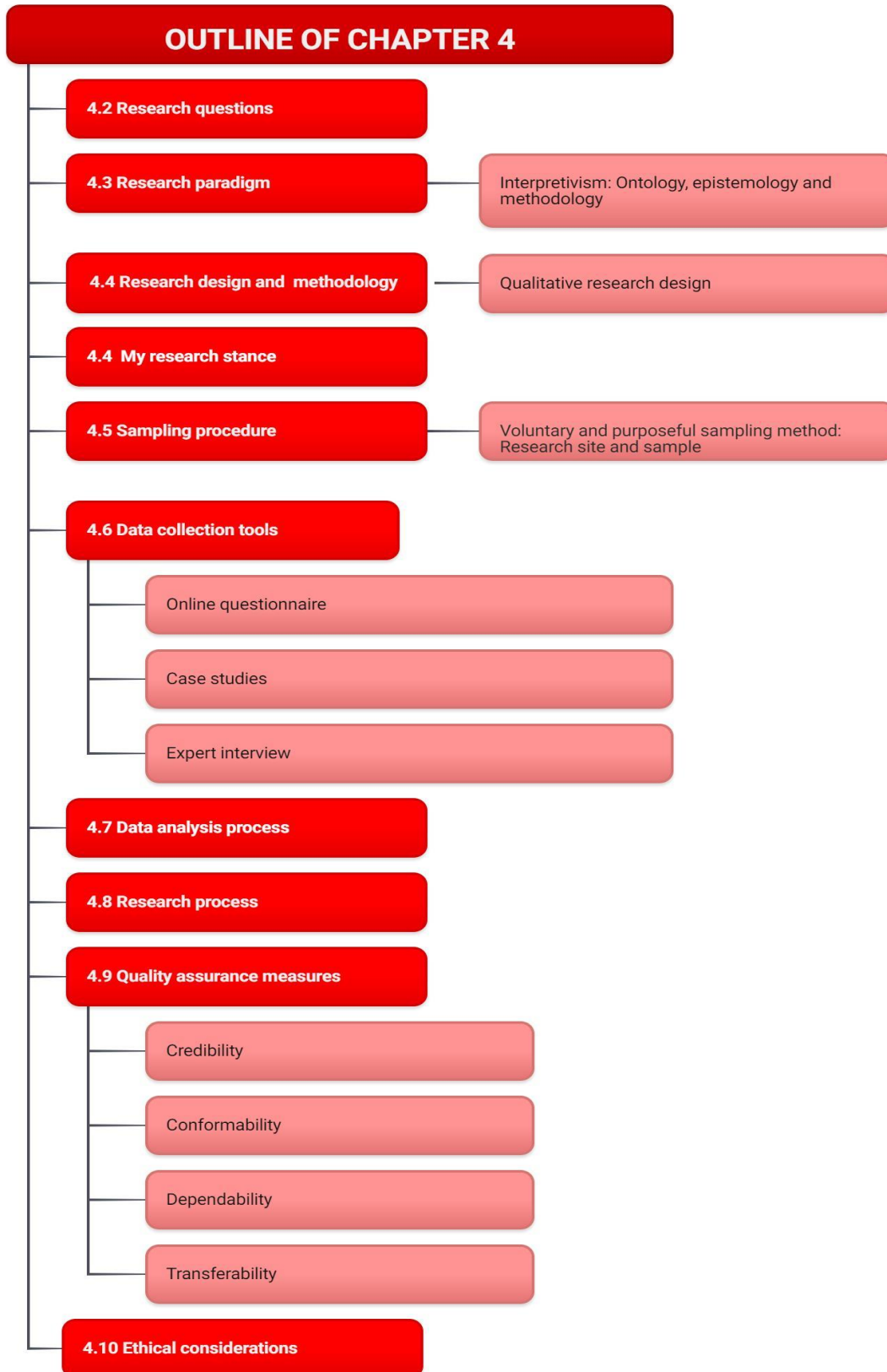


Figure 4.1: Outline of Chapter 4

4.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The primary research question that underpinned this study was, “How does the current classroom context affect the well-being of South African teachers?” This question necessitated an investigation into the well-being of teachers in the context of the South African education situation. Elucidation of these encounters will explain, on the one hand, the reasons why numerous teachers leave the profession (push factors), and on the other hand, why several teachers remain in the teaching profession and find their careers rewarding (pull factors).

The following secondary research questions sought to answer the main research question and validated the evidence required in answering this question:

- Which push and pull forces influence the well-being of teachers?
- How do teachers address their well-being?

4.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

A research paradigm can be referred to as a worldview (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:44). They define it as “a general philosophical orientation about the world and the nature of research that a researcher brings to a study”. The significant paradigms are post-positivism and interpretivism/constructivism, which form the basis for educational research, quantitative and qualitative (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:14). Merriam and Tisdell (2015:8) assert that interpretivism and constructivism are often used interchangeably.

Hence, Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011:175) define interpretivism as a paradigm that focuses on subjective experience, small-scale interactions and understanding. This paradigm relies on the human mind, values and perceptions that cannot be studied like physical matters. Still, they must be interpreted through an individual’s eyes in a specific context (Creswell & Poth, 2004:78). Cohen et al. (2018:19) reiterate that the interpretive paradigm “is characterised by a concern for the individual” to understand the “subjective world of human experience”. Therefore, the individual's inner experiences have meaning, not the assumptions or preconceived ideas of the researcher.

As my study aimed to explore a small sample of South African teachers with regards to their well-being, I wanted to understand the subjective experiences of teachers, relying on what Creswell and Creswell (2018:46) call “participants’ views on the situation” they find themselves in. Furthermore, these authors mention the importance of “contexts in which people live and work,” which resonated well with my study, as the teaching profession, in general, was the context relevant to this study. Bhattacharjee (2012:103) points out that reality is composed of experiences as well as contexts (ontology) and that these contexts should be combined with the interpretations of participants (epistemology).

Explaining my philosophical stance, I concur with Martin, Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2014:273) who present the interpretive paradigm as one that takes

people’s subjective experiences seriously as the essence of what is real for them (ontology), making sense of people’s experiences by interacting with them and listening carefully to what they tell us (epistemology), and making use of qualitative research techniques to collect and analyse information (methodology).

Transposed to my study, I wanted to gain insight into the unique experiences of teachers, specifically their well-being and what they regard as challenges within the teaching profession, the way they cope with these challenges, and lastly, the aspects that they find rewarding. These subjective experiences were accessed by employing open-ended questions, which Creswell and Creswell (2018:46) view as enabling the researcher to listen “carefully to what people say or do in their life settings”.

Merriam and Tisdell (2015:9) situate the interpretive paradigm within the qualitative approach, which I have been following in my research.

4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research can be viewed as part of a research-practice continuum, with translation as the methodical process of bringing research into practice (Trochim, Donnelly & Arora, 2016:112). Different research designs exist in research, but there are mainly two approaches that can be followed in educational research, namely qualitative and

quantitative (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Trochim et al., 2016; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

Denzin (2018:43) defines the qualitative approach as “a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible ... qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them”. Another reason for following this approach is, according to Bertman and Christiansen (2014:6), the need to investigate the phenomenon under study more deeply to bring hidden information to the surface.

I decided to make use of a qualitative research design, seeing that I sought to investigate the well-being of teachers as a phenomenon. This study aimed to gather data from as many teachers as possible about their experiences in the teaching profession. However, the eventual participants who completed the open-ended questions were all at home during this stage of my study. They were, therefore, “removed” from the natural setting and had to rely on their memories and overall perceptions about their experiences. There were “externally imposed constraints” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:345) present seeing that most part of the data collection took place during lockdown.

Furthermore, Creswell and Creswell (2018:258) mention the researcher's role as one of the qualitative characteristics, and this aspect will be alluded to under research methods. Maxwell (2013:132) also underscores what I have experienced in this study, namely that qualitative researchers usually study a small number of individuals “and preserve the individuality of each of these in their analyses ... [so that] they can understand how events, actions, and meanings are shaped by the unique circumstances in which these occur”.

4.5 MY RESEARCH STANCE

My position as a researcher is addressed in this subsection because, according to Babbie (2020:18), the researcher's stance and role should be established and explicitly specified from the start of a study to ensure transparency.

What distinguishes qualitative research from other research approaches is the role of the researcher. Merriam and Tisdell (2015:64) postulate that the researcher is “the primary instrument for data collection and analysis”. Since understanding participants’ experiences is one of the goals of a qualitative approach, the researcher as a “human instrument” seems to be the most suitable means of collecting and analysing the data.

My teaching experience enabled me to extract the necessary and relevant information from my participants and probe them emphatically for more personal and subjective data. Creswell and Creswell (2018:260) add that since qualitative research is situated within an interpretive paradigm, the researcher is intensively and continuously involved with participants. I specifically decided not to involve any assistants in the participants’ engagement, as I would not have any control over any helpers’ possible bias. Cohen et al. (2018:390) expressly caution that the case study researcher should ensure that facts, explanations, and theories receive prominence rather than promoting their value judgments.

Although it is natural in a qualitative research environment for subjectivity to be present, McMillan and Schumacher (2014:356) advise that personal feelings and experiences should foster an understanding of participants’ perspectives and deep respect for their views. Therefore, the researcher should clarify her positionality (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:357), which assumes displaying her viewpoint and stating her own experience as grounds for reasoning, which I discussed as justification for the paradigm in which this study is situated (Consult Section 4.3.1). Additionally, I regarded my experience as a teacher for 15 years as a significant advantage when collecting and analysing data. I understood my participants’ context and could empathise with their experiences. It also allowed me to ask relevant questions to ensure that rich data was gathered. While analysing, I made inferences and interpreted the data against the backdrop of personal experience, theoretical frameworks and literature evidence. This enabled me to meet the requirement of case study research, as suggested by Cohen et al. (2018:389): “A case study requires in-depth data, a researcher’s ability to gather data that address fitness for purpose, and skills in probing beneath the surface of phenomena.”

4.6 SAMPLING PROCEDURES: RESEARCH SITE AND PARTICIPANTS

The procedures used in selecting the research site and participants are part of a study's sampling procedure. Participants participated in the study using their own time at the locations where they resided during the lockdown. The research settings in my study were the teachers' homes or a classroom at the school where they were teaching at the time of the interview.

Taherdoost (2016:19) believes that the sampling process starts with the definition of the sample. Data was collected in three stages, where all participants came from the same pool of the initial sampling process. Figure 4.2 is a visual representation of the three stages.

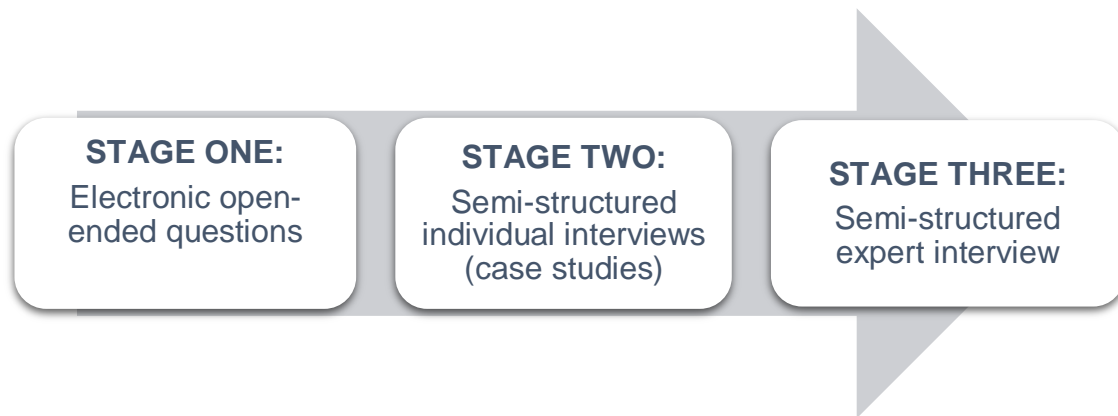


Figure 4.2: The stage approach in the data collection procedure

I used voluntary sampling in the first stage of the data collection process. Murairwa (2015:186) describes voluntary participation as a “sample selected from the willing and qualifying respondents to participate in the study” and explains that this type of sampling has different phases.

First of all, the researcher should determine the research problem and objectives. I wanted to explore how the current classroom context affects the well-being of teachers, focusing on challenges and coping skills. Secondly, I identified the target population, which constituted teachers who had access to any smart device and data to use the internet. Thirdly, I published the study's intent and invited volunteers to participate (Murairwa, 2015:187). I posted the following purpose of the study on three different teaching pages on Facebook, inviting teachers to participate:

A wonderful opportunity to voice your opinion about teaching challenges and teacher well-being: you are invited to act as a participant in a research study to improve the working conditions of teachers. Please click on the link.

These Facebook pages were established to provide teachers with a platform where concerns/tips/experiences can be shared; all three are multicultural and use English as a medium of communication. The first one was **Teachers for real change** and has approximately 19 000 members. The second one was **Teachers SA** that has about 16 000 members. The third one is **Onderwysers! Teachers!** It has more or less 37 000 members.

In Stages 2 and 3 I used non-probability sampling, which refers to a sample where not everyone in the target population has an equal chance of being included (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016:146). Purposeful sampling is the most common form of non-probability sampling and is based on selecting participants according to the purpose of the study. I followed the advice of Merriam and Grenier (2019:77) and selected a sample from the first stage of participants from whom I believed most information could be gained. The selection criteria for participating in the second stage were that these participants had to come from various school settings and ethnic groups, had multiple experiences in teaching, and I also wanted a representation of gender. In Stage 3 I approached an expert in the teaching profession for an interview who had “special expert knowledge related to a special professional field” (Bogner, Littig & Menz in Hannaway, 2017:18).

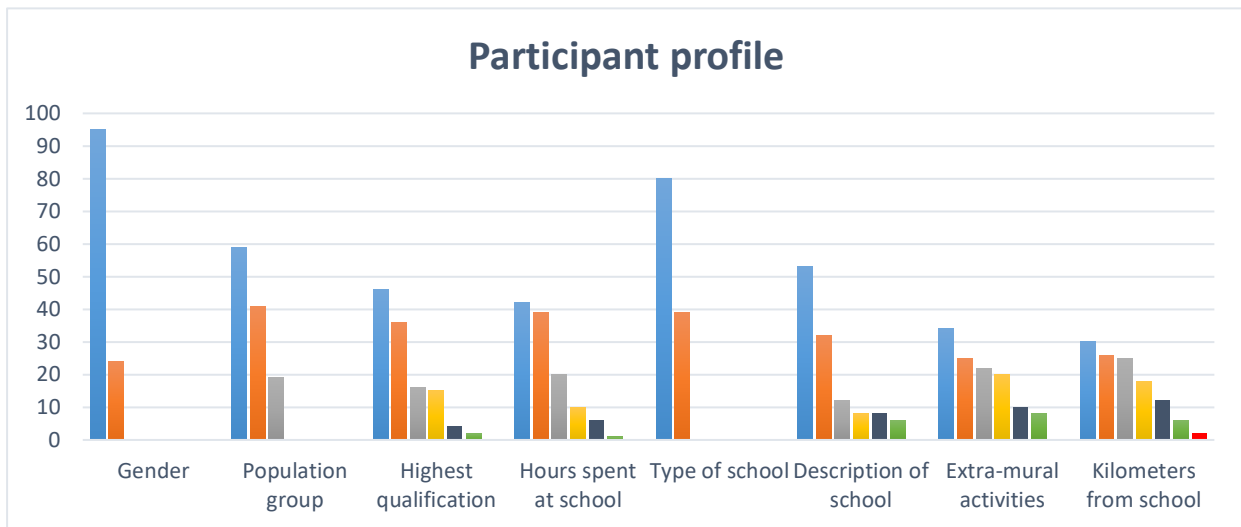
4.7 DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

As previously explained in Figure 4.2, I collected data in three stages, using different data collection tools.

4.7.1 Stage 1: Electronic Open-ended Questions

After I had invited possible participants on the three Facebook pages (Consult Section 4.5) the willing participants clicked on a link that took them to Qualtrics (an online research tool that allows one to build and distribute surveys and analyse responses). They were then invited to complete questions, consisting of two parts. Part one

consisted of biographical questions that provided information on the locations of the different schools, participants' gender, population group, teaching experience, teacher qualifications, and involvement in extramural activities (Consult Addendum A). The purpose of these biographical questions was to construct a profile of the participants who used the Facebook sites for teachers. I also wanted to use this information for Stage 2 of the data collection process. One hundred and nineteen participants completed this section. Figure 4.3 indicates the characteristics of the 119 participants:



Gender	■ Male ■ Female
Population group	■ Black ■ White ■ Coloured
Highest qualification	■ Degree ■ Postgraduate ■ Degree and diploma ■ Diploma ■ No teaching qualification ■ Certificate
Hours spent at school	■ 8 hours ■ 9 hours ■ 7 hours ■ 10 hours ■ 4-6 hours ■ Other
Type of school	■ Primary school ■ Secondary school
Description of school	■ Public ■ Township ■ Private ■ Inner-city ■ Special needs ■ Rural
Extra-mural activities	■ Soccer/netball/rugby ■ Athletics ■ School functions ■ Other ■ Drama
Kilometres from school	■ 3 – 5 km ■ 6 – 10 km ■ 0 – 2 km ■ 11 – 20 km ■ 21 – 30 km ■ 31 – 60 km ■ More

Figure 4.3: Participant profile

Part two of Stage 1 consisted of eight open-ended questions (Consult Addendum B). Eighty-eight participants completed this section. The rationale for each question is discussed in Section 5.2, where the questions are analysed. Creswell (2014:212) proposes that the researcher pose general, broad questions to participants to allow them to share their views without constraint. Making the questions available online allowed participants to complete these questions independently, without any restrictions imposed upon them. Weller, Vickers, Bernard, Blackburn, Borgatti, Graylee and Johnson (2018) explain open-ended questions as exploring a phenomenon in-depth that may produce short answers or lengthy narratives. An advantage of open-ended questions is that these questions “provide for an extension of views because they allow for unlimited details from participants” (Okeke & Van Wyk, 2015:319).

To address the concern that the questions might be too broad in scope, I used my primary and secondary research questions as guidelines to develop the questions (Creswell, 2018; Maxwell, 2013). I also drew on my experience as a teacher in private and public schools, which gave me an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study. Lastly, posting the purpose of the study with the link to the questions on three different Facebook pages ensured that 88 responses were gathered.

4.7.2 Stage 2: Semi-structured Interviews (Case Studies)

Stage 2 involved a multiple case study. McMillan and Schumacher (2014:344) regard case study research as a “flexible form of inquiry best suited for studying a particular phenomenon within its natural context”. Yin (2018:45) succinctly explains that conducting a case study is because the researcher wishes to understand a “real-world case” by assuming that contextual factors play an essential role in understanding the phenomenon. Furthermore, Schoch (2020:246) states that case study research has advantages in terms of both process and outcome. The case study design will assist the researcher in focusing the investigation on a specific example within the constraints of location and time. A case study also allows the researcher to collect various types of data on the case and provides the researcher with the opportunity to obtain an in-depth look at an organization or individual, as well as the inner workings

and interactions of that organization or individuals. This resonates with the purpose I had in mind, namely, to understand teachers' well-being. Cohen et al. (2018:405) add that case studies can determine the “how” and “why” of experiences and that these can be observed in authentic contexts, where an in-depth understanding can be gained “to do justice to the case”.

These authors also believe that as many variables are present in a study, more than one case may be needed for data collection (Cohen et al., 2018:405). Therefore, I opted for a multiple case study design. According to Yin (2018:91), “the evidence from multiple cases is often considered more compelling, and the overall multiple-case study is more robust”. As I included cases from different contextual backgrounds and with various degrees of well-being, I believe the criteria of being “compelling” and “robust” were met. Merriam and Tisdell (2015:38) mention that multiple case studies allow the exploration of “subunits” or “subcases” embedded within the different cases, which may make data richer and more profound.

I purposefully selected eight participants. I wanted individuals who represented South African teachers, and they were therefore selected based on the following criteria:

- Population group
- Type of teaching context

These participants were interviewed using a semi-structured interview schedule (Consult Addendum C) to understand their experiences in the teaching profession. Semi-structured interviews are “designed to ascertain subjective responses from persons regarding a particular situation or phenomenon they have experienced” (McIntosh & Morse, 2015:1). Cohen et al. (2018:199) reckon that semi-structured interviews have a definite plan and that open-ended questions are posed to participants “to enable the contents to be re-ordered, digressions and expansions made, new avenues to be included and further probing to be undertaken”. Moreover, a prerequisite for using this method is that the interviewee must be knowledgeable about the relevant phenomenon under study.

Initially, I contacted 25 of the 88 participants, keeping in mind that not all would reply or be willing to participate in individual interviews. These 25 participants varied in terms of a population group, gender and school description. It was essential to include participants from various population groups to get a true reflection of all teachers in South Africa. In the end, eight participants volunteered to be interviewed.

I decided to use semi-structured interviews as I wanted to follow up on the responses I gained from the open-ended questions I received in Stage 1. Although the phenomenon under study is not new territory, I felt that the different views of the participants would give a voice to the well-being of South African teachers. Newcomer et al. (2015) caution that semi-structured interviews may be time-consuming and labour intensive and that they are suitable to a small sample only. I was thus comfortable interviewing only eight participants and an expert participant that formed part of the following data collection stage. Telephonic interviews were convenient for the participants as well as myself and complied with the lockdown regulations.

4.7.3 Stage 3: Semi-structured Expert Interview

The third data collection stage comprised a semi-structured interview with an education expert. I used this interview to verify the data I collected during Stages 1 and 2.

Libakova and Sertakova (2015:116) believe that this type of data collection technique is effective when the researcher needs rich data quickly. Another advantage of interviewing an expert is that the participant is highly qualified, and it eliminates the need for “additional screening and clarifying questions”. Döringer (2020) mentions three types of expert interview, the first being the *exploratory expert interview*, which is used to gain insight into a new or unknown field of study. The second type is the *systematising expert interview* employed when the researcher wants to compare data.

I deemed this interview necessary to allow the verification of data collected during Stages 1 and 2. It allowed for the perspective of a representative from the Department of Education on the well-being of teachers and the issues they are being confronted with, and enabled me to get an indication whether the DoE is in touch with the realities of the day-to-day lives of teachers.

The third type is the *theory-generating expert interview* used when methodological development is about to occur. I conducted a systematising expert interview where I used semi-structured questions to verify the themes and categories that emerged from the data gathered during Stages 1 and 2. A detailed explanation of the profile of the expert will be presented in the following chapter.

Using the research tools above, I collected data that enabled me to answer the research questions and determine the reliability of the data (Lincoln, 1995:276).

4.8 DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS

Data analysis typically means making sense of the data collected through different methods. Merriam and Tisdell (2015: 226) explain that meaning-making involves a process where data is consolidated, reduced and then interpreted. To put it simply – data analysis is the process that is followed to answer the research questions, and the latter refer to the study’s findings. These “answers” are categories, themes or conclusions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015: 202,203). Creswell and Creswell (2018:257) report that qualitative researchers work inductively. These themes and categories are built from the bottom up, moving back and forth between these themes and the database “until the researchers have established a comprehensive set of themes”. Figure 4.4 illustrates the data analysis process.

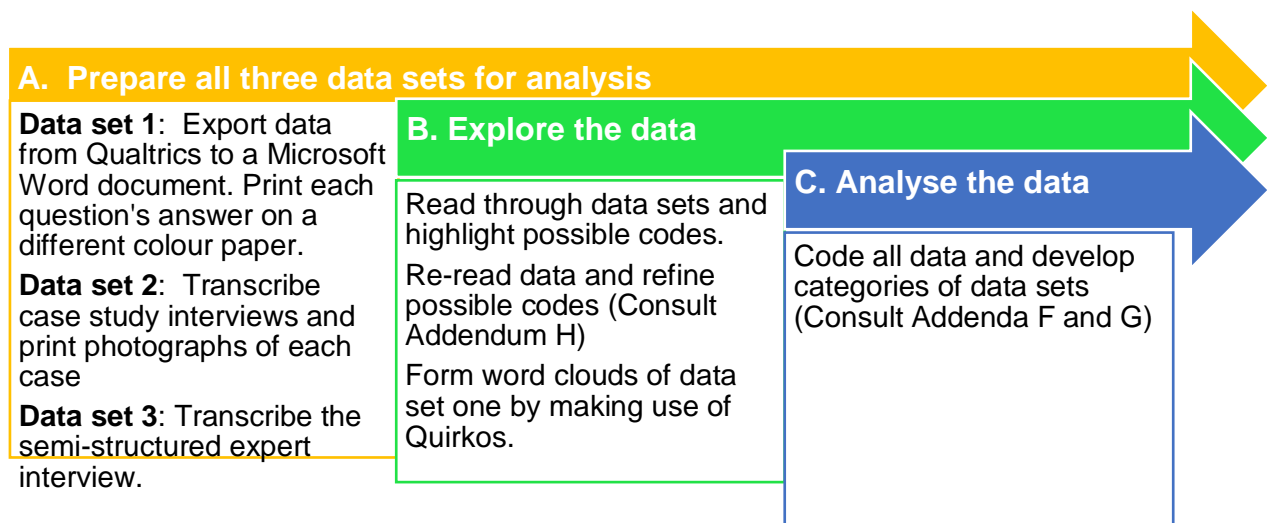


Figure 4.4: Data analysis process followed in this study (adapted from Kosta, 2019)

The data analysis process began with the preparation of the various data sets. I exported the first data set from Qualtrics to a Microsoft Word document, making it easier to read and mark relevant information. I printed the answers to each question on paper of a unique colour (Consult Addendum H), which helped with the coding process. The second and third data sets that constituted semi-structured interviews were then transcribed and printed.

Secondly, I began the exploration of the data sets. I read through all sets and marked and highlighted possible codes. After that, I re-read and intensively studied the data sets (Consult Addendum H). While reading the data of set 2, I decided to use word clouds to help highlight possible codes and visualise the data in Chapter 5.

Lastly, the final analysis took place. I coded all three data sets and developed a visual representation of all data to gather a holistic view (Consult Addenda F and G). This assisted me in the data interpretation.

4.9 RESEARCH PROCESS

In this section, I explain the research process. This is necessary for the findings to be valid and transparent. Figure 4.5 illustrates the research process that I followed:

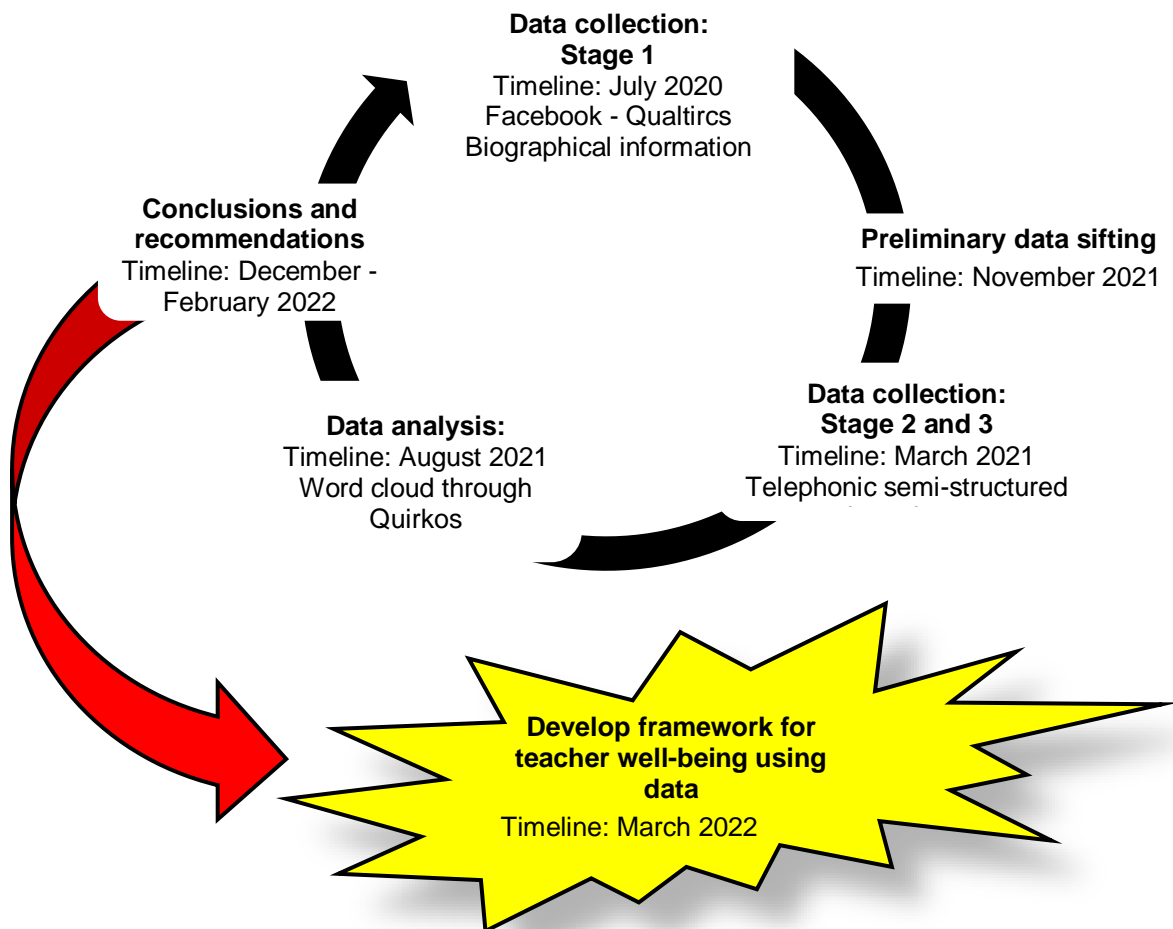


Figure 4.5: The research process of my study

Data collection commenced in June 2020. I posted the invitation to partake in the study on three Facebook pages (Consult Section 4.5), where 119 participants completed the biographical information. Seeing that the participants could complete the biographical information and the electronic open questions in their own time, I allowed 12 weeks for participants to complete these two sections. At the end of October 2020, I closed the link that allowed participants to share their answers. Eighty-eight participants completed the open-ended questions.

Next, I sifted through the data, which enabled me to select 25 participants that had the potential to contribute to the case studies. These individuals were chosen based on specific criteria (Consult Section 4.6.2). From March 2021 to June 2021 telephonic interviews were conducted with eight voluntary participants, followed by one expert interview.

