

EXPLORING NOVICE TEACHER IDENTITIES

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I explore the experiences of five novice (new and inexperienced) teachers regarding the development of their professional/teacher identities.

I establish that novice teachers face many difficulties that they did not expect to face while studying to be teachers. This can be problematic in developing a strong and positive professional/teacher identity in the early years because lack of preparation for the forces that impact on their teaching leads to lack of control over the impact of those forces on them. More control can be gained by novice teachers being more active in their professional/teacher identity development.

I show that novice teachers struggle with the development of their professional/teacher identities because striking a balance between their professional autonomy and institutional conformity is problematic due to conflict occurring. Expectations placed on teachers by government, through policy, is said to be unrealistic. Novice teachers constantly struggle to mediate this conflict so maintaining their professional autonomy is a constant struggle. This leaves novice teachers feeling both empowered and disempowered throughout the journey of developing their professional/teacher identities.

I also look at the various roles that novice teachers play to meet the overwhelming demands placed on them by learners, colleagues, parents and government. They have to experiment with roles of both a pedagogical and pastoral nature. Constant experimentation of their roles leads to difficulty in cementing a strong and positive professional/teacher identity.

Playing the pastoral roles of a teacher leads to novice teachers using their personal values as part of their personal identity to help with their professional/teacher identity development. They are restricted by certain policies regarding the extent to which they can put their personal values into practice (e.g. corporal punishment not being allowed can be disempowering to teachers) so they often experience conflict between their personal identity and professional/teacher identity. Professional development of novice teachers is partly determined by personal development and vice versa.

I take into consideration not only how novice teachers see themselves as teachers but also how they think others see them as teachers when it comes to the moulding of a professional/teacher identity.

The way novice teachers experience their professional identities is very complex and can therefore make developing strong and positive professional/teacher identities very problematic.

DECLARATION

I declare that *Exploring Novice Teacher Identities* is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Full name:

Date:

Signed:

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CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

The focus of this research was to explore the experiences of novice (new and inexperienced) teachers regarding the development of their identities as teachers. The research that I conducted was of an exploratory nature.

Background to the problem

The pre-conceived notions of novice teachers about their roles as teachers and what the profession entails before entering the profession are not in sync with the reality of teaching. This makes the development of positive professional/teacher identities problematic in the early stages (Jones, 2003).

While complying with policy to fulfill what is expected of them, novice teachers tend to experience conflict between their professional and personal identities. Novice teachers strive to reconcile their personal values and beliefs with the reality of teaching as they develop their teacher identities (Jones, 2003). The distance between what policy states and what practically occurs in schools remains a frustrating problem to education change theorists. This distance has led to a lack of professional autonomy which disempowers teachers. Corporal punishment as an instrument of control being relinquished disempowers teachers even further (Jansen, 2001).

With regards to teacher identity, what novice teachers believe about teaching, learning and the “self” as teacher is of utmost importance. It is the foundation for making meaning and decisions, developing a teacher identity must then begin by exploring the “self” (Hattingh & de Kock, 2008). Teacher identities refer to the teacher’s sense of “self” and refers to their knowledge, beliefs and interests towards their work (Jansen, 2001).

To be a teacher one must be seen as such not only by oneself but by others as well, acquiring and redefining an identity that is considered legitimate on a social level is a matter of importance (Coldron & Smith, 1999).

Identity Theory, with its micro-sociological roots, would state in this context that a teacher’s social behaviour is affected by society through its influence on the teacher’s “self” and therefore his/her “self” is a reflection of society. Social Identity Theory, with its psychological roots, would state in this context that a teacher’s sense of belonging to the profession will define who that

teacher is in terms of what he/she define being a teacher is. How a teacher defines him/herself forms part of his/her self-concept (Hogg, Terry & White, 1995).

Teachers have to perform multiple roles which lead to them having to experiment with their roles and recreate their teacher identities in accordance with the contexts in which they find themselves. This can make the development of a strong and positive teacher identity more complex for teachers, especially novice teachers (Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011).

Some popular role perceptions of teachers are the roles of knowledge provider, caregiver/nurturer, role model, facilitator of learning, disciplinarian and mediator (Hattingh & de Kock, 2008).

Contemporary teachers are caught up in the anxieties of policy change and experience feelings of entrapment between the different styles of teaching because policy insists on transition from a teacher-centred approach to a learner-centred approach. Teachers still lack professional autonomy to fulfil their duties to the learners. Burdened by tiresome learner assessment policies and administrative responsibilities, the overall reality of the teaching profession seems to be a negative picture which promotes the profession as unappealing (Hattingh & de Kock, 2008).

Main research question

- **How do novice teachers experience their professional identities?**

I explored novice teacher identities by answering the above-mentioned question.

Motivation and rationale for the study

The purpose of this study was to gather data that might be useful to prospective and novice teachers in light of the challenges that they will face when entering the profession. Perhaps it can be useful for teacher trainers as well. Gathering data about the identity dilemma of teachers, especially novice teachers, can also be useful to the Department of Education (DoE), schools, fellow teachers and tertiary institutions offering teaching qualifications and could help create awareness.

Such information from fellow teachers will be useful in order to minimise the negative effects on their teacher identities by the inevitable conflicts and contradictions that they will experience. This study might not change the world but if I can verify findings from similar studies and

contribute to an on-going dialogue or conversation about how teachers experience their early years of teaching and how their professional identity develops in those early stages, then this study will prove to be significant. I hope that the data I plan to gather could spread awareness to such an extent that novice teachers develop positive identities as teachers before potentially being disillusioned by the reality of the challenges that they will face.

Hopefully fewer teachers will then promote the profession as unappealing. The hope is that prospective teachers having a more realistic idea of what to expect when entering the profession will help to minimise negative effects on their teacher identities.

Brief statement of the research methods

I took a qualitative approach to this study making use of an exploratory case study design. I collected data by conducting individual semi-structured interviews with five novice teachers as my sample but only after conducting two individual semi-structured pilot interviews with novice teachers to test my interview questions. All interviews were recorded with the use of an audio recording device in order to transcribe the interviews for analysis. To analyse the data that I gathered, I used thematic analysis.

Limitations of the study

Time was a constraint, and a limitation of individual interviews as a tool for collecting data was that they were very time-consuming in terms of setting up, interviewing, transcribing and analysing (Trochim, 2002).

Time constraints also affected my approach to sampling participants (Marshall, 1996) for individual semi-structured interviews as part of my qualitative and exploratory case study design as I explored the experiences of novice teachers regarding the development of their professional/teacher identities as my unit of analysis (Baxter & Jack, 2008). However, some judgement was made to be purposeful in my sample selection to justify leaning more towards selecting participants that are most accessible (Marshall, 1996). I only interviewed five novice teachers due to time constraints. Selecting the most accessible participants lead to my participants all being from schools in disadvantaged communities only.

One limitation of Interpretivism is that the results cannot be generalised but Mack (2010) argues that the results could still be similar to the work of other researchers. Another criticism is that

interpretive research is subjective and not objective but she argues that all research is subjective because when choosing a paradigm one is subjectively being oriented to a particular way of doing research. She goes on to say that as a researcher one's perspective will always be a factor. Objectivity does arise when analysing the data that one has collected (Mack, 2010).

CHAPTER TWO - LITERATURE REVIEW

Novice teachers are new and inexperienced teachers. There are several themes that arise regarding novice teacher identities.

Novice teachers very often have pre-conceived notions about what the profession entails before entering it and it is usually far removed from reality (Hatting & De Kock, 2008; Beijaard, Verloop & Vermunt, 2000; Jones, 2003). Policy expectations and what can realistically be achieved due to various constraints are also very often not aligned. Teachers experience conflict between their professional and personal identities due to policy expectations restricting teachers from fulfilling their duties as they personally would. This lack of autonomy can lead to teachers feeling disempowered which can negatively affect the development of their teacher identities, especially in the early years (Jansen, 2001; Sachs, 2001; Coldron & Smith, 1999). The way teachers see themselves as teachers and the way others see them as teachers are important to shape teacher identity (Tsui, 2007). Teachers have to perform multiple roles to fulfil their duties, they have to experiment with their roles to adapt to different circumstances. This can make it difficult to develop a strong and positive teacher identity (Hattingh & De Kock, 2008; Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011). Difficulty in developing a strong and positive teacher identity can negatively affect a teacher's sense of self within the context of the teaching profession. A negative self-concept due to a teacher's personal identity can negatively affect the development of a teacher's professional identity too (Hattingh & De Kock, 2008).

