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Novice teachers' challenges and strategies in coping with COVID-19 at a rural school

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Abstract—The study was undertaken to investigate and understand the challenges and strategies of novice teachers in coping with COVID-19 at a rural school. The researcher observed and experienced many challenges during the first year of teaching, including stress, anxiety, depression, lack of support, and lack of collaboration with teammates. This study explores the challenges faced by novice teachers in coping with the COVID-19 pandemic at a rural school. The study employed a qualitative approach, interpretive paradigm, and case study design. Four high school novice teachers participated in this study. Guided by ethical considerations in research, semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. This study used narrative analysis to analyse data from the participants. This study found overcrowded classrooms, heavy workloads, lack of resources, lack of support, tribalism, lack of orientation, lack of discipline, lack of knowledge of subject content, and pressure from school administration as challenges encountered by novice teachers during COVID-19. This study also revealed frustration, discouragement, Insomnia, and mood swings as the effects affecting novice teachers' well-being.

In conclusion, novice teachers applied different strategies to deal with challenges during COVID-19. The Department of Education in Free State should provide mobile classrooms so learners are comfortable and enjoy the lesson, and teachers can also move around when presenting a lesson. The government must develop supportive social networks and proper orientation for novice teachers to limit the lack of support.

Keywords: Novice teachers, COVID-19 pandemic, Rural school

I. INTRODUCTION

ACCORDING to Sözen (2018), a novice teacher teaches for the first time in his/her professional teaching career. There is no sharp time limit for the duration of that stage. Novice teachers could be considered someone who does not have experience teaching and teaching for less than five years. COVID-19 has hit the world an infectious disease caused by the coronavirus. COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus. It is crucial to consider novice teachers as the future assets of educational institutions. They generally perform their duties as the profession requires them to meet educational targets. They expect induction and training from institutions when they join the teaching profession. Still, after joining, they encountered various challenges in the in-school settings. However, literature has reported that inexperienced teachers face several difficulties. Brannan and Bleistein (2012, p. 279) indicated that novice teachers need support from peers, schools, education departments, parents, and communities. Klassen and Chiu (2011, p. 116) pointed out that "new teachers face contradictions between pre-service preparation and classroom pedagogical applications". Since cooperation and teamwork are so important in the education industry, teacher can feel comfortable based on their time with their colleagues. They can feel uncomfortable if left alone during their first years of employment due to workload, misbehaving learners, demanding bosses, or other factors. It demoralises them and discourages successful teaching and learning. Nearly all countries worldwide closed their schools in March 2020. Things began to shift because of the school lockout. To deal with COVID-19, inexperienced teachers employed a variety of techniques. COVID-19 impacts teaching and learning in schools, especially in rural areas. Research concentrates on teachers who have difficulty coping with their tasks at work. According to Kim and Roth (2011, p. 4), novice teachers face frustration, insecurity, confusion, and alienation during their first year due to their lack of subject knowledge and teaching experience. The arrival of COVID-19 in their lives complicated the situation immensely because it changed traditional education. Novice teachers do not get enough support from school heads and senior teachers. Novice teachers cannot control learners' behaviours, do not get enough space for their privacy, and cannot communicate properly with their colleagues. Also, there is a lack of resources at school. Sabar (2004, p. 151) indicated that the academic knowledge they obtain at the institutions is irrelevant, which adds to their alienation. It is the primary source of depression among new teachers.

Bandura (1977, p. 448) highlighted that "when people have low self-efficacy, they encounter many problems, such as anger, depression, and anxiety". It was also found by various researchers, such as Boyd, Grossman, Ing, Lankford, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2011, p. 403), that lack of physical and moral support of school heads and teaching staff is another major cause of novice teachers' job dissatisfaction, influences intension of leaving the teaching profession. Several researchers studying various aspects of teacher effectiveness have provided a wider lens through which challenges new teachers face about their self-confidence as they aspire to be successful teachers can be better understood. As an Honours