Data analysis commenced in August 2021 (Consult Section 4.7) following the conclusions and recommendation and concluded in February 2022. Simultaneously I developed a well-being framework for teachers using the data I had gathered over time, explained in-depth in Chapter 7.

4.10 QUALITY ASSURANCE MEASURES

Okeke and Van Wyk (2015:201) underscore the importance of quality in qualitative research by saying that “the process used to measure concepts must provide stable results”. This can only be reached if the researcher keeps track of her own biases. To address my own biases, I attempted to elicit credible findings by continually reflecting on my own possible biases, regularly meeting with my supervisors, getting colleagues' input, and cross-referencing my data with relevant literature (Creswell, 2014:112). Throughout the study, I remained an active learner and refrained from passing judgment by reporting the participants' points of view. Furthermore, I adhered to trustworthiness by meeting the requirements for credibility, conformability, dependability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 2003:220).

4.10.1 Credibility

How can one establish confidence in the “truth” of the findings of a particular inquiry for the subjects (respondents) with which and the context in which the inquiry was carried out? (Guba 1981:79).

Explaining credibility, Wahyuni (2012:72) believes that it is equivalent to internal validity that refers to the accuracy of the research in reflecting what it intended to achieve in the collected data. Creswell (2014:22) argues that credibility is about “whether research results can be trusted to reflect the participant's perspective on the research topic”. For me credibility implies that data should meet the objectives of a research study, as embedded in the research questions. Translated to my study, the findings or conclusions of this indication of the well-being of teachers. Bhattacharjee (2012:111) notes that the credibility of a qualitative research study can be improved when the researcher can provide evidence of “extended engagement in the field”. Although data was collected online, engagement with the topic, albeit in a digital field,

was gained through different data collection methods and involving different sets of participants.

Patton (2015) as well as Merriam and Tisdell (2015) believe that the researcher is the one who is responsible for the credibility of the study as “the trustworthiness of the data is tied directly to the trustworthiness of those who collect and analyse the data – and their demonstrated competence” (Patton, 2015:706). My experience of fifteen years in the teaching profession provided me with deep insight into the daily encounters of teachers in various contexts. Shenton (2004:64) suggests some provisions that should be made to ensure that the researcher accurately records the topic under study: Firstly, the research methods should be well established. These refer to procedures such as developing questions for the data collection and methods of data analysis. I developed my open-ended questions by studying the literature and taking advice from my supervisors. As far as the data collection methods are concerned, a well-thought-out procedure for attaining rich data was established, as discussed in Section 4.6.

Secondly, the researcher should develop a familiarity with the culture of participating organisations before data collection commences. This is applicable where specific organisations such as schools or businesses are involved as a research site or if teachers/employees participate in the study while at work. Participants participated in the study using their own time at the locations where they resided during lockdown. Thirdly, a random sampling of possible participants should be included. Shenton (2004) argues that random sampling might negate charges of researcher bias in the selection of participants. I made use of purposeful sampling in the sense that I chose the three most active pages on teaching on Facebook. Teachers could then decide whether they wanted to participate; it can be regarded as a random sampling form, as no participants were purposefully selected in Stage 1. Participants who partook in Stages 2 and 3 of the data collection were chosen purposefully (Consult Section 4.6.2). Because of the online nature of the data collection, biases were automatically minimised as I did not meet the participants. Furthermore, credibility was ensured through triangulation. “Triangulation involves mixing various methods and instruments which enable researchers to obtain a variety of information from the participants in a particular study” (Okeke & Van Wyk, 2014:219). I used a three-staged data collection

process: open-ended questions, semi-structured interviews, and an expert interview. A diverse group of participants participated in the study, making the collected data more credible.

Shenton (2004:70) points out that participants should have the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time during the research process. Participants gave informed consent by clicking on the link that took them to Qualtrics, where they were thoroughly informed of the study and that they might withdraw during the study. If the participants were willing to partake in Stage 2 of the data collection, they provided me with their email addresses. Lastly, I regularly met with my supervisors, who guided me and helped me to recognise my own biases.

4.10.2 Confirmability

Confirmability is concerned with demonstrating that the data and interpretations of the findings are drawn from the data and are not the result of the inquirer's imagination (Haven & van Grootel, 2019:231) or as Mailwane (2016: 71) puts it, “the extent to which others can confirm findings of a study”. To meet these requirements, my research process was continually monitored by my two supervisors and two external research advisors. The fact that I also had ample experience as a teacher contributed to insight into and understanding of teachers’ perspectives.

4.10.3 Dependability

How can one determine whether the findings of an inquiry would be consistently repeated if the inquiry were replicated with the same (or similar) subjects (respondents) in the same (or similar) context? (Guba 1981:80).

Dependability mirrors reliability in quantitative research, ensuring that the results found in the study can be repeated by another researcher (Trochim, 2006:12). According to Gupta and Shaheen (2018:19), in qualitative research, dependability involves the quality of the integrated processes of the collection of data, the analysis of data, and theory generation; simply put, dependability is when a researcher can show that the findings are consistent and can be repeated (Langa, 2016:70). To ensure dependability in my study, I meticulously documented the research procedures to

allow a similar study to be conducted under related circumstances and in similar surroundings using my audit trail.

4.10.4 Transferability

How can one determine the degree to which the findings of a particular inquiry may have applicability in other contexts or with other subjects (respondents)? (Guba 1981:79-80)

Transferability refers to the degree to which research findings have applicability in another context of related research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994:193). Bhattacharjee (2012:111) explains transferability as the degree to which the research findings can be generalised to other research settings. In this regard, Lincoln and Guba (1985:316) declare, “It is, in summary, not the naturalist’s task to provide an index of transferability, it is his or her responsibility to provide the database that makes transferability judgments possible on the part of potential appliers”. I followed this strategy by presenting a detailed description of the selection of participants, the data collection process, and explaining how the data was analysed (Consult Sections 4.5 and 4.6).

4.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In working with human participants, ethical considerations were of the utmost importance throughout the research process. Cohen et al. (2018:111) regard ethics as concerning “that which is good and bad, right and wrong”. Arifin (2018:30) argues along the same line when saying, “The protection of human subjects through the application of the appropriate ethical principle is important in any research study ..., in a qualitative study, ethical considerations have a particular resonance due to the in-depth nature of the study process”. The following section explains how I observed ethical considerations during the research process.

Before data collection began, I applied for ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria. The process was rigorous, and possible ethical hazards were identified. I attended to these and reapplied. After my study had been approved (EDU036/20; consult Addendum D), I posted the link to Qualtrics on Facebook, which contained Stage 1 of my data collection. I indicated to

participants that data would remain confidential and that their identities would not be revealed. In this regard, Flewitt (2005:558) cautions that participants often share sensitive information with researchers, understanding that their identities will be protected and that the findings will be a true reflection of what they said. Creswell and Creswell (2018:152) also advise that the privacy of participants should be respected, which implies confidentiality. McMillan and Schumacher (2014:134) define this as “making certain that the data cannot be linked to individual subjects by the name”. As pseudonyms were used, and no schools were identified during the data dissemination, I could ensure the participants of anonymity. I also took care to remove any identifiable personal markers when reporting. Qualtrics made this possible as the participants did not need to fill in their names; I contacted them through the email addresses they provided if they willingly indicated that they would partake in the open-ended questions section of the research. This mirrors Arifin’s (2018:30) statement that consent should be given voluntarily and information regarding the study should be communicated to the participants. The consent (Consult Addendum E) included all necessary information and explained the power of freedom of choice to withdraw at any given time.

Ponterotto (2010:587) argues that ethical behaviour is more than merely ethical procedures and the functioning of the research design, and underscores the researcher’s self-awareness, multicultural competence and commitment as the basis for any ethical practice. Ethics is a complex term, but it supports the viewpoint that research actions should “abide by rules of responsibility, accountability, liability and due process” (Recker, 2013:141). Throughout the study, I honoured intellectual property by referencing all sources and acknowledging them. I studied the documents carefully to avoid false claims, and I did not generalise the findings but instead sought insight into the unique experiences of the participants. Creswell (2018:267) suggests that an external audit should be conducted on the study. I requested two external researchers to review the study and report back by identifying its strengths and weaknesses.

To adhere to ethical practice in research, Creswell and Creswell (2018:148) advise the researcher to “select a site without vested interests” and explain that a power imbalance exists when interviews occur. The interviews were conducted on the phone,

and I made every effort to put my participants at ease, allowing them to do the most of the talking. As a result, I made sure that they felt heard and that the information they offered was important.

As the online environment was primarily used in collecting my data, I needed to consider the implications that could arise. In this regard, Merriam and Tisdell (2015:189) suggest three areas that the qualitative researcher should keep in mind. Firstly, the effects of “software functionalities” in the data collection process. By using Qualtrics, there was always a chance that this program could give technical problems. The program is extremely user-friendly, and none of the participants reported having trouble using it. They did not need to install any software, as the program is based online. Secondly, these authors propagate awareness of an online platform’s effect on ethical practice. I did not consider it problematic, but using this platform to conduct the open-ended questions was difficult because I could not depend on body language to give additional information (sensing distress, and so on). I found this medium to inhibit the researcher-participant relationship. Although this cannot be regarded as infringing on ethical principles, I believe it could affect the quality of data I gathered. Merriam and Tisdell (2015:183) warn that these differences between online and face-to-face contact “must not be ignored or trivialized”. In my case, I was well aware of the downside of online research but also grateful that I could complete the data collection through this medium. Another point that saddened me was the fact that some participants who could share valuable data did not have access to computers. Although their absence did not distort the findings, I would have preferred to give all South African teachers the option to participate.

4.12 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter described in detail the topics related to the methodological position that reinforced my data collection and analysis and served as a map to guide the process of collecting and analysing the data. To gain a comprehensive understanding of teacher well-being, I followed a qualitative approach by conducting multiple case studies. I also discussed quality criteria and ethical considerations that underpinned my study. In the following chapter, I present the data, using themes, categories and sub-categories that emerged from the data analysis.

CHAPTER 5

DATA PRESENTATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The research design and methodology used in my study were outlined in Chapter 4. I also alluded to the ethical considerations and quality criteria that guided my study.

Chapter 5 presents and analyses the data. I followed a staged approach in the data collection procedure. Stage 1 involved teachers who were part of three Facebook groups, answering both biographical questions (helping to construct a profile of participants as described in Section 4.4.2), and eight open-ended questions. In the second stage, I interviewed eight purposefully selected participants by making use of semi-structured questions, where each participant represented a specific case. The last stage of data collection involved an expert interview with a specialist in the teaching profession.

The data are presented according to these stages. Thereafter I present the categories and themes that have emerged from the data analysis. The theoretical framework of my study, namely the four forces of the Force Field Model (FFM) informed the themes that structured the research findings. Figure 5.1 provides an outline of Chapter 5.

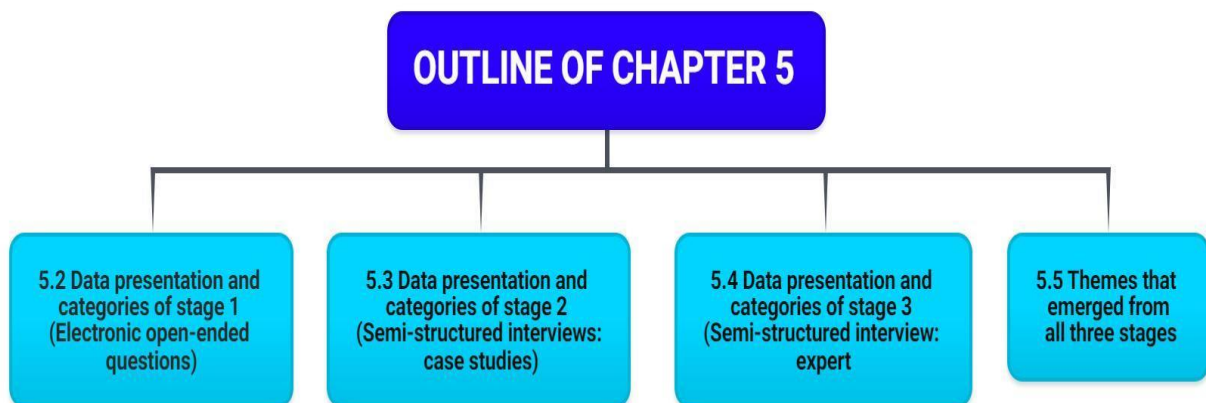


Figure 5.1: Outline of Chapter 5

This study followed a qualitative research design, where data were collected and analysed to answer the primary research question that informed the secondary research questions.

A staged approach guided the data collection procedure (Consult Section 4.7). Stage 1 involved 88 teachers who were part of three Facebook groups, answering both biographical questions and eight open-ended questions. In the second stage, I interviewed eight purposefully selected participants from Stage 1 by making use of semi-structured questions, where each participant represented a specific case. The last stage of data collection involved an expert interview with an educational specialist. The data are presented according to these stages. Thereafter the codes and categories that have emerged from the data analysis are presented. Finally, I give an overview of all categories, followed by the themes.

5.2 DATA PRESENTATION AND CATEGORIES OF STAGE 1 (ELECTRONIC OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS)

Teachers who were members of the three Facebook groups were asked eight open-ended questions based on the research questions. These questions were answered by a total of 88 participants.

The responses to each question are firstly presented in a word cloud below. These word clouds were formed by making use of Quirkos, an online program that assists with data analysis. This software provides a graphical interface in which the themes of a data set become evident to allow a holistic view of the data gathered. These themes differed in size, based on the significance and frequency of occurrence. The colour scheme is random and does not hold a particular meaning. The data were presented according to each open-ended question.

5.2.1 Why Do You Think Teachers Remain in the Teaching Profession?

While reviewing the literature on the well-being of teachers, I discovered that very little research had been done on why teachers choose to remain in the teaching profession despite all the challenges they face. I therefore believed that this question would shed light on what teachers find rewarding about the profession, as set out in the primary research question.

The word cloud in Figure 5.2 summarises the answers of teachers.



Figure 5.2: Word cloud on Question 1: Reasons for staying

When analysing the word cloud, one can see that *love* was used most frequently. Participants reported¹, *I just love my profession; Love children; I love teaching*. The love of teaching relates to having a passion for the profession. *Teaching* and *children* are concepts that were frequently mentioned when answering the question. Forty-three participants referred to teaching as a passion in their answer, which showed that teaching was about the love for children, and the wish for them to progress in life.

Most participants reported that teachers remain in the profession because they have a passion for teaching. A specific statement summarised most responses by explaining that teaching is *in your blood*. One participant explained that *teaching is a passion, not a job. If you love teaching you will not do something else*. Another response read *because of the passion of working with children. Seeing them achieve their goals in life ... I think that gives us hope for the future*. Another participant mentioned the context of teaching when she referred to children in township schools: *I think the main reason is the love for the children and making a difference especially with township children. A lot of them only get love and affection from a teacher*. This indicated that empathy with the circumstances in which learners find themselves may contribute to the reasons why some teachers are staying in the profession. One

¹ Responses are provided verbatim and have not been edited.

participant touched on feeling valued and appreciated when saying, *I think the smiles every day from the children is the reason for me to teach and to help them reach their goals and become what they want.* This response correlates with teachers feeling appreciated and acknowledged for the work that they are doing.

The second most frequently reported reason for staying in the profession was the stability or the security that teaching offers, where 17 participants reported on this. *Safety of pension; job security; stability and security* were some of the responses recorded. One participant explained it as follows: *We feel comfortable, we are so used to it and don't want to risk trying something new.* Another stated: *We feel safe and have a sense of belonging.* It was clear that safety for them meant financial and job security.

Linked to emotional security, 11 participants argued that teachers stay in the profession due to a lack of other opportunities. *A teaching degree leaves you limited to find other jobs.* Another one added, *there is rarely any other occupation to pursue with my teaching degree.* Another participant unapologetically answered: *We stay for the salary,* while a colleague reiterated, *for the salary at the end of the month.* In the same vein, a participant explained, *I can provide for my family.* I also noted that not one participant reported that the given salary for teachers was acceptable or good, but merely that teaching gave them a secure income at the end of the month. The second question that was posed still focused on exploring participants' positive experiences in the profession.

5.2.2 What Do You Find Rewarding About Teaching?

Whereas the first question allowed a general response, the second question demanded a personal, subjective answer. Figure 5.3 summarises the responses.

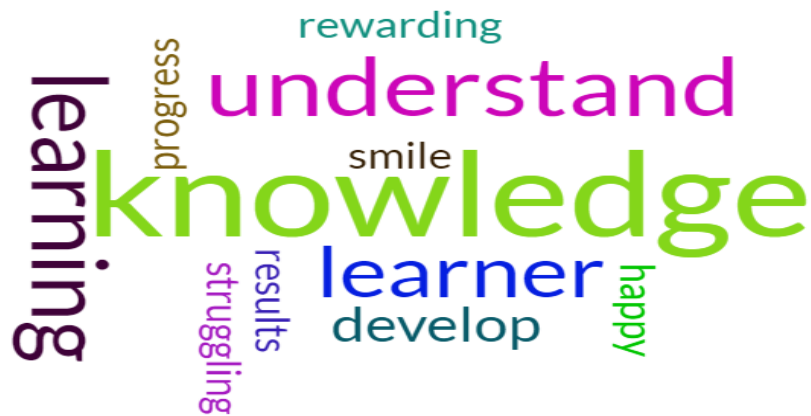


Figure 5.3: Word cloud on Question 2: Teaching rewards

The most prominent concept used by participants in answering this question was *knowledge*. *Understand* and *learning* also featured prominently. At first glance, one can see that responses referring to learner performance dominated the findings.

According to 46 of the participants, seeing a learner perform well was the greatest reward: *Seeing the reaction on a child's face when they finally understand a concept*. One participant was more specific: *When learners reach outcomes, such as reading*. Similar responses were: *Learning new things all the time*; *Positive results at the end of the term*; *Learners that perform well* and *When kids achieve*. Another participant explained, *I am a Grade 1 teacher, so seeing my children develop throughout the year is amazing!*

The second most frequently reported reward mentioned by 27 participants, had to do with relationships within the teaching profession. This makes sense seeing that teaching involves several relationships with various educational stakeholders. One participant explained, *Experience of dealing with parents, teachers as humans and as colleagues, and also learners*. Similarly, another participant said, *Happy parents, happy learners*, which placed the focus on the parents. A few participants referred to building relationships with both learners and parents, whereas others included their colleagues. Reports such as, *To build a relationship with my learners and colleagues* and *Interaction with learners and co-workers* were responses that underscored the significance of relationships.

The next group (9 participants) of responses related to acknowledgment and appreciation. *Learners coming back and thanking me for everything*, one response read. Another explained, *When learners appreciate your efforts*. Correspondingly, one participant said, *Being able to see learners appreciate the efforts of teachers*.

The last overarching classification criterion was salary and fringe benefits, with only five participants mentioning these. A few participants reported that the frequent holidays were the most rewarding aspect of teaching: *Being a mother it just makes sense to be a teacher. I can be at home when my children are on holiday*. Others merely stated, *Holiday* without any further explanation.

On the other hand, one participant found nothing in the profession rewarding. Not reporting a single rewarding experience was an outlier. One participant reported on the diversity of both the curriculum and stakeholders' backgrounds: *The diversity in the implementation of the curriculum as well as people's diverse backgrounds*. This attitude suggested an appreciation for working with learners from various cultural and other backgrounds.

5.2.3 What Do You Think Influences a Teacher's Workplace Well-being?

With the third question I wanted to gain insight into the factors influencing teachers' well-being while at school. Watsonna, Tregaskisa, Gediklib, Vaughan and Semkinaa (2018:249) underscore the relationship between well-being and the work context; they maintain that it "is critical because of the potential for employment conditions to operate as a pathway to a healthy workforce and the economic and societal impacts that follow". Transposed to the teaching context, it means that the well-being of teachers at school is a critical element for successful teaching and healthy teacher-learner as well as teacher-colleague and teacher-management relationships.

The word cloud in Figure 5.4 summarises the common keywords.



Figure 5.4: Word cloud on Question 3: Factors influencing workplace well-being

When analysing the word cloud it is evident that the school environment was a concept used by 20 participants. The words *colleagues* and *management* were used with the same frequency, which gave me an indication of the influence these two relationships have on the participants' well-being. *Work* was also frequently mentioned, but only as a verb or noun, and not as an indication of what might influence well-being. Some of the concepts, such as *colleagues* and *co-workers* as well as *management* and *leadership* were closely related.

The concept *environment* was linked to phrases such as *disciplined environment*; *school atmosphere*; *positive working environment*; *a school environment that is safe and stressful working environment*. Overcrowded classrooms were mentioned often, and were tied to a challenging environment. One participant blatant stated that: *The overcrowded classroom environment harms my well-being*. Another participant agreed: , *The number of learners in one class is too big*. Another participant mentioned that a *supporting environment* would benefit her well-being. Support in this sense might indicate the support of all stakeholders, such as parents, management, the DoE and colleagues. This mirrors the response of two participants who said, *Co-operation from all stakeholders including learners and Good support from staff members and parents*. Being supported by colleagues, parents, and management were key matters mentioned frequently.

The last viewpoint is closely related to the concepts *management* and *colleagues*, which had to do with relationships among educational role players. One participant explained, *The way that a teacher is treated by her colleagues and school management team*. Short answers such as, *The principal; Co-workers and Management* were also mentioned. However, these responses do not indicate whether the school management or the participants' colleagues had a positive or negative impact on their well-being, but by implication mean that these people had a particular role to play in the well-being of the individual teacher. Another participant said, *The leader that appreciates individual efforts, being able to work harmoniously with colleagues*.

Being appreciated for walking the extra mile and *being acknowledged for work done* were repeatedly mentioned. Responses such as, *Having my work recognised; Being appreciated for hard work; Being treated with respect and to feel appreciated* indicate that appreciation and being valued are crucial for teachers' well-being.

Thirteen participants mentioned factors that had to do with themselves, things that they could change, and that had nothing to do with other roleplayers. Most of them mentioned that a positive attitude influences one's well-being. Concepts such as *Positivity* and *Positive attitude* were frequently mentioned. One participant said, *Making time to relax*. Another participant mentioned lack of sleep and being stressed too much. In the same vein, one participant claimed that being a teacher was just too stressful.

Interestingly enough, only one participant referred to the workload: *Extra-mural activities, administrative requirements, and time constraints influence my well-being*. Finally, one participant said, *Just do your work and mind your own business*. The next question, therefore, focused on specific challenges that teachers experience.

5.2.4 What Challenges Do You as a Teacher Experience?

In line with one of the research questions, this question sought to evoke personal, subjective experiences regarding the challenges teachers experience in the teaching profession that are displayed in Figure 5.5.

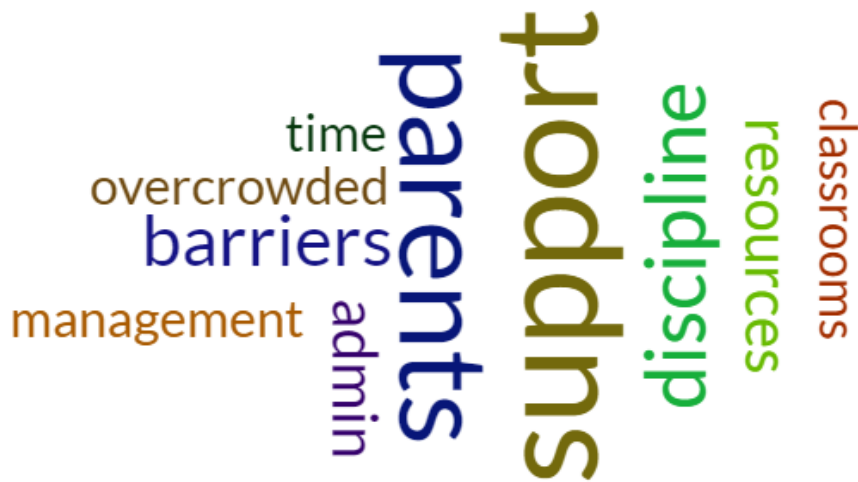


Figure 5.5: Word cloud on Question 4: Challenges experienced by teachers

The concepts *support* and *parents* took precedence over the others in the word cloud, with *support* being mentioned the most. The implication is that the greatest challenge for teachers was a lack of support. The second most prevalent concept was *parents*; *support* and *parents* were often used in the same sentence, which indicates that lack of parental support was also a concerning factor, as these two concepts were used mostly in the same sentence. The implication is that the majority felt that they did not get enough support from parents, whereas others perceived parents to be challenging. Although *barriers* were also highlighted, it was mentioned in conjunction with other concepts.

The lack of support from parents seemed to be an immense challenge as illustrated in the following responses: *The lack of parental involvement; Parents that are not involved; Lack of support from parents.* One participant explained, *You don't get any support from the parents and when there is support, they are uneducated and not able to assist with homework.*

Although *discipline* was not the concept mentioned most, it acted as an umbrella term for learners' misbehaviour (19 participants reported on learner discipline). Answers such as *Bad behaviour of learners; Learner discipline; Disrespect from learners and misbehaving learners* were given to explain in what sense learners seemed to present

challenging behaviour. One participant reported, *Having to deal with learners who do not want to be at school* while another jotted down *Learners that disrupt the classroom dynamics* and yet another said, *Late-coming and disrespectful learners*. One participant touched upon external factors impacting the behaviour of learners by saying, *economic issues that affect learners and our community*. Mentioning discipline specifically, one participant said, *These days the discipline that must be learned from the teachers' side most of the time*, implying that learners are not disciplined at home and that teachers have to take up the role of teaching discipline, which is not their primary responsibility. One participant generalised the behaviour of learners, saying, *The general undisciplined behaviour of learners and parents*, which underlines once again that parents also serve as a challenge for teachers.

The next challenge 16 participants reported on was the lack of resources. One participant explained as follows:

At this stage, our school is still closed due to the lack of water. We don't have any water. It has been a problem for more than four years. We have reported it numerous times, but no one listens. Our learners are very poor and don't have technological knowledge. Most parents don't even have cell phones. We could not give any online work and due to the water crisis, we may not open the school. My worry is: how will we be able to catch up with the work when we are already a few years behind? Our learners suffer from Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) and therefore are slow learners.

This response addresses not only the lack of water, which is a resource but also the socioeconomic environment of the specific school. Also referring to resources, many participants mentioned overcrowded classrooms as a challenge. Some responses were *Too many children in a class; Overcrowded classrooms; Not enough classrooms in schools* and *Too many learners per class*. Some participants mentioned resources in general: *Learning resources are not always available*.

The next challenge has to do with the workload that teachers face. Fifteen participants reported on the vast amount of work they had to do each day. One participant said, *Keeping up with the syllabus is challenging, it requires good planning and you need to*

stick to that plan. Although this participant did not use the words *not enough time*, I concluded that if they struggled to keep up with the syllabus, the workload might be too heavy. Quite a few participants referred to the administrative workload which took much of their time: *Time management between curriculum coverage and administration; Too much admin* and *A lot of teaching and administration work.* One participant said that there was not enough time to complete all the work. Another participant explained, *The Department of Education expects us to do many workshops and meetings and some in our holiday and it is an extreme waste of time.*

With the following question I wanted to determine how participants reacted to these challenges. The gist of their responses appears in Figure 5.6.

5.2.5 How Do You Address These Challenges?



Figure 5.6: Word cloud on Question 5: Teachers' coping strategies

As in the case of the previous question, the presence of parents took precedence in these answers. It is understandable that if parents are regarded as one of the biggest challenges, they would also be the ones who have the potential to assist in addressing some challenges. Two other prominent concepts that were used by participants were *motivate* and *time*. *Work* and *time* were also frequently used, but only as a means to communicate the answers effectively. Other concepts mentioned were *best*, *help* and *involve*. This was done when explaining that they needed support from parents to

overcome challenges. Phrases such as *Discussions with parents; Support from parents; Encourage parents to be involved* and *By asking assistance from parents* were used. A participant suggested that parents can be empowered to support: *We need literacy programs for parents*. This participant did not explain how literacy programmes can assist in overcoming this challenge, but it seems sensible seeing that the previous question's data revealed that illiterate parents were said to be a challenge as they were unable to identify with their children's homework challenges, and thus could not lend support.

In listing other possibilities to address challenges, concepts such as *stakeholders*, which seemed to include colleagues, management and the Department of Education were used. Twenty-seven responses related to the communication/support code. One participant said, *Support from the Department of Education would be a great help*. Other participants felt that support from their colleagues would alleviate problems: *Help from colleagues* and *Support from peers* were mentioned. Another participant said that involving unions could be advantageous. Numerous participants explained that communication with stakeholders would serve as support when dealing with challenges. One participant explained: *Sit down with the school's stakeholders to discuss strategies to deal with challenges*. Others added, *By communicating with all stakeholders involved in the issue or situation; Whether verbally or via email* and *Engage with the School Management Team*.

In dealing with challenges, 46 participants took the responsibility upon themselves to address challenges by also focusing on internal factors, such as empowering themselves or adapting the way they taught. One participant reported, *I learn different behaviours of children then set techniques to handle the problem*. Another participant said, *I try to motivate my learners as much as possible. I try different ways to get them to pay attention and be part of the lesson instead of being disruptive. I also plan my lessons in such a way that they remain busy*. A participant added, *I learn each learner's background, religion, and how they do things*. More positive responses included *I use weekends and holidays to reach learners who need special attention since I can't attend to them during school hours due to overcrowding; Take time to do one on one sessions with them; I try my best to give each child the necessary attention*

and *Try my best to teach with love and I also use my data and gadgets to get information and give it to learners.*

Not all participants shared these pro-active attitudes. Responses such as, *Can't do anything about it; Nothing gets done; You don't have a say and I just ignore them also featured.* One participant said, *At this stage, I am extremely despondent.* One participant gave a disturbing answer: *They don't get addressed. We are educating a useless generation.*

5.2.6 What Do You Think Influences a Teacher's Decision to Leave the Teaching Profession?

With this question, I attempted to delve more deeply into the reasons behind teachers leaving the profession. Keywords are presented in Figure 5.7.



Figure 5.7: Word cloud on Question 6: Reasons why teachers leave

When analysing the word cloud one can see that *support* and *learners* dominate in the figure. *Work* and *teachers* are additional concepts that are highlighted, but as previously mentioned, some concepts are reflected for being used as a verb or noun in the specific question. Other concepts that featured prominently are *discipline*, *salary* and *pressure*.

One participant explained as follows:

The amount of time spent on school work and other people's children while your own has to be second in line for your time. As well as sitting with children that have no respect whatsoever and you as a teacher can't do anything about it because these children have more rights than the teacher and teachers are being overworked and underpaid.