Understanding the formation of identity as a developmental process and the identities of teachers as they position themselves have not been shown as much attention as it deserves. The studies that have been done in this area come to the same point differently on three major issues (Tsui, 2007).

The first issue is the multidimensionality or multifaceted nature of professional identity and the relationships between these dimensions or facets. Teachers have different roles they must experiment with that causes their multiple identities to conflict with each other which creates problems for developing a professional identity. The second issue is the relationship between the personal and social dimensions of identity formation. How teachers see themselves and how others in society see them are both important regarding the shaping of teacher identity. The third issue, which is closely related to the second, is the relationship between agency and structure in

identity formation. Agency refers to the actions or choices of teachers constituting their teacher identities and structure refers to policies or institutions that require uniformity and conformity of teachers which affect teacher identity (Tsui, 2007).

To understand professional identity it is important to firstly understand what identity is.

It is useful to draw on the definitions of identity used by Symbolic Interactionist Mead (1934) and the Psychologist Erikson (1968) in order to explain professional identity. The former is rooted in Sociology and the latter is rooted in Psychology. Erikson focused on the formation of identity in social contexts and on the stages that people go through in their lives when it comes to maturing psychologically and biologically. Erikson felt that identity is not something you have but rather something that you develop throughout your entire life. On the other hand, Mead focused on identity as it relates to a sense of self. He argues that the self can only arise within a social setting where social communication is present, through communication we can learn to monitor our actions and take on the roles of others. McCormick & Pressley (1997) defines the concept of self as being an organized representation of our theories, attitudes, and beliefs about ourselves. Identity is not fixed but rather an on-going developmental process, it is a process where you interpret yourself as being a certain kind of person and also being recognised in the same way by others in a certain context (Gee, 2001).

To further explain identity and how it relates to the concept of self, I will draw on two theories namely Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory which are rooted in Sociology and Psychology respectively.

Identity Theory has to do with the function and structure of people's identity as it relates to the behavioural roles they perform in society whereas Social Identity Theory has to do with the function and structure of people's identity as it relates to their membership in groups. Both theories have a similar perspective of the self as a dynamic social construct mediated between social structure and individual behaviour (Hogg, Terry & White, 1995).

Identity Theory, with its micro-sociological roots, would state in this context that a teacher's social behaviour is affected by society through its influence on the teacher's self and therefore his/her self is a reflection of society. Social Identity Theory, with its psychological roots, would state in this context that a teacher's sense of belonging to the profession will define who that

teacher is in terms of what he/she define being a teacher is. How a teacher defines him/herself forms part of his/her self-concept (Hogg, Terry & White, 1995).

Hattingh and De Kock (2008) claim that developing a professional identity or teacher identity must start by exploring the concept of self because it is the foundation for decision-making and making meaning. The attitude of teachers towards changes in Education and the way they develop and teach is strongly determined by their self-image (Tickle, 2000). Teacher identity or professional identity refers to a teacher's sense of self and to their knowledge, beliefs and interests towards their work (Jansen, 2001). The concept of professional identity is not fixed (Coldron & Smith, 1999). MacLure (1993) claims that identity should not be seen as a stable entity (something that people have) but rather as something that they use to understand themselves as they relate to others and to the contexts in which they find themselves.

Teacher identity is both achieved and ascribed by active location in social space. "Active location in social space" within this context refers to how actively a teacher socially participates in his/her teaching environment at school which will situate him/her within that space. Teachers create themselves as teachers both from the beginning and during their careers. To be a teacher one must be seen as such not only by oneself but by others as well, acquiring and redefining an identity that is considered legitimate on a social level is a matter of importance (Coldron & Smith, 1999).

It is difficult for new teachers to have a greater understanding of professional identity in its entirety and how it applies to teachers in society today. It is a misconception to think that as a teacher gains experience the development of a professional identity will automatically occur. Deliberate action is needed to make sure that new teachers are equipped with the tools needed to negotiate the first few years of their career which can be very challenging. More awareness needs to be spread regarding the process of developing a professional identity in order for prospective teachers to meet their inevitably challenging demands both positively and professionally (Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011).

It is especially important for beginner teachers to spend a significant amount of time reflecting on themselves personally and to look within in order to develop a professional identity (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004). Before one can solve a problem one must first identify it so once teachers identify the forces that impact on their teaching they are in a better position to be able to

control the impact of those forces on them (Hattingh & De Kock, 2008). Awareness of certain positions that they potentially might have to assume is important for teachers (Coldron & Smith, 1999).

Very often prospective teachers have images and beliefs about the roles they see themselves fulfilling in the profession that are fixed. After genuine school-based experiences, their initial perceptions regarding the roles they saw themselves performing tend to change which leads to them having to rearrange their perceptions of teacher roles. It is their interpretation of social reality and what learners need in addition to their belief systems based on prior educational experiences and personal life experiences that influence these fixed images and beliefs about what the profession entails (Hattingh & De Kock, 2008).

The perceptions held by most teachers in their current positions regarding their professional identity significantly differ from their prior perceptions of this identity while they are still new teachers in their early years. How teachers perceive their own professional identity affects their power to produce desired results and their professional development. It also affects their teaching practice and how willing and able they are to cope with changes in Education (Beijaard, Verloop & Vermunt, 2000).

Policy projects what a teacher should ideally look like and is not aligned with the personal identities of teachers when it comes to how they see themselves and how they would go about being classroom practitioners. The visions of policy and what is realistically practical in schools and classrooms is said to be dislocated (Jansen, 2001). The demands made by policy conflict with the personal identities of teachers (Sachs, 2001).

According to Goodson and Sikes (2001), professional development of teachers can only occur if development amongst teachers is present. They say that the newly qualified teachers who are most severely affected by the discrepancy between the expected and actual reality of teaching are those who don't create positive relationships with their fellow teachers as colleagues. Their reasoning is that professional development is personal development.

The multiple roles that teachers perform play a part in the development of their professional identities (Tickle, 2000). Some popular role perceptions of teachers are the roles of knowledge provider, caregiver/nurturer, role model, facilitator of learning, disciplinarian and mediator (Hattingh & De Kock, 2008). Teachers have to perform multiple roles which lead to them having

to experiment with their roles and recreate their teacher identities in accordance with the contexts in which they find themselves. This can make the development of a strong and positive teacher identity more complex for teachers, especially novice teachers (Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011).

The pre-conceived notions of novice teachers about their roles as teachers and what the profession entails before entering the profession are not in sync with the reality of teaching. This makes the development of positive teacher identities problematic in the early stages. While complying with policy to fulfill what is expected of them, teachers tend to experience conflict between their professional and personal identities. Novice teachers strive to reconcile their personal values and beliefs with the reality of teaching as they develop their teacher identities. Newly qualified teachers attempt to strike a balance between their professional autonomy and institutional conformity (Jones, 2003).

The distance between what policy states and what practically occurs in schools remains a frustrating problem. This distance has led to a lack of professional autonomy which disempowers teachers. Corporal punishment as an instrument of control being relinquished disempowers teachers even further (Jansen, 2001). Teachers lack professional autonomy to fulfill their duties to learners due to being burdened by responsibilities regarding administration and adherence to assessment policies which can be very laborious (Hattingh & De Kock, 2008).

Teachers afflicted by policies that impose greater degrees of uniformity and conformity onto them are threatened with the impoverishment of their active location. "Active location" in this context refers to a teacher's active participation in negotiating his/her teacher identity, their professional autonomy being affected plays a part. As expressed by Foucault (1981) and Bourdieu (1984), action and personal identity are ultimately shaped by social forms produced by the operation of power in society and they are conditioned by that very same power. As the professional autonomy of teachers diminish due to having greater degrees of uniformity and conformity imposed onto them by policy so too does their sense of empowerment diminish. Lack of professional autonomy disempowers teachers (Coldron & Smith, 1999).

If policy attempts to change the practice of teachers without concern for the conceptions of professional responsibility which are deeply rooted in general classroom realities, a lowering of morale and decreased effectiveness will be the outcome (Enslin & Pendlebury, 1998). The complex nature of the reality of teachers today arising from the multiple demands from pupils,

parents, colleagues and government, new teachers need to be equipped with the critical capability of acting in their own right in order to appropriately respond to the various challenges they will inevitably encounter. Otherwise an increasing de-professionalisation of teachers could be the consequence (Goodson & Sikes, 2001).