student in psychology of education at a selected University in the Free State province, I faced many problems during my first year of teaching and found it difficult to concentrate. This could affect self-efficacy. The researcher also experienced stress, anxiety, and depression. It affected my self-esteem, and I was afraid to go to class as I thought there was something wrong with me. The researcher expected a lack of collaboration with my teammates, but tensions and demanding teaching methods made working harder. The researcher was disappointed because she valued working with my team.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study first explored through a critical analysis of a review of related literature relevant to major challenges novice teachers face during the initial years of their professional careers. Later, efforts were made to overview the latest information from various sources related to the research work to suggest strategies for coping with the research problem. In addition, numerous research studies on the study have underlined the need and significance of this report. A detailed description of this study's literature review related to the research problem is given below.

To understand novice teachers' challenges and the strategies they must employ to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic at a rural school, it was necessary first to know the term Novice teachers. The term novice was commonly used for teachers. According to Farrell in Sözen (2019, p. 279), a novice teacher also teaches for the first time. There is no sharp time limit for the duration of that stage. Sözen (2019, p. 279) mentioned less than five years of teaching experience. Sözen (2019, p. 279) highlighted those two years of teaching experience or less.

Challenges and coping strategies

Novice teachers entered the educational profession, which was generally trained during their pre-service training period, with various teaching and learning beliefs. However, they often found themselves in a difficult situation during a transition from training to teaching practice. This was supported by Qayen, Abadi, and Naimi (2013, p. 23) when they suggested that novice teachers faced a conflict between pre-service and practical application of learner-centered pedagogies in rural schools. It badly affected their morale and working capabilities. Although Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1983, p. 67) argued that the extent to which pre-service programmes can help novices with their problems is unclear. Scholars pointed out that learners belong to various backgrounds, are psychologically unstable, display a lack of self-respect, create discipline and other allied problems that become the causes of stress for novice teachers (Sari & Altun, 2015; Báez, Sandoval & Quiroga, 2019). Similarly, researchers pointed out the same views: "novice teachers frequently failed to cope with the hard situation developed by learners' disruptive behaviours and due to lack of experience and stress (Karatas & Karaman, 2014, p. 29). They became emotional and responded negatively to learners, which later proved significant reasons for their dissatisfaction with the job and even their decision to leave the teaching job.

The root of the novice teachers' problems was a lack of adequate preparation in the fundamentals of instruction. Mandel (2006) also argued that novice teachers could be supported by being taught survival skills in their teaching preparation programmes. Another root was the lack of proper organization. Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1983, p. 69) argued that schools can help novices by providing textbooks and other teaching materials before the first day. Shakwa (2001, p. 76) suggested that various problems that novice teachers encounter are also deep-rooted in the culture of the teaching profession and the conditions of the school as a workplace.

Moreover, Steyn and Schulze (2005, p. 23) suggested that novice teachers reported experiencing problems with isolation as many teachers in the schools had already made their relationships. Zepeda and Mayers (2001, p. 76) reported that many schools were characterised by working conditions of isolation, where teachers did not even hear each other teaching. Such a situation prevented teachers from

collaborating with their peers. It drastically reduced the possibility for them to learn from each other, and for novice teachers, isolation would be most disadvantageous (Shakwa, 2001, p. 79).

Professional isolation or loneliness was also another reason proving to be a cause of novice teachers' job attrition, as due to lack of experience, poor socialisation or networking with senior teachers, stress, overburden of workload, marital status, age, socio-economic conditions, family background and harsh attitude of school heads developed elements of stress among them (Kelly & Saunders, 2010; Cuddihy, 2012; Razak, 2012). In this context, due to lacking communication skills, they were deprived of physical and moral support, good relationships, and companionship with senior teachers and even school heads, which in turn caused concern and anxiety (Garcia-Garduno, Slater & Lopez-Gorosave, 2011; Combat, 2014). Similarly, some scholars revealed from research that professional isolation could develop hardships for novice teachers, directly affecting their quality of work and indirectly affecting learners' performance (Stephenson & Bauer, 2010; Watts, 2012). According to Goodwin (2012, pp. 84-85), novice teachers' first job years were often difficult for them, as many of them felt ineffective and insecure and were left isolated with no support or guidance from experienced teachers and school heads, which affected their job performance.