In analysing the response, one can see that this participant listed three main reasons for leaving: too much work (18 responses); bad behaviour of children (22 responses), and poor remuneration (23 responses). It is also clear that this participant seemed to accept being powerless to do anything to the situation, feeling disempowered. Whilst analysing the data I realised that this participant had underscored the most commonly mentioned reasons for teachers to leave the profession. I start by referring first to remuneration (which is most frequently mentioned), then the ill-behaviour of learners, and lastly the workload.

The second most frequent factor to be mentioned was that of learner discipline. Participants did not elaborate on what type of discipline problems they experienced; only concepts such as *Ill-discipline, Learners' behaviour; Lack of discipline* and *Discipline* were presented. One participant mentioned that lack of respect was an issue: *Learners are being disrespectful*. Another participant said: *Intolerance with the behaviour of learners*.

Workload seemed to be another pushing factor causing teachers to leave the profession. Administrative matters seemed to be the main issue regarding workload. One participant lamented, *All the paperwork and assessments and it feels like you don't have time to re-teach*. More participants reported, *Administration is too much; Teachers are overloaded with administration work; Admin overload and Administration and paperwork are too much, there is not enough time to teach*. One participant said, *Lots of changes and administration work*. Another participant explained, *It is too much work and the responsibilities are exhausting*. Another participant referred to a teacher shortage: *I think there are not enough teachers these days and it just gives us more to do*.

As most of the administrative responsibilities are determined by the Department of Education, another participant said, *There's too much pressure from the Department*

of Education that hinders teaching time. Another participant's response addressed the lack of support: *When eventually reaching the breaking point of not being able to mentally and physically cope with the demands and lack of support from superiors.* One participant expressed concern about the distance between the school and home: *Being far from home.*

5.2.7 What Advice Would You Give Teachers Who Encounter Numerous Challenges and Consider Leaving the Profession?

With this question, I wanted participants to draw on their own experiences in advising other teachers. Figure 5.8 displays their responses.

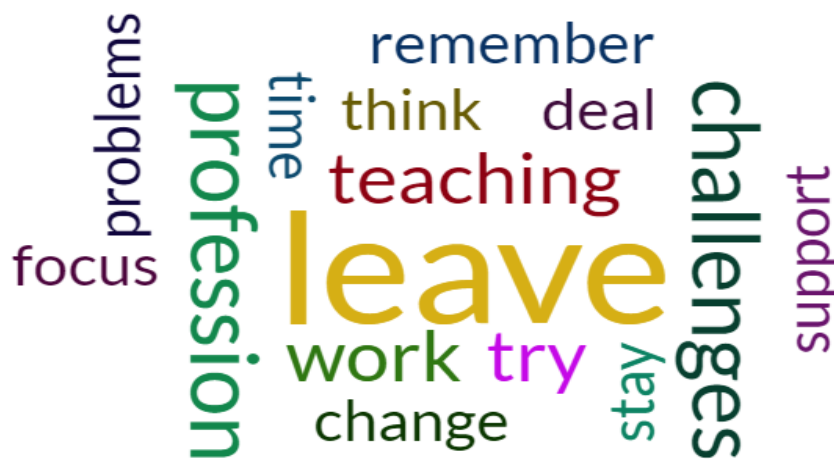


Figure 5.8: Word cloud on Question 7: Advice to teachers from teachers

The concept used most frequently in the response was *leave*. This does not necessarily mean that participants urged other teachers to leave the profession, but that *leave* could have been used in conjunction with a different response. Moreover, as it was a part of the question posed to participants, it was quite natural that it would appear frequently in the answers. *Challenges* and *profession* were mentioned as well.

Words of encouragement were often identified in the data, where 17 responses mentioned: *Just keep going; Stay positive; Perseverance and remember who you are doing it for and Follow your heart. You are making a difference even if it's just for one child; Nothing comes easy; Sometimes you must be patient and at the end, everything*

will be fine and Just deal with the challenges calmly. These answers were given in greater detail suggesting their convictions. . One participant explained, *Try to motivate educators. Make them realise that we have to look at a situation from two sides, a positive side, and a negative side. Also, make them realise that whatever battle we are facing is not our battle to fight but God's battle. We just need to trust in Him.* This was the only one participant who touched on religion as a sustaining factor. A participant said, *The shape of the future is in our hands; it is our responsibility to build the shape that we want. We must bring solutions to our problems and not quit.* Another participant had a fitting quote: , *They must follow their heart. However, they must align themselves with changes, e.g. learn how to use technology.*

Although most participants offered words of encouragement, not everyone was so optimistic. Seven participants encouraged teachers to leave the profession with responses such as, *Don't hesitate. If possible, leave immediately.* Another participant said, *Leave while you are still young enough.* More participants simply said, *Leave or Quit.* One participant did say that a teacher must quit, but in this sense, it was perceived as positive rather than negative: *If you are not happy and satisfied with the job, then quit, make space for someone else.*

The third group of responses are those that encouraged teachers to seek help or support. *Talk to other teachers. We are somehow all going through the same problems.* Another one said, *Engage with management, get advice from professional bodies.* One participant advised, *Seek counselling.* It seems that participants mentioned that teachers should get support from three different groups: colleagues, management, and professional bodies, such as therapists.

The last category related to self-care. Bluntly put, one participant said, *Your well-being comes first.* Another one stated, *Make time for yourself. Rest and relax.* Likewise, another added: *Take time to revitalise, focus and try again. Learners need you.* Concluding this section, I provide one last response: *Focus more on yourself and your personal life, it's just a job.*

The next question addressed the future prospects of the participants.

5.2.8 Considering Your Career, Where Do You Picture Yourself In Five Years' Time?

Figure 5.9 displays a summary of the responses to this question.

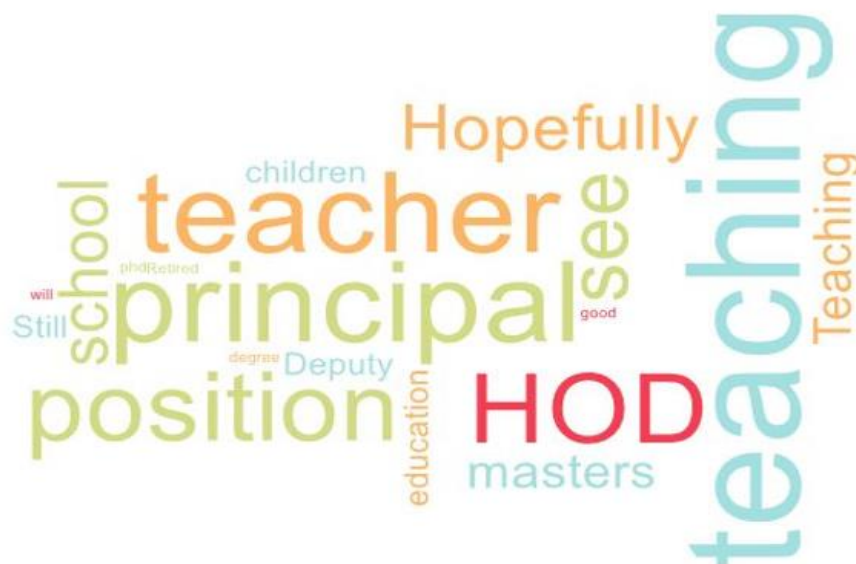


Figure 5.9: Word cloud on Question 8: Teachers' future prospects

With this question I wanted to determine whether teachers still pictured themselves in the profession in five years' time or whether they had other ambitions. The concept *teaching* remained prominent, which implied that most participants still saw themselves in the teaching profession after five years. Forty-six participants stated that they still wanted to be teaching within a school, some as HODs or even principals. Other concepts that were mentioned in the education sector were *HOD (Head of Department)* and *principal*.

One of the participants said, *Hopefully become a great teacher over the years. Some of the children will remember me and some will remember me for someone who had a good impact on them.* In the same vein, another participant said, *I see myself as a successful teacher that inspires children and makes a difference in their lives.*

More participants gave answers such as, *Still being a teacher; Still a teacher; Teaching and Hopefully still teaching and studying towards a Ph.D.* Quite a few participants commented on their plans to obtain a higher position within either the school environment or in Higher Education, such as tertiary institutions. Some of the responses read: *In a more senior position within the school or a position at a university.*

Others said, *Deputy principal or principal. Or simply just enjoy teaching my subject; As a HOD or deputy principal; Hopefully Department Head; Being the Head of my department and Moving from secondary education to tertiary education.* The data analysis showed that some participants wished to establish their own schools: *Having opened my school and Hopefully I will own my preschool.*

Although most of the participants revealed that they would like to remain in the teaching profession or the education sector, not everyone shared the sentiment. Several participants reported that they wanted to leave the profession. One participant expressed the wish to be at home for her children when saying, *I pray to God to be a stay-at-home mom.* Another participant was rather unsure about what to do next: *Hopefully, not teaching.* Some participants expressed their entrepreneurship dreams: *Owning a business; Being self-employed, running my own business.*

Some participants mentioned that they would be retiring in the next five years. One participant wished to retire early if certain conditions were not met: *I will be retiring if I don't get promoted for my best work and if I don't get a commitment.* This participant did not elaborate on what was meant by *commitment.*

Five categories emerged from the information gathered through these open-ended questions. The table below shows how the categories were created using the codes and sub-codes as a guide.

Table 5.1: Codes, sub-codes and categories of open-ended questions (Stage 1)

SUB-CODES	CODES	CATEGORIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See learners' progress • See learners achieve goals • Positive results 	➤ Learners' academic development	1. Learners' influence on teacher well-being
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bad behaviour of learners • Disrespect from learners • Learner disruption of lessons 	➤ Poor learner behaviour	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different backgrounds of learners 	➤ Leraner diversity	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication with management • Relationship with management • Being acknowledged by management and the DBE • Being appreciated by management • Support from management and DBE 	➤ Management and DBE involvement	2. Stakeholders' influence on teacher well-being
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenging parents • Parental involvement • Uneducated parents • Support from parents 	➤ Parental involvement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love of the profession • Love for children • Love of teaching 	➤ Passion for teaching	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapting classroom practice/teaching strategies • Using free time to teach extra lessons • Motivating learners • Using technology 	➤ Efforts by teachers to improve pedagogy	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staying positive • Perseverance • Being patient • Motivating oneself 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Teachers' internal coping strategies ➤ 	3. Teachers' internal/personal factors influencing their well-being with reference to the PERMA Model of well-being
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talking to colleagues • Engaging with management • Seeking counselling 	➤ Teachers' external support structures/	

SUB-CODES	CODES	CATEGORIES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Feeling safe ● Financial stability ● Risk of trying something new ● Lack of other opportunities 	➤ Job security	4. Professional benefits' influence on teacher well-being	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Frequent holidays ● Salary 	➤ Fringe benefits		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Better financial opportunities ● Being underpaid 	➤ Remuneration		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Disciplined environment ● Positive working environment ● Safe environment ● Overcrowded classrooms ● School atmosphere 	➤ School environment		5. Contextual influence on teacher well-being
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Administrative requirements ● Extra-mural activities ● Workshops arranged by DBE ● Annual assessment plan ● Not enough time 	➤ Workload demands		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Diversity of the curriculum 	➤ Curriculum		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lack of teaching resources 	➤ Socioeconomic resources		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Facilities not maintained 			

5.3 DATA PRESENTATION AND CATEGORIES OF STAGE 2 (SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS: CASE STUDIES)

As I worked from an interpretivist perspective, I defined the data in an explanatory creative way (Yin, 2018). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016:2), interpretive paradigms focus on “meaning in context” and therefore require a data collection instrument that is “sensitive to underlying meaning”, such as interviews and observation. The design of the study should also meet the criteria of meaning-making, and therefore a multiple case study design was followed, where every case provided rich data that is not necessarily generalisable. These case studies provided, in the words of McMillan and Schumacher (2014:24) “context-bound summaries for understanding education”.

Pseudonyms were used for each case to protect the privacy of the participants. In this section, I have used an avatar for each participant to visually present at their biographical details. This allows for an immediate overview of the specific case while further masking the identity. Next, I elaborate on the biographical details after which I present photographs of the context of the schools where each participant taught. When analysing the photographs, one should take into consideration that they represent the photographer’s point of view. Hence, certain ideas and feelings underpin the choices the participants made when they captured the photographs (Tinkler, 2017). Tinkler explains that the guidance the researcher gives is crucial for the photographs that participants take as they can add meaning during the data analysis process. I asked the participants to take a few photographs of the school environment so that the socio-economic status of the community could be evident as well as the type of resources the school had access to. Furthermore, I asked them to take the photographs in such a way that the reader could get an overall feeling of the environment that the teachers were teaching in. Moreover, to gain insight into the participants’ experience of their school environment. I provided these specific guidelines to sketch a richer image of each case under study.

After this, I present the data gathered from the interviews. Two main questions were asked after which I gave participants a statement that I wanted them to elaborate on. Follow-up questions based on the answers were also posed. These three questions

(or two questions and the statement) aimed at exploring, on a one-on-one basis, what the participants regarded as the push and pull factors impacting their well-being as teachers. The first question I asked was, What are the biggest challenges you experience as a teacher? What do you find rewarding in your teaching practice? Lastly, I presented a response that featured during the open-ended questions in Stage 1, namely *We are teaching a useless generation* and asked participants to respond to it. With this response I wanted to verify existing research and also media reports that address ill-disciplined learners and their general poor behaviour. I conclude this section with the codes and categories that emerged from analysing this data set.

5.3.1 Rachel

This case study comprised a self-identified Coloured female teacher working in a Free State township school and is visually presented in the figure below.

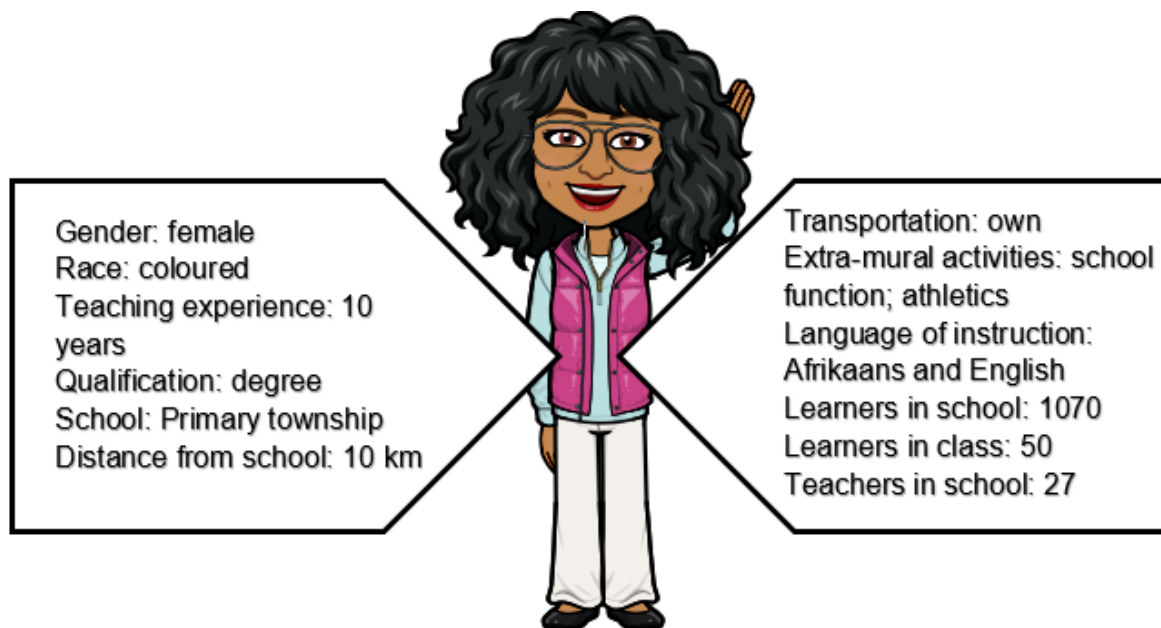


Figure 5.10: Biographical details of Rachel

Rachel is a 36-year-old Coloured female teacher. She obtained a B.Ed. degree for the Intermediate Phase from a South African university. She has been a teacher at the same school for more than nine years, teaching Mathematics in the Intermediate Phase (Gr. 4 to Gr. 7). Rachel spends an average of eight hours daily at the school. She lives 10 kilometres from the school and although she has her own transport, she mostly travels to school using a carpool.

This township school consists of 1 070 learners with an average of between 40 to 50 learners per class. The language of instruction is Afrikaans and 27 teachers are employed at the school.

Rachel described the school as a Quintile 1 school. This is a no-fee school which means that such a school gets financial support solely from the state. The school initiated a feeding scheme partially funded by the state and sponsors. All learners receive food once a day. The photographs she took in Figure 5.11 depict her view of her teaching context.



Figure 5.11: Rachel's school context photographs

1, 4, 5 and 6. Classrooms

2 and 3. The school building

As previously stated, these images were captured from the participant's perspective and might not always be an accurate representation of the school as a whole. These photographs show that the depicted classes have desks, blackboards, doors and

windows. Despite the lack of tiles on the classroom floors and the overall appearance of the school's surroundings, it appears that teaching could be conducted successfully.

When asked to tell me about the challenges she specifically experienced at school, Rachel explained as follows: *Since this is a no-fee school, meaning that the government is responsible for maintenance of the school, there is no sufficient funding. We do not have well-maintained facilities or enough resources such as textbooks to teach learners.* Rachel explained that teachers tried to make their classes more inviting at their own costs by buying educational posters. There were not enough desks in some classes and the floor tiles were broken or missing.

Apart from a lack of resources, I asked Rachel what other challenges she experienced. She laughingly said, *There are too many to mention.* She started with the lack of parental support. *If you have a problem with a learner and want to discuss it with his/her parents it is impossible to get hold of them.* She explained that parents were mostly uneducated and could not help their children with academic work. *It is difficult to try and improve the learners' marks if they don't get support at home.* I asked in turn if she felt that they as teachers had enough support from the school management team (SMT) and the Department of Basic Education (DBE) since there was no support from parents. *I think that the SMT are doing their bit. The principal is doing his best. It is not easy.* Concerning the DBE, she stated that they had too much paperwork and sounded frustrated when she said that she wondered if the authorities would like them to teach or rather do administrative work, which alluded to another challenge, namely administrative responsibilities.

Another challenge was language barriers. She explained that most learners were not taught in their home language. *We have different cultures, different religions, parents, and learners with TB, HIV, and now COVID as well.* I asked her how she managed to teach during the lockdown. *We tried to copy work for the learners that they could have fetched from school, but we soon realised that this didn't work. Most learners did not collect the work, and those who did, struggled too much to do the work as their parents couldn't assist them. Now the learners are behind with everything. As teachers, we try to catch up on work, but it is hard.* Rachel mentioned that they did struggle with learners misbehaving, but the lack of support, financial constraints and language barriers were far more serious than the discipline problems.

The next question alluded to possible rewards she might experience as a teacher. *I studied teaching and love my job because we have an input to the future of our country.* She did sound passionate regardless of the challenges that she mentioned earlier. *When you walk in the street and a learner that you taught years ago, greets you and thank you for the way you taught him/her – that is rewarding!* She elaborated saying that her purpose was to change lives through her teaching.

Lastly, I presented her with a response from one of the participants who provided data in the first set - the open-ended questions: *We are teaching a useless generation* and asked Rachel for her reaction: *I disagree! The problem lies with the parents. They do not motivate their children. They are not motivated themselves. Children dream, we are there to help their dreams become reality.* Seeing that she spoke about motivation, I was eager to know what she did to motivate herself to keep on teaching despite the challenges. She explained that she relied on her religion: *To stay motivated and enthusiastic is a constant prayer request for me. God helps me daily. I also try to encourage myself through spending time with God.*

5.3.2 David

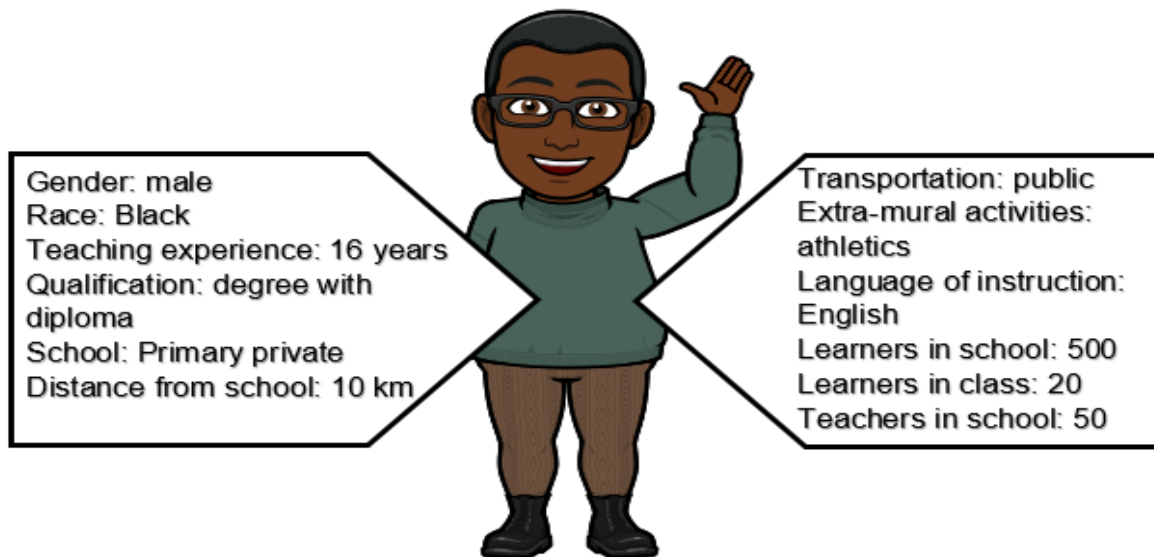


Figure 5.12: Biographical details of David

This case comprised a 36-year-old male black teacher. He had more than 16 years teaching experience and held a B.Sc. degree in Biochemistry and a post-graduate diploma in Education. He graduated from a university in another country. David made use of public transport and lived approximately 10 kilometres from the private school

where he was employed. He taught Mathematics and Natural Science from Grade 4 to Grade 7 in the Intermediate Phase. His extra-mural activities included athletics and he spent more or less eight hours per day at school.

The school is situated in a large metropolitan area and consisted of 500 learners with 20 learners per class. A total of 50 teachers were teaching in this school with English as the language of instruction. David described the school as a Quintile 4 school, which implies that the school functioned on an average financial level. The school fees for the Foundation Phase were R650 per month plus R1 200 for educational resources, totalling R 1850 per month. The Intermediate Phase school fees amounted to R 750 per month plus R 1 200 for educational resources, which totalled R1 950 per month. The educational resources included computer classes for all grades as well as resource material that teachers deemed fit to enhance the teaching of the specific subject. He took the following photographs that show the school from his perspective:



Figure 5.13: David's school context photographs

- 1. In front of the office**
- 2. In a classroom**
- 3. Outside a classroom**
- 4. Sports fields**

From the photographs that David took, it appears that this was a school with sufficient resources. The buildings as well as the sports fields were well maintained. Looking at the classroom, one can see a whiteboard, data projector and ample teaching resources. Socioeconomic challenges in this school seem minimal.

I began the conversation by asking about the specific issues he faced. I asked him to tell me about some of the challenges he had while teaching at that particular school. David answered this question very eagerly and explained that learner discipline was the biggest challenge. He paused at one stage and explained that the learners' discipline problems originated from an inability to read and therefore they did not understand the work that was being taught. He said, *Children behave badly when they do not understand. We try and focus now on them reading well.* I wanted him to elaborate on his answer and asked what he thought the reason for the bad literacy rate was. *Well, you see, most learners are not being taught in their home language. English is their second language and this makes it difficult when you need to teach a specific or difficult concept. I normally explain these terms in Tswana as well, which also takes up a lot of teaching time.* When asked whether he experienced any challenges with parents' involvement he explained that there were two types of parents: parents that were over-involved in their children's school career and parents that left everything to the teachers. *There is no middle ground for these parents, they either come to school for the smallest thing, or we struggle to get them here for a parent meeting.* When asked whether there were any other challenges, he replied, *For me, no.*

Next, I asked him if he experienced any rewards in teaching. He laughed and said: *When my learners pass.* David elaborated and explained that teaching was worthwhile when he saw that his learners made a success of their school career and explained that this was why he started teaching in the first place. Then he said the following: *I just wish to get a position in a public school.* I was interested in why he wanted to teach in a public school. He explained saying, *I want to make a difference in children's lives who need it. I have specialised teaching skills and I think that a public school could benefit from this. I've been teaching at this private school for more than 10 years. It is time for a new challenge.*

I ended our interview by asking David to respond to the statement *We are teaching a useless generation.* He sounded angry at this response and replied, *Definitely not!* He said that teachers need to adapt to the current generation that they are teaching and that they need to motivate themselves to motivate learners. I probed and asked how he motivated himself: *Getting up each morning and telling myself that I am making a difference.*

5.3.3 Benjamin

The following figure lists the biographical details of Benjamin.

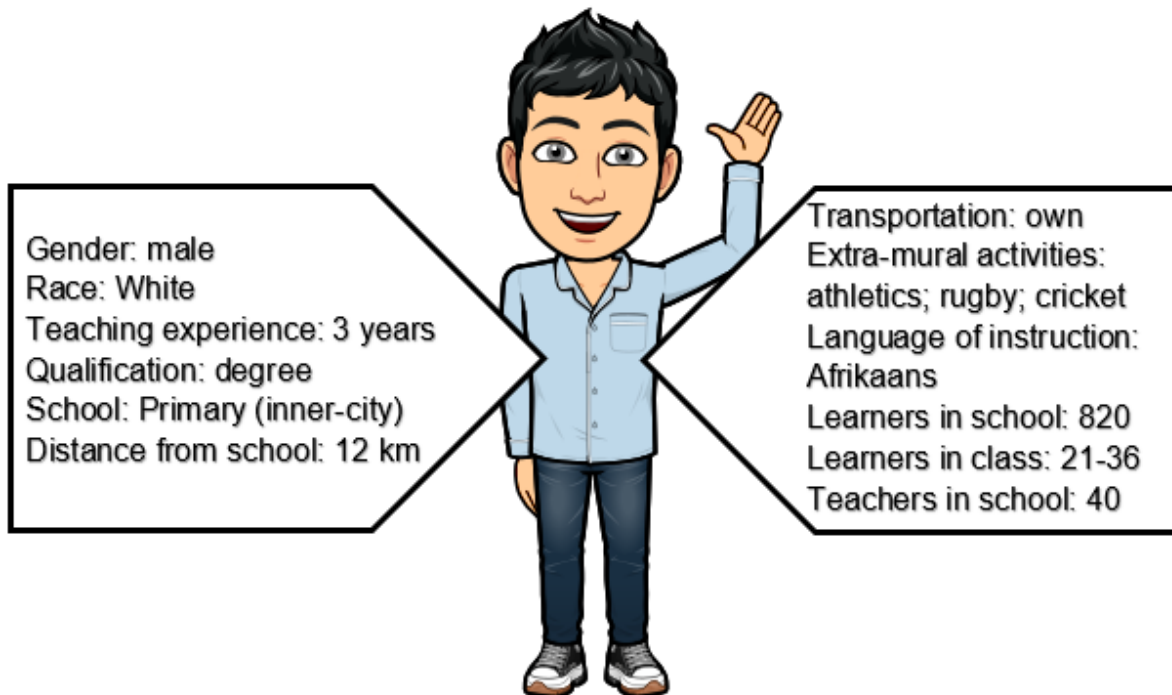


Figure 5.14: Biographical details of Benjamin

This case represents a mainstream public school in the heart of Gauteng. This case study comprised a young teacher.

Benjamin was a 26-year-old White male teacher. Last year he completed his B.Ed. degree in the Intermediate Phase at a private higher education institution. He was appointed as an assistant at this specific school and was soon employed as a teacher. He had been a teacher for almost three years. He taught mainly Life Skills to Grade 5 and Grade 6 learners, Intermediate Phase. Benjamin spent at least 11 hours at school each day. When he had done teaching for the day, he started with extra lessons to help learners who struggled, after which he started coaching various types of sport. Rugby was his favourite sport and he believed that rugby assisted with learner discipline. Benjamin stayed approximately 12 kilometres from the school, but he explained that some days it took an hour to get to school. He was fortunate enough to have his own transport.

This public school is in the centre of a large metropole in Gauteng. The school was located in an average income neighbourhood and more or less 820 learners attended

the school. Class size varied from 21 to 36 learners per class with 40 teachers teaching in Afrikaans and English. This was a Quintile 4 school with school fees of R760 per month. The photographs in Figure 5.15 depict the school from Benjamin's perspective.



Figure 5.15: Benjamin's school context photographs

1, 2 and 5. Inside a classroom

3 and 6. The school building

4. Sports field

When reviewing the photographs one can see that the schools' facilities were well maintained. The classes were equipped with enough desks and resources to teach effectively. *We do not have a problem with textbooks. We are fortunate, we even*

develop our workbooks with extra resources for the learners. I asked Benjamin to share the challenges that he experienced as a teacher. Parents are our biggest problem. All parents think that their 'donkey' is a 'pedigree horse'. I laughed at this response and asked him to explain it. Well, you see some parents don't believe you when you tell them that their child displays unwanted behaviour, or that their child doesn't do their homework. They will always have some excuse or even blame teachers, saying that we don't respect the children. To them, their child is the best and can't do anything wrong. This was interesting as the previous two cases said that parents were not involved in their children's education. I asked Benjamin if this was the case with all the parents. *No, no not at all. Let me put it this way – it is a 60/40 situation, where 60% of the parents are the ones that I previously described. The last 40% of parents are those who are uninvolved or uneducated.* When I asked him what he meant by uneducated he explained that they had learners from underprivileged homes, where the parents had not completed school and therefore could not assist in any way if their child struggled with school work. He continued saying that most of these parents were unemployed. At his school they had a feeding scheme for about 43 children.