Novice teachers are individuals who, to an extent, construct their own meaning and understanding which shape their realities. The identity dilemma that novice teachers face in light of their experiences is a phenomenon that will be best viewed through the Interpretivist Paradigm, it is also referred to as Constructivism (Mack, 2010). A paradigm is “a loose collection of logically related assumptions, concepts or propositions that orient thinking and research (Bodgan & Biklen, 1998).”

The way novice teachers experience their professional identities is very complex and can therefore make developing strong and positive teacher identities very problematic.

CHAPTER THREE - RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

Qualitative research concerns itself with understanding the meanings that people attach to beliefs and values, decisions and actions within the social world that they find themselves in. Qualitative research is subjective in its approach and looks beyond numerical data to get an understanding for the viewpoints, impressions and feelings of participants. Obtaining insight of such a nature is done best by using smaller, highly targeted samples (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

A qualitative approach was the best approach for conducting this exploratory research of novice teacher identities because it helped to place emphasis on quality rather than quantity to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences that novice teachers have regarding the development of their identities as teachers. Some aspects of human existence cannot be quantified.

Research Design

I made use of a qualitative and exploratory case study design. A case study design helped me study the phenomenon in context (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Everyone has a story to tell and I wanted to explore the experiences of my participants that are relevant to my study as part of their story.

My unit of analysis was to explore the experiences of novice teachers regarding the development of their professional/teacher identities. Regarding the philosophical underpinnings of qualitative case study design, the approach of Yin (2003) and Stake (1995) to case study is based on Constructivism which focuses on people subjectively creating meaning (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

The Interpretivist Paradigm is also sometimes referred to as Constructivism and this paradigm is my theoretical research framework (Mack, 2010).

Participants and Sampling

Due to time constraints, my sampling strategy was to utilise a “convenience sample” which involved selecting the most accessible subjects to be my willing participants (Marshall, 1996).

At the very least, to justify this approach, I made sure that I was thoughtful in my selection of a sample so some judgement was made to be more purposeful so that my research question was

adequately answered with reasonable credibility (Marshall, 1996). For example, I interviewed five novice teachers for my study who were both male and female and who were either in their first or second year of teaching as professionals.

For many novice teachers, the first three years are probably the most stressful times in their careers (Martin, Chiodo & Chang, 2001). The reason that I only focused on teachers in their first or second year is that I did not want to sacrifice depth for too many broadened perspectives. Novice teachers are new and inexperienced teachers.

Procedure for Data Collection

Individual semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data. An interview is a conversation between two or more people which entails an interviewer asking an interviewee/interviewees both open-ended and close-ended questions to elicit opinions and beliefs relevant to the research objectives, while still allowing for free expression. It is a technique used to understand the experiences of others and differs from other methods of data collection due to it being more exploratory in nature and allowing for more flexibility (Dick, 2002).

A strength of individual interviews is that they are useful for getting detailed or in-depth information with regards to perceptions, personal feelings and opinions. Another strength is that they allow more detailed or in-depth questions to be asked which usually achieve a high response rate (Dick, 2002).

Method of Data Analysis

I used thematic analysis to analyse and interpret the data gathered. I collected data and drew conclusions from what I observed. I reported on the experiences, meanings and the reality of the participants. Thematic analysis can be used to identify and analyse patterns (themes) within data. I was able to make social and psychological interpretations of the data (Braun & Clark, 2006). I drew on Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory which are rooted in Sociology and Psychology respectively to understand the experiences of novice teachers regarding the development of their professional/teacher identities (Hogg, Terry & White, 1995) so I felt that thematic analysis was a suitable method for analysing the data I gathered.

I used an audio recording device to record the responses of the participants so that I could transcribe and analyse the data. Interesting features of the data were coded systematically, each code consisted of relevant data accumulated. Codes were put into potential themes gathering all relevant data to those potential themes. I then checked the themes as they related to the coded extracts and all the data to form a map of the thematic analysis. There was then further analysis to refine the themes and the story they tell which helped define and name each theme. Significant examples extracted were selected for final analysis in order to link them back to the research question and literature (Braun & Clark, 2006).

Data reliability/validity

To guard against certain effects that could compromise the reliability/validity of the data to be gathered I conducted two pilot interviews with novice teachers as a means of testing the interview questions to see if participants found difficulty in understanding the questions I posed to them. Thereafter, some of my interview questions were refined and some were left as is.

I also allowed participants to respond in Afrikaans if at times they couldn't express themselves the way they want to in English. When this happened, which was seldom, I translated my findings to English.

The use of an audio recording device allowed me to refer back to the responses of my participants for accurate analysis.

I had a reflective journal as a form of "reflective commentary" to make sure that my own experiences didn't overshadow how I interpreted the data and to monitor my on-going reflections and interpretations (Shenton, 2004).

I also made sure not to infer too far from what people said by giving descriptions close to that of participant responses, direct quotations were helpful in this regard (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982).

For the sake of credibility, another researcher who was unbiased and unfamiliar with my project went over my work in addition to my supervisor. This is referred to as "peer scrutiny of the research project." (Shenton, 2004).

Ethical Considerations

The principals of the schools where the participants taught were given the following – a letter requesting permission to interview their novice teachers (APPENDIX A), the list of interview questions (APPENDIX D), the consent form (APPENDIX C) and all the information regarding the procedures that I followed and what the study was about (APPENDIX B).

The interviewees received an information sheet informing them what the study was about, what will be asked of them, that their participation will be kept confidential, what the risks were if any, what the benefits were and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Interviewees must give consent to be recorded by the audio recording device I plan to use and therefore each participant was given a consent form to complete so as to receive consent from them that they were willing to participate in the study. Informed consent is of utmost importance to rigorously adhere to ethical standards.

The names of my participants and the names of the schools at which they taught were not mentioned in my research paper. When referring to participants and their responses in my findings I only referred to them by their title with the first letter of either their first name or surname (e.g. Mr Derwin Daniels will be referred to as Mr D.).

CHAPTER FOUR - FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

After conducting two individual semi-structured pilot interviews to test my interview questions and refine them, I conducted individual semi-structured interviews with five other novice teachers (Mrs T., Mr P., Mrs M., Ms B. and Mr S.) to explore their novice teacher identities and establish how they experienced their professional identities. I will now report on the experiences, meanings and reality of the participants.

	<u>Mrs T.</u>	<u>Mr P.</u>	<u>Mrs M.</u>	<u>Ms B.</u>	<u>Mr S.</u>
Gender	Female	Male	Female	Female	Male
Teaching experience	Second year	First year	Second year	Second year	Second year

I highlighted five themes to explore the novice teacher identities of my participants with regard to how they experienced their professional/teacher identities. These themes are: the studying world and the working world are two different worlds, teaching can be empowering, teaching can be disempowering, moulding of professional/teacher identity by others and moulding of professional/teacher identity by oneself.

The studying world and the working world are two different worlds

The participants were asked what their current experiences of being novice teachers are compared to what they expected their experiences to be when studying to be teachers and if they are experiencing any unexpected difficulties

Three of my participants said that their experiences as students while studying to be teachers didn't prepare them well enough for teaching as professionals - Mr P. : *"The theory doesn't prepare you well enough for the practice, you feel somewhat unprepared."* "I came into the teaching field blind and then the first six months of being a teacher opened my eyes." Mrs M. : *"At teaching practice it is not how it's going to be one day when you are in your class."* Ms B. : *"What you learn when you study, it doesn't prepare you."* Despite his studies not fully preparing him for teaching as a professional, Mr P. felt that *"You understand more by doing stuff yourself."*

Two of them pointed out that as novice teachers they didn't expect administrative responsibilities to affect the quality of their teaching due to it taking up a lot of their time – Mrs T. : *“Can't stick to your time, you can't give your all onto teaching, there's admin things.”* “I love the teaching, I don't enjoy the admin.” Mrs M. : *“I expected to teach but it's like we not actually teaching, you almost never teach, all you do is preparing these poor children to be able to pass the assessments, not empowering them.”*

Mr S. thought that he would just have to educate the learners but he soon found out that the behaviour of the learners affecting classroom management is a challenge that, if not handled well, could disrupt teaching and learning. Other novice teachers had the same experience – Mr S. : *“When I was a student, my mind-set was the teacher is there to educate but in practice it's not just about educating. Because you dealing with people, you're dealing with many different dynamics. In a class of 36, that's 36 individuals with their own thinking that you need to negotiate just so that you can get to the point of teaching.”* Mr P. : *“My biggest problem was classroom management.”* “I think it's a bit naïve of me to think the children want to learn, some of them don't, they don't want to put in the effort.” Mrs M. : *“Last year I had a good year, this year I'm faced with a whole different story. I didn't know I would get a different type of child, it's not what I expected it to be.”* Ms B. : *“Unexpected, I think is the behaviour of the children, they can push you and you have to hold yourself back. You have to put your beliefs and anger one side, keep your composure, that's a struggle you have to endure every day.”*

Majority of my participants experienced how developing their professional/teacher identity can affect them personally due to it being so demanding, which they did not expect – Mrs T. : *“Teaching is an over-time job, I have to find the balance between my family and the teaching.”* Mr P. : *“You have to lead by example, I did not know that whatever I do will be imitated by children in my class.”* “I found I need to change the way I do things, change the way I walk, change the way I address people.” Ms B. : *“It's not that it's there but it's like they bring it out of you because of their behaviour.”* “It takes a lot out of you.”