There are strategies that novice teachers use to cope during the COVID-19 pandemic. Researchers stated that cordial relationships between learners and novice teachers played a leading role in improving the learning environment developed confidence in learners (Al Nasseri, Renganathan, Al Balushi & Al Nasseri, 2014). Various studies have suggested that teacher-learner relationships play a significant role in improving the performance of learners (Frisby & Martin, 2010; Gehlbach, Brinkworth, & Harris, 2012). Similarly, it was also suggested by several research studies that the teacher-learner relationship had positive effects on uplifting learners (Botty, Mohd, Shahrill & Mahadi, 2015; McArthur & Bostedo-Conway, 2012). Moreover, head teachers were responsible for properly implementing higher authorities' policies, instructions, and guidelines. It was their prime responsibility to build communication networks that contributed to leading teaching and supporting staff in the right direction, sending proper feedback at the right time, and applying the right leadership style to raise teachers' morale to uplift the performance of the school (Mbon, 2017; Edward, Mualuk & John, 2017). Brannan and Bleistein (2012) state that novice teachers need administrative, mentoring, psychological, resource, logistical, and knowledge-based support from colleagues and school heads.

Furthermore, Brannan and Bleistein (2012, p. 87) mentioned that novice teachers needed support. They meant that support was information about the psychology of young people, resources, and logistical knowledge provided by colleagues. Mann and Tang (2012, p. 21) also studied the effect of age and experience between mentors and teachers. Having an experienced mentor was not a must. If there was not much difference in experience or age between the mentor and the mentee, they were better at establishing a fruitful professional relationship.

It would have been better if these novice teachers could observe their mentors' lessons. Real-life situations would have been more helpful. Peer observations were beneficial for both sides in sharing ideas. So, in that way, novice teachers learned new ideas. In some cases, novice teachers could not easily reach their mentors and interact with them, resulting in many unwanted situations. Professional development needed some dedication. Improving my teaching skills came as a reward after my commitment to work. As Barkhuizen (2011, p. 23) mentioned, novice teachers need experienced teachers' narratives and each other's case studies. Novice teachers experienced similar challenges. So, they could be proactive about the challenges in class. In other words, colleagues' experiences could be used as training resources to encourage reflective thinking.

(Lantolf, 2000, p. 15).

III.   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Background of the theory

This study used the cultural learning theory by Lev Vygotsky. He was born on November 17, 1896, in Orsha, a city in the Western religion of the Russian Empire. Sociocultural theory has made a great impact on the learning and teaching profession. Vygotsky suggested that human development results from dynamic interactions between individuals and society. Vygotsky's theory suggested that development depended on interaction with people and the tools the culture provided to help form their view of the world. The zone of proximal development describes what a learner could accomplish with the help of competent support. Therefore, it described the actual task that the teacher could effectively support. According to Veenman (1984, p. 87), better performance in the classroom, flexibility, different use of teaching approaches, and appropriate coping behaviours existed in teachers at higher cognitive developmental levels than those at lower cognitive developmental levels. There was no difference between beginner teachers at different developmental levels, as they had different views of problems they encountered in the classroom. Veenman (1984, p. 98) further stated that novice teachers at a higher level of development were found to have empathy, flexibility, understanding of individual differences, and responding to learners' needs. Novices at lower stages viewed themselves as lacking the power to motivate learners, lacking management skills, and being defensive.

Teacher socialization framework was also considered, as this played an essential role in the development and growth of novice teachers, McKenzie (2005, p. 43) and thus in formulating effective coping strategies. Lacey and Lacey (1977, p. 13) defined socialization as the development of sets of behaviours and perspectives by individuals as they confront social situations. This framework concerned the social interaction teachers undergo in becoming effective teachers and the influence of other persons and structures they interact with in improving and developing their teaching theories and beliefs (Koeberg, 1999; Jordell, 1987). According to Bahta (2003, p. 145), socialisation proceeds through interaction and learning. As novice teachers interacted with people around them, they learned and developed better ways of coping with their challenges. Thus, socialization allowed novice teachers to learn the teaching culture and become accepted members. In addition, social processes resulted in change among novice teachers, enabling them to see their problems better and develop effective coping strategies.