Another challenge that he alluded to was that the underprivileged children seemed to be behind the rest of the learners. I asked him to elaborate on this response. *Since these learners do not have the same support from parents, do not have the same resources in terms of, let say, electricity to study at night, they do not thrive the same way as the privileged learners. Listen, I do not say that this is the case with all of them, but most of them.* Benjamin continued by saying that especially during COVID when the school was closed, they struggled with the underprivileged learners in terms of not collecting their work and falling behind the rest of the learners. *We will never be able to get these learners to catch up on all the work they missed. They will always be behind. We did everything from our side, we copied all the work, all that they needed to do was to come and collect the work. Then again, the learners who did collect the work didn't complete it because some of them didn't understand the work and parents couldn't help or they just didn't want to do the work. Why should they do the work, if their parents don't even care whether they do it or not?*

Benjamin did not mention anything about discipline. I asked him about possible discipline problems. *I do not experience any discipline problems. My learners know I*

respect them and so they respect me. I also think that I have an advantage being a male teacher. Learners tend to push their luck with female teachers. Another advantage is that I am a rugby coach. Children, specifically boys, look up to me because of this. If learners display behaviour problems, I always encourage them to start a sport. Sport equals discipline. Benjamin seemed a very motivated teacher, but I wanted to know if there were other challenges apart from the two that he had mentioned previously.

Next, I asked him to tell me about the support system at the school, focusing on the SMT, HOD and also the DBE. *I firmly believe that you are responsible to find solutions for your problems and don't need to run to management if you have problems. If you've tried everything in your power to manage the problem and you still need help, then you ask for help from the HOD or SMT. I never had a problem that I couldn't sort out myself, but I have seen some of my colleagues asking for help from senior personnel. Our principal has an open-door policy, meaning you can walk into his office at any time if you experience problems. That to me, says a lot about the support. The only thing I sometimes wish is that the people from the DBE can sit in our classes, you know, be a teacher for a week. They will then see that we do not have time for all the admin they require. And please, can someone tell me why they need all the paperwork? We live in the 21st Century, no one works with paper anymore.*

Drawing on his passion for teaching, I asked him why he had decided to become a teacher, and also what he did to motivate himself when he got frustrated with challenges. *I decided to become a teacher because I love sport, specifically rugby. I believe that sport gives children a reason to live, it motivates them to be better. I specifically decided to specialise in Life Skills, seeing that this subject complements my love of the sport. If I can only make a difference in one child's life, it will be worth it. I love being around people, so when I get frustrated I speak to my colleagues, which are my friends as well. I get my energy from people, I hate being alone. I also value my Christianity. I believe that God has all the answers. I try to study the Scriptures and speak to God every day.*

To conclude the interview I asked Benjamin for his view on the contentious statement: *We are teaching a useless generation.* He replied, *Wow, I can't believe that anyone can say that. That person's view of the future is wrong. We are teaching the next*

generation of leaders. If they fail, we failed them. I will never quit teaching. I will always be a teacher, hopefully in a more senior position in the next few years, but I will keep on teaching “this useless generation”, he laughed.

5.3.4 Peter

The biographical information for Peter is given in the figure below.

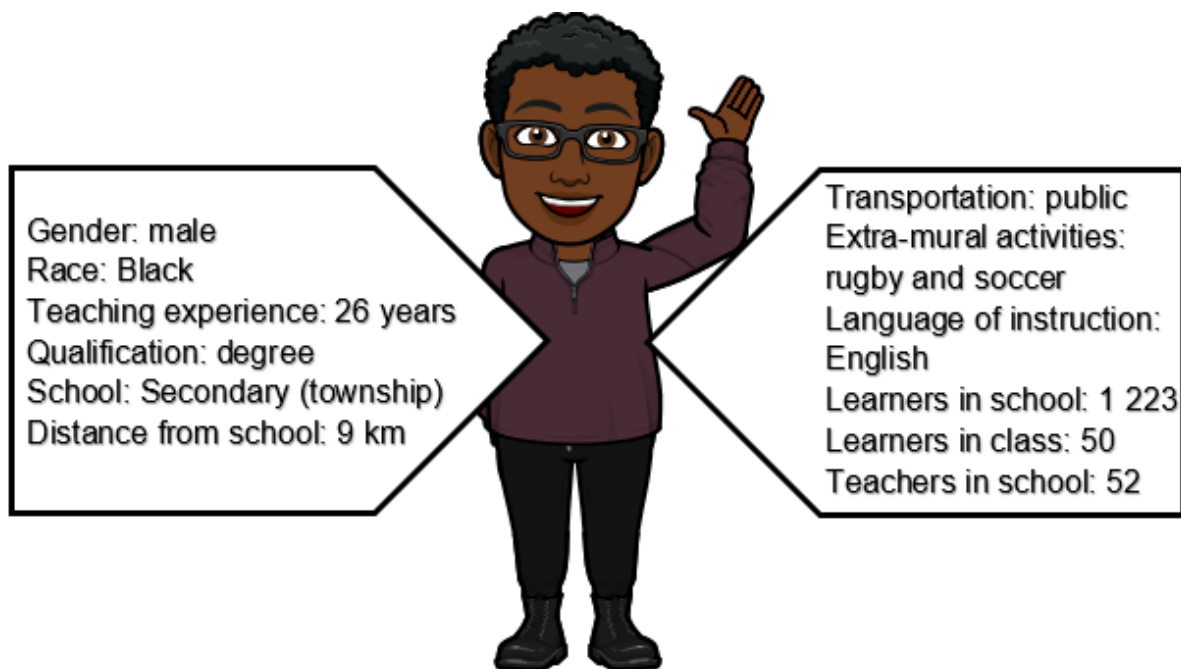


Figure 5.16: Biographical details of Peter

The following case comprised a 52-year-old male Black teacher. He obtained his B.Ed. degree from a University of Technology and was teaching Natural Science to the Grade 8 and 9 learners at a secondary school in a township in the Free State province. Peter lived approximately nine kilometres from the school and made use of public transportation. *We don't have sporting facilities, but I try and coach the boys the basic soccer and rugby skills after school, Peter explained why they did not compete against other schools, although the township did have a field where the community got together and played soccer over the weekends.*

This was a big school with 1 223 learners, and at least 50 learners per class. A total of 60 teachers were teaching in this school with English as the language of instruction. It was a Quintile 2 school and therefore a no-fee paying school. Peter was able to send only three photographs he had stored in his gallery, since his camera on his

cellular phone was broken at the time. He did not feel comfortable borrowing a phone from a colleague.



Figure 5.17: Peter's school context photographs
1 and 3. The school building
2. Inside a classroom

I asked him to describe the school to me: *Most of the classes don't have doors. The windows are broken and newspapers or black bags cover the broken glass. It gets very cold in the winter. We do have blackboards in the classes but do not have the privilege of data or overhead projectors. We have a continued struggle with textbooks, and if there are textbooks, learners share. Most of the subject content is written on*

the board for the learners to copy. Peter shared that they frequently taught without electricity and that the school sometimes struggled with a water shortage.

Apart from the obvious socioeconomic challenges, Peter felt the biggest challenges for him as a teacher were: *Definitely the lack of resources. It is difficult to teach if you don't have basic things like textbooks. To write the content on the board creates other problems. Sometimes there is not enough time for the learners to copy the work. It is also difficult to write all the important facts on the board. I need to teach and explain while they copy the content. And then you get learners without stationery, without books and some of them just don't care. We don't get enough funding from the government, the DBE should do more so that we can teach.* I could hear the despondency in his voice. I wanted to know how he dealt with these challenges. He explained that he did what he could. *I do my best and God will do the rest.* He then continued to say that he always told the learners that he did not care about what they wrote with, pen, pencil, or crayon, and that they could write it on any piece of paper, as long as they wrote down some of the words. He also said that he sometimes told himself that he was not alone in the struggle, that all of his colleagues had the same challenges. *There is nothing that the principal can do to make life easier, if we don't get the resources, what should he do?* He continued saying, *Another challenge is the absenteeism of learners. These teenagers decide whether and when they want to come to school. They walk in the street, socialise, and do not care about their education. They are going to end up like their parents, unemployed without an education.* I understood that one factor of absenteeism was a lack of motivation, but I knew there had to be more reasons. I asked Peter about them. *Living in a township means that poverty is on your doorstep. Some of these children need to look after sick parents or siblings. That is their priority. When the boys go to initiation school, they are absent for weeks. Initiation school is mostly during the holidays, but sometimes it overlaps with school days. For them, initiation school is more important than learning to do maths.* Depending on the ethnic culture, males and females attend initiation schools that are culturally-based schooling focusing on values, principles, hardship, and respect within their cultural tradition (Rathebe, 2018:2).

Peter said that most learners' parents were unemployed and uneducated. I asked him to elaborate on the response. *The people of our community are mostly unemployed or do temporary work. This is a small town with not enough work opportunities. Most*

parents did not complete school and I think because they did not complete school, they feel that their children don't need to complete school. They do not motivate their children. They are not supportive and when we need them to come to school to discuss let's say a discipline problem, they will not show up. Less than 10% of parents respond when you ask them to come and see you. They just don't care. Like in the previous cases, parental support seemed to be a big challenge.

With the challenges that he described, I was curious to know if he found anything rewarding about his career and what he did to cope with the challenges. *I did enjoy teaching once. Now I keep on teaching to provide for my family. I don't have a choice, I cannot leave. I cope by telling myself that maybe the circumstances will get better. I also try and remind myself that I once loved teaching, and in a few years I will retire.*

I concluded the interview and asked him to give his opinion on the response: *We are teaching a useless generation.* He started to laugh and said, *They are not useless per-se, hmmm, we cannot judge the entire generation. We must guide them. I believe with the right guidance they will change. Look, complaining won't help.*

5.3.5 Maria

I explored this case in the Free State, in a small town. This school was an intermediate combined farm school, which means that various grades were taught simultaneously in one classroom. The following figure outlines the biographical details of Maria.

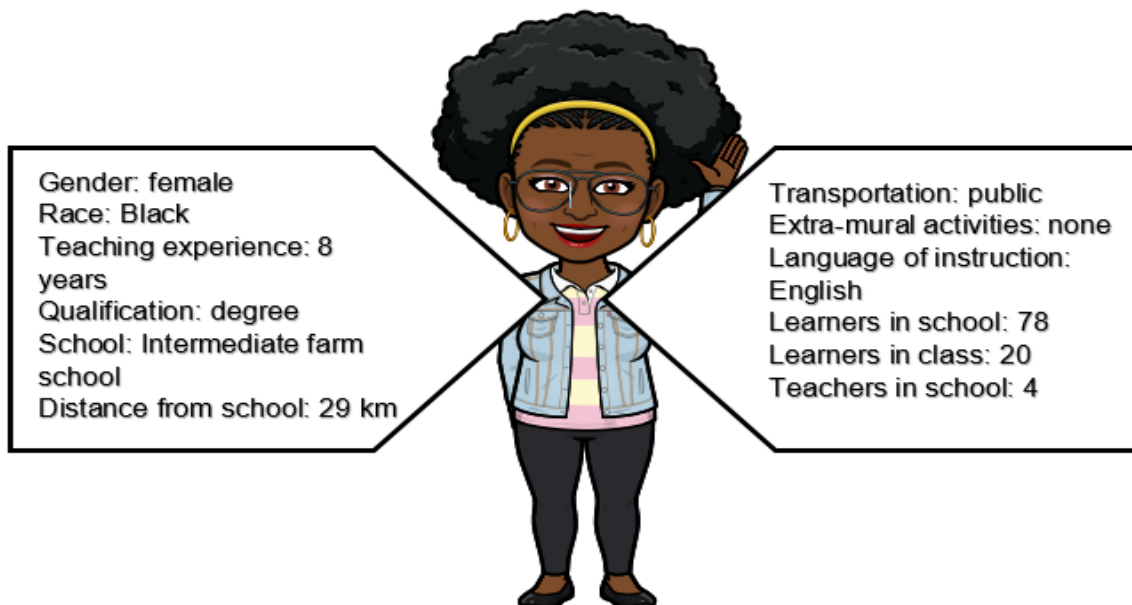


Figure 5.18: Biographical details of Maria

Maria is a 47-year-old Black female teacher. She completed her B.Ed. degree in the Foundation Phase at a South African university. After teaching in a township school for a few years, she moved back to a rural area to look after her mother and started teaching at a local school where she had been for five years. She taught all subjects to Grade 4 to Grade 7 learners. Maria spent approximately eight hours at school each day as the school did not offer any extramural activities. She lived 29 kilometres from the school and made use of public transport for the first 24 kilometres and then walked the remaining five kilometres to school.

This school was a Quintile 1 school, which means that the financial resources were those of the poorest due to the low income of the community, the poor literacy level, and the unemployment rate of the community (DBE, 2011). There were four classes with four teachers teaching each class: Class 1 comprised Grade R to Grade 3 learners; Class 2 comprised Grade 4 to Grade 7 learners; Class 3 comprised Grade 8 and Grade 9 learners and the last class was the Grade 10 to Grade 12 learners. There were between 12 and 20 learners per class.

Maria could not provide me with any photographs of the school, as her cellular phone did not have a camera. She had no signal at school and limited signal at home. She described the school to me. *We are located on a farm. We have one building with four classrooms. We do have desks and chairs for most learners because we always have a few absent learners. The windows in three of the classes are broken and two classes don't have doors. There are two outside toilets with a basin – one for the girls and one for the boys. We don't have electricity and the water supply is frequently interrupted. Outside we have patches of grass, so to say. We don't offer extra-mural activities; we don't have any sports facilities. We do have a school uniform, grey shorts or skirts, and a white shirt. These are clothes that parents or caregivers can buy at most inexpensive shops.* When I had a good idea of the environment and facilities I asked her to explain the challenges she experienced.

She started with the most challenging factor: the socioeconomic crisis of their community and school. *Our community suffers from a high unemployment rate and people are very poor. The local church sometimes helps with food and second-hand clothes that we send home with the learners. Many learners come to school hungry. We do not have the luxury of a feeding scheme. So we depend on the government*

for all our supplies. Some years are better than other years. Last year we received a few textbooks and stationery and then COVID happened. By the time the learners could return, not one of them had any stationery left. Where must their parents or caregivers get money to buy new pens and pencils? Since she mentioned COVID, I asked her to elaborate on the challenges that the pandemic brought. It was bad for our seniors. We couldn't keep on teaching or send work home, we do not have the luxury of copy machines, telephone lines, etc. These learners will always be behind. It did not help us to stress about it. It will not help to stress now. We do our best. Maria then continued to say that the learners were often absent, especially the girls. She explained that it is a girl's responsibility to help in and around the house and to take care of sick siblings, parents or grandparents. When it was either rainy or too cold the learners stayed at home. Most of these learners walked to school and the parents could not afford transport money. *We always have a lot of learners absent in the winter months. There is nothing that we can do about it.*

Then Maria alluded to the much-debated issue of discipline. *We do not struggle with discipline problems. The learners all know each other and everyone knows everyone around here. I think that it helps that we are a small school. Most learners are friends with each other. There is no competition between them. All of them have nothing. It gets difficult when money gets involved.* Seeing that all the previous respondents complained about parental support, I asked Maria to give her point of view. *We never ask to see parents, because we know they will not come to the school. The school is far; transport is a big problem.* I wanted to move on to the next section of our interview; I asked for the last time if there were any other challenges that she thought were worth mentioning. She said that she could talk about the poor literacy levels of the learners that made it difficult to teach them, or the fact that it was difficult to teach all the subjects to three different grades, but then she said, *All of that doesn't matter. If we do not get the proper facilities and resources, we will not be able to change the latter.*

I then asked Maria why she had decided to become a teacher and what kept her motivated. She explained that she had a teacher in secondary school that had had a tremendous impact on her life. *This teacher had so much passion and did not only teach me the subject, but also valuable life lessons. I wanted to be like her. I wanted to motivate learners and teach them how to live a full life.* I asked her if she thought that she was succeeding in this goal of hers. She replied, *Well, I believe so. I think*

many learners see me as a mother figure. To teach at a rural school is so much different than teaching in a public school. I try to teach learners everyday coping skills and let say, how to start your garden. Since she had not always taught at this school I wanted to know if she would prefer to teach at an urban school or even a township school. At first it was difficult. I was used to having at least some resources. But now I got used to my circumstances. I still need to care for my mother, so even if I wanted to, I cannot leave. I need to tell myself that I do make a difference, and we don't get many teachers to teach at this school. Teachers prefer to teach at city schools. So if I leave they will struggle to get someone else. This is my job, I teach and I take care of my mother. This is who I am.

The interview was interrupted by a weak signal and I phoned her back the next day to conclude the interview. I asked her to comment on the response: *We are teaching a useless generation.* She paused for a bit and replied, *Isn't that what our parents and grandparents said when we were at school?" I think everyone thinks that the next generation is useless. No, they are not useless, some are just lost and need to find the way back.*

5.3.6 Martha

The following figure represents the biographical details of Martha.

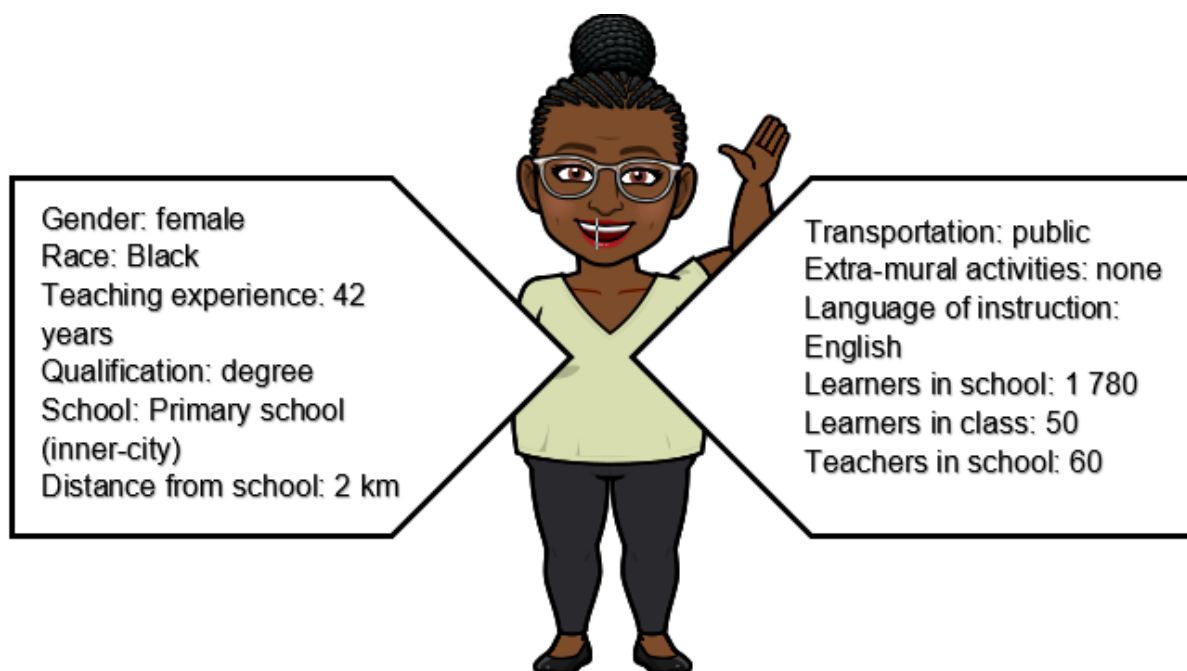


Figure 5.19: Biographical details of Martha

Martha is a 64-year-old Black female teacher with more than 42 years of teaching experience. She graduated from a South African university with a degree in Education. She had retired two months before the interview having taught Tswana in the Foundation Phase. She took public transportation to and from school because she lived 15 kilometres away.

The school was a Gauteng inner-city school with 1 750 learners. There were approximately 45 learners in each class. This school had a total of 57 teachers, with English as the primary language of instruction. The school, according to Martha, was a Quintile 4 school. The monthly school fees amounted to R600. The following photographs in Figure 5.20 depict the school from Martha's perspective.



Figure 5.20: Martha's school context photographs

1. Outside a temporary classroom

2 and 3. School building

4. Outside a block of classes

5. Sports field

6. Inside a classroom

Based on these images this school appeared to be well-equipped with resources and classrooms. The amenities were in excellent condition.

I commenced the interview with the question about specific challenges she had experienced in her career. Martha said, *I was an HOD, but there was a lot of challenges, as I was a senior to teachers. These nowadays teachers they don't want to do their work. I was so depressed about the attitude of those teachers. I didn't even understand, it's not just to say that I'm a good teacher or I'm a very strict HOD, I was not a very strict HOD. I just leave the teachers to do the best. But the attitude of these young teachers they spoiled my interest of teaching and they destroyed even my health. I could honestly feel I was not happy at all.* I asked her to explain what she meant by the *attitude* of teachers. She explained the mentality of young teachers, noting that they wanted to be told everything and not think for themselves. Martha went on to say that the younger teachers did not do their jobs, such as marking learners' books. This frustrated her because, in her opinion, the HOD was always blamed for the teachers' failure to do their jobs.

I asked Martha if there were any other challenges she experienced. She said, *other challenges they are there because the challenges is between parents and the teachers and with the school. In our areas or in our black schools they do not have communications with the parents. If you write them a letter to come to school they don't respond, they don't care about the education of their kids.* She went on to say that many children did not have warm clothing for the winter and that they were primarily fed at school because the school had a feeding programme. *Even Grade 1 learners can come to you: "Ma'am, this is my last meal, I'm going to eat now and only again at school on Monday". And it was tearing me apart. I sometimes even cry at home. I feel like buying some cabbage and pap and with some mince and can go back to school during weekends to serve those learners.* Another issue Martha cited was overcrowding in the classroom. She notably mentioned rural schools, claiming that there were far too many learners in each class and far too few teachers to teach them.

However, Martha made no mention of learner behaviour or discipline issues. I inquired if she had ever encountered them. She explained that she did not struggle with this and told me that she always used a song to get the attention of the learners. When

she noticed that certain learners were becoming uneasy or disrupting the class, she would sing them a song. This strategy had always worked for her.

As the interview continued, I realised that Martha was referring to a school where she previously taught. She said, *There is no resources. Even the toilets, there were no toilets. All the learners were sharing, girls 4 toilets and boys 4 toilets and more than 1 000 learners.* This was at a township school. I decided to include this in the study, seeing that challenges can be divided into general and context-specific ones. I wanted to delve more deeply into the parental challenges she referred to and asked her if she could elaborate on the challenges she experienced with parents. She explained, *Most of the parents are not working. Most of the parents they don't care. They just go and they deliver ... some they do a lot of drinking. They sometimes leave their kids alone. Go gallivanting outside there, during the week leave them in the shack. Just imagine they use paraffin, they use candles and leave the kids alone there, what's going to happen to those kids during the night? Others are raped and they didn't tell us. We discover in school. Some of them bad things happen to our learners at school.*

The next question was related to the coping strategies Martha employed to help her with these challenges. *I usually prayed all night that God give me strength to do this. Because I know God pointed me to give me this job. He is the only one who's going to protect me to go on with this whole difficulties. That I ... there's nothing going to be difficult for me. I'm going to try until the end of me. I even try now, I'm helping my grandkids with everything, especially the education things.* In line with this response, I asked Martha what advice she had for teachers considering to leave the profession. She referred to her religion once more, saying that teachers must continue to pray and not give up. She would also advise teachers to seek counselling and speak with those who could assist them.

I concluded the interview and asked Martha to respond to the *useless generation* comment. She did not understand the question, nor the response. I tried to explain it to her. She then said that she pitied the person who had said that.

5.3.7 Rebecca

Rebecca was a teacher at an inner-city school in the Gauteng province. The following figure visually represents Rebecca.

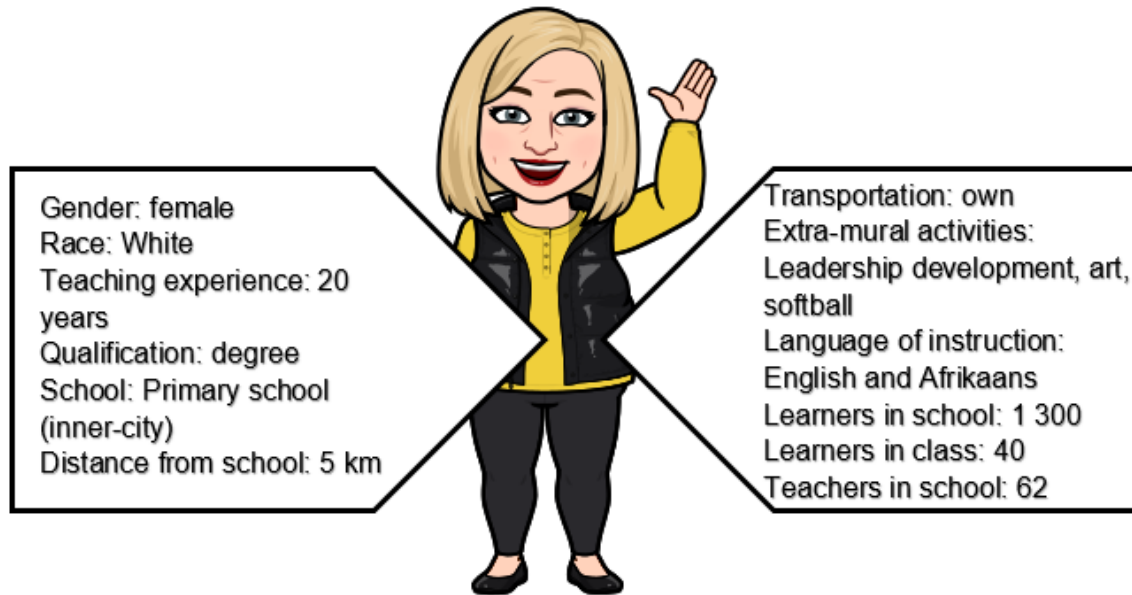


Figure 5.21: Biographical details of Rebecca

Rebecca was a White 44-year-old female teacher. She graduated from a South African university with a degree in Education. She had taught in three different primary schools for more than 20 years. The school where she currently taught had some 1 300 learners with no more than 40 learners per class and employed 62 teachers who taught in both English and Afrikaans. Rebecca taught Mathematics to Grade 5 to Grade 7 learners (Intermediate Phase) and spent approximately nine hours per day at the school. She was involved in leadership development and coached softball. Rebecca had her own transport and lived five kilometres from the school.

This school was situated in a middle-class neighbourhood. It was a Quintile 4 school with school fees amounting to R870 per month. To depict the school, Rebecca took the following photographs available in Figure 5.22:



Figure 5.22: Rebecca's school context photographs

- 1. Outside a block of classrooms**
- 2. Conference room**
- 3 and 4. Inside a classroom**
- 5. Inside the staffroom**
- 6. In the foyer**

On reviewing the photographs, it is clear that the facilities were well-maintained. The staff room was decorated in a modern fashion and the classes were equipped with enough desks, chairs and resources.

As with the other cases, I started asking Rebecca to elaborate on challenges that she experienced in the school context. She started to explain that during COVID the previous two years, teachers did not have their own classes. Learners stayed in one

classroom and the teachers changed classes. This created discomfort and challenges: *For example, I could not have ever got any paperwork filed, I was never at my own class.* She continued and said that it was difficult to carry all her teaching material from one class to another.

Another challenge she experienced over the years had to do with the workload regarding administration. She said, *I feel at this point in time that I am only doing 'paper pushing'.* Rebecca did not mention anything about learner discipline, and I wanted to know if she experienced any challenges with learner behaviour. She replied: *No not at all, I don't have a problem with discipline at all.* I asked her why she thought that she did not struggle with disciplinary challenges. *I am a strict teacher, I do not take nonsense. I learned early on in my career that it doesn't help to yell at a learner. I rather try to build a better relationship with my learners.* Rebecca made no mention of parents, lack of support, or uninvolved parents, as did the other participants. I inquired about her thoughts on parental engagement. *I've never had an issue with parental involvement. Parents are really supportive.* Although Rebecca experienced few challenges, I wanted to know how she kept herself motivated on days that the profession got the better of her. She explained that she always tried new things to make her classes interesting. It motivated her and the learners. She also encouraged herself to *get out of bed even if I feel I don't want to.*

Next, I asked Rebecca why she became a teacher and also what she found rewarding about teaching. She explained that both her parents as well as her aunt had studied education. She said that as a child she often pretended that she was a teacher and that she enjoyed it. *I think a teacher is a person that receives the most love. It is rewarding when a learner thanks you, when you get a chocolate – it makes it all worthwhile.*

I concluded the interview by asking Rebecca what advice she would give a despondent teacher and to comment on the *useless generation* response. She advised teachers to maintain a balance. Teachers need time to relax and spend time with friends and family. *You need someone to speak to, someone that can listen and motivate you.* Rebecca did not agree with the response; she explained that as a teacher one needs to pave the way for a better future.

5.3.8 Susan

The following is a visual representation of the biographical details of Susan.

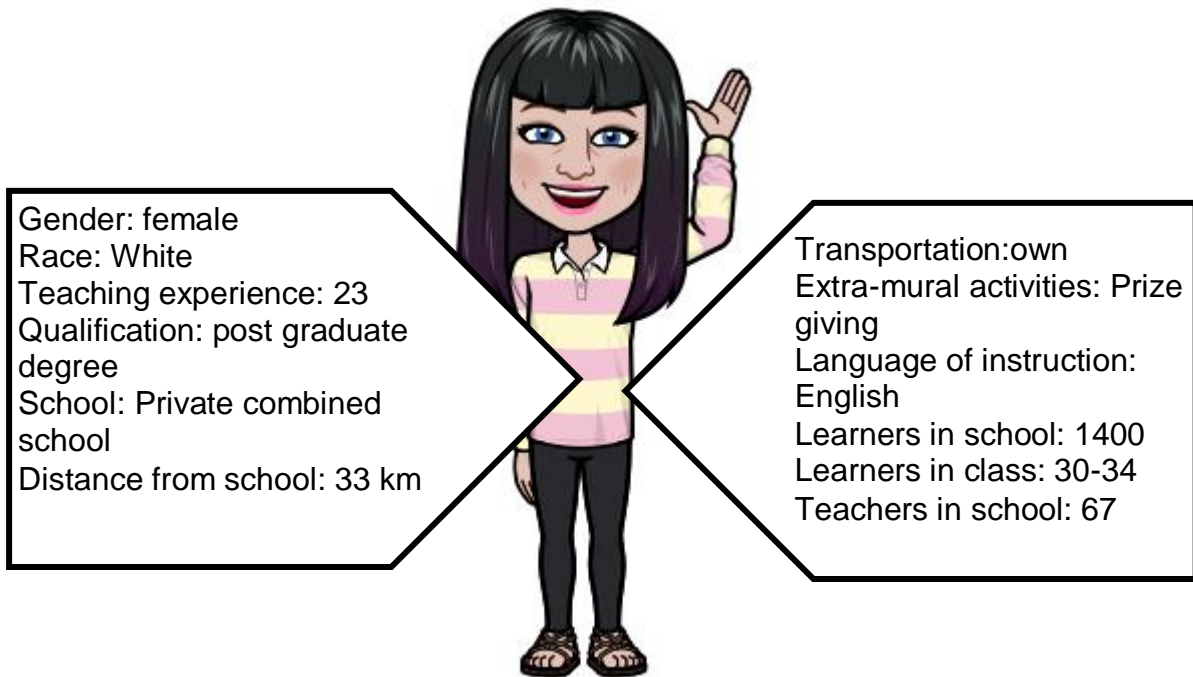


Figure 5.23: Biographical details of Susan

The following case comprised a 47-year-old White female teacher. She obtained a Postgraduate Certificate in Education at a South African university. Susan was teaching Mathematics to Grade 4 and Grade 5 learners at a combined private school in Gauteng. She lived 33 km from school and used her own transport. The school employed sports coaches and therefore teachers were not involved in extramural activities. Susan did, however, help with school functions such as prize-giving events.