One participant said that she did not expect parental involvement to be so poor – Mrs M. : *“Parents tend to be difficult, parent's involvement is not up to scratch, we deal with a different breed of parents.”* She did however point out that some of the parent's circumstances are extenuating and makes it difficult for them to help her with their children's learning - *“You can't blame them, shame, some of them come home late.”*

Two of my participants gave responses suggesting that the profession of teaching has many roles that accompany it – Mr S. : *“As a teacher, you play the role of mother, father, priest. Certain things that happen with learners in their home life, they share with you, that’s rather unexpected at times. As I’m still young, I don’t always have the right words, at times I find myself lacking.”* Mr S. didn’t expect to experience this but he now understands that *“Being a teacher doesn’t end the moment they walk out the door, your job doesn’t end with teaching, you take into consideration their social wellbeing, any learning difficulties they might have.”* Ms B. said she did expect to play various roles as a teacher - *“I expected to play the role of being the everything to the child, you play that motherly role, you have to be a teacher, you have to be a security guard.”*

Mr S. said that the beliefs he had about teaching when he studied to be a teacher compared to the beliefs he has about teaching now that he is teaching as a professional differ greatly - *“It’s in stark contrast what I believe now and the ideology I held when I was a student.”*

These novice teachers entered the profession of teaching with preconceived notions of what it entails and found that after realistic teaching experience as professionals there are vast differences between the two. Hatting & De Kock (2008), Beijaard, Verloop & Vermunt (2000) and Jones (2003) say that novice teachers very often have pre-conceived notions about what the profession entails before entering it and it is usually far removed from reality.

While teaching professionally, novice teachers must take their preparation from studies and combine that with being actively involved in their professional/teacher identity development. At teaching practice, prospective teachers do not have a class to call their own, when teaching professionally novice teachers have their own class, which is their domain, so the experience will inevitably be different.

When teaching as professionals, novice teachers are burdened with many administrative responsibilities that negatively affect the quality of teaching time. Hattingh & De Kock (2008) said that teachers lack professional autonomy to fulfill their duties to learners due to being burdened by responsibilities regarding administration. According to some participants, administrative responsibilities can be a constraint negatively affecting time management. This can affect the degree to which novice teachers are able to empower learners. Being a teacher

professionally can, to an extent, prevent a teacher from doing the very thing he/she loves most, teaching.

Studying to be teachers didn't prepare these novice teachers well enough for managing the children they teach, when teaching professionally. The amount of children in a classroom can prove to be challenging for a novice teacher to manage. The challenges faced by novice teachers change as time progresses because they are constantly dealing with different people which creates different dynamics to which they must adapt. Continuous evolution of the challenges faced by novice teachers requires continuous adaptation of their approach to teaching which leads to continuous evolution of their professional/teacher identity. Coldron & Smith (1999) concur by saying that teachers create themselves as teachers both from the beginning and during their careers. Novice teachers need to adapt for survival in the profession of teaching.

The responsibilities that come with being a teacher are very demanding and can affect the personal life of a teacher in a negative and positive way. At times there may be conflict between personal development and professional/teacher development so it becomes difficult to consistently maintain the integrity of one's personal identity while developing one's professional/teacher identity. Jones (2003) also established that teachers tend to experience conflict between their professional and personal identities.

Learner behaviour can be problematic because many of them compel the novice teacher to wrestle with these different roles that he/she has to assume which can create inner conflict for the novice teacher. This can prove to be problematic for the novice teacher who is trying to develop his/her professional/teacher identity. Thomas & Beauchamp (2011) said that teachers have to perform multiple roles which lead to them having to experiment with their roles and recreate their teacher identities in accordance with the contexts in which they find themselves. This can make the development of a strong and positive teacher identity more complex for teachers, especially novice teachers.

The socio-economic status of parents in the community, in which the school is located, plays a part in the experience a novice teacher will have with certain parents and learners. Some working class parents work very late, leading to children being home alone after school for many hours, affecting their level of involvement in their child's education, which negatively affects the child. Some parents and learners from disadvantaged communities are negatively affected by social

ailments and the novice teacher will inevitably be affected too because he/she has to interact with them.

The role of a teacher is much more than simply that of a teacher. Novice teachers roles are pedagogical and pastoral in nature. A teacher has to develop learners academically and simultaneously care for them as parents. There are many challenges that require interpersonal social skills to address them appropriately before being able to develop learners academically. The age of a novice teacher may also play a factor in the development of a professional/teacher identity especially if you are young and still have much development to undergo where personal identity is concerned. A novice teacher isn't done with his/her job when the learners are no longer present in class nor does it only involve teaching, he/she considers the wellbeing of the learners beyond the classroom as well.

Novice teachers may enter the profession with ideals that often can't be materialised due to many unforeseen challenges that come with teaching professionally.

Studying to be a teacher will not fully prepare one for being a teacher professionally, only to an extent, because teaching professionally has far too many challenges that cannot be fully addressed as part of a teacher education programme. It seems that interpersonal skills, as part of the personal identity of a novice teacher, are needed to compensate for the lack of preparation from studies in order to minimise the negative effects of unexpected difficulties on his/her professional/teacher identity. As the personal identity of novice teachers influence their professional/teacher identity so too does their professional/teacher identity influence their personal identity.

Teaching can be empowering

The participants were asked how autonomous and empowering teaching is.

Four of my participants indicated that their professional autonomy lies within the class where they have the freedom to teach how they are going to teach, this is empowering - Mrs T. : *"There's a lot of freedom, you prepare your lesson plans, you teach according to your lesson plans."* Mr P. : *"How I prepare and how I teach is up to me, being in charge of whatever I'm going to use to teach a lesson makes me feel empowered."* Mrs M. : *"In class, as the teacher, you the only person here so there is freedom to make choices. In class you have the most freedom to*

choose what you going to do, I'm in charge, I do things the way I feel it should be done." Ms B. : *"I'm in charge in my class, I have that freedom there, that's where I feel more confident, the power comes in there, then I forget about whoever is above me."*

Mr P. suggested that his experience with professional autonomy is at extremes - *"There is freedom at times and at times it feels like there is none."* whereas Mr S. said that his professional autonomy and conformity to policy is *"50/50, whatever I do is guided by policy but the way I do it is up to me."*

Mrs M. said that it is empowering to be able to control her classroom environment the way she feels is best - *"I feel empowered because I empower myself, I make the choices. In the class, what goes on here goes on because either I allow it to happen or I don't allow it to happen."* *"You have to choose your battles."*

Mrs T. and Ms B. expressed that it is empowering to see the learners becoming empowered because of them – Mrs T. : *"Helping them to learn is empowering."* Ms B. : *"I feel empowered because I'm empowering them, because they learning and I'm the one that's providing the knowledge."*

Teachers sharing their experiences with each other is also empowering according to Mrs T. and Mr P. – Mrs T. : *"We work together and share the way we do things."* Mr P. : *"Being in conversation with other teachers makes me accept the highs and the lows because I'm not experiencing it alone."* *"I have parents in teaching, I'm taking my parents guidance. I'm taking my Head of Department's guidance."*

One of the participants said that parental involvement is empowering – Mrs T. : *"You that facilitator just guiding them and when the parents are involved then it's even better."* Not only is the co-operation of parents empowering but also the co-operation of the learners which helps to build a positive teacher-learner relationship enabling the practice of certain personal values - *"I think having that relationship with the child does enable you because they listen to you, often they will listen to you more than they listen to their own parents."*

Simply being labelled as a teacher is empowering to Mr P. because with it comes responsibility that he does not have in his personal life - *"Just the label, a teacher, makes me feel empowered. I am the youngest in my family so I don't have people coming to me saying 'How do I do this?'"*

These novice teachers, in the early stages of their career, experience most of their autonomy within their classroom which is their domain and territory, that is where they feel most powerful. They experience autonomy when it comes to how to prepare for a lesson, how to teach a lesson and what resources to use to teach a lesson. Being prepared is also empowering because it puts the novice teacher in a better position to guide and empower learners. There are those that might make novice teachers feel less free to make certain choices which could disempower them to an extent, which is why they must determine their own sense of power by making the choices that they are able to and not always letting it be determined by external forces. Coldron & Smith (1999) said that teachers must actively participate in negotiating their teacher identities.