Assumptions of the Theory

Based on the assumption that teaching and learning were an inseparable and dynamic interpersonal process, emphasizing dialogue and the role of language in mediating cognitive development, Vygotsky's ideas provided theoretical solid support for the teacher's critical role in children's development. Vygotsky's theory enhanced teachers' status and power in children's informal learning activities. Further, it placed interactive teaching at the heart of development. Effective teaching leads development by bridging what the child already knows and what they could know with sensitive assistance.

Relevance of the Theory

The most crucial application of Vygotsky's theory to education was his concept of a zone of proximal development. The concept was important because novice teachers used it to guide child development. It allowed teachers to know what a learner could achieve through a mediator and enabled the teacher to help the child attain that level by themselves. The critical aspect of this theory was the role of play in his theory. According to his perspective, teachers must provide children with many opportunities to play. This theory advised teachers to give more attention to the learners. Vygotsky encouraged teachers not to concentrate too much on teaching concrete facts but also to push their learners into an abstract world as a means of assisting them to develop multiple skills that would enable them to deal with complex tasks

IV.   OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The study explores novice teachers' challenges in coping with the COVID-19 pandemic at a rural school. It explores strategies novice teachers employ to cope with COVID-19 at a rural Free State, South Africa school.

V. METHODS

Research approach

A qualitative approach was used in this study. According to Creswell (2013, p. 8), the qualitative approach focuses on individuals' subjective interpretations and interpretations of experience and their formulation of definitions. It included all the appropriate instruments for eliciting recall, which helps problem-solving (Berg & Howard, 2012). Furthermore, it uniquely provides factual and descriptive information (Johnson & Christensen, 2012, pp. 29-37). The participants' expressions and perceptions are readily understood even when there is little or no information about them (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014, p. 14). The information may be wrong, inaccurate, or misleading (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p. 21). This approach was necessary for this study because it analysed participant's issues. Participants got an opportunity to express their feelings and opinions using this approach. Qualitative research is a form of interpretive inquiry whereby researchers interpret what they see, hear, and understand, making connections with their backgrounds, history, context, and prior understanding of the issues. According to Henning, Van Rensburg, and Smit (2004), qualitative research seeks to establish the truth centred on observation or experience rather than theory or logic. Qualitative methodology was concerned with in-depth understanding rather than 'quantity understanding' of the social phenomena from the participants' perspective; thus, it was subjective rather than objective. The study focused on gaining an understanding and meaning of novice teachers' coping strategies. In addition, the study seeks to interrogate novice teachers' individual experiences, insights, and understanding of their first year.

Research paradigm

An interpretive paradigm was used in this study. Researchers tend to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and its complexity in its unique context instead of trying to generalise the base of understanding for the whole population (Creswell, 2007). Wellington and Szczerbinski (2007) pointed out that by leveraging the key method of the interactive interview, which allows the researcher to investigate and prompt things that we cannot observe, researchers can probe an interviewee's thoughts, values, prejudices, perceptions, views, feelings and perspectives. While Cohen, Manion, and Marison (2011) suggested that intepretivists gain a deeper understanding and knowledge of phenomena within their context complexity rather than generalise these results to other people and contexts. The interpretive paradigm assumes that there are multiple realities that individuals socially construct as they interact with their world.

Research design

A Case study design was used in this study. Yin (2003) defined a case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly defined. Woodside (2010, p. 8) takes a wider approach, saying that case study design investigates identifying, knowing, anticipating, and monitoring individual behaviours. A larger audience understood it. On the other hand, it was a disadvantage because it often lacked much control. The case study approach was especially useful when the contextual conditions of the event being studied were critical and where the researcher had no control over the events as they unfolded. All the collected evidence was collated to arrive at the best possible responses to the research question(s). As a result, the researcher gained a sharpened understanding of why the instance happened as it did and

what might become important to look at more extensively in future research.