It was a large private school with 1 400 learners ranging from Grade 1 to Grade 12. Classes comprised 30 to 34 learners per class with 62 teachers teaching at the school. Being a Quintile 5 school, school fees amounted to between R2 600 and R4 428 per month, depending on the grade. Susan sent the photographs in Figure 5.24 to describe her take on the school and its surroundings.



Figure 5.24: Susan's school context photographs

- 1 and 2. Sport fields**
- 3. Staffroom**
- 4. Outside the administration block**
- 5. Outside a block of classrooms**
- 6. Inside a classroom**

From the photographs one can see that the school had ample teaching resources and that the facilities were extremely well maintained.

The first interview question alluded to the challenges Susan experienced as a teacher. She started to explain that learners did not respect female teachers; and that work ethics did not matter for most learners. *They don't care if they are late for class and if they finish with the work or not. They have this 'thing' that they want everything on a*

servicing plate. I asked why she thought it was the case. She replied by saying that the parents played an important role, that learners whose parents were involved were the learners who did their work. I probed, asking why some parents were involved and some not. *We have a lot of money, I mean, the school fees are very expensive. The parents feel that they pay a lot of money and therefore their children are now the 'school's baby'. They couldn't be bothered less.* She continued to say that the Grade 5 group struggled much with writing; they could not write between the lines. *These learners were Grade 3 when COVID hit ... they are far behind.* Susan pointed out that she had 24 learners who failed Mathematics. She sent emails as well as an SMS and a WhatsApp message to the parents. Only two parents replied. *You see, they can't be bothered if their children fail or pass.* Another challenge that Susan mentioned was the amount of administrative work she was expected to complete. She explained that all administrative work had to be uploaded electronically to a drive. *I understand that it is better, especially when you resign, but it is a lot of work.* Furthermore, she elaborated on the relationships between colleagues. Susan explained that the principal of the primary school did not have an open-door policy and that she did not get along with her. She also explained that her HOD was much younger than she was, which also created problems for her. Moreover, Susan believed that the discipline structure should differ from the primary and secondary schools. *You cannot discipline a 10-year-old the same as a 16-year-old.* Susan continued with the challenges and said that she struggled with discipline problems and that the discipline procedure was time-consuming and she did not have time to intervene each time a learner misbehaved.

The interview moved on to the next question. I asked Susan how she coped with the challenges, or how she motivated herself to keep going. *You know what, at this stage, my children are the only thing that keeps me going. I must provide for them. I pray, I pray for grace. I look for other work almost every day. We would also like to emigrate; it is just a lot of money.* I asked Susan if she would like to leave the profession altogether. *No, I like teaching, especially Mathematics. I would like to teach Grade 8 and Grade 9, but without a degree in Mathematics, it is not easy to get a position in a secondary school. I would like to be a learning facilitator, you know to work for the Department. I would like to have more time for my children.*

With regard to why she decided to become a teacher, she replied, *You know, I did not study education. I studied marketing. My parents did not want me to work at a clothing shop, so I applied for a teaching position at a secondary school. The principal appointed me on the condition that I do a postgraduate teaching certificate. So I did. If I could do it over, I would rather be in marketing.*

Although Susan stated that she would choose another profession, I asked her to give advice to teachers who considered leaving the profession. She said that teachers should leave South Africa and teach in another country where there are ample resources and where learners' worldviews differ from those of South African learners. Replying to the *useless generation* response, Susan agreed. *I agree 100%, but then I think of my children and I hope that it is not true. In my heart I believe a parent can make a difference.*

A summary of the codes, sub-codes and categories that have emerged from the eight case studies is given in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Codes, sub-codes and categories of the case studies (Stage 2)

SUB-CODES	CODES	CATEGORIES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See learners achieve goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners' academic development 	1. Learners' influence on teacher well-being	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bad behaviour of learners Disrespect from learners Learner entitlement Appreciate teachers Acknowledge teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learner behaviour 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different backgrounds of learners Language barriers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversity of learners 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiation school Caretaking of family members Weather conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learner absenteeism 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication with management Being appreciated by management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management involvement 		2. Stakeholders' influence on teacher well-being
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication between parents and teachers Parental involvement Uneducated parents Support from parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parental involvement 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Love of the profession Love for children Making a difference Receiving love from learners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Passion for teaching 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adapting the way of teaching Using technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efforts by teachers to improve teaching 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staying positive Perseverance Being patient Motivating oneself 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Words of encouragement 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Studying scripture Constant praying Dialogue with colleagues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers' support structures/coping strategies 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helping others 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keeping work-life balance 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relying on supportive relationships 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial stability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job security 	4. Professional benefits' influence on teacher well-being
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salary at the end of the month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remuneration 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disciplined environment Overcrowded classrooms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School environment 	5. The contexts' influence on teacher well-being
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workload of the profession 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of teaching resources Facilities not maintained Lack of basic needs (water and electricity) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Socioeconomic resources 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uneducated parents Involved parents Lack of resources Lack of finances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parental factors Socioeconomic factors 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adapt teaching methods Workload Convenience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher factors 	6. COVID-19's influence on teacher well-being

5.4 EXPERT INTERVIEW

The last set of data followed after an interview with an educational expert. The purpose of the interview was to shed light on how an educational expert regards the challenges, rewards and coping strategies associated with teachers' well-being. This was the only interview that took place face-to-face. We met twice at a time and place that was convenient for the participant. Similarly, as with the previous data sets, I made use of a pseudonym to protect the privacy of the participant.

Jenna was a White, 50-year-old female who had been a teacher, as well as Head of Department (HOD) of a secondary school for 17 years. Thereafter she worked for seven years as an inspector at a district office of the Department of Basic Education (DBE), where more than 25 principals reported to her. For the last six years, she has been in a top management position at the national DBE office.

The interview consisted of two parts: the first part set out to gather data on her views on teacher well-being based on her experience as an educational specialist. The second part of the interview consisted of the same open-ended questions asked to the participants. I wanted to compare Jenna's answers to those of the participants to garner the perspectives of an educational expert on the phenomenon under study.

5.4.1 Expert Interview: Part 1

The interview commenced with an explanation of the study that included the title as well as the aims of the study. We discussed background information related to the research questions, focusing on relevant literature. My first question was based on the work of researchers Long, Graven, Sayed and Lampe (2017:11) who asked, "Will teachers preserve their commitment to this vocation and continue to be motivated and energised despite being constantly blamed and not being supported?" Jenna appeared almost irritated when she answered, *I think most teachers have a victim-mentality. They have this idea that their work is the hardest in the world and that everyone owes them something, rather than to face their challenges and do something about it.* I asked her to elaborate on her answer. She explained that teachers do have an important job, but said that teachers also create chaos in the sense that they do not practise what they preach. Jenna continued to say that teachers should go back to the basics, such as taking responsibility for themselves and being consistent in what

they demand of learners. Then she asked me a rhetorical question: *Don't you agree that teachers are responsible for creating their challenges?* We discussed the resilience of teachers and the effect this has on their well-being at school. She questioned me again, without wanting or waiting for an answer: *Why is it that some teachers can manage challenges and cope better than other teachers? Most teachers should have qualifications, whether a degree or a diploma, which tells us that they did receive formal training. If most of our teachers are qualified, they should be able to deal with the challenges in South African schools.*

Next, I wanted to explore her insight into the challenges that teachers face and what she thought could be done to address these. She acknowledged the existence of the following challenges: discipline problems, lack of support from parents or management, language barriers, socio economic issues, too much administration, and too many learners in a class. After listing the challenges, she said, *But this is not going to change soon. We will always have most of these challenges. We cannot and will not be able to address all these challenges. What we can do is to change ourselves to cope with and manage the challenges. Teachers need to be trained how to effectively teach while facing challenges.*

I asked Jenna who should take responsibility for training teachers in these coping mechanisms. According to her, the training should be three-fold. Teacher training institutions should focus more on possible challenges that teachers may face in different school contexts. *The township teacher should have other skills than the inner-city school teacher. Sure, the basics should be the same, but the challenges are different if you consider the context of each school.* She believed that most training institutions do not focus enough on the different contexts of schools. Next, the School Management Team (SMT) should focus on equipping teachers with skills to cope with challenges. *School principals should know their teachers, their weaknesses and strengths and then develop personal development plans for teachers.* She continued to explain that if a principal knows that certain teachers struggle to manage discipline, they should invite a guest speaker to inform these teachers on effective discipline management techniques. The third role-player is unions. Jenna said that she believed unions should also take ownership when it comes to teaching coping mechanisms. She suggested that unions should launch well-being workshops and build a support structure where their members can seek help. *Teachers should be guided to deal with*

their challenges, they should be empowered to make career choices that ensure positive well-being.

Thereafter she returned to the teacher's role and alluded to *commitment issues of teachers*. She explained that a committed teacher would walk the extra mile and do everything in their power to be an effective teacher and overcome challenges. Staying committed is also a challenge, she agreed, but *by doing introspection, one can manage one's thoughts and then ultimately your actions*. Although she focused mainly on the teachers and their responsibility when it comes to challenges, she did, however, mention two challenges that can be addressed by the DBE only: township schools that need urgent attention in terms of resources and facilities, and classroom size that should receive urgent attention.

Starting with township schools she explained that the DBE was aware that these schools were in dire need of maintenance on different levels, starting with the facilities. *Most children attending these schools are growing up without basic needs; this is why it is of utmost importance that the school should provide them with facilities which make them feel welcome. They should be able to look forward to going to school. How is this possible when most township schools lack basic facilities?* She continued to explain that due to the absence of these facilities, teachers tend to seek employment in urban areas that leads to another problem of unqualified and unmotivated teachers teaching at township schools. I then referred to discipline problems which seemingly were one of the biggest challenges that teachers experienced, and pointed to the connection between lack of resources and discipline problems, in the sense that teachers did not have the necessary resources to teach learners effectively and to keep them interested in the learning content. Jenna acknowledged my point of view and repeated that a teacher should be able to teach regardless of the challenges they might face. *Acknowledging that the DBE should take responsibility to maintain and provide resources for township schools do not justify teachers the victim-mentality of teachers.*

Referring to classroom sizes that should be managed, Jenna said, *If the township schools are well maintained and provided with the resources, more parents will enrol their children in these schools and will not send them to urban schools. This will help with the overcrowded classes in some schools. There are quite a lot of schools that*

are not in use due to facilities that were never maintained or were vandalised. If we can re-establish these schools, it will also help with the over-crowded classes.

Concluding the interview, Jenna acknowledged the various challenges teachers are facing, but she believed the solution lies with teachers themselves. They have to reflect on their attitudes, and take responsibility for their teaching; then they would be able to overcome most of the challenges. She admitted that the DBE should also take responsibility for the part they play in education and again mentioned that HEI should train student-teachers to cope in different school contexts.

I realised I could gain more information from Jenna, so I asked her if we could have a follow-up interview. I intended to ask her similar questions to those I had asked in Stage 1.

5.4.2 Expert Interview: Part 2

The second part of the interview started with the first question: *Why do you think teachers remain in the teaching profession?* Jenna's answer focused on three main reasons: survival (she explained that people need to work to earn a salary to provide for themselves and their families), convenience for mothers (seeing that mothers can be at home after school and have the luxury of four holidays a year), and lastly passion (most teachers love teaching children and want to play an active role in their future).

The next question focused on the rewards teachers experience in the profession. She started saying, *I think it depends on your personality, your personality type plays a role.* She added that the academic success of the learners motivates teachers and this is what teachers find rewarding. Another aspect, according to her, is the phase in which a teacher is teaching. I asked her to elaborate: *If you teach Grade 12, there is an external examination so your focus is to get your learners to succeed in their academic as there is a lot of people that look to you as a teacher when the results come. If you are teaching Grade 4, for instance, you don't have external eyes focusing on you.*

Thirdly, I asked, *What do you think influences a teacher's workplace well-being?* Again she stated that it is a person's personality and circumstances that play the biggest role in well-being. She explained that the way teachers look after themselves and how they manage their external circumstances have a direct influence on their

well-being at school. Next, she stated that the management of school also plays a vital role that has a direct effect on the discipline of the learners. *The biggest challenge that teachers can experience, I think, is the discipline in the classroom.* I wanted to know to what extent management plays a role. Jenna elaborated, saying that they were not only management, but they were the leaders of the school and also should be the role models. According to her, management is responsible to see that the environment of the school is such that it makes effective teaching possible. Adequate support should be given to teachers and especially new teachers. She said that management should realise that new teachers do not know how teaching works in practice. They should be guided. She concluded by saying that if the preceding takes place, the well-being of teachers will also improve.

Previously Jenna mentioned that according to her, discipline was the biggest challenge that teachers can experience. I wanted to delve into possible other challenges teachers might be experiencing from her point of view and therefore asked her what other challenges she thought teachers might experience. *Working with a lot of different people/learners.* She explained that learners come from different backgrounds and have different cultures and beliefs that might cause conflict as well as stress in the classroom. Teachers need to adapt lessons according to diversity. Another challenge, according to Jenna, is that teachers are not consistent in their classes, which causes discipline problems. *Teachers themselves are the main reason for the discipline problems they experience.* She elaborated saying that teachers should practise what they preach and should act consistently.

The lack of parental support was one challenge that was mentioned quite frequently in the first set of data. Jenna's opinion was: *I am sorry, but what type of support do teachers want from parents?* She sounded almost irritated. I sketched an overall picture of the participants' grievances concerning parental support and then gave her time to respond. *I am trying to think back to when I was a teacher and what I expected of parents. Look, we want parents to play an active role in their child's academic career.* She explained that she wanted parents to give academic support to their children, but she never expected parents to support her as such. She stated that teachers rely on support from external sources where they should focus on their teaching strategies and methods.

The following question alluded to coping strategies and how teachers address challenges. Jenna stated that this facet was related to an individuals' personality. She explained that when she faced a challenge she would manage it by empowering herself by reading or doing short courses to help her; someone with a different personality will rely on people to help them with challenges. She believed that teachers should own up to their responsibility of teaching. Teaching will always have challenges, but teachers should empower themselves and not wait for or depend on the school management, department or parents to be their coping mechanism. She continued to say that there are wonderful resources on Google and that teachers do not need to pay for books or short courses.

Although many teachers decide to stay in the profession, many decide to leave the profession. I asked Jenna why she thought this was the case. *Emotional burnout. I think the fact that most teachers struggle with discipline causes them to leave the profession. But they should rather learn how to manage discipline rather than to leave altogether.* Another reason, according to Jenna, might be financial reasons. She said that teachers left due to other job opportunities that offered better salaries.

My second last open-ended question sought to determine where the participants pictured themselves in five years' time. I did not pose this question to Jenna as I did not believe it was relevant to the study. I ended the interview asking for her view on *We are teaching a useless generation.* I had barely finished the response when she clearly declared:

He must just leave the profession! You cannot be a teacher with an attitude like that. It might sound like nothing, but this teacher enters the classroom with this attitude and it is his attitude that causes his challenges ... the expectations that he sets for learners are negative. It is the same with a teacher that has been teaching for 30 years and now all of a sudden feels as if learners can't be taught. You are appointed for a reason, to awaken the potential of the learners. I have nothing left to say.

The following table presents a summary of codes and sub-codes as well as the categories that emerged from the expert interview.

Table 5.3: Codes, sub-codes, and categories of open-ended questions (Stage 3)

SUB-CODES	CODES	CATEGORIES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different backgrounds of learners 	➤ Diversity of learners	1. Learners' influence on teacher well-being	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of support from management 	➤ Management involvement		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal development plans for teachers 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of support from parents 	➤ Parental involvement		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content specific knowledge 	➤ Teacher training institutions		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-being programmes for teachers 	➤ Unions	2. Stakeholders' influence on teacher well-being	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having passion for the profession 	➤ Passion for teaching		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victim mentality 	➤ Efforts by teachers to improve teaching		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facing challenges 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating own chaos 	➤ Internal factors		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment issues 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different personalities 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal circumstances 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of challenges 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personality 	➤ Coping strategies	3. Teachers' internal/personal factors influencing their well-being with reference to the PERMA Model of well-being	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowerment 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking responsibility 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent holidays 	➤ Fringe benefits		4. Professional benefits' influence on teacher well-being
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survival: salary at end of the month 	➤ Remuneration		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disciplined environment 	➤ School environment	5. The contexts' influence on teacher well-being	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overcrowded classrooms 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of resources 	➤ Socioeconomic resources		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities not maintained 			

5.5 THEMES THAT EMERGED FROM ALL THREE STAGES

As I gained a deeper understanding of the data, I realised that the categories might be tied to the FFM's diverse forces and the PERMA Model's elements. I reread each data set separately after organising the codes, sub-codes and categories to ensure that my preconceptions did not force the data into specific categories or themes.

Subsequently I utilised both models in categorising the data, seeing that the models specify the key elements that I believe influence the phenomenon under study. This also underscored the need to evaluate how key factors might differ under certain circumstances. The flow chart in Figure 5.26 (adapted from Morgan, 2018:1) explains the link between codes, themes, models and theories and supports the way of linking my data to the FFM and the PEMRA Model.

a) CODES

Codes mark parts of the text/data that are of special interest.

b) THEMES

Themes convert codes into core concepts that represent the most important aspects of the results.

c) MODELS

Models connect themes to show the relationship between them.

d) THEORIES

Theories explain why these themes capture the data and why they are related.

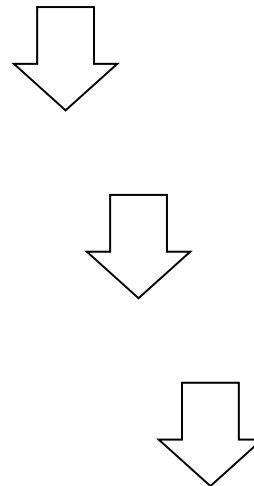


Figure 5.25: From codes to theory (adapted from Morgan, 2018:1)

As explained in Chapter 3, the FFM model addresses the external factors that influence teacher well-being whereas the PERMA Model alludes to the internal factors – hence the biographical forces. I therefore organised the categories into the following themes as set out in Table 5.4:

Table 5.4: Categories of data sets 1, 2 and 3 organised into themes

Code	Category	Theme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learner development 	Learners' influence on teacher well-being	Institutional force
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learner behaviour 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learner encouragement 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learner absenteeism 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learner diversity 		Programmatic force
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management and DBE involvement 	Stakeholders' influence on teacher well-being	Institutional force
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parental involvement 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Passion Efforts to improve teaching Words of encouragement Teacher support structures/coping 	Teachers' interpersonal/personal factors influencing teacher well-being	Biographical force (PERMA)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job security Fringe benefits Remuneration 	Professional benefits influencing teacher well-being	Contextual force
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School environment Socioeconomic factors Workload Curriculum 	The contexts' influence on teacher well-being	Institutional force
		Programmatic force
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Socioeconomic Parental factors Teachers factor 	COVID-19's influence on teacher well-being	Institutional force
		Biographical force (PERMA)

5.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Multiple factors play a role in the well-being of teachers. The presentation of the data obtained from three data sets that fall within the different forces of the FFM and PERMA Models was expected to yield key findings that reflect those factors influencing teacher well-being. The data concerning the literature and participant experiences was synthesised to present the key findings. In the next chapter the data is interpreted and discussed.

CHAPTER 6

DATA DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This study aimed to explore and identify how the current classroom context affects the well-being of South African teachers. More specifically, it aimed to discover which push and pull factors influence well-being and the coping strategies that teachers employ to address challenges. Data had to be collected accordingly. I used open-ended questions and case studies to gain the perspectives of teachers throughout South Africa and conducted a semi-structured interview with an educational expert to verify the data.

In Chapter 5, I analysed the data and identified the codes and categories that subsequently emerged. These categories held clear meanings and helped me make sense of the data and were classified using themes derived from the Force Field Model (FFM) as well as the PERMA Model (Consult Table 5.4).

In this chapter, the data sets are viewed through the lenses of the themes and aligned with the research questions (Consult Section 1.3), reviewed literature (Consult Chapter 2), and the theoretical framework (Consult Chapter 3). The outline of the chapter is presented in Figure 6.1.

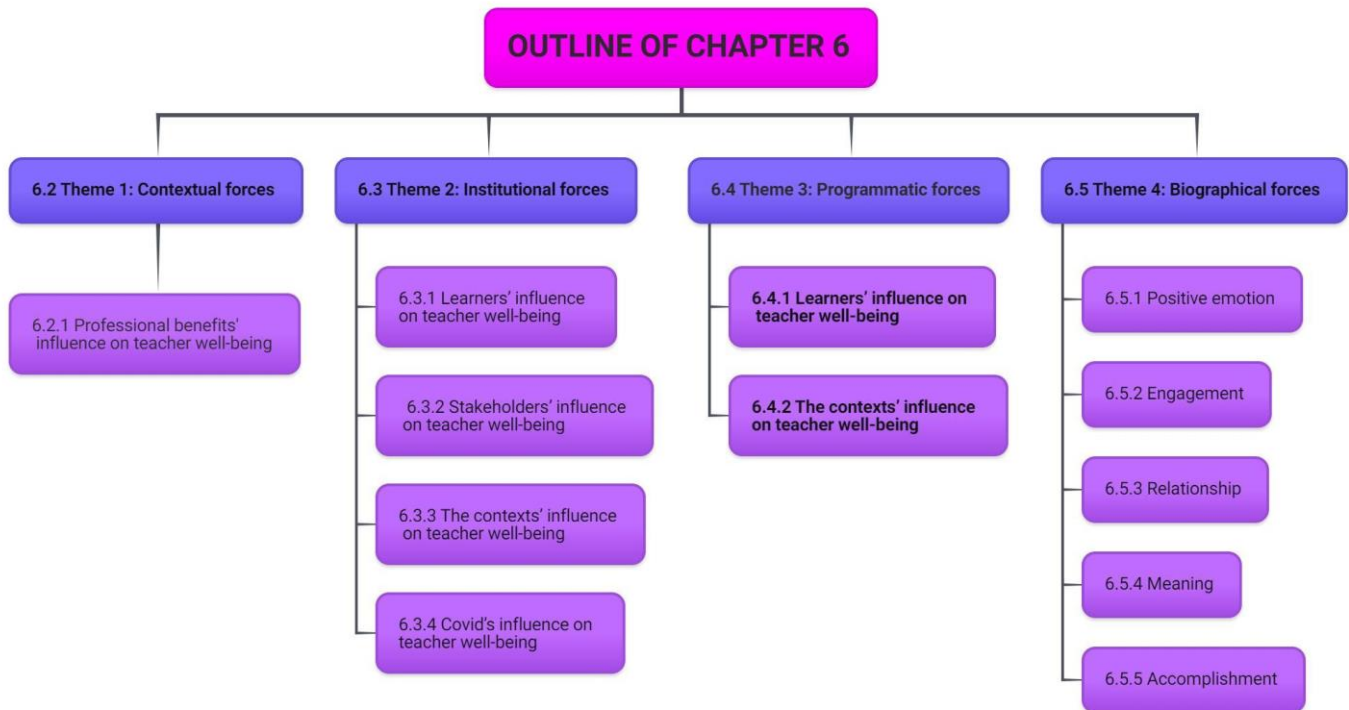


Figure 6.1: Outline of Chapter 6

The first theme, contextual forces, is introduced in the next section. Each category is examined in conjunction with the relevant codes derived from the data.

6.2 THEME 1: CONTEXTUAL FORCES

The first theme reflects the distinctiveness of the teacher's (participant's) holistic school/educational setting. In other words, contextual factors involve all experiences that teachers encounter during their careers, irrespective of the situations in which they teach – thus the universal experience of all teachers in all contexts. Table 6.1 below lists the category and codes that fall under contextual forces.

Table 6.1: Outline of Categories in Contextual forces

Theme: Contextual forces	
Category	Codes
Professional benefits' influence on teacher well-being	Job security
	Remuneration
	Fringe benefits

6.2.1 Professional Benefits' Influence on Teacher Well-being

The influence of professional benefits on teachers' well-being emerged as a category under contextual forces. Professional benefits, in this context, refer to all the advantages associated with teaching, as identified by participants. The codes that emerged relate to job security, remuneration and fringe benefits.

6.2.1.1 Job security

Being a teacher gives participants a sense of security. Knowing that they have a job despite the country's socioeconomic circumstances serves as comfort (Consult Section 5.3.1). Job security is based on the expectation of continuity in the existing job environment and is described by Adom, Hussain and Saif (2018:1) as employee concern about losing a job or losing a desired employment characteristic such as a lack of advancement opportunities, current working circumstances, and long-term career options in the employee commitment job security is the most essential element.

Participants also referred to the perceived lack of other opportunities and the risk of trying something other than teaching. This finding coincides with Qadir's (2014:154), who found that 59% of participants value job security as one of the basic tenets of job satisfaction. Moreover, this profession is known to the participants and provides financial income at the end of the month. The latter was the main reason why participants referred to job security.

To feel safe or have a sense of belonging within the teaching profession is closely linked to the salary teachers receive at the end of the month and prevents teachers from leaving the profession. Moreover, job security has become more relevant during the pandemic times since many people in other spheres lost their jobs.

6.2.1.2 Remuneration

As explained in the preceding section, salary as a pull force was perceived as a means of providing for families, which offers stability and security for teachers. A participant explained that she needed to provide for her mother and therefore had to hold on to her teaching job (Consult Section 5.3.1). Although participants did not indicate that their salaries were good or acceptable, they commented on the reassurance of a

secure income every month. In other words, receiving a stable salary, even lower than one would prefer, gives teachers security at the end of a month.

Teacher remuneration, however, can also be viewed as an opposing force and as one of the main reasons within the specific category teachers cite for leaving because people tend to pursue a career that pays more (Consult Section 2.3.3). Teacher Salary in South Africa (2022) reports, “The average salary for a Teacher in SA is R 258 060 gross per year (R 21 510 gross per month), which is 9% lower than South Africa's national average salary”.

Seventy-four per cent of the participants stated that they spent more than seven hours at school and that these hours excluded the time they spent at home on marking, preparing for classes, and administration (Consult Section 5.2.1). Hence, the average working hours per day did not align with teacher salary at the time of the study. Literature and the research findings indicated that inadequate salaries were one of the main reasons for teachers leaving the profession. In this regard, Bipath, Venketsamy and Naidoo (2019:9) agree that “... teachers are not the best paid in South Africa”. Taole and Wolhuter (2019:107) concur by saying, “The average annual salary of a teacher in South Africa is lower than that of most professions, or even occupations not requiring tertiary education”.

6.2.1.3 Fringe benefits

The last code relates to the teaching profession's fringe benefits, such as four paid holidays per year. Especially mothers find a teaching career advantageous, as it allows them to spend more time with their families (Consult Sections 2.3.5 and 5.2.1). Existing literature correlates with the data by reporting that women made up 72,5% of the teacher population in South Africa (Skosana, 2018). However, these four paid holidays should not be mistaken as free time. Most teachers spend their holidays catching up on administration, preparing for the following term's classes, or attending workshops as set out by the DBE (Simic-Muller, 2018:188). Many have extramural coaching commitments too. The misconception that teaching is only a half-day job and the relatively low salary teachers receive contribute to the low status attached to the profession. Teachers are looked down upon even though their work lays the foundation for the success of the future society. I experienced this first hand when I

offered my son help when he struggled with putting a remote control car together. In a frustrated voice he said, “You won’t be able to help me; you are just a teacher”.

The professional benefits’ influence on teacher well-being is presented in Figure 6.2:



Figure 6.2: Push and pull forces with regard to professional benefits’ influence on teacher well-being

Job security, remuneration, and fringe benefits may act as pull forces, which subsequently serve as reasons for teachers to stay in the profession. These forces may also contribute positively to teacher well-being. However, remuneration also acts as a push force that drives teachers from the profession.

6.3 THEME 2: INSTITUTIONAL FORCES

As explained earlier, contextual forces refer to the teaching environment regardless of the location, culture or description; these are forces that all teachers will experience, irrespective of where they teach. These forces refer to the infrastructure, resources, geographical location as well as type of school. Institutional forces are forces unique to a specific school, the lived biography of the school and will change if a teacher changes schools. Table 6.2 lists the categories and codes that fall under institutional forces:

Table 6.2: Outline of categories in Institutional forces

Theme: Institutional forces	
Category	Codes
Learners' influence on teacher well-being	Learner development
	Learner behaviour
	Learner absenteeism
Stakeholders' influence on teacher well-being	Management and DBE involvement
	Parental involvement
The context's influence on teacher well-being	School environment
	Socioeconomic factors
COVID-19's influence on teachers' well-being	Parental factors
	Socioeconomic factors

Four categories were identified under this theme, each with its accompanying codes that are discussed next.

6.3.1 Learners' Influence on Teacher Well-being

Linear growth, behaviour, encouragement as well as learner absenteeism serve as forces influencing teachers' decision to leave or stay in the profession and thus their well-being.

6.3.1.1 Learner development

Participants widely reported that they wanted their learners to succeed, pass or achieve their goals (Consult Sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2). For learners to grow is one of the most prominent reasons why teachers found the profession rewarding. Having an impact on a learner's life and seeing a learner pass or achieve a goal acts as a motivator. Although participants explained that they did not always experience appreciation or witness the influence they had, they knew it was present in some learners' lives.

This specific characteristic of participants is closely related to the biographical force, as it refers to the accomplishment element of the PERMA Model, where teachers view learners' achievements and success as rewarding. This is discussed further in Section 6.5.