Novice teachers are likely to feel a bit insecure in the early stages of their career regarding their professional/teacher identity because they are new to a professional community amongst many who are more experienced than them. Novice teachers might feel as though their superiors are monitoring them which can be an overwhelming feeling but in the classroom, where one is less exposed, the novice teacher will feel more free and confident. Novice teachers may lack a sense of power beyond the classroom and feel more secure within it. That sense of power will likely extend gradually beyond the classroom as they progress in their professional development and assert themselves outside of the classroom as well. Mastery of one's domain, the classroom, seems to be the first thing that is necessary for novice teachers to gain more confidence in their professional/teacher identity.

Novice teachers may sometimes experience autonomy on their journey of developing their professional/teacher identity and sometimes they may not. A novice teacher's experience may fluctuate between feeling empowered and disempowered. This could possibly lead to the fluctuation between a negative professional/teacher identity and a positive one. When it comes to being autonomous, which plays a part in how empowered novice teachers feel, they are not fully free to determine their own actions because educational policy, as set out by government, determines some of their actions to an extent. In order for novice teachers to maintain a degree of autonomy that will empower them, it seems wise to use some policy as a guide rather than a set of rules that one must always rigorously adhere to. Being resourceful and utilising professional autonomy to its fullest possible extent is useful to maintain a sense of power.

Learners can be very demanding so learner behaviour in the classroom can potentially be a hindrance to gaining a sense of power as a novice teacher because one could be confronted with

many challenges at once and prioritising which to address and which to ignore is important. Trying to solve every problem all at once will set one up for failure and leave one feeling disempowered. Good classroom management is empowering, knowing one's limitations is empowering.

Teaching can be an empowering experience for novice teachers because when they help to empower the learners they then feel empowered themselves. To an extent, how empowered a novice teacher feels is dependent on how empowered their learners become because of their guidance. A sense of freedom is empowering to novice teachers, this enables them to empower their learners more and in doing so empower themselves even more.

Sharing experiences with other teachers can be very empowering in that you learn from each other and empower each other. This will likely improve the novice teacher's sense of belonging to a professional community of teachers.

Novice teachers feeling empowered may, to an extent, be dependent on how much the parents of the learners are involved in their child's education. Ideally, teachers and the parents of the learners must work together to educate their children. If novice teachers develop a rapport with their learners they might find the experience to be emancipatory in that they will have more freedom to put some of their personal values into practice. They will feel more at ease and be able to act more naturally with their learners, which is empowering. Sometimes novice teachers have to compensate for the shortcomings of the parents of learners and play the pastoral role of parent to their learners.

The professional/teacher identity of a novice teacher, in light of the duties that help develop that identity, could empower him/her by meeting certain desires that are not met in their personal lives. To maintain a positive professional/teacher identity, it seems that a novice teacher must have a positive view on what it means to them to be a teacher. This seems to be influenced by the personal identity of the novice teacher.

An empowered novice teacher is likely to develop a positive professional/teacher identity. Feeling empowered is likely to be accompanied by a feeling of disempowerment as well.

Teaching can be disempowering

The participants were asked how autonomous and disempowering teaching is, how their realistic teaching experience compares to what governmental policy expects of them and to what extent they are able to put their personal values into practice as teachers.

Four of my participants said that a feeling of disempowerment, due to a lack of autonomy, stems from their inability to practice their personal values the way they feel is best due to policy restricting them regarding discipline - Mrs T. : *“You always have that child that acts out, you can’t hit the child.”* Mr P. : *“I can phone the parents to come see the principal but the next day the child will be in class again and the problem will continue, having somebody out of line and I can do so little makes me feel disempowered.”* Mrs M. : *“They not my children and you can’t hit them because corporal punishment is not allowed, your hands are tied.”* Mr S. : *“I feel that my power has been taken away due to policy. In certain situations policy holds me back, the system takes the power away from the teacher.”* *“You can’t really do anything beyond reprimanding a child.”*

Mrs T. said that she feels the education system of the government disempowers her - *“I had eight children that I wanted to repeat, I was told ‘They can’t repeat, they need to go over, they will develop in that phase.’”* *“I feel the system is failing them.”* *“The teachers are powerless.”* and because of such occurrences Mr P. experiences how disempowering it is to teach learners who aren’t ready to be in the Grade that he is teaching - *“I have children in class who are not on grade level, they can’t cope, that slows you down.”*

Mrs T. and Mrs M. expressed how disempowering it is to teach many learners – Mrs T. : *“Because classes are so big, it’s difficult to give each child individual attention.”* Mrs M. : *“My disempowerment, these huge classes.”* Mrs M. also adds that another source of disempowerment is *“All the unnecessary admin work.”*

Ms B. said that she doesn’t feel very autonomous and empowered due to her lack of experience compared to her superiors and more experienced colleagues - *“I don’t think I’m that free because I always think about the principal, ‘Is he going to be happy? Are the teachers going to be happy with my actions?’ I’m always second guessing.”* *“Because I work with older teachers, I feel that I’m not able to voice my opinions that much because they have more experience. I feel like they*

think they know better so I rather back down, in that way I feel disempowered. They are so set in their ways, you working with old blood.”

Parents also play a factor in how autonomous and disempowering teaching can be – Mrs T. : *“You give your all but you don’t have their support, you just need that extra support at home.”* *“The parents come with their petty things and attack you.”* Mr P. : *“Culture was always a difficult thing to deal with, mother and father are a child’s first teachers, the way they do things might not be the way I want them to do things.”* Ms B. : *“I’m always thinking of ‘What is the child going to tell their parent?’ I don’t want to cause problems.”*

Mrs T. said that the interactions between teachers, parents and learners can be disempowering to both the teacher and parents because sometimes *“The children manipulate the teacher and the parent.”* When it comes to interactions between teacher and learner Mr P. said that *“These children are my boss.”* because they demand so much from him which becomes overwhelming.

What government expects of teachers and what they are realistically able to do can be disempowering due to expectations being unrealistic – Mrs T. : *“They say this is an inclusive school, we not trained to teach those special needs.”* Mrs M. : *“It’s impossible what they expect us to do with these children, they expect too much and there’s not enough time to fulfill all these expectations.”* Ms B. : *“What they expect and what is reality clashes completely, the type of child I’m working with is not the child that they envision. They don’t realise all their social problems that the child goes through on a daily basis.”* Mr S. : *“The way they set policy up, you are dealing with this perfect learner, you are sitting on policy that caters to this one learner when in fact you are dealing with individuals that are at different levels.”* *“The government believes a teacher will walk into a classroom and immediately start teaching, they don’t take into account the dynamic in the classroom. You have to ensure there is discipline, a lot of time is spent on classroom management.”*

Mr S. expresses how damaging lack of autonomy can be to him at times - *“At times you feel disheartened that your autonomy is compressed into a little box. If you are a free thinker, that box can crush your passion.”*

These novice teachers encountered many challenges that disempowered them and were most likely problematic for the development of their professional/teacher identities.

Novice teachers have to care for their learners as though they are their parents but cannot discipline them as they would their own children by hitting them to show tough love because according to policy, as set out by government, corporal punishment is not allowed. Jansen (2001) said that corporal punishment as an instrument of control being relinquished disempowers teachers.

The novice teacher not being able to discipline a learner, by hitting them to show tough love for example, can be difficult to handle because the learner is likely to continue that problematic behaviour leaving one feeling as though one is disabled. That feeling is disempowering.

Lack of parental support is another problem novice teachers are faced with. Sometimes parents will attack novice teachers undermining their authority in front of their child and sometimes they don't help novice teachers to educate their children. This tends to lead to children manipulating both the parent and the teacher because the parent enables it.