Participants

According to Osuala (2007), sampling takes a portion of the whole population to represent that population. The idea is to generalise the results to the selected population without researching the whole population, which can be time-consuming and costly. Avwokeni (2006, p. 4) suggested that a sample is a manageable portion of a population with elements that share characteristics. Four participants, including three male and one female novice teachers. Their teaching experience was less than five years in the teaching profession. Sampling is selecting a sample from a large group of people for research purposes. Purposive sampling was used in this study. According to Maxwell (2012, p. 23), Purposive sampling is also known as decision sampling. The study was accurate since the participants chosen were the exact ones who were novice teachers experiencing problems at school. This sample size was a subset of four participants. They lived in the region where I was conducting my study. All inexperienced teachers were from the Thabo Mofutsanyane district. Narrative analysis was used in this study. It was easy to get people to share their stories. I collected detailed information, and participants could disclose aspects of themselves. The researcher did not force participants to participate. Informed consent was used to ensure the participants fully understood their questions. I informed them about myself and the reason why I was interviewing them.

Furthermore, confidentiality and anonymity were used. The researcher-maintained anonymity throughout the study. I did not share their names with anyone, but I used letters. The researcher did not physically, psychologically, emotionally, or socially harm the participants. Lastly, The Researcher wrote the report as it was.

Research Setting

The study took place at a rural school. The races of the participants were all black. This study also considers the community's history. Based on my familiarity with the region, the novice teachers gave me greater access to potential participants. All inexperienced teachers were from the Thabo Mofutsanyane district in the Free State Province, South Africa. The research environment was vital because it identified the research or interview location.

Data collection instruments

A semi-structured interview was used in this study. According to Irvine, Drew, and Sainsbury (2013, p. 77), a semi-structured interview is one in which the interviewer prepares a list of subjects to address and questions to ask. It produced a large amount of data, which was versatile and responsive. However, the participants' honesty was not guaranteed. Boyce and Neale (2006, p. 3) suggested that in-depth interviewing is a qualitative research technique involving intensive individual interviews with a few participants to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, programmes, or situation". Participants provided more detailed information. Participants were more comfortable when they had a conversation with the researcher. It was not generalizable; when in-depth interviews were conducted, generalisations were not made because small samples were chosen. Interviews were significant in unfolding opinions, experiences, and values. In-depth interviews helped the participants to uncover more details.

Data analysis

Narrative analysis was used in this study. According to Riessman and Quinney (2005, p. 3), it is a collection of approaches focusing on people's stories. Creswell (2012, p. 9) established the following advantages: it is easy to get people to share their stories, it collects detailed information, and participants can disclose aspects of themselves. According to Bruner (1990, p. 8), narrative research does not generalise to populations. Still, Narrative analysis is valuable because it allows people to create a coherent story about their lives realistically. When told to a listener, it influences how the listener perceives the storyteller. It was easy for the researcher to understand the participants' situation in this study.

Ethical considerations

Silverman (2000, p. 201) reminds researchers that they should never forget that while they are doing their research, they are entering the private spaces of their participants. Understandably, this raises several ethical issues that should be addressed during and after the research has been conducted. Creswell (2003) stated that the researcher should respect the informants' rights, needs, values, and desires. Therefore, appropriate steps should be taken to adhere to strict ethical guidelines to uphold participants' privacy, confidentiality, dignity, rights, and anonymity. The following section describes how ethical issues in the research have been addressed: The Researcher informed the participants, and all the novice teachers were informed about the study. Informed consent was used so that the researcher ensured that participants fully understood what they were being asked to do and why the researcher was interviewing them. In this study, the researcher guaranteed that no participants were put in a situation where they might be harmed due to their participation, physical or psychological. The researcher could not guarantee the honesty of the participants because, in some of them, the researcher conducted a telephonic interview. Total anonymity was possible. However, the researcher ensured the participants' confidentiality and anonymity throughout the study. The researcher clarified that the participants' names would not be used for other purposes, and the information revealing their identity would not be shared with anyone. To protect the identity of the participants, the researcher used the letters Teacher A, B, C, and D. Despite all the precautions mentioned above, it was made clear to the participants that the research was only for academic purposes, and their participation in it was voluntary. No one was forced to participate in this study.