6.3.1.2 Learner behaviour

Learner misbehaviour (Consult Section 2.3.2) contributes to a negative work environment and was mentioned by the majority of participants. The cause of discipline problems experienced by teachers can be attributed to the following:

- Diversity of learners (Section 2.3.3): Disruptive behaviour is more evident when some teachers fail to facilitate learning effectively to a diverse group of learners.
- Socioeconomic environment (Consult Section 2.3.2): Teaching at a rural/township school has marked socioeconomic challenges, such as teaching learners on an empty stomach, which makes it difficult to concentrate and then leads to disruptive behaviour. Private schools boast helicopter parents who make it difficult for teachers to manage learners and contribute to the “you-are-there-to-serve-me” mentality that so many learners in private schools have (Consult Section 5.2.6).
- Literacy levels (Consult Section 2.3.1): Learners who struggle to read and write do not understand the content being taught; consequently they become frustrated and display behavioural problems (Consult Section 5.4.2). These learners, therefore, are unable to participate actively in class, thereby forcing the teacher to take on a teacher-centred approach (Serin, 2018:166), causing learners to lose interest and resort to disruptive behaviour.
- Disrespect: Numerous learners have a disrespectful attitude to teachers and behave as if teachers are mere service providers who render a service to them (Consult Section 2.3.4). However, one male participant claimed that he did not have any discipline problems with learners, and attributed it to the fact that he was a male and also because he was a rugby coach: *Children, specifically boys look up to me because of this. If learners display behavioural problems, I always encourage them to start a sport. Sport equals discipline.*
- This last point highlights several variables related to discipline in the classroom context, namely respect/disrespect, gender of the teacher, and being a sports coach. The following questions can therefore be asked: First, does respect improve learner discipline? Curwin, Mendler and Mendler (2018:6) claim that when learners are respected and treated with dignity, classroom discipline will not be a major problem. The data agree (Consult Section 5.4.3). Treating

learners with respect and dignity entails remaining empathetic, compassionate and caring, regardless of their behaviour. Next, do male teachers experience fewer behavioural problems than females? In this regard, McDowell and Klateenberg (2019:8) explain that although it has been said that female teachers exhibit a softer style of discipline, learners tend to respect male teachers more, but no empirical evidence can support this claim. Lastly, does being a sports coach help with maintaining discipline in the classroom context? Literature reports on the various advantages that sport has on overall behaviour (Garcia & Subia, 2019:86). Being in a leadership position of coaching a sports team has its benefits. Apart from teaching learners' skills and self-discipline, a more emotional connection develops between coach and learner that allows respect and understanding (Scantlebury, Till, Sawczuk, Weakly & Jones, 2018:3240).

The findings regarding discipline were interesting as I assumed that teachers from the township and rural schools would have more difficulty with regard to learner behaviour; however, Benjamin (Consult Section 5.4.3), Maria (Consult Section 5.4.5) and Martha (Consult Section 5.4.6) proved me wrong. This begs the question as to why certain teachers struggle more with discipline than others. The interview with Jenna reported that personality, characteristics and classroom management have a direct influence on the behaviour of learners (Consult Section 5.5.2).

Moreover, learner behaviour also serves as a pull force. Words of encouragement from learners tend to reward teachers and give them a reason for staying in the profession. When learners appreciate their teachers, offering them a word of thanks or acknowledging them motivates teachers to keep on teaching (Consult Sections 5.2 and 5.3).

6.3.1.3 Learner absenteeism

Learners' regular absenteeism has a direct influence on teacher well-being as it creates a situation where the teacher needs to take time to facilitate the learning content the learners missed during the time they were absent. This adds to the teacher's already full workload.

The literature (Consult Section 2.3.4) and data (Consult Section 5.4) agree and add that learner absenteeism is a result of the following:

- Poverty/socioeconomic circumstances of the learner. At times, the weather makes it impossible for learners to walk to school, and they frequently lack transportation. Many learners, particularly girls, must care for sick siblings or carers. Some girls miss school due to personal matters related to their menstrual cycles. Others are often in charge of domestic matters such as cleaning, cooking, and caring for siblings or elderly relatives. They are then just too exhausted to go to school.
- Cultural customs such as initiation schools are one of the reasons why learners are absent.
- Lack of motivation – learners are unmotivated and see no future for themselves. As a result, they see no point in attending school.

The influence that learners have on teacher well-being is set out in Figure 6.3.

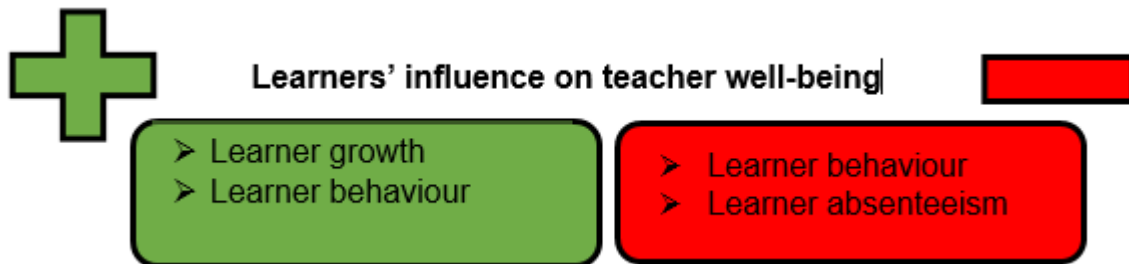


Figure 6.3: Push and pull forces with regard to learners' influence on teacher well-being

Learners' growth and positive behaviour contribute to the reasons why teachers stay in the profession, thereby improving their well-being, but absenteeism and poor behaviour push teachers away from the profession and have a negative impact on their well-being.

6.3.2 Stakeholders' Influence on Teacher Well-being

The second category involved the role of stakeholders and refers to a school's management team (SMT), the Department of Education (DoE) and parental involvement.

6.3.2.1 Management and DBE involvement

Participants did not frequently refer to the management of the school, but the cases where they were mentioned were positive in the sense that the participants explained that most principals and HODs had an open-door policy and that they felt that the management of the school did what they could to manage the school to the best of their ability (Consult Section 5.3). Moreover, when participants referred to the SMT, phrases like "being appreciated" or "being acknowledged" surfaced. When teachers feel that their work is being recognised, they tend to work harder and this serves as motivation for them (Consult Section 5.2.3). This is also closely linked to the *meaning* element of the PERMA Model and is discussed further in Section 6.5.4.

The lack of focus on specifically the DBE can be attributed to the fact that data set 1 occurred during the lockdown period, which meant that teachers were at home, removed from the school environment. This implies that teachers had limited involvement in the DBE's administrative demands and school visits. In other words, the DBE and management were not actively involved in the teachers' role throughout this time period. But, when the DBE was mentioned, participants seemed frustrated. Participants believed that the DBE was out of touch with their responsibilities as teachers and therefore required them to conduct unnecessary administrative work and attend workshops after school or even during school holidays (Consult Sections 5.2 and 5.3). The views of participants were echoed in my own impression when I conducted the interview with the educational expert - an employee of the DBE (Consult Section 5.4). She refused to accept responsibility for any shortcomings that the DBE might have. She was apprehensive towards my claim that teachers expected support from SMTs and specifically said that teachers should not expect management to be a coping mechanism. From her point of view, she perceived teachers in general as victims, always looking for help, but not willing to tap into their own resources to teach

effectively. The impression that I had was of a person who was far removed from the reality of teaching at grassroots level.

6.3.2.2 Parental involvement

Data revealed that parents were the main contributing factor influencing teacher well-being. Throughout the data sets, participants referred to the lack of parental involvement, limited parental support, uneducated parents and unsatisfactory communication between teachers and parents.

The two most frequently mentioned factors that fall under parental involvement and that are discussed briefly were the unemployment of parents and uneducated parents. *Uneducated* in the scope of this study means that parents either did not complete their school career, or that they were illiterate.

- Unemployment of parents/caregivers (Consult Section 2.3.1): the high unemployment rate of parents/caregivers leads to poverty-stricken households. Many learners from poor households go to school on an empty stomach and struggle to concentrate (Consult Section 6.2.2). Learners also do not have the basic stationery to complete work and often go to school without a pen or pencil.
- Illiterate parents/caregivers (Consult Sections 2.3.1 and 5.4.3): It is difficult or even impossible for illiterate parents or caregivers to give academic support. Even though parental support is one of the institutional forces that affect teacher well-being, the literacy levels of parents are a challenge that will not change soon (Consult Section 5.2).

One participant proposed that literacy programmes be introduced to empower parents. When parents feel empowered and capable of assisting their children, they may be more willing to attend meetings at school and regard themselves as partners in the education of their children. Moreover, it was evident that participants felt that they did not receive the desired support they needed, especially not from parents. One participant (Rebecca) was the exception, stating that the parents she encountered always supported her and their children in improving their marks (Consult Section 5.4.7). Rebecca taught Mathematics, which could explain why the parents of her learners were more likely to support her efforts when she reached out, seeing that

learners needed at least 30% in this subject to progress to the next grade. Another explanation could be that Rebecca taught at an inner-city Quintile 4 school, where the socioeconomic conditions allowed parents to attend teacher-parent meetings, contact the teacher via email or cellular phone, or help their child academically.

When teachers are not supported, they tend to leave the school or the profession entirely (Consult Section 2.3.3). “To support a person is to supply them with things necessary for existence, or to keep their spirits or courage up under trial or affliction” (Merriam-Webster, 2018). Parental support or lack of parental support should be examined from two perspectives. Firstly, uninvolved parents lack the ability to motivate their children to achieve academic standards (Consult Section 2.3.2), do not guide their children in acceptable and appropriate behaviour, and do not support teachers when potential learning problems arise.

Secondly, to what extent does the teacher require parental assistance and in what form?. Jenna explained that teachers should not require assistance or support from parents and should remember that it is the teachers’ job to educate the learners (Consult Section 5.4.1). Participants, however, sought support from parents in dealing with academic and behaviour challenges. Support in this sense refers to teachers joining hands with parents to ensure the successful completion of a school career.

Figure 6.4 gives an outline of the push and pull forces regarding the stakeholders’ influence on teacher well-being.

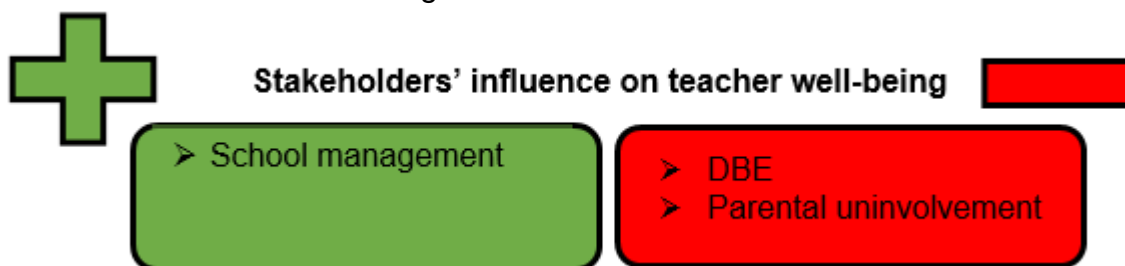


Figure 6.4: Push and pull forces with regard to stakeholders’ influence on teacher well-being

The positive influence that school management may have on the well-being of teachers is corroborated by the literature (Consult Section 2.3.5). Van Stone (2019:24) agrees, saying, “Supportive management lead to teachers experiencing job

satisfaction”. In opposition, the DBE and lack of parental involvement push teachers away from the profession and have a negative impact on their well-being.

6.3.3 The Context’s Influence on Teacher Well-being

Given South Africa’s multicultural, multiracial and multilingual character, and the big divide in socioeconomic classes, the reality of different school environments with different traditions, values and challenges is understandable. Therefore the codes that were identified within this theme overlap, but I identified them as specific school environments and socioeconomic factors.

6.3.3.1 School environment

The concept *school environment* in this study refers to all the characteristics within a specific school, including safety, atmosphere and overcrowded classrooms.

Firstly, the safety of the school environment was mentioned in the first data set as an answer to what influences teacher workplace well-being (Consult Section 5.3.6). This data are supported in the literature (Consult Section 2.3.2) with the TALIS report (Teaching and Learning International Survey, 2018:2) stating that South Africa is the country with the highest frequency and variety of school safety incidents among all countries and economies participating in TALIS. It is, however, necessary to mention that the safety of the school environment was mentioned only in data set 1 and by only three participants who taught in township schools. This could imply that the other participants did not consider safety to be important enough to warrant a discussion, or that other challenges weighed more heavily.

Secondly, participants reported a positive school atmosphere as a factor that enhanced their well-being. Teaching in a favourable school environment pushed teachers to do their best and kept them in the profession. Memari and Gholamshabini (2018:2) argue that a positive school climate results from a school's focus on creating a safe, supportive, disciplined physical environment, and developing and maintaining respectful, trusting and loving connections throughout the school community, regardless of setting.

Lastly, teachers struggle to teach effectively in overcrowded classrooms, which are the norm in many township and rural areas (Consult Section 2.3.3). Overcrowded classrooms as a challenge is a combination of an increase in population, a shortage of qualified teachers, and a decrease in funding from the DBE; such classrooms aggravate existing challenges, such as behavioural problems and a lack of individualised attention. Struggling learners need more attention and tend to fall even further behind in overcrowded classrooms. These learners become demotivated and become disruptive as explained earlier in the chapter.

6.3.3.2 Socioeconomic factors

The last category in this theme is the role of the socioeconomic environment on the *lived biography* of a particular school (Consult Section 3.2.2). Many South African learners attend schools with poor infrastructure, which has a direct impact on academic performance. Many learners in historically poor metropolitan neighbourhoods attend schools that lack resources (Consult Section 2.3.3). In analysing the data on the socioeconomic environment in a specific school setting, it was found that teaching in rural and township schools presents different challenges to teaching in private and urban schools. This does not exempt private and urban schools from these challenges; rural and township school teachers simply experience these (and others) challenges more frequently and differently.

The socioeconomic hardship of the majority of schools proved to be a key challenge for teachers. Firstly, the shortage of textbooks and learning space (Consult Section 5.3.4) creates a major challenge. The Development Bank of South Africa (DBSA, 2020) argues that adequate learning material is critical in education. Learners must have access to the most recent textbooks as well as finances to acquire workbooks, practice books, readers and core learning tools to advance in their education. Such learning media requires money, which many learners do not have, and many cannot rely on the school to provide the essential resources due to a shortage of financing in the education system. Most participants reported that the lack of resources and poor infrastructure posed an immense challenge to teaching effectively (Consult Sections 5.2 and 5.3). One of the participants, Peter, explained that most classrooms did not have doors, windows were broken, and textbooks were a luxury (Consult Section

5.4.4). This is true for many South African schools (Consult Section 2.3.1). The classroom context is closely linked to the socioeconomic environment in which a school finds itself.

Although socioeconomic issues were primarily reported as a push force, not all participants faced the problems that the socioeconomic environment presented. Four of the eight participants who served as case studies worked in schools with ample teaching resources. As a result, participants reported having data projectors, whiteboards and interactive resources and an abundance of teaching media giving them a variety of options for teaching content in a creative way.

Figure 6.5 shows the push and pull forces of the influence of the professional context on teacher well-being.

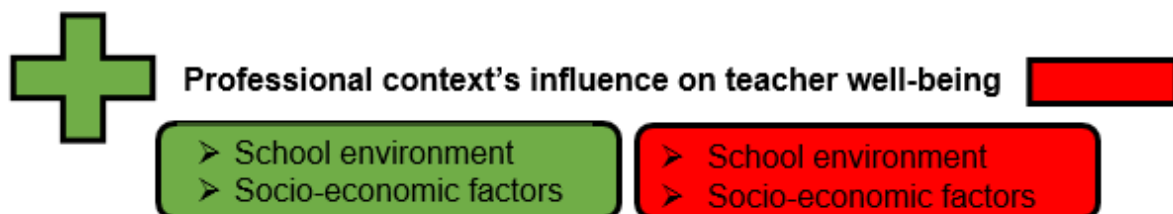


Figure 6.5: Push and pull forces with regard to the professional context's influence on teacher well-being

Both codes may push or pull teachers away from the profession and therefore influence their well-being.

6.3.4 COVID-19's Influence on Teacher Well-being

During lockdown teachers had to adapt to using online learning platforms, provided they had access to these. However, many teachers did not have the knowledge to use these technological applications and they had to empower and reskill themselves to keep on teaching. With regard to teachers who taught underprivileged learners, or learners without technology like laptops and smartphones, they needed to think of creative ways to facilitate content to learners and help where they could to make learning possible. The pandemic created various never-before experienced challenges for teachers.

Although this study did not focus on the impact of COVID-19 on participants, data were collected during the lockdown period, and I assumed that it would have an impact on

teachers as they were not able to teach learners in a classroom situation. Codes that emerged underscored parental and socioeconomic factors that impacted teaching during this unprecedented period.

Firstly, participants reported on illiterate parents who were unable to assist their children with education when schools were under lockdown (Consult Sections 5.1 and 5.2). As learners could not attend school, parents were required to act as teachers and assist their children academically but many were unable to help and hence did not ensure that worksheets and schoolwork were completed. Schoolwork was mostly overlooked in many households at the time.

Secondly, Mhlanga and Moloji (2020:18) explain that the digital transformation of education has a tremendous effect on education as a whole, as all activities inside a school environment are being challenged. This was reflected in the data, particularly where participants taught in townships and rural areas that suffered more from socioeconomic challenges. Where parents could assist their children, some schools lacked the resources to copy material to provide to learners or were not privileged enough to digitalise their work so that learners could continue to learn. The socioeconomic difficulties of homes proved to be a severe setback for teachers, exacerbating the challenge of juggling their duties with their work to teach remotely (Chogyel, Wangdi & Dema, 2021:3).

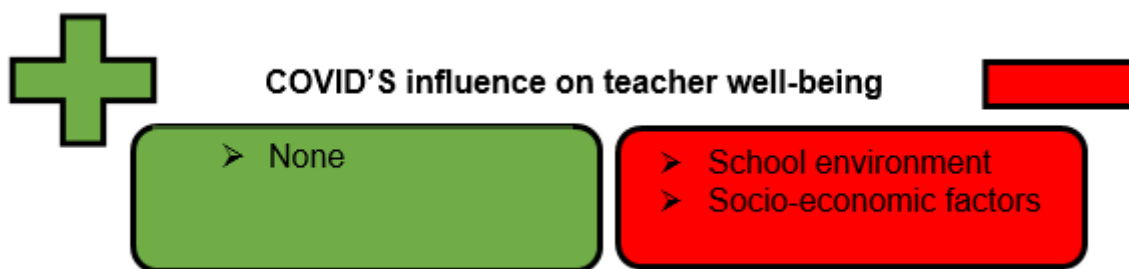


Figure 6.6: Push and pull forces with regard to COVID-19's influence on teacher well-being

It is critical to note that no data were gathered to describe the problems or rewards offered by COVID-19, hence the discussion was brief. I do believe that COVID-19 might have demonstrated pull forces and did, in some situations, improve teacher well-being but my research did not intend to investigate this phenomenon.

6.4 THEME 3: PROGRAMMATIC FORCES

The programmatic forces refers to “the formal (official), non-formal and hidden curriculum, the espoused curriculum and the experienced curriculum of the school” and the impact it has on the experiences within the teaching-learning situation (Samuel & Van Wyk, 2008:141). In analysing the data, I realised that participants did not refer to the curriculum as such, but rather to the workload associated with the curriculum as well as the diversity of learners that influences the effectiveness of curriculum implementation. Hence, this theme was captured under the following categories and codes presented in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3: Outline of categories in the Programmatic forces

Theme: Programmatic forces	
Category	Codes
Learners’ influence on teacher well-being	Learner diversity
The context’s influence on teacher well-being	Curriculum
	Workload

Both the categories – the learners’ influence and the context’s influence – together with the specific codes are interwoven with the curriculum as common denominator. The diversity of learners in a particular class influences curriculum implementation and how learning is facilitated in a lesson. This has a direct impact on the teacher's workload, as is illustrated in the following discussion.

6.4.1 Learners’ Influence on Teacher Well-being

When discussing the influence of learners on teacher well-being within the programmatic force, special emphasis is placed on the diversity of learners. Learner diversity does not refer to language and cultural differences only but in this context relates to the impact of different socioeconomic contexts in which schools are located. Participants revealed that the diversity within the school setting necessitates ongoing adaptation in terms of the way in which learning is facilitated and the classroom is handled. Not all learners are on the same cognitive level, and furthermore, the battle against linguistic barriers between teachers and learners hinders communication between teacher and learner. According to Palane and Howie (2020:44), numerous learners are not taught in their native language, which causes issues with the pass

rate and classroom management. When learners do not understand the content, they become disruptive (Consult Section 5.2).

Furthermore, the expert interview highlighted that learner diversity may induce conflict and tension in the classroom (Consult Section 5.5.2). Participants responded that it is challenging to address the needs of every learner in large classes. This is not surprising seeing that literature (Consult Section 2.3.1) also states that South Africa's population is one of the most complex and diverse in the world, which suggests that a diverse set of needs is expected in the classroom.

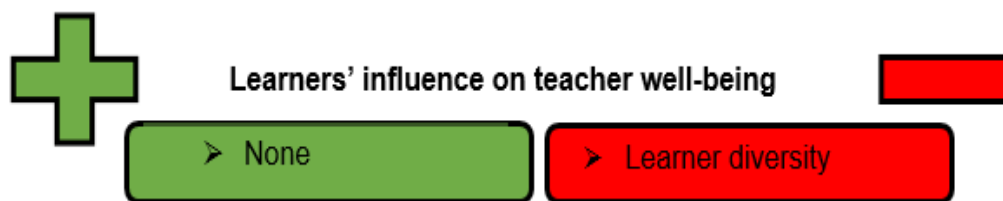


Figure 6.7: Push and pull forces with regard to learners' influence on teacher well-being

The results revealed that the diversity of learners may be taxing teachers' well-being, and that diversity may be one of the reasons why teachers leave the field. Next, the influence of the professional context on teacher well-being is discussed.

6.4.2 The Context's Influence on Teacher Well-being

The curriculum and workload of the teacher are very closely related.

6.4.2.1 Curriculum

Nowhere else is inequality as evident as in the schooling system, and it seems that the current education system is perpetuating this disparity through the "one-size-fits-all" curriculum (Amin & Mahabeer, 2021:499). These authors posit that the curriculum should be changed to meet society's needs and warn that "the revised curriculum ignores the contextual distinctions amongst schools". They, therefore, suggest that the curriculum should be trimmed by removing outdated and irrelevant content and focusing on content that is important for the particular group of learners, and reorganised by grouping similar topics across subjects together to reduce curriculum

overload. Adopting these suggestions will allow the teacher to adjust the curriculum according to the specific needs of the learner population of a specific school. These authors conclude that “A curriculum is only as feasible as its context; hence, internal and external factors that influence the curriculum’s effectiveness must be confronted ...” (Amin & Mahabeer, 2021:497). Harmse and Evans (2017:143) agree when saying that teachers need to adapt the subject content to align it with the context “rather than the prescribed curriculum”. The expert interview (Consult Section 5.5.2) also alluded to the need for teachers to adapt their teaching strategies and lesson plans to accommodate diversity. This suggestion correlates with the biographical forces, discussed hereafter.

6.4.2.2 Workload

When taking into account that there have been four curriculum changes in the education system since 1994, where each one required training, orientation and skills development as well as administrative work to prove competency in curriculum implementation (Govindasamy, 2018:2), it speaks for itself that the changing nature of the curriculum has resulted in an increased workload as teachers need to prepare new assessments, lesson plans, and material (Consult Section 3.2.3). Although the data did not explicitly stipulate which participants went through the curriculum modifications, mention was made of the ever-increasing demands for changing of assessments and administration work (Consult Sections 5.3 and 5.4). Teachers feel overwhelmed by the assessment plans set out by the Department of Education and struggle to manage to get through the content that needs to be covered per term. Due to the district or provincial examination papers being written by most schools, teachers are forced to cover all content, which leads to difficult content not being thoroughly explained or to struggling learners falling even more behind. In addition to this, the administrative responsibilities of teachers add to their frustration and workload. Rachel (Consult Section 5.4.1) stated, *We have too much paperwork! Do the department want us to teach or fill in papers?* Literature also reports that the huge workload is a reason for teacher stress and contributes to teacher burnout (Consult Section 2.3.3).

Molapo and Pillay (2018:7) believe that there is more behind the complaint of administrative overload when alluding to “teacher agency” about curriculum

implementation, which in this case refers to ownership that teachers take when engaging with the curriculum. These researchers believe that the top-down approach to the South African school curricula, being “highly prescriptive” deprives teachers of any initiative, creativity or enthusiasm when implementing the curriculum. As teachers are not involved in any processes in respect of the development of the curriculum, they subconsciously distance themselves from any demand that the curriculum places on their time and effort.

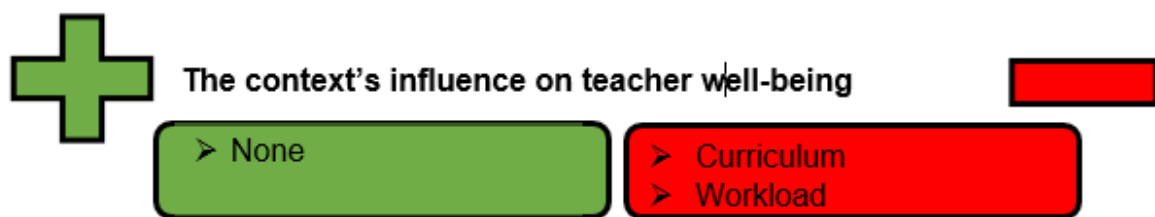


Figure 6.8: Push and pull forces with regard to the context's influence on teacher well-being

According to the literature (Consult Section 2.3.1), the additional effort imposed by the curriculum adds to teachers' workload and therefore generates additional stress, acting as a negative or push factor that has a detrimental impact on their well-being.

6.5 THEME 4: BIOGRAPHICAL FORCES

Samuel and Van Wyk (2008:140, 141) explain biographical forces as "... including different individuals' cultural, racial, ethnic and religious identities which predispose them to think, act, or behave in particular ways with learners, school authorities, and school subjects". These forces, therefore, are a function of teachers' lived history and have the ability to influence teachers' well-being. Although these inherent forces are acknowledged, they can be regarded as set attributes that the teacher has no control over. The PERMA Model's biographical forces were therefore merged with those of the FFM, and in this study are regarded as internal forces that the teacher can regulate. The five elements *positive emotion*, *engagement*, *relationship*, *meaning* and *accomplishment* are presented as categories in Table 6.4 together with the accompanying codes.

Table 6.4: Outline of Categories and Codes of the Biographical forces

Theme: Biographical forces	
Category	Codes
Positive emotion	Passion for teaching
Engagement	Efforts by teachers to improve teaching
Relationship	Teachers' support structure/coping strategies
Meaning	Words of encouragement
Accomplishment	Learner development

These categories and codes are explained next.

6.5.1 Positive Emotion

The first category explains how positive emotion contributes to teachers' well-being. Positive emotion refers to all emotions that one cultivates to improve one's well-being (Consult Section 3.2.1).

This element was visible across all three data sets with the majority of participants referring to love and passion for the profession (Consult Sections 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5). These findings are corroborated by Keller et al. (2014:71) who state that teaching is an emotionally rewarding career; Coetzee and Jansen also argue that teaching is a profession that is strongly anchored in emotional experiences. The desire to continue teaching was cited by participants as the most compelling reason. When deciding to pursue a degree in education, most participants expressed their passion for making a difference in a learner's life. Moreover, participants stated that they wanted to be positive role models, and they wanted to teach because the profession was rewarding.

In the teaching profession, a deep love for children combined with a desire to help them attain their greatest potential is critical to teacher well-being. The positive emotions that teachers experience act as a push force that keeps them in the profession and enhances their well-being.

6.5.2 Engagement

The next element of the PERMA Model refers to engagement. To be engaged in one's profession means to be emotionally resourceful and focused. Seligman (2011) argues

that when one is doing something one enjoys, one prefers to live in the present moment and is thus completely focused on what is going on around one. In other words, when one is engaged, one is emotionally connected. Moreover, engagement refers to the achievement of challenging tasks by using skills and strengths (Consult Section 3.2.1). Translating these perspectives to the teaching profession, engaged teachers may be defined as people who have discovered their life's purpose through providing a satisfying and fulfilling service.

In analysing the data it became evident that participants agreed that the diversity within the school setting called for constant adaptation and posed a challenge with regard to the way learning was facilitated and the way in which the classroom was managed. To empower oneself, one must ensure that one is equipped with skills to take on a challenging situation. This means that teachers manage to cope with challenges or hardship by seeking counsel and support from management, colleagues or even by relying on their faith. Coping mechanisms are elaborated on in Section 6.5.3.

Jenna suggested that teachers should not rely on school management, the department or even on parents to help them cope with difficulties, but rather consult free sources available on Google or in libraries (Consult Section 5.2.2), thereby taking ownership of their tasks and challenges. Literature agrees and suggests ways in which the teacher can acquire skills and the necessary emotional strength to combat challenges, which Boakye and Ampiah (2017) call “survival strategies”. Akin (2019:64) similarly emphasises the need for teachers to be committed to their jobs: “If teachers can make more commitments from their special times, act willingly to take responsibility and prioritise inner peace, the level of meeting the expectations of the produced services can rise”. Data obtained from participants, however, shows that they got relief from discussing problems with colleagues and they appreciated an open door SMT policy. Relationships therefore play an important role in the coping mechanisms of teachers, as discussed in the next section.

6.5.3 Relationship

The relationship element in the PERMA Model underscores the importance of various relationships in the workplace by highlighting their ability to enhance well-being.

According to researchers, those who have supportive and fulfilling relationships have better mental and physical health (Consult Section 3.1.1).

Teaching is a relationship-based profession (Dreer, 2021:103) and if these relationships are properly managed, they can help retain teachers in the profession and improve their well-being. Throughout the study, the importance of healthy relationships between teachers and their colleagues, learners, management and parents was mentioned. When these role-players have a healthy relationship, it improves the teachers' well-being and gives them a sense of "sharing their burdens". Literature concurs that the ability to develop meaningful relationships with all stakeholders is necessary for a teacher's well-being (Consult Section 2.3.4). It is evident that various relationships influence the decision whether a teacher decides to stay in or leave the teaching profession.