Novice teachers may also feel as though the government doesn't help them to empower learners and in doing so doesn't help to empower them as teachers due to undermining their authority when they want to fail learners who aren't ready to be promoted to the next grade. In this way the education system may seem to be failing both the teachers and learners. Coldron & Smith (1999) said that teachers afflicted by policies that impose greater degrees of uniformity and conformity onto them are threatened with the impoverishment of their active location. "Active location" in this context refers to a teacher's active participation in negotiating his/her teacher identity, their professional autonomy being affected plays a part.

Having children in the class that aren't academically ready for that grade creates problems for novice teachers because working at their pace hinders progress, those learners work slower than the others who are on grade level. Such an experience can be disempowering to an extent in that the novice teacher could be left feeling inadequate when a certain amount of work that needs to be done with the class is not complete at the ideal time. The integrity of the professional/teacher identity of novice teachers in the early stages of their career seems to be primarily determined by their proficiency as classroom practitioners.

Government places unrealistic expectations on novice teachers and that can be disabling to them. Novice teachers may feel that the government expects too much of them when performing duties as teachers to their learners, especially since time is a constraint due to attempting to fulfill some

of the many expectations government has of them. The government puts policies in place that impose unrealistic expectations onto teachers like labelling certain mainstream schools as inclusive schools that have to cater for learners with special needs. Novice teachers very often aren't equipped with the knowledge, skills and resources required to cater for learners with special needs and this makes it difficult to empower them. They will need individual attention to help them properly but due to having so many children in the class it is difficult.

The cultural diversity amongst the learners and the novice teacher can be problematic because the personal values of novice teachers, as part of their personal identity, inevitably play out through their pastoral roles and may conflict with the personal values held by the learners that were culturally transmitted to them by their parents. Novice teachers must respect the cultural diversity of the learners and their personal identities but it can prove to be problematic where classroom management is concerned especially when learners exhibit disruptive behaviour infringing on the teaching and learning process.

The learners demand so much attention from the novice teacher, most of the duties performed as a teacher are ultimately for their benefit and in great numbers they influence the progress in class with their co-operation or lack thereof. In light of this, the novice teacher might feel at times as though they are not in control, at times they may feel that the learners are their boss with more control than them which can be disempowering for the novice teacher. Learner discipline is a challenge to novice teachers, there is very little that one can do to punish a learner effectively for desired results. The government's education system doesn't seem to do enough to empower teachers, especially novice teachers. It's as if the learners are empowered by the government more than what the teachers are. Jansen (2001), Sachs (2001) and Coldron & Smith (1999) go on to say that lack of autonomy can lead to teachers feeling disempowered which can negatively affect the development of their teacher identities, especially in the early years.

The more children to teach in class the less empowered a novice teacher could possibly feel because meeting all the demands of the learners can be very taxing. Novice teachers must ensure that discipline and classroom management are well taken care of by laying a strong foundation on which to build otherwise quality teaching time will very often be undermined. The more learners a novice teacher has the more administrative responsibilities he/she will have which can be very laborious, tedious and tiresome.

Novice teachers could become self-conscious about how they portray themselves as professionals to their colleagues, especially to those with more experience and those who are in leadership positions, which can leave them feeling less free. Being a young novice teacher amongst veteran teachers can be difficult because one might question the value of one's input, one might question the value of oneself professionally amongst fellow professionals. They are likely to seek validation from those colleagues so their sense of belonging to a professional community of teachers is somewhat determined by how they think they are perceived by their colleagues. This will affect how they see themselves as professionals which altogether mould their professional/teacher identity. Tsui (2007) reiterate that the way teachers see themselves as teachers and the way others see them as teachers are important to shape teacher identity.

Always having to be so mindful of one's actions can cause a novice teacher to behave less naturally. A novice teacher's pre-occupation with what parents opinions are regarding their interaction with their children can be another constraint. Novice teachers always having to be mindful of themselves, require that they be reflective practitioners in order to identify their strengths and limitations within context so that they can learn from their mistakes and improve.

Policy can be constricting at times, especially to novice teachers who enjoy autonomy in their thinking. It seems policy promotes conformity and uniformity and if novice teachers adhere to it too rigorously they are likely to feel less unique as individuals which will negatively affect both their personal and professional/teacher identity. It is therefore best to use some policies as a guide rather than using it dogmatically.

Disempowered novice teachers are likely to struggle with the development of a positive professional/teacher identity.

Moulding of professional/teacher identity by others

The participants were asked how they thought others (learners, colleagues, parents and government) saw them as novice teachers.

How the participants think others (learners, colleagues, parents and government) see them as novice teachers affects, to an extent, how they see themselves as novice teachers which in turn partly affects the shaping of their professional/teacher identity. The behaviour exhibited by others is observable so novice teachers can interpret the way others treat them generally or in

comparison to other fellow teachers and from that determine, to an extent, how others actually see them.

Mrs T. : Learners - *“I don’t feel I can go break up a fight because I’m so scared they might just hit me, just the older children, the younger ones see me as just being their teacher.”* Mr P. : Learners – *“A kwaai (cool and/or good) teacher, a normal teacher does not play soccer with them while on playground duty.”* *“To their parents they would say ‘He puts in the effort.’”* Mrs M. : Learners – *“Some children do recognise that ma’am is working hard trying to help us.”* Ms B. : Learners – *“The clever ones would question am I teaching them the right thing and the others are just there, they don’t take note of you.”* Mr S. : Learners – *“I think the learners see me as very strict.”*

One’s age as a novice teacher plays a part in the kind of reception one receives from learners, at least some of them. The age of the learners determines the kind of reception one receives from them as a novice teacher too. It seems the older the learners, the more challenging they become to manage. Being a young novice teacher is likely to be more challenging when it comes to developing a professional/teacher identity because one will often be made to feel less worthy of the identity as teacher by learners who treat novice teachers differently to older teachers. Being new and inexperienced with much to learn will constantly be in the minds of novice teachers and drive their behaviour. A young novice teacher can use his/her youthfulness to their advantage, especially with the learners, that will set one apart from the older veteran teachers and help one develop a positive professional/teacher identity. Novice teachers won’t always be appreciated by learners for their efforts but there are those that will appreciate them. Clever and hardworking learners are likely to be the most co-operative learners but a novice teacher’s class will not only consist of such learners but also those that don’t want to learn or don’t want to put in the effort to learn. The performance of learners seem to reflect the performance and competency of the novice teacher and partly shape the professional/teacher identity of him/her. Novice teachers will find that at times they will be compelled to be strict with their learners and it will, to an extent, form part of their professional/teacher identity.

Mrs T. : Colleagues – *“I’m new to the school, must still learn. No one really came to tell me ‘This is wrong, you can’t teach like that,’ they respect you and the way you teach. They have trust and faith that you are going to teach accordingly.”* Mr P. : Colleagues – *“Somebody new to the profession, still going to develop so they will give me advice.”* Mrs M. : Colleagues – *“They think*

I'm in it to win it." Ms B. : Colleagues – *"I'm eager, I have a lot to learn."* Mr S. : Colleagues – *"I think they perceive me as very green, I still have many ideologies. It seems once you've been in the profession for a couple of years , you become rather jaded, you lose that lustre you started out with."* *"A know-it-all, I won't always ask for help, we learn best by figuring it out on your own. I'll come for help only once I've formulated something in my head already."* *"I'm not the best of educators because according to where the CAPS (Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements) document is and where I am, I'm behind with my work, that might seem that I'm not an efficient educator."*

Colleagues will often leave novice teachers to sink or swim as a test. It seems colleagues will give support to novice teachers in the form of advice more/rather than actively supporting them through action. Novice teachers being confident will help colleagues to be confident in them. Compared to more experienced colleagues, novice teachers will be aware that they have much to learn and they should be eager to seek guidance from their more experienced colleagues. Novice teachers enter the profession with ideals that may lessen the longer they teach as the reality of teaching may render them unrealistic. They may feel as though they are idealistic fools in the eyes of some of their colleagues who may have already been disillusioned by the teaching profession. Sharing experiences with fellow teachers can be empowering and one must be open to learn from them but one must also be independent and learn on one's own. A novice teacher's sense of self is important to developing a positive professional/teacher identity so empowering oneself first is important to be able to be empowered by others. A novice teacher's progress regarding work done with the learners won't always be aligned with where policy suggests one should be after a certain amount of time has passed. This doesn't mean that the novice teacher is not doing a good job, much of policy is only a guide. The professional/teacher identity development of the novice teacher will be different from that of his/her fellow colleagues.