VI.   RESULTS

Narrative results

Understanding of novice teachers

The interviews from all teachers showed that a novice could be understood as a new teacher. Novice was commonly used for teachers. The novice teacher completed a university-based teacher education programmes with less than five years of teaching. Novice teachers could be viewed as strangers in a new land since they are unfamiliar with the school's culture and norms. It is a teacher who is new in the teaching field with little or no teaching experience. A novice teacher is somebody who teaches for the first time; also, there is no sharp time limit for the duration of that stage. It is those teachers that have less than five years of teaching experience. The statement from a teacher illustrates the following:

"*Yes. To my understanding, a novice teacher is a teacher who is new in this field. He or she does not have much experience. There is a lot that he or she needs to learn*" (Teacher A).

"*Yes, I do understand the definition of novice teachers. To me, a novice teacher is a teacher who is still new to the teaching profession and has taught for less than a year. A novice teacher is a teacher that has little teaching experience*" (Teacher B).

"*Yes, I do understand the definition of novice teachers. To me, a novice teacher is a teacher who is still new to the teaching profession and who has taught for less than a year. A novice teacher is a teacher that has little teaching experience*" (Teacher C).

"*Yes, in my opinion, a novice teacher is a teacher in the entry stage of his/her teaching career who has little or no teaching experience in the field*" (Teacher D).

Novice teachers' challenges at a School during Covid-19
Overcrowded classroom

The teachers' interviews indicated that overcrowded classrooms could be teachers' challenges at school before COVID-19. An overcrowded classroom means a place where learners exceed the recommended capacity for the class. A classroom is said to be overcrowded, and the number of learners exceeds the optimum level, which causes hindrances in the teaching-learning process. In an

overcrowded classroom, there is always poor interaction, poor class control, poor participation, and difficulties in-class assessment and resource competition. It is where there is not enough space for a teacher to go around. The statement from a teacher illustrates the following:

"*About 40-44 learners in class, so I cannot give them all my attention because classrooms are overcrowded*" (Teacher D).

Heavy workload

The interviews with teachers indicated that the heavy workload could be a challenge for teachers at school before COVID-19. Heavy workload means the work an individual must finish within a given period. It also refers to the intensity of the job assignment. It means having more than your required workload. The statement from a teacher illustrates the following:

"*One of the challenges is workload. Since the classes were split, it was a big challenge for me because I was new. I teach from the morning till the afternoon. Mind you, I still must mark class activities, tasks, and tests. I am suffering. I am overloaded with responsibilities and afraid to push back and say no. Since I teach many classes and must rest when I arrive, I find it difficult to prepare the lesson because I do not get enough time*" (Teacher A).

"*There is a workload because the number of classes I had to teach in one day also increased since learners were reduced to 30 per class. This made me teach more classes in a single day. The issue of rotational classes and grades also challenged me, and it was hard to cover all the term's work and monitor whether learners did their homework*" (Teacher B).

"*I am working on a seven-day cycle with seven periods per day and had only three free periods throughout the cycle. That meant I could teach for three consecutive days without any free periods. The workload was too much for me*" (Teacher D).

Lacking resources

The teacher interviews indicated that lacking resources could challenge teachers during COVID-19. Lack of resources means insufficiency, shortage, and absence of something required or desired. It is something that is required but is absent or in short supply. It is something that is missing. It also refers to the limited availability of a resource compared to the limitless wants. It can arise when the resources or means to fulfill an end are limited or costly. The statement from a teacher illustrates the following:

"*I am not satisfied with the number of textbooks I have in the classroom. Some are old and dirty. I need new textbooks; learners should not share textbooks during this pandemic. Some textbooks are not the new version*" (Teacher A).