My results did not show that participants sought assistance from colleagues, but rather that the collegial relationship fostered a sense of togetherness. Furthermore, participants did not specifically mention their interaction with learners but focused more on the difference they as teachers could make in the learners' lives. Few participants did, however, mention that when learners showed their appreciation and gave them acknowledgement it served as a reason to stay in the profession regardless of the challenges they experienced. As previously stated, the relational factor is associated with positive emotion.

The final relationship explored was the role religion plays in motivating participants to continue teaching in the face of adversity. Five of the eight participants relied on their belief in a higher power (God) to guide them. Most participants subscribed to a monotheistic faith.

6.5.4 Meaning

A human's primary motivation in life is to find meaning (Consult Section 3.2.1). Meaning is the fourth element in the PERMA Model of Well-being. Meaning in this study refers to teachers' need to feel valued and worthy, which includes serving something greater than themselves.

Participants widely reported that the teaching profession was rewarding because they felt they were being appreciated. They believed that they were adding value to the future by playing a part in the education of learners. To be acknowledged for working hard and being recognised kept teachers from leaving the profession. Participants referred to the smiles they received from learners, or past learners greeting them with love and affection when they walked past them in public (Consult Section 5.3). This finding correlates with the literature review that states that teachers are most in need of recognition.

6.5.5 Accomplishment

The last element relates to the importance of accomplishment. Accomplishment refers to achievement, mastery or success at the highest level possible within a specific sphere (Forgeard, Jayawckreme, Kern & Seligman, 2011:1). When teachers feel they have accomplished their goal, it enhances their well-being and therefore also serves as a pull force. The goals they want to accomplish vary from seeing learners pass to learners making a success of their lives after leaving school. These accomplishments also serve as a driving force to set and reach career goals.

Hence, when asked where participants pictured themselves in five years' time, 46 participants in data set 1 reported that they would still like to be in the teaching profession. Some of them mentioned that they hoped to obtain a higher position within the education sector either as HOD or even as a lecturer at a higher education institution. This finding is reassuring when viewed against the backdrop of all the challenges that teachers face in the teaching profession and is in agreement with a study where the researchers found that “the career orientation of the teacher is primarily value-driven”, and conclude that the realisation of a calling is the most important asset and determinant in teacher training and provision (Steyn & Kamper, 2015: 273, 274).

The PERMA Model's elements serve as positive or pull factors that enhance well-being. When these elements are present in teachers' lives, they will experience a greater sense of well-being and will be more inclined to stay in the profession.

With this in mind, the opposing forces will drive teachers away from the profession while also adding to the deterioration of their well-being. Although the majority of participants demonstrated a positive attitude to the teaching profession and had the majority of the elements of the PERMA Model present in their lives, some participants did not share this sentiment (Consult Sections 5.3.5 and 5.4.7).

Most of the participants did report a lack of support from parents and therefore the relationship element acts as a push force. Moreover, not all participants felt that the profession held meaning for them (Consult Section 5.2). Some participants revealed that they were teaching for the sole purpose of providing for their families, or that they taught because there were no other options. The opposite of the PERMA elements is set out in Figure 6.7 and is discussed in Chapter 7.

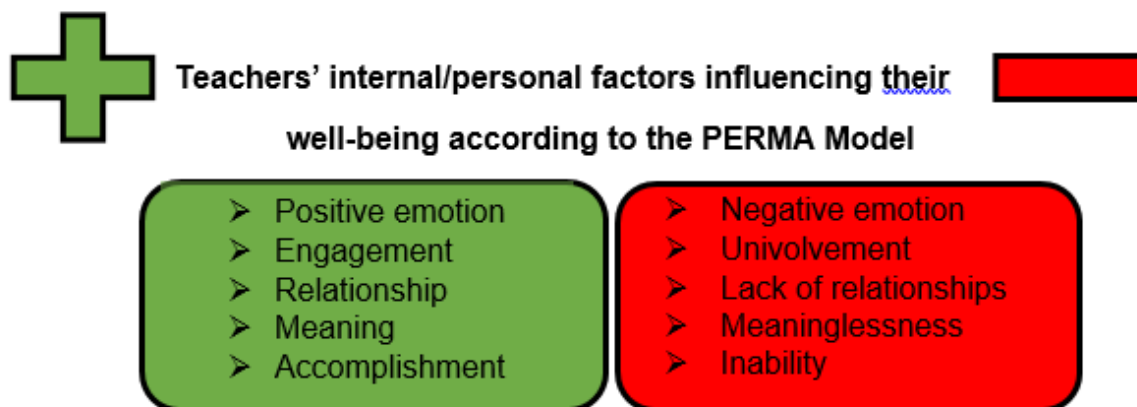


Figure 6.7: Push and pull forces with regard to teachers' internal/personal factors influencing their well-being according to the PERMA Model

6.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter, I ascribed meaning to the data through the four relatable themes that ultimately helped with responding to the research questions as presented in Chapter 1. Data collection was undertaken to get input from a sample of South African teachers on how they regarded the education context in affecting their well-being. Three sets of data were collected by making use of online open-ended questions, semi-structured interviews with eight participants (case studies) and semi-structured interviews with an education expert. Four themes, based on the FFM and PERMA Model, structured the research findings that are presented accordingly:

- **Contextual forces:** Research participants provided useful insight into the role that salary plays either as a pull (stay in the profession) or a push force (leave the profession). Teaching also provides job security, as it is not likely that teaching jobs may become redundant. The last key finding within the contextual theme reported on the fringe.
- **Institutional forces:** the first category underscored the influence learners have on teacher well-being. The codes and categories that surfaced were learner development, behaviour, encouragement and absenteeism. Moreover, the role of the school context, socioeconomic factors as well as the stakeholders' influence on well-being.
- **Programmatic forces:** the current curriculum as prescribed by the Department of Education (DoE) tends to push teachers away from the profession as it adds to their already heavy workload. Additionally, the extreme diversity in terms of religion, culture, language and socioeconomic status of learners contributes to their stress levels, thereby impacting their well-being.
- **Biographical forces:** the PERMA model of Well-being's five elements was incorporated into this theme. Findings correspond to the literature on well-being, and it was found that teachers stay in the profession because of their love of and passion for their job (positive emotion), devotion to their career, being emotionally involved (engagement), relationships with learners, colleagues, parents and management (relationship), the need to feel valued and worthy (meaning), and lastly achievement of learner success (accomplishment). Regarding the coping strategies teachers employ, the data analysis revealed that they seek counselling from either management, colleagues or their faith (relationship). Participants explained that they find the profession rewarding due to the difference they might make in learners' lives.

The FFM and PERMA Model of Well-being made it possible to investigate the categories and allowed me to make sense of the interplay between the categories and themes as set out in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 7

SIGNIFICANCE, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This study aimed to investigate how the current classroom context affects the well-being of South African teachers with specific reference to challenges, rewards and coping strategies. The research process focused on various push and pull factors that either enable or constrain teachers' professional practice or well-being. This chapter concludes my study and is outlined in Figure 7.1.

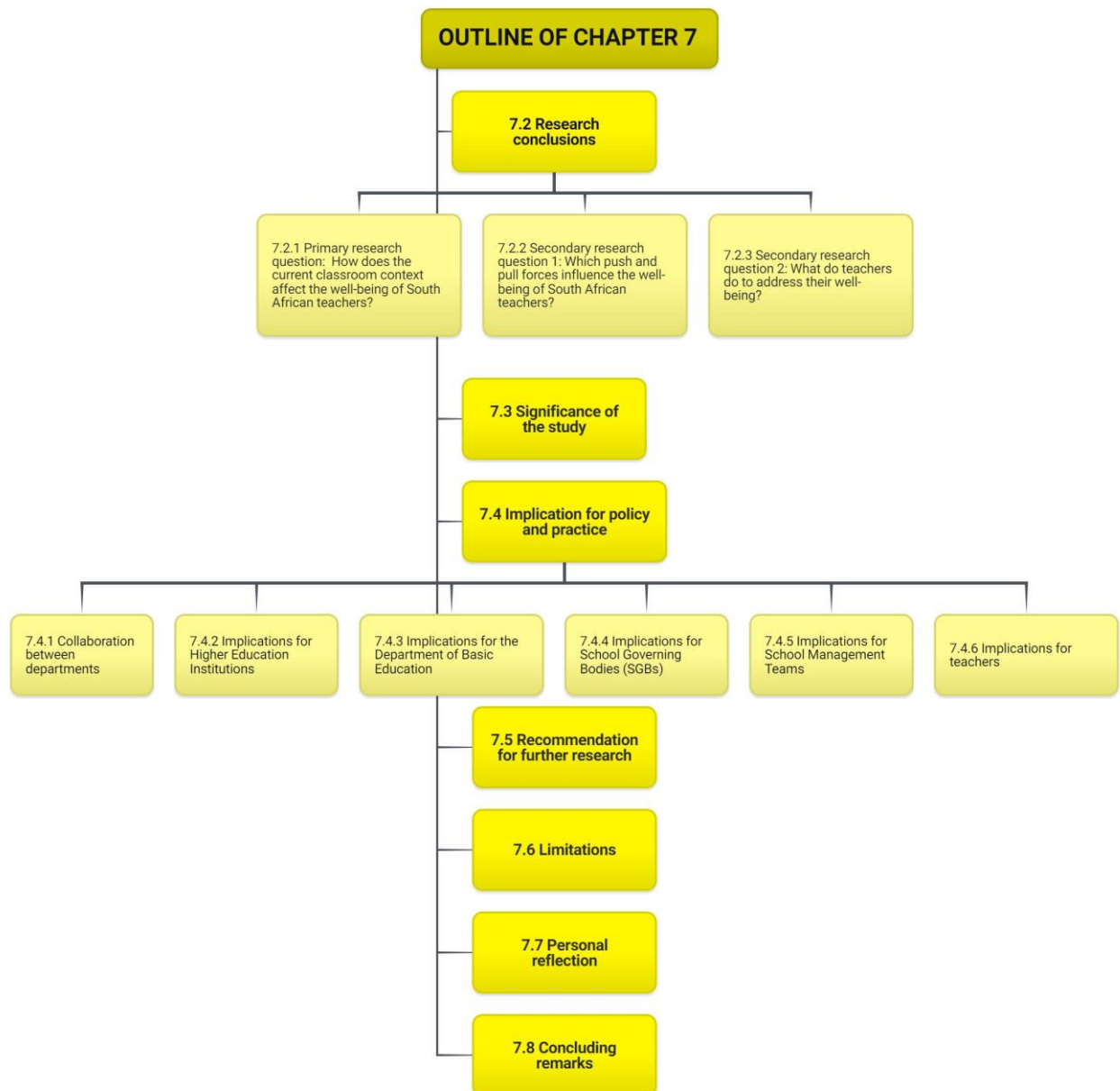


Figure 7.1: Outline of Chapter 7

The chapter commences with the research conclusions by answering the research questions as set out in Chapter 1. The significance of the study is then alluded to, based on the findings and conclusions from Chapters 4, 5, and 6. Thereafter, I present the implications for policy and practice and also make recommendations for future research. Lastly, I acknowledge the specific limitations of my study and give a brief personal reflection.

7.2 RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

In this section, the research conclusions derived from my initial research questions (Consult Section 1.3) are presented.

7.2.1 Primary Research Question: How does the current classroom context affect the well-being of South African teachers?

The answer to the primary research question was arrived at having gathered empirical evidence and analysed it by using the theoretical framework comprising the FFM and PERMA Model. The response to this question will begin with a description of the classroom context, followed by a visual representation of how the classroom context influences teacher well-being.

7.2.1.1 The current classroom context

The classroom context in which the South African teacher teaches, varies according to the type and location of the school that activates different forces to act either as pull or as push forces. Participants from data set 1 and 2 came from a range of schools, hence different classroom contexts were involved in the study and reported on.

7.2.1.2 The influence of the classroom context on teacher well-being

The classroom context in this study consists of the FFM forces, with explicit attention to the components that fall under each force. These aspects interact with one another and cannot be separated, making them a component of the overall classroom context.

It became evident from the all three data sets that the current classroom context has either a positive or a negative influence on teacher well-being. Hence, most of the factors associated with the classroom context have a negative impact on teacher well-being (Consult Chapter 6). Figure 7.2 visually represents the factors that have either a positive or negative influence on teacher well-being:

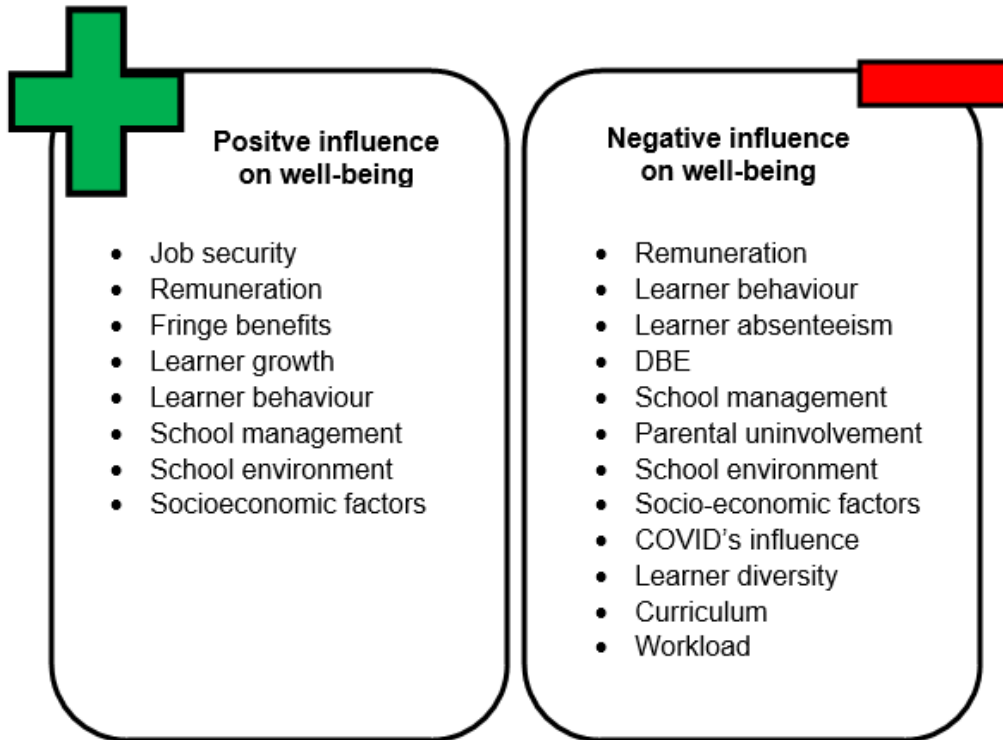


Figure 7.2: Factors influencing teacher well-being

Despite the fact that my study included only a small number of teachers, I feel it might be applied to the larger teaching community. Teachers' well-being is declining due to the aforementioned issues. Moreover, the different categories within each force, as set out in figure 7.2, interact with one another and there is a reciprocal relationship between them. Hence, the well-being of teachers is affected by the synergy between factors as displayed in Figure 7.2:

7.2.2 Secondary Research Question 1: Which push and pull forces influence the well-being of South African teachers?

All four forces from the FFM were found to influence the well-being of South African teachers. A visual representation of these forces is displayed in Figure 7.3.

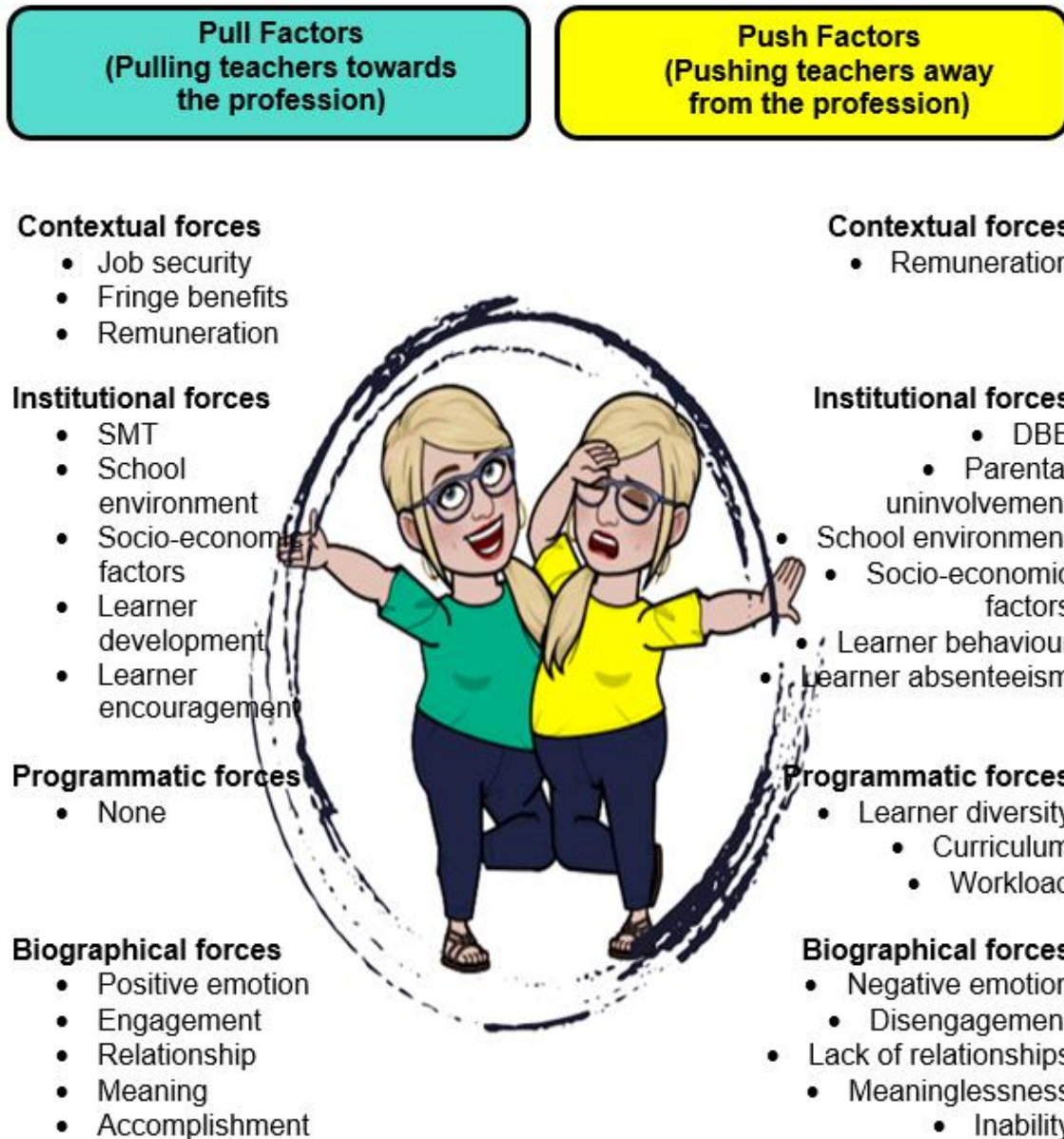


Figure 7.3: Push and pull factors that influence the well-being of South African teachers

The **contextual force** with regard to the teacher's well-being firstly relates to the impact of teacher salary. This force was reported on in all three data sets, but mainly came to light in data set 1 where *salary* was a code much reported on (Consult Figure 5.7). The inadequate salaries of teachers are the main contributor to teachers' dissatisfaction and thus influence their well-being. They often do not have a choice, but to keep on teaching to provide for families and basic needs. A stable income, however insignificant, does provide teachers with security in a society where unemployment is rife. Especially mothers find the teaching profession convenient as

regular holidays allow them to spend more time at home. To balance a teaching career and family life is not easy, as holidays are not necessarily spent with family, but rather on catching up on administration or preparing lessons for the next term.

The **institutional force** applies here as it specifically alludes to the classroom context. Learner behaviour and discipline, overcrowded classrooms, lack of resources, and the socioeconomic environment were identified as categories in all three data sets (Consult Tables 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3). Learners' misbehaving, disrespect and lack of discipline often result in teachers feeling overwhelmed, helpless and anxious and therefore often contribute to teachers leaving the profession. Additionally, trying to teach effectively in overcrowded classrooms without the necessary learning material, such as textbooks, adds to their frustration. The socioeconomic environment of a specific school relates mostly to uninvolved parents or over involved parents, which inhibits the partnership between the home and school. Socioeconomic challenges, as well as overcrowded classrooms are experienced mostly by rural and township teachers, but behavioural problems are experienced regardless of the location or type of school.

The **programmatic force** that includes the curriculum, workload and learner diversity also influences the classroom context. The changing nature of the curriculum often results in an increased workload due to new lesson plans, assessments and material that needs to be developed. Moreover, to cater for and effectively teach a diverse group of learners requires specialist training, which most teachers have not received. Teachers therefore struggle to teach a set curriculum to learners with different intellectual abilities, from various races, cultures, religions and socioeconomic backgrounds.

The **biographical force** that alludes to the PERMA Models' five elements, is the only force that the teacher has complete control over, seeing that the elements have to do with one's personality and attributes. Participants widely reported on their passion and love for the profession (Consult Table 5.4). Moreover, the data reported on the participants' engagement in their daily tasks, their relationships with all relevant stakeholders, the meaning they find in teaching and the sense of belonging that comes with the working in this field.

7.2.3 Secondary Research Question 2: What do teachers do to address their well-being?

All teachers experience challenges that have the potential to affect their well-being. The data analysis has revealed that each teacher uses different strategies to cope with challenges (Consult Section 6.5.3). Subconsciously teachers make a choice, either to allow external challenges to overwhelm them, or to accept and oppose these by relying on internal forces. Should teachers realise and accept that some challenges are a given and will not change, they can choose to counteract them by mobilising their internal resources and strengths that are embedded in the five elements of the biographical force. Hence, the well-being of South African teachers is affected by the synergy between forces.

The data analysis in this study disclosed that, depending on the intensity and nature of push factors, some teachers resort to negative coping mechanisms, such as disengaging from the teaching-learning situation by absenteeism, late-coming, loss of interest in learners, using teaching time for other activities, and so forth. However, some teachers look for support through relationships with colleagues and other educational role players, such as the SMT and parents (Consult Section 5.4). Some teachers regard teaching as a calling, and therefore rely on their religious convictions to carry them. Implementing religious habits such as prayer and other meditative and reflective practices helps teachers to motivate themselves to keep on teaching amidst the challenges they face. Accomplishment also plays a role where learners' success gives a sense of accomplishment and therefore makes teaching a worthwhile profession to pursue.

As a result, connectivity, as an underlying principle, defines the reaction to the coping mechanisms used by teachers to address their well-being. Teachers' connections with their colleagues, management, and spirituality help them cope with the challenges they confront on a daily basis. Passion and dedication are manifestations of a teacher's relationship with the profession.

7.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In an era where challenges within the education context are extremely daunting, the need to consider and enhance teacher well-being is indisputable as indicated by the literature and empirical study. Numerous studies have been conducted to investigate the challenges that teachers face, but underscore mostly the role that various stakeholders may play in mitigating these challenges. The significance of my research thus resides, first and foremost, in the principle of connectivity as a means for teachers to cope with daily challenges. Teachers can strengthen the connection principle by enforcing the five elements of the PERMA Model of well-being, as shown in Table 7.1 below.

Table 7.1: Teacher connection as part of the PERMA Model

Positive emotion	A sense of love and passion for the profession strengthens teachers' connection to the profession.
Engagement	A connection with their daily tasks as teachers. For example, employ new teaching strategies to involve learners and create creative methods to convey content.
Relationships	To connect with colleagues, management teams, parents, and their faith as different relationships.
Meaning	Finding purpose in one's career fosters a connection inside the teacher.
Accomplishment	Achieving goals or feeling competent fosters a bond between the teacher and the profession while also improving the teacher's personal emotional connection.

Next, through the merging of the FFM and the PEMRA Model, this study established its significance by identifying the important role that the forces play in the well-being of teachers. This study was also able to contribute to the field of teacher training institutions by having identified push and pull forces that may influence potential teachers to enter the profession. In this sense, programmes might be modified to include ways for dealing with challenges that student-teachers may face while entering the profession.

7.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

Based on the reviewed literature as well as the empirical findings and aims of this study, implications are offered to serve as suggestions and to propose options for responding to the study's primary findings. If the following suggestions are considered, teachers' well-being can be ensured. Implications are set out below for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), the Department of Education (DoE), School Governing Bodies (SGBs), School Management Teams (SMT), and teachers.

7.4.1 Collaboration between Departments

The following implication is directed to the Department of Higher Education and the Department of Basic Education:

7.4.1.1 Collaboration between the Department of Higher Education and the Department of Basic Education

Both these departments have the education of the country's children at heart and should therefore liaise consistently. The Department of Education that should be aware of what happens on ground level in schools, should advise HEIs on the skills student teachers need so that these can be included in teaching training programmes.

7.4.2 Implications for Higher Education Institutions

HEIs are responsible for the training of student teachers, thereby equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills to teach effectively in the South African education context.

7.4.2.1 Revisiting the curriculum of student teachers to include training in teacher well-being

The emotional and vocational needs of the teacher student should take precedence in the compilation of the syllabus for the teaching degree. A thorough study of teacher well-being should be made and should be emphasised as part of teacher training. It should include equipping students with coping skills, implementing the PERMA Model to teach them how to be resilient in the ever-challenging teaching profession so that they can deliver teachers who thrive and are effective in the profession. Having student teachers reflect on specific challenges that influence their well-being and

ultimately influence their effectiveness in teaching, could empower them with the necessary knowledge and skills to ensure that their well-being is looked after to ensure teaching excellence. In this regard, emphasis should be placed on equipping student teachers with skills to communicate effectively with parents. Thus, HEIs should explicitly integrate issues surrounding teacher well-being into all modules. Teacher well-being should form a holistic part of a teaching training programme.

I therefore propose the embryonic well-being framework in Figure 7.4 to be implemented as part of teacher training.

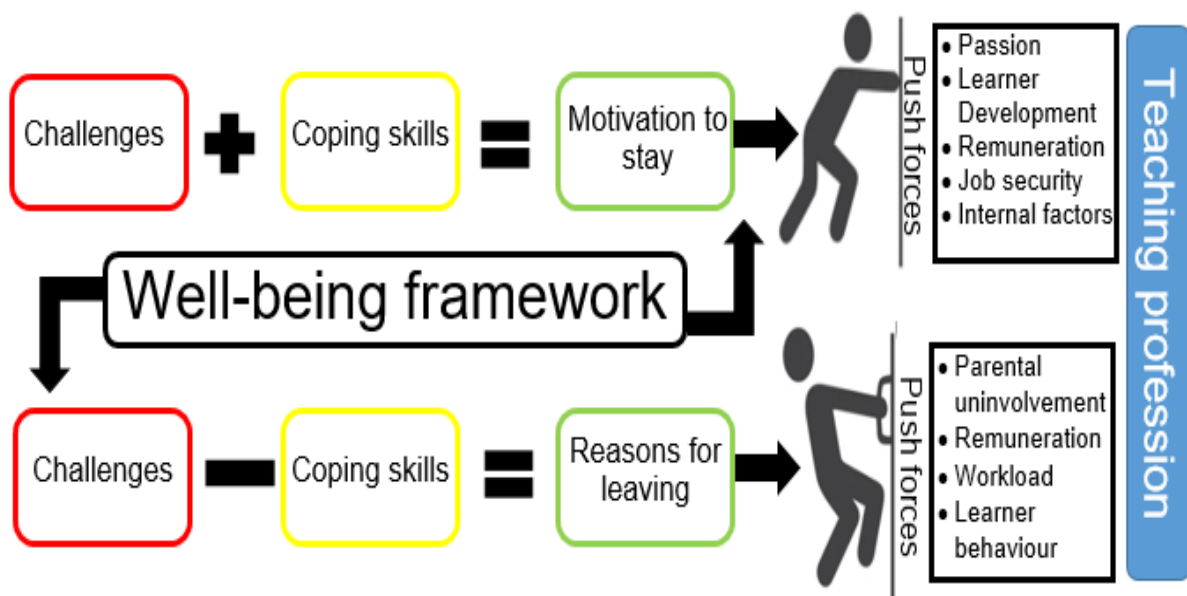


Figure 7. 4: The Well-Being Framework for teacher well-being

To design this framework I used the different forces of the FFM as well as the elements of the PERMA Model as themes, and the various categories that have evolved, as building blocks.

According to this framework, a teacher is more likely to stay in the profession when using coping skills to deal with potential challenges. Furthermore, challenges that are met with positive coping abilities act as pull factors that may also serve as incentives and encourage future teachers to enter the field. This will ultimately enhance teacher well-being. However, when difficulties arise and teachers do not apply coping skills to deal with these, the teacher may leave the profession. As a result, this phenomenon

will function as a push force, negatively impacting teacher well-being and pushing teachers out of the profession.

Challenges, in my belief, force teachers to use coping skills, and coping skills do not exist in the absence of challenges. If the latter is true, as illustrated in Figure 7.3, teachers are not equipped, nor motivated to stay in the profession. Furthermore, my findings indicate the necessity for teachers to engage in introspection and move away from a victim mentality that so many employ in looking for change. According to the findings, teachers should mobilise their internal capabilities, resources and strengths by engaging their internal locus of control.

Finally, since limited research focuses on equipping teachers with coping skills, my study is relevant because the findings contribute to the field of educational research by identifying the impact of teachers' declining well-being. Furthermore, the findings can assist lecturers at higher education institutions (HEIs) in preparing student teachers for the issues they may face when joining the teaching corps.

7.4.2.2 Exposing student teachers to various school environments

During practice teaching as part of the teaching programme, student teachers should alternate their practice teaching periods by gaining experience in different school environments, so that they are well-equipped to teach in either independent or public schools. Differentiated skills, such as devising one's own resources and applying creative means to address shortages in schools, being able to teach in multi-grade classrooms, and adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of learners with different abilities are crucial for functioning in schools from different socioeconomic environments.

7.4.3 Implications for the Department of Basic Education

The following implications should be considered by the DBE as the executive body overseeing the employment and well-being of teachers.

7.4.3.1 Prioritisation of textbooks and relevant learning material

Delivering enough textbooks and learning material necessary for the teaching-learning situation, should be the number one priority of the DBE. Timeous planning and

communication with various school districts should ensure that textbooks are ordered and delivered before the school year commences.

7.4.3.2 Teacher administration needs streamlining

The extent of teacher administration needs to be revisited as numerous studies consistently report on the heavy administrative load of teachers that they find unnecessary and overwhelming. A more streamlined process is necessary to lessen the load not only on teachers but the SMT as well. Too many administrative duties pose a risk for effective teaching, as teachers use teaching time to catch up on administration.