Mrs T. : Parents - *"Some parents see 'She's still so young' so they won't have that much respect for you. With older teachers they will be fine, my colleague gets more respect because she looks older and she's teaching the same number of years."* Mr P. : Parents – *"Normally when they say a good teacher, they are talking about the older teachers."* *"This is still a baby, a young man, inexperienced but I put in my effort."* Mrs M. : Parents – *"Some parents see you as a good teacher, then there's other narrow-minded and close-minded."* Ms B. : Parents – *"The parents think 'Do you know what you're doing? Is my child going to pass because you're the teacher?"*

Are you doing your job? Is my child safe?" Mr S. : Parents – "They might be a bit apprehensive as to what knowledge I can give their child seeing that I'm still a child in their eyes."

One's age as a novice teacher plays a part in the kind of reception one receives from parents, at least some of them. As a novice teacher, one might be judged unfairly or harshly, knowing that you do your best will help you be more confident as a teacher despite some of the views you perceive others to have of you. Some parents won't always appreciate the novice teacher for his/her efforts but there are those that will appreciate them. The young novice teacher will often be made to feel less worthy of the identity as teacher by some parents who treat novice teachers differently to older teachers. Novice teachers, regardless of age, may feel that their competence as teachers is being questioned by parents due to their inexperience.

Mrs T. : Government – *"Inexperienced, you don't know how to do this and that, you need support and coaching. We have to go to workshops on a Friday, Saturday. They think you don't have family."* Mr P. : Government – *"They see me as young and this is going to be a teacher for years to come."* "He still has another thirty years to go, if you are thirty years they value you more because you can train another teacher." Mrs M. : Government – *"They just see me as a persal number."* Ms B. : Government – *"They think you're easy to replace, I don't think government cares."* Mr S. : Government – *"The government sees me as the future, that I'm going to be the vehicle for change."*

Not feeling valued by government seems to be common amongst novice teachers. The government expects a lot from their teachers, so much so, the personal lives of teachers as part of their personal identities will at times conflict with their professional lives as part of their professional/teacher identities. Novice teachers may feel as though they are only valued by government the longer they teach, it's as if the government is perceived to be more concerned with quantity rather than quality. The government gives teachers persal numbers as a way of identifying them on their system and to some novice teachers it may feel as though the government just sees them as a number, insignificant, somebody that is expendable. It may feel as though government doesn't take care of its teachers properly. Novice teachers will find that the education system is imperfect and needs constant change and that they must help bring about that change but first they must acknowledge themselves as imperfect and in constant need of change in order to be the change the education system needs. A novice teacher's professional/teacher identity will undergo constant change as time progresses.

A novice teacher's sense of self is important because a positive sense of self will minimise the negative effects on their professional/teacher identity by how others view and treat him/her. A positive sense of self will help foster the development of a positive professional/teacher identity. Beijaard, Verloop & Vermunt (2000) said that how teachers perceive their own professional identity affects their power to produce desired results and their professional development.

Moulding of professional/teacher identity by oneself

The participants were asked what roles they play as novice teachers, the relevance of their personal values to their work as teachers, how they see themselves as novice teachers and what advice they would give themselves when they embarked on the journey of becoming teachers.

How novice teachers see themselves and position themselves as novice teachers plays a part in how well they maintain a strong and positive professional/teacher identity.

Each of my participants identified assuming roles beyond that of simply a teacher - Mrs T. : *"You the friend, the teacher, the doctor, the social worker, I'm their everything."* Mr P. : *"You have the pastoral role where you motivate to spur development. You have to teach and assess the teaching, examiner."* Mrs M. : *"I'm a social worker." "I'm a feminist, girl power is important." "The most important role I play has been motivator, I'm motivating them to do the best they can."* Ms B. : *"That motherly role where you have to nurture, you have to be security guard to stand and make sure they complete their work. The role of a teacher, making sure you teach them, that they know their work."* Mr S. : *"You play the role of a parent, you play the role of confidant that does not judge."*

Four of my participants said that being a teacher with the many roles they have to assume affects them in the following way – Mr P. : *"It feels like more than one job at a time." "Being a teacher made me more of a leader, it made me more sensitive to people's feelings, more open. It is making me a stronger person."* "Me helping a learner helps me as well, I grew in terms of empathy and sympathy." Mrs M. : *"Sometimes you get despicable situations in class then you behave in a way that you would never do. It's almost like I'm Schizophrenic, when I come into class I'm a whole different person. I became rude and it's not who I am."* "I told them 'I'm supposed to be rude, a tyrant, just so that you can behave. I treat you the way I wouldn't other people to treat me, just so that you can behave.'" Ms B. : *"It kind of drives you crazy sometimes, you feel like you going to lose your mind because you playing this role you not supposed to be*

playing, I'm supposed to be a teacher." Mr S. : *"Being in these situations affects you greatly because afterwards you reflect, you realise the type of person you are is not suited to a certain situation because you yourself have issues with something in that line. It makes you look introspectively."*

Mr P. mentioned something that suggested having street smarts at a public school is useful - *"I see myself as a young teacher who is soon going to realise that the angry face, I'm going to need it, because being a kind teacher, in a public school, there are children who mistakes it for weakness and test you. You don't get kind people on the streets."*

Mrs T. said that playing the different roles she plays is necessary because *"You have to go down on their level and understand the child."* *"Each child is different, you can't deal with them all the same."* She adds that the way she coped with playing so many roles is that *"My core values made me strong to be able to deal with everything."* Ms B. said that one must adapt to deal with it - *"Different personalities expected of you, you have to like be different people at the same time, you must adapt."*

Mrs M. said that *"To be a teacher is to teach them the curriculum and about life. Use yourself as an example, make a fool of yourself, don't come with high and mighty behaviour, come down to their level."*

Mr S. mentioned how his personal values assist him by saying *"My personal values shape how I interact with my learners, it helps me reflect what I'm trying to teach them, not impose it on them."* In light of this, Ms B. said that *We teach them all the time so you teach them things that you believe and try to instill that in them because you think it's right but not to influence them too much, you need to respect their beliefs also."*

Ms B. said that even though she is a teacher, her learning doesn't stop - *"You supposed to play this role of leader but you also learning all the time and often you learn from the children, they can teach you."* *"You learn from your colleagues."* *"I'm a teacher but I also feel like a learner still."* Mrs T. said something similar - *"I'm always growing, learning, open to new ideas. I'm a teacher but I'm also growing as a person. I want to be a lifelong learner."*

Some of my participants described themselves as novice teachers in the following ways – Mrs T. : *“I see myself as a reflective teacher, reflecting on how I can better my teaching, better myself.”* Mrs M. : *“I see myself as a good teacher, a damn good teacher.”*

Other participants described what it means to be a teacher by saying the following – Mr P. : *“To be a teacher is a sacrifice but it is not wasted.”* Mr S. : *“I believe being a teacher is helping learners regardless of what manner it is in, I need to develop a learner holistically.”*

Despite many hardships, some of my participants gave responses that showed they haven’t given up hope – Mr P. : *“Once you are a teacher, you can never not be a teacher again. I would not want to be in any other job, I wouldn’t stop being a teacher for anything.”* *“I feel honoured to be a teacher.”* Ms B. : *“Being a new teacher has been very challenging but makes your heart happy, you should make it that you enjoy it.”* *“You want to be that person that influences the child to say ‘I want to be a teacher.’”* Mrs M. : *“As much as I feel despondent sometimes, this is what I need to do and I’m going to do it to the best of my ability.”*

Knowing what they know now, my participants reflected on when they were prospective teachers and gave themselves the following advice – Mrs T. : *“You need to be more stern in the way you deal with adults. I need to see myself as an adult in the workplace, as an equal. Don’t doubt yourself, stick to what you believe.”* Mr P. : *“Be a bit more stern, more assertive, a lot more strict, give more homework. Don’t wait to do stuff, do it as soon as you get it.”* Mrs M. : *“Don’t become a teacher because our education system is more about quantity than quality, it’s watered down. The money they pay us is not enough for what we do.”* Ms B. : *“Each day is different, prepare yourself for the unexpected and be tolerant.”* *“Try new things all the time, see what works, what doesn’t work. Do as much research as possible.”* Mr S. : *“Don’t be such an idealistic fool.”* *“I’d have better prepare myself to deal with people instead of better preparing myself to know my content because you can get more out of the classroom.”*

Due to children coming from different cultural backgrounds having experienced different challenges, these novice teachers assumed different roles to care for the different children to attempt to meet their different needs. Experimenting with these different roles seemed to have caused problems in cementing a positive professional/teacher identity. My participants drew on their personal values as part of personal identities and used their interpersonal skills to teach their learners and it was not in a condescending manner, one must be humble. Novice teachers have to

teach from an academic standpoint and a moral one. The personal values of novice teachers will help them deal with the inevitable difficulties they will face when teaching as professionals while they are developing their professional/teacher identities. Novice teachers are likely to get better reception from their learners the more nurturing they are in their approach.