7.4.3.3 Provisioning of a differentiated curriculum

South Africa is a nation with learners from diverse backgrounds in terms of race, culture, language and religion. Therefore, the one-size-fits-all curriculum that was driven by the historically rooted apartheid era failed. This is evident from academic results, the learner drop-out rates, and school context-specific challenges. A differentiated curriculum is therefore recommended. Teachers should have the flexibility to interpret the curriculum in such a way that it applies to the school environment where they teach. More focus should be placed on different sets of skills, depending on the socioeconomic environment as well as the geographical location of a school. This will ensure that learners are equipped with context-specific skills that they can relate to.

7.4.3.4 Developmental workshops for teachers

Workshops must be conducted in the various districts to equip teachers to teach amidst socioeconomic challenges and with curriculum differentiation skills. The DBE offers various subject-related workshops, and data on teachers' challenges in specific districts should be collected to ensure individualised programmes that equip teachers with skills to enhance their well-being. These programmes and workshops must provide an interactive platform, allowing teachers to share their concerns and have their voices heard. When teachers are empowered to manage their stress and cope with challenges, their well-being will be enhanced, which in the long run will positively impact their teaching.

7.4.5 Implications for School Governing Bodies (SGBs)

Based on the findings, where most participants lamented the lack of involvement of parents, the following implication is directed to SGBs.

7.4.5.1 Inclusion of parents on SGBs

Parents should be included in the SGB of a school, regardless of their literacy and education levels. Their input must be obtained, as they are part of a community and are responsible for the education of their children. This will ensure better collaboration between home and school and could serve as a starting point for more parents to attend school meetings and be involved in a partnership between home and school.

7.4.6 Implications for School Management Teams

The following implications are presented to SMTs. The first one, directed to SGBs, is also relevant to SMTs.

7.4.6.1 Involvement of parents

The SMT needs to take hands with parents, using open dialogue and transparency when addressing school-related problems. The focus should be on building relationships with parents. Lack of support and involvement from parents plays a significant role in teachers' perception of not being supported. Involved parents can assist in managing behavioural problems and indirectly contribute to effective teaching. An open-door policy will allow parents to feel more at ease to communicate with teachers and management.

7.4.6.2 Providing support for teachers

The main responsibility of the SMT is to support the staff. Regular meetings in an atmosphere of trust and acceptance should be conducted where teachers can express their challenges and expectations. Specific challenges should be addressed in workshops in which members of the community with specific skills and experience can be involved. Additionally, the focus must be on the development of teachers, such as encouraging them to attend workshops that may empower them to address and find solutions to personal weaknesses. SMTs should focus on informing and encouraging

teachers to equip themselves with additional skills by accessing free resources, such as online books and workshops.

7.4.6.3 Establishment of a personal well-being management plan

SMTs should establish a personal well-being management plan to assist teachers in embracing challenges in the teaching profession and finding creative ways to address these. The impetus for such a management plan is the ability to adapt to the diverse context of the school environment so that teaching can take place effectively without the deterioration of the well-being of teachers.

7.4.7 Implications for Teachers

7.4.7.1 Empowerment of oneself

Teachers must take responsibility for themselves by developing techniques and coping mechanisms to deal with the challenges they encounter. These strategies should focus on an internal locus of control, where teachers take responsibility and ownership of challenges and move away from being a victim-mentality where they feel constantly overwhelmed by the challenges they face.

7.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In this section, I suggest possible topics that could be pursued for further research:

- The Generation theory should be further investigated and modified with specific emphasis on Generation Z in the context of South Africa.
- A comparative study to determine the expectations of teachers and parents in terms of the support systems required by both parties to ensure the effective completion of a learner's school career.
- An exploration of the relationship between teacher well-being and teacher productivity within the South African context can be advantageous to various stakeholders.
- Research can be conducted on how teaching in diverse environments can be addressed in the teaching training curriculum.

- A comparative study of the well-being of teachers in public and independent schools can be conducted, using the well-being profiler as an instrument.
- Teacher perspectives on the importance of parental engagement in education can be investigated. Furthermore, teachers' perceptions of parental literacy levels.

7.6 LIMITATIONS

My study explored how the current classroom context affects the well-being of South African teachers and included teachers from all over South Africa who had access to a laptop or a smartphone. This criterion reduced the number of potential volunteers who may have taken part in the research, which meant that more potentially useful data could not be gathered.

Another limitation relates to my data collection strategy of conducting semi-structured interviews via Zoom telephonic interviews. It was convenient at the time of data collection since lockdown and COVID-19 restrictions required social distancing. However, I lament the fact that face-to-face interviews could not be conducted as personal contact would have allowed me to include body language as response. I am sure that it would have sensitised me to probe more deeply and to show more empathy. The quality of the data could be richer and more in-depth.

Among the data collection tools that I utilised were electronic open-ended questions. I made use of the Qualtrics platform, where participants remained anonymous. Although this platform ensured that ethical principles were followed, it left gaps in specific questions where more information was required. Some participants answered a question with a single word or phrase, which affected the data because I could not decipher what they truly meant. As a result, I propose that while creating the question on a platform like Qualtrics, a researcher should afterwards contact the participant to probe for additional data.

It is also necessary to mention that in telephonic interviews some information got lost in translation. Language barriers made it difficult for some participants when I could not fully comprehend what they meant. A translator could be very helpful if participants are able to explain certain phrases or answers in their home language. The translator

could assist and be asked to translate the recorded interview during the transcription process.

7.7 PERSONAL REFLECTION

The topic of my study fuelled my interest in gaining perspectives and input from teachers in various educational settings at various schools regarding what either contributed to or negatively affected their well-being. As I embarked on this research journey, I had preconceived ideas about how teachers experience the profession with specific regard to the innumerable challenges they face. The literature review contributed to my assumption that the dilemmas teachers face are so overwhelming, that I did not know what the drift of my approach would be. My findings countered my initial assumptions as many teachers still have a passion for the profession. The different data sets allowed me to gain a detailed insight into what participants find both rewarding and challenging about the teaching profession and how they cope amidst these challenges. Although I deemed the expert interview as necessary at first, to verify the data, I realised at the end that the expert interview was unnecessary as the participants of dataset 1 and 2 provided me with rich data.

As a lecturer at a teacher training institution, conducting this study was personally enriching, as the literature and empirical review opened my eyes to the range of challenges associated with the teaching profession and broadened my understanding of the teacher well-being phenomenon. After comprehensive reflection on the literature and my research findings, I strongly urge all stakeholders within the educational sphere to join hands in empowering teachers, thereby investing in South Africa's future leading generation. However, my main recommendation is aimed at teachers: do not wait for change and resort to a victim mentality, where "you keep the focus is outside yourself when you look outside yourself for someone to blame for your present circumstances, or to determine your purpose, fate, or worth" (Eger, 2017:204). Rather take control of your circumstances by investing in your well-being and continuing to teach with passion that is bound to contribute to building the future of South Africa.

7.8 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter concluded the study by having presented a summary of the literature findings as well as the key empirical findings. The contribution of my study is a framework for a well-being programme that can be developed to help teachers cope with the numerous challenges in the educational context. Considering the research questions, literature review and empirical study, the research questions were answered and allowed me to make recommendations for the various role players in the education sector.

Teachers' well-being in South Africa must be prioritised, as they are key individuals who may affect meaningful changes in the country's future through their educational roles. I want to conclude this study by answering the question that Long, Graven, Sayed and Lampe (2017:11) asked:

Will teachers preserve their commitment to this vocation and continue to be motivated and energised despite being constantly blamed and not being supported? (Long, Graven, Sayed & Lampe, 2017:11).

Despite the numerous challenges that teachers face on a daily basis, I believe that the majority of teachers will continue to be dedicated to their career. Teachers will be inspired to stay in the profession if their well-being is taken into account by various role players and if they are enabled to take ownership.

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ADDENDUM A

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

1. What is your gender?

Male	1
Female	2
I do not wish to specify	3

2. For how many years have you been teaching?

0-2 years	1
3-5 years	2
5-10 years	3
More than 10 years	4

3. What is your highest teaching qualification?

No teaching qualification	1
Certificate	2
Diploma	3
Degree	4
Degree with diploma/certificate	5
Postgraduate qualification (Honours degree or Masters)	6

3. At what type of school are you employed?

Primary school	1
Secondary school	2

4. How would you describe your school?

Township school	1
Inner-city school (located in the central area of a city)	2
Public school (such as the former model C schools)	3
Private school	4
Rural school	5
Special needs school	6

5. Please indicate the extra-mural activities in which you are involved.

Soccer/rugby/netball/hockey etc.	1
Athletics	2
Drama (singing/dancing/acting)	3

Public speaking/debate/eistedfod	4
School functions	5
Other	6

6. How many hours do you approximately spend at the school daily?

4-6	1
7	2
8	3
9	4
10	5
Other	6

7. How far do you live from the school?

0-2 kilometers	1
3-5 kilometers	2
6-10 kilometers	3
11-20 kilometers	4
21-30 kilometers	5
31-60 kilometers	6
More	7

8. Will you please provide me with your email address for follow-up questions, if necessary?

ADDENDUM B: OPEN- ENDED QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think teachers remain in the teaching profession?
2. What do you find rewarding about teaching?
3. What challenges do you as a teacher experience?
4. How do you address these challenges?
5. What do you think influences a teacher's decision to leave the teaching profession?
6. What do you think influences a teacher's workplace well-being?
7. What advice would you give teachers who encounter numerous challenges and consider leaving the teaching profession?
8. Considering your career, where do you see yourself in five years' time?

ADDENDUM C: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS


1. What are the biggest challenges you experience as a teacher?
2. What do you find rewarding in your teaching practice?
3. I gave a statement: “We are teaching a useless generation” where participants should have commented on the statement.

ADDENDUM D



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA
Faculty of Education

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	CLEARANCE NUMBER: EDU036/20
DEGREE AND PROJECT	PhD Challenges, rewards and coping strategies associated with teachers' wellbeing in the 21st century
INVESTIGATOR	Mrs Maria Getruida Botha
DEPARTMENT	Humanities Education
APPROVAL TO COMMENCE STUDY	12 March 2020
DATE OF CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	31 May 2022
CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS COMMITTEE:	Prof Funke Omidire
	
CC	Mr Simon Jiane Dr Sarina de Jager Prof Rinelle Evans

This Ethics Clearance Certificate should be read in conjunction with the Integrated Declaration Form (D08) which specifies details regarding:

- Compliance with approved research protocol,
- No significant changes,
- Informed consent/assent,
- Adverse experience or undue risk,
- Registered title, and
- Data storage requirements.



ADDENDUM E

Faculty of Education

Dear Teacher,|

I am a Ph.D. student at the University of Pretoria doing research on the following topic: **The well-being of 21ST-century South African teachers: challenges, rewards and coping strategies.**

Limited studies focus on the well-being of teachers and specifically on how teachers can be supported and equipped to deal with the challenges they encounter. With this study, I want to fill this gap, by identifying these challenges that confront teachers, and also determining why teachers remain in the teaching profession, in spite of these challenges. The overall aim of this study is to identify key factors which can enhance teacher well-being.

Your participation in this study is very important and will be highly appreciated. Should you be willing to participate, you can merely click on the following link which will take you to a short questionnaire.

Participation is entirely voluntary. Should any issue arise that makes you uncomfortable, participation may be terminated with no repercussions.

How to complete the questionnaire:

This questionnaire is divided into two sections. Section A requires your biographical information, and section B is the questionnaire on well-being. At each question, encircle the number that represents your answer or type your answer in the space provided. Please note that for questions where a number has to be indicated for an answer, **only one number** should be encircled.

I do appreciate your cooperation! If you have further questions regarding the study, you are welcome to contact me or my supervisors.

Yours sincerely

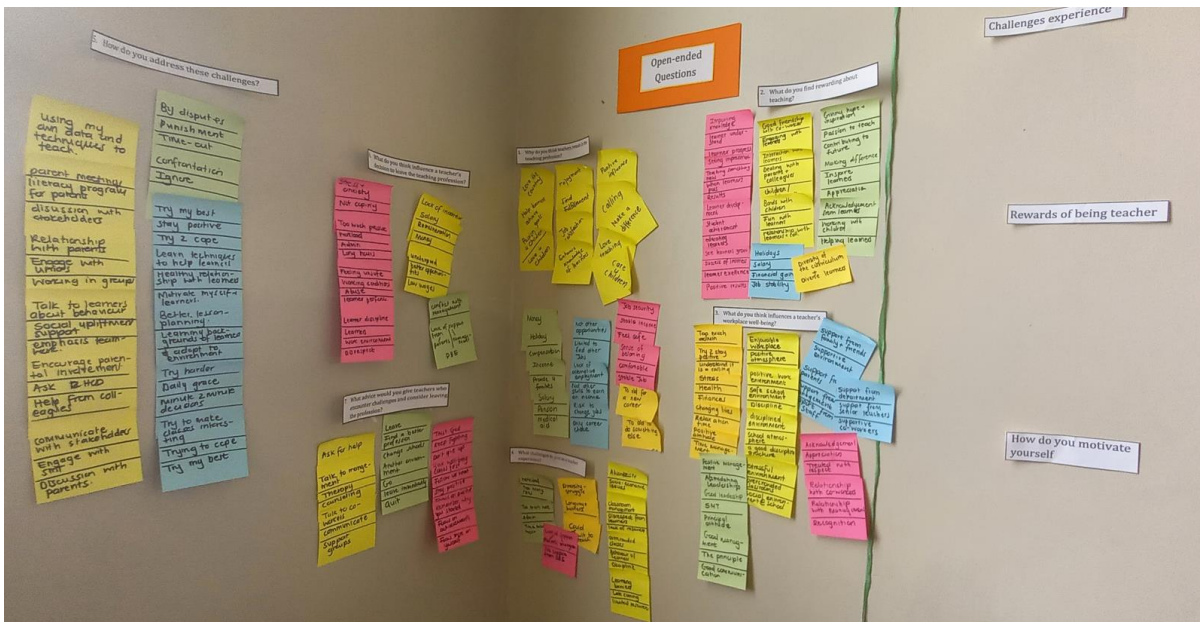
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Prof Rinelle Evans (Co-supervisor)

Faculty of Education
Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

ADDENDUM F



ADDENDUM G

NAME OF AUDIO : **Ellen**
LENGTH OF AUDIO : **29:56**
TRANSCRIBER NAME : **CYBER TRANSCRIPTION**
TRANSCRIPTION LEGEND : **RESEARCHER R**
: **INTERVIEWEE I**

R Thank you for all the background information that you provided me with. I wanted to know Ellen, what challenges, what specific challenges did you experience at school?

I You want challenges with regard to the learners or to the teachers?

R To everything. What was the biggest challenge for you being a teacher?

I A lot of challenges because I was an HOD... let me start with the management first.

R Yeah, okay.

I I was an HOD, there it was a lot of challenges. If you are a senior to teachers. These nowadays teachers they don't want to do their work. I was so depressed about the attitude of those teachers. I didn't even understand me, it's not just to say that I'm a good teacher or I'm a very strict HOD, I was not a very strict HOD. I just leave the teachers to do the best. But when attitude of these young teachers they join my interest of teaching and they destroy even my health. I could honestly feel I was not happy at all.

R That's because of the attitude you say?

I Because of the attitude of these new teachers, not the old teachers. During our time I started teaching in 1980. Nobody behind us to say do this, do this, do this. But during the time of this democracy we experienced lots of problems. I don't want to blame the government but I think it's the attitude of the teachers that they get it from the? I don't want to mention it. It was frustrating my dear. That's why I end up resigning because I was not happy.

R And you say that you were not happy mostly because of your colleagues?

I Yes, because of the work of the... not the colleagues. I think the teachers. I was expecting them to do their work. When you want this they didn't do it, when you want this they didn't do it, I don't know. I don't know what to explain to you [inaudible 02:47] I think it's going to be better to know that.

R Yeah.

I You have to take a learners book to check if the learners have done enough work. But you find even at the second term or third term only 3 pages have been written, what implies that?

R Yeah, I hear what you say.

I You get so frustrated in HOD. Because when a senior come to you, ask for learners book, who's going to be blamed?

R Yeah, you? Yeah.

I That is very true. Land on you as an HOD. And if you explain and even the other teachers they tell you attitude. They've got this attitude to tell you even you can say that you must do a lot of work, at the end of the month you get the whole salary. That's the answer that we used to get in our schools.

R Yeah, lets...

I I just want to compare [inaudible 03:50], black area schools, [inaudible 03:52] was the best I'm telling you. It was the best. I was happy then, I was very very happy. And if... I wish to work with them until I'm 70. I wish to work with them. If they can give me a post of HDB I will definitely welcome that.

R Yeah I hear you. Ellen, why do you think you struggle so much with the younger teachers? What's the reasons there?

I The reason that I told you... As an HOD I have to take the learners of the books, the files... I must check the preparations and everything and this, they didn't do that. They can tell you that I will do it, I'll send the file tomorrow. You need the file tomorrow he's absent or she's absent.

R But why do you think they are like that? Why do you think they have these type of attitudes?

I I think they are protected by our unions. Where can we call them? The unions will protect them.

R Yeah, I hear you.

I Especially our black unions. Not... I don't want to blame the other schools, especially the...in towns. The difficulty that we are facing in our black area schools.

R I understand. Okay, so you had the problems, you have the challenges with the younger teachers, what other challenges did you experience?

I Other challenges they are there because the challenges is between parents and the teachers and with the school. In our areas or in our black schools they do not have communications with the parents. If you write them a letter to come to school they don't respond, they don't care about the education of their kids. There a few, only a few. 50% can do but then the rest of the parents don't take care of their children's work. They don't come to school, even call them if we have a problem with them. And I think I was working at the most... the poorest of the poor area. I was [inaudible 06:29] they were so difficult to work with learners. Looking at the learner without shoes, without jersey in winter, without food, without even... but the government introduced at least the feeding scheme it was much better. You can see that they eat at school, on Friday is the last meal. They'll get another meal on Monday. All weekend there's nothing at home.

R Yeah.

I Even grade 1 learner can come to you ma'am, this is my last meal, I'm going to eat here at school on Monday. And it was tearing me apart. I sometimes even cry at home. I feel like buying some cabbage and pap and with some mince and can go back to school during weekends to serve those learners. Because I use to have lot of them. It was tearing me. To be honest with you it was tearing me. I want to explain to you. There was like a learner in my class who come to school without wearing a panty. A grade 2 learner, and she was noticed by one of her friends and he come to me. And I call the learner and separately and talk to her. He told me that I don't have them. I have to go to Pep Store and go to buy some panties for that girl. It was so... to work at that condition it was painful.

R Yeah, I understand.

I It was too painful. That's the situation that we are working there at that time. But to compare with [inaudible 08:12] adult schools, adult schools are much, much, much better and better.

R Yeah, in terms of socio economic circumstances because there's more resources and there's more money.

- I Yeah, there's no resource. Even the toilets, there was no toilets. All the learners were sharing, girls 4 toilets and boys 4 toilets and more than 1000. Just 4 toilets for girls like over 1 point something learners. Just imagine when they go to the toilet it's a chaos.
- R I understand. But you say at [inaudible 08:59] it was much better now that you've got the facilities....
- I It was excellent there and Orchard it was best there compared to where I was working.
- R Yeah I understand you. And I just want to go back to the parents Ellen. You said that the parents, one of the biggest challenges is that you don't get support from parents and I saw it from various, numerous participants said that they struggle with parents. The communication and parents to buy in and just to support them. Why do you think do we struggle to get parents involved?
- I Most of the parents are not working. Most of the parents they don't care. They just go and they deliver... some they do a lot of drinking. They sometimes leave their kids alone. Go gallivanting outside there, during the week leave them in the shack. Just imagine they use paraffin, they use candles and leave the kids alone there, what's going to happen to those kids during the night? Others are raped and they didn't tell us. We discover in school. Some of them bad things happen to our learners at school. When we talk to them and we find them, some of the learners who are in school when they have to go to school they don't want to go home, they just want to stay, even until 4 o'clock or until half past 3 we leave. Why? Because there's no care at home. And you know at that extra time you stay at school you have something to eat. Maybe a bread and a juice and a what what. They are looking at you because you are going to stay with them.
- R Yeah.
- I You are the only hope to them.
- R Yeah, I hear you. Ellen, just to go back quickly to... what extra mural activities did you partake in?
- I I was interested in drum majorettes at school. I like drum majorettes a lot. That's why I introduced drum majorettes at our school. Not in [inaudible 11:28] but in our rural school.
- R Okay, and [inaudible 11:31] what did you do there?
- I Because I was going there only for 2 days.

- R Okay.
- I It was only for 2 days but I was interested in helping anything. Especially netball I was interested but because of the time.
- R Yeah, I understand now. Okay, I understand. And tell me Ellen, so it was just that one thing that you did with extra mural. And extra teaching time and so on? At what time did you mostly leave school?
- I Extra teaching?
- R Yes.
- I At Orchard, let me refer to Orchard. After I'm done with my Setswana lesson when the teacher is absent, especially in foundation I just go to the class and continue with the normal lessons.
- R Okay, I understand. Okay, Ellen why did you become a teacher?
- I It was my interest and even my mom encouraged me to do teaching because I was interested in nursing. And he told me that my daughter I want you to be a teacher. Because I don't want to disappoint her.
- R Yeah.
- I And being a teacher. And she was very proud of me. Even she was in the gathering with other women she just told is a teacher, don't forget that I've got a daughter who's a teacher. She was so proud of me. Even in our village when she died we were busy at home. They ask where's this girl? Her om used to talk about her, who's the teacher here? All the [inaudible 13:21] want to see me because she always talk about me, even at the gatherings with her friends and everybody.
- R Argh shame. That's good to know that your mom is proud of you.
- I Yeah, she was very proud of me.
- R Ellen but you managed to tell me now about a lot of challenges. How did you cope with that? How did you motivate yourself to get up in the morning and keep going? I mean you've been teaching for so many years. How did you cope with these challenges?
- I I did cope because some of... I'm going to give you this scenario. I once had a problem with a teacher at my school and I refer her, I take all the measures and go to the district and ask for this, what do you call that one? Psychologist who are based in the district? Yeah, I forget the name what they call them.

R Yeah, it doesn't matter.

I Yeah. So I take all the pains and refer that lady to that lady to help me with this. Because I noticed that girl she got lot of problems but didn't want to discuss them. So I just talked to that lady to come and talk to this girl. Only to find that underlying all those problems in the class she was divorcing with the husband. That was my challenges. Because some of the teachers you point fingers at them forgetting their 3 fingers are pointing at me.

R Yeah, I understand. And how did you...

I Which is why I take [inaudible 15:03] and help her and she disclosed everything but I was happy because at the end I managed to help that girl.

R Yeah, I understand. But how did you... Ellen, how did you motivate yourself? How did you cope? I mean I can hear that you helped other teachers but how did you cope? How did you get up in the morning and go to school and know that you have so many challenges?

I I usually prayed all night that give me strength to do this. Because I know you pointed me to give me this job. You are the only one who's going to protect me to go on with this whole difficulties. That I... there's nothing going to be difficult for me. I'm going to try until the end of me. I even try now, I'm helping my grandkids with everything, especially the education things. Even the [Inaudible 16:09] and even the neighbours. I was even interested in this [16:17] learning learners. Because I noticed that there are some learners who are not to be placed in an ordinary school, they have to be placed in special schools. I was in that group, I was there in that group. I was facilitating that in the school. That if we have noticed that program in that child, let me handle it and take it up until the child is placed at the right school at the right place. There are some learners which I placed there at the special schools after I've done all the research and filled the necessary forms.

R Yeah. And tell me, what advice would you give to a teacher that's saying that they can't cope anymore? They just want to leave the profession? What advice will you give them?

I They just keep on praying and you mustn't give up, you mustn't give up. You must go on and go on and try and do the research and talk to people. Don't just take everything personal, talk to people. And you can even talk to anybody who is not a teacher because there are some people who got help which are not teachers. Talking is helping and it's healing. When you are somewhere with a friend or when you are in the gatherings you

can talk about... let's talk about this and this and this and somebody will give you something [inaudible 18:02] than you are going to all of us. That is the first remedy. If you don't kick yourself to deposit because if you are going to deposit you are going to die alone. Just talking, talking. When I talk to people, even when I talk to my friends they say I have got a problem at my school. You have to about this. I'm going to try to do these methods and we are trying. Even in Orchard I used to deal with young teachers. They were so frustrated t they want to leave teaching, I told them don't do that. I just have to give you a word of encouragement, don't. Just stick [inaudible 18:42] and try to do this and this and this. Even in their classes, even if you want to introduce a lesson they don't know how to introduce it. They just called me ma'am, I want to introduce this lesson but it's difficult for these learners to understand. I just leave my [inaudible 19:01] aside and tell them... I show them how I'm going to do it and they were so happy about that. They were very very happy about that. And there was a student teacher she was supposed to be treated at Orchards. And the lesson was life skills, it was the life skills and the topic was weather. And that lady has got a problem. I just told her just do the lesson, I'm going to listen to you. She start the lesson, it was so boring. And after she finished I told her just to sit down let me just introduce this lesson to you. Fortunate enough the lesson was about... the introduction was going to introduce the lesson about the teapot. I am a teapot what what... you know this [inaudible 19:59].

R Yeah, yeah.

I And the introduction it doesn't... You can't stand in front of the grade 1 or grade 2 learners that you say I am a teapot and this. You have to have an introduction that you give them encouragement that it's going to be interest to them. I started the lesson by saying... we were so fortunate enough that it was very cold that day. I asked the grade 1 learners look outside, how is the weather? It's cold today. They told me no man, its cold today. And I asked them what kind of a drink are we going to drink? Are we going to drink cold drink, cold water with ice? No ma'am, we are going to drink tea. That's when I introduced the I am a big teapot. We are going to drink tea today. Now the lessons going to start with I am a teapot. And after that I did them the chart. The chart was with 5 days of the week, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday up to Friday. This chart we are going to put it on the chalkboards. When you come in the class just share it, when its rainy just put the drops of the rain. When there's clouds just put the clouds, and when it changes, next door there's a block, when the weather changes, I just give them that assignment to do it. When I went to the class, every day I found something there. Nobody asked them to do it. When the teacher is out they do that.

- R Yeah.
- I Instead of being naughty in the class they concentrate on that. That's why they keep them busy and less noise.
- R Yeah I understand. Argh Ellen, I have one last thing that I would like to pick your brain actually. I have one participant that said... he gave me a statement and I'm going to give the statement to you and I would just like you to respond. He said that we are teaching a useless generation. What do you think about that statement?
- I She told you that we are teaching useless...
- R Generation.
- I I'm 100% behind that word, useless. I don't like to use that word because I think it was too much to say its useless generation. I think it's useless and... I just want to put another word which is more than the word useless. Not caring, they don't care yeah. They are useless and they don't care.
- R Yeah.
- I My mom was not a teacher, my mom didn't know how to read but she know how to guide me. When I say mama I want to do this and then just going to tell me the story that... she used to tell me lots of stories. If I'm not from school but I can have kids that are educated. I want to have kids that are educated.
- R Yeah. So you don't think it's the learners? You think the problem lies with the teachers?
- I With the parents.
- R With the parents okay.
- I The main route is the parents. The parents have to support the teachers. The teacher will do the rest. The parents have to support the teachers. They mustn't come to school when they have quarrel with the teachers. they must come to school just to praise the teacher. I'm happy because you help my kids with this. Not only the quarrels, with the negative things. They must come with the positive things. The problem starts with the parents and the teacher needs support from the parents and the parents will try to do the best. Because without checking my kids work every day the parents will do what? Will pull up their socks and do the best because I'm concerned about my kids work. If I take my daughters book and found at the 3rd term it was only written on 2 pages what... as a parent? I have

to start at the beginning of the year just to communicate with the parents. And during September time I don't have any business with the teacher. Because I've done my work. And the teacher again she's happy to move that child to another grade because I was in the middle , between the parent... it's me and the child. I have to take care of the... because 90% of the time is spent with the teacher. I only spend 10%.

R Yeah I understand.

I The attitude from the parents. He parents must try. We have to do that. The parents must try to help the teacher.

R Yeah.

I They have to do the homework for the learners. Just to try. I encourage the parents to do the homework for the learners. Guide them. Just try to do this every day just to guide. So if you've got a problem with me, the parents must come to me, ma'am we were told to do this and this with the learner. I will explain to the parents. I think the parents will explain better to the learner than me.

R Yeah.

I They have to do the work.

R Yeah, I understand.

I That's the only thing that we have to stretch.

R Ellen just one thing. It's very interesting that you never mentioned that you struggle with discipline problems. You know most teachers say one of my biggest challenges that I experience is discipline problems or disruptive learning. And you didn't have that or...

I I didn't have that problem, I'm going to tell you the thing that I as using, the method that I was using.

R Yeah.

I When I enter the classroom, especially when it's my lesson, I think you can ask one of the teachers in [ina26:56]. When I started it with them the learners were so disruptive I know. When I enter the class I start with a song every day. Every day I start with a song, a play song. 2 minutes, 5 minutes and I start with my lesson. That's why I teach them just to listen. In my school before I start everything I start with my playing side and I start with my lessons. Even [inaudible 27:27] I used to do that just to

grasp them with their concentration and to look at me and go with my lesson.

R Yeah. Argh Ellen it was so nice to chat with you. Is there something else that you think is worth mentioning or something else that you think I should include in the research?

I I think there's something that you have to include is the number of learners especially in our... I think you don't know the rural schools. Because I know in [Inaudible 28:05] its 45 in a class which is too much. Now in our black schools it's going to be 65 or 70 in a class, just one. 1 teacher with 60 or 70 learners, its chaotic in the class. In rural schools. You don't even know other learners because of the number or learners. We don't have individual... helping to them because it's so painful. Even in [Inaudible 28:51] I know it's much better but 45 is a lot.

R It's a lot.

I It's a lot. I only feel pity for them but anyway that's our calling. I usually tell them that I'm a mother, I'm a grandmother. I have to handle everything. Take it with the pride that you are... I used to tell them that I take everything with a pride because I know I'm the best teacher. I'm going to die being the best teacher.

R Yeah, I hear you. Argh, thank you so much Ellen. If there's something else I mean you can contact me anytime if there's something else that you would like to add. If there's something else from my side I will also just ask you if I can just phone you again.

I No problem my dear.

R Thanks so much Ellen, you must have a lovely day.

I Thank you my dear.

R Thank you.

I Bye.

R Bye bye.

END OF AUDIO