Novice teachers must respect the beliefs of the learners and be careful not to indoctrinate learners by imposing their beliefs onto them. This is something that may happen unintentionally which is why reflecting on oneself regularly is important to guard one against such things. Leading by example, practising what one preaches, seems to be very important because being a hypocrite is likely to undermine the credibility of novice teachers in the eyes of their learners. They must also steer away from being too kind to learners, it's not a popularity contest, because many learners tend to take advantage of kindness due to seeing it as weakness. This seems to be prevalent in public schools within disadvantaged communities where street smarts are considered a means for survival.

With the many challenges that novice teachers will face, it is imperative that they be reflective practitioners to be able to endure the difficulties because reflecting on oneself will help one to improve. Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop (2004) said that it is especially important for beginner teachers to spend a significant amount of time reflecting on themselves personally and to look within in order to develop a professional identity. Novice teachers that strive to be lifelong learners, will not only grow professionally but personally as well because one's personal identity and professional/teacher identity are somewhat interdependent once entering the profession of teaching. The profession of teaching with all that it entails can cause conflict between the personal identity and professional/teacher identity of novice teachers so reconciling them is important to foster positive development of a professional/teacher identity. Jones (2003) claim that novice teachers strive to reconcile their personal values and beliefs with the reality of teaching as they develop their teacher identities.

To assist the novice teacher in developing a positive professional/teacher identity, he/she seeing themselves as professionally equal to their fellow teachers regardless of differences in age and/or experience and allowing that to influence their interactions with fellow teachers will be helpful. For interactions with learners parents who may question the credibility of the novice teacher based on experience and/or youth, be assertive. Novice teachers should also hold onto their beliefs, professional development is personal development and vice versa. Maintaining a sense of

altruism is important for novice teachers to develop positive professional/teacher identities because at times it may feel that being a teacher isn't worth the trouble and one may feel as though one wants to leave the profession. Seeing the profession of teaching in a positive light will help to position oneself as a novice teacher in a positive light and lead to developing a positive professional/teacher identity.

CHAPTER FIVE - CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

I concluded that novice teachers face many difficulties that they did not expect to face while studying to be teachers. They struggle with the development of their professional/teacher identities because striking a balance between their professional autonomy and institutional conformity is problematic due to conflict occurring. This leads to them experiencing both empowerment and disempowerment as part of their on-going journey of developing their professional/teacher identities. They have to constantly experiment with different roles which leads to difficulty in cementing a strong and positive professional/teacher identity. They are restricted by certain governmental policies so they often experience conflict between their personal identity and professional/teacher identity. How novice teachers see themselves as teachers and how they think others see them as teachers helps to shape professional/teacher identity. The way novice teachers experience their professional identities is very complex and can therefore make developing strong and positive professional/teacher identities very problematic.

Recommendations

To improve the current findings, future researchers can use more novice teachers as participants in such a study. Participants can be selected from schools that are in both advantaged and disadvantaged communities.

I think that governments should facilitate mandatory teacher fellowship meetings for fellow colleagues at schools and mandatory teacher conventions for fellow teachers in different provinces. Fellow teachers will then be able to share their experiences with each other and learn from each other thus empowering each other. This will be most helpful to novice teachers.

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APPENDICES - APPENDIX A



**UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE**

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

(Date of issue)

(Principal's title, initials and surname)

The Principal

(Name of school)

Dear (Principal's title, initials and surname)

PERMISSION TO INTERVIEW TEACHERS

I would like to request your permission to conduct individual interviews with one or more of the novice teachers at your school willing to participate in my study. The interviews will be set up at times and locations that are convenient for all participants involved and will not interfere with teaching time.

Please peruse the consent form and information letter attached. I will ensure that all personal information is kept confidential, and that the identity of you, your teachers and that of your school will be protected.

I thank you in advance, hoping that you will comply with my request. Thank you for your consideration.

Yours in Education

Mr D. Daniels

APPENDIX B



**UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE**

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

INFORMATION SHEET

Research Title: “Exploring novice teacher identities”

What is this study about?

This is a research project being conducted by Mr D. Daniels who is an Honours student at the University of the Western Cape studying Educational Psychology. I invite you to participate in this research because you are able to give information that could help explore the experiences of novice teachers regarding the development of their teacher identities.

What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate?

You will be asked to take part in an individual interview that will take place at a time and location that is mutually beneficial. The interview will be audio-recorded and the questions asked will give me information that relates to the research title mentioned above.

Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?

I will keep your personal information confidential. In order to help protect your confidentiality, the recording of the interview will not have your name on it and will be kept locked in a secure location. There will be nothing on the records that can identify you or your school. If I write a report about this research, your identity and that of your school will be protected.

What are the risks of this research?

There are no known risks associated with participating in this research.

What are the benefits of this research?

The results of this research may help me as the investigator learn about the experiences of novice teachers regarding the development of their teacher identities. Prospective teachers identifying the forces that will inevitably impact on their teaching will put them in a better position to be able to control the impact of those forces on them which will help to minimise the negative effects on their novice teacher identities. Awareness of certain positions that they potentially might have to assume is important for teachers. I hope that the results of this study will spread awareness to such an extent that prospective teachers have a more realistic idea of what to expect when entering the profession.

Do I have to be in this research and may I stop participating at any time?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may withdraw at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you withdraw at any time, you will not be penalised or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.

What if I have questions?

This research is being conducted by Mr D. Daniels, a teacher at Highlands Primary School and an Honours student at the University of the Western Cape studying Educational Psychology. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact Mr D. Daniels at 083 887 9230 or at derwindaniels@gmail.com.

Should you have any questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:

Prof. M. Guilfoyle
Department of Educational Psychology
University of the Western Cape
Private Bag X17
Bellville 7535
Email: mguilfoyle@uwc.ac.za

This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Department of Educational Psychology and by the Western Cape Education Department (WCED).

APPENDIX C



University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

CONSENT FORM

Research title: “Exploring novice teacher identities”

The study has been described to me in a language that I understand and I freely and voluntarily agree to participate. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand that my identity or that of my school will not be disclosed and that I may withdraw from the study without giving a reason at any time and this will not negatively affect me in any way.

Participant’s name:

Participant’s signature:

Researcher:

Date:

Should you have any questions regarding this study or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:

Prof. M. Guilfoyle
Department of Educational Psychology
University of the Western Cape
Private Bag X17
Bellville 7535
Email: mguilfoyle@uwc.ac.za

APPENDIX D - INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1) How long have you been teaching as a professional?
- 2) What motivated you to become a teacher? Why did you want to be a teacher? Explain.
- 3) What is your experience of being a teacher at this early stage of your career?
 - a. What hopes and expectations do you have for your career?
 - b. Are there any unexpected tensions or difficulties you are negotiating in your role as a teacher?
- 4) How does your current understanding of your role as a teacher compare to the expectations you had when studying to become a teacher? What are the differences and similarities?
- 5) What roles do you play as a teacher and how does that affect your identity as a teacher?
- 6) Do you think any of your personal values are relevant to your work as a teacher? Explain.
- 7) To what extent are you able to put your personal values into practice as a teacher? What enables this and what constraints are there in doing so?
- 8) How much autonomy do you have in your role as a teacher? i.e. How much freedom do you have to determine your own actions as a teacher? What is this like for you?
- 9) How empowered and disempowered do you feel as a teacher? Explain.
- 10) How does your realistic experience of teaching compare to what governmental policy expects of you as a teacher?
- 11) What perceptions do you think others have of you as a teacher? How do you think people see you, with respect to your being new to the profession? (learners, colleagues, parents and government)
- 12) How do you see yourself as a teacher? What does it mean to be a teacher? Explain.
- 13) What advice would you give to your younger self, when you were just starting out on the road to becoming a teacher?
- 14) Is there anything that you would like to add as a conclusion to this interview? Is there anything that we haven't discussed that you would like to raise?