"*Textbooks became a challenge for me because they were lacking. In a class of 40 to 44 learners, there might only be 10 or 20 textbooks allocated to the class, so learners had to share those textbooks, which is not allowed during this time of the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, some learners kept the books to themselves, unwilling to share them with others. In addition, much of the teaching time was taken up by the writing of summaries rather than on teaching and learning due to the scarcity of textbooks*" (Teacher D).

Lack of support

The interviews from teachers indicated that lack of support could be teachers' challenge at a school before or during COVID-19. Lack of support means not getting assistance from other people. It means not supporting someone who needs help, and it means not getting advice from other people. The statement from a teacher illustrates the following:

"*I cannot get enough support from my colleagues. I had no friends and decided to join other guys at school. Female teachers are unwilling to help me and do not bother themselves with staying with me*" (Teacher A).

Tribalism

The interviews from teachers indicated that tribalism could be teachers' challenge at a school before or during COVID-19. Tribalism is the attitude and practice of harbouring such a strong feeling of loyalty or bonds to one's tribe that one excludes or even demonises those 'others' who do not belong to that group. Tribalism thus prompts one to have a positive attitude towards those who are connected to them through kinship, family, and clan, and it de facto alienates one from people of other tribes who are not related to them by blood, kinship, family, and clan. The statement from a teacher illustrates the following:

"*I am a Zulu girl, and I must adapt to the school environment, which has a lot of Sotho's. There is tribalism in this school, and I find it difficult to adapt and make friends. Teachers are dividing themselves. There is a Sotho group and a Zulu group. It is difficult for me to ask for help and make friends with Sotho teachers*" (Teacher A).

Lack of orientation

The interviews from teachers indicated that lack of orientation could be teachers' challenge at a school during COVID-19. Lack of orientation means not introducing a worker to other co-workers and not getting to know important information about the workspace. The statement from a teacher illustrates the following:

"*Another challenge I faced was not getting enough orientation in this school. I had to find out things on my own. The orientation comprised nothing more than being shown around the school and given a few materials. I had to ask for assistance from the senior teachers, and most of them were willing to help, but there were few who could not help*" (Teacher C).

Lack of discipline

The teacher interviews indicated that lack of discipline could be teachers' challenge at a school during COVID-19. Lack of discipline means the inability to manage someone. It means not being able to discipline other peoples' behaviours. The statement from a teacher illustrates the following:

"*Another challenge is the limitations of disciplining learners. Not all learners in my class may be well-mannered or respectful, and I have those learners who always want attention. I find it difficult to discipline them because I am new in this environment*" (Teacher A).

"*Another challenge that I am facing is that since COVID-19 started, I cannot manage the class very well because some learners are not taking the schoolwork seriously and claim that those questions are too hard for them. I also experienced a challenge where learners did not attend class and hid in the toilets. Absenteeism is high; learners always have excuses claiming they are scared to go to school due to COVID-19 and I cannot punish them*" (Teacher B).

"*I am still new in this field, and it is difficult for me to discipline learners because they do not want to wear their face masks. They are always in groups, which is unacceptable because they can be infected with Covid-19. I also experienced difficulties in managing learners' behaviours. Learners took advantage of the fact that I am new in this environment. I had a problem with learners who would not participate in class, and I had to talk throughout the day*" (Teacher C).

"*I experienced difficulties in managing learners' behaviours, and learners took advantage of the fact that I am new in this environment. They do not do their homework, and some participate in class. The same learners always take schoolwork seriously*" (Teacher D).

Lack of subject content knowledge

The interviews with teachers indicated that a lack of knowledge of the subject content could challenge teachers during COVID-19. Lack of subject knowledge means that the teacher does not have the expected knowledge about the content of a particular subject. This means that a teacher can finish the lesson in a short period. The statement from a teacher illustrates the following:

"*Teaching a subject that I did not do at school as a major is another problem because I must spend time on it because I am unfamiliar with it. It is difficult to teach a subject I know little or no, especially for a teacher like me who does not have teaching experience*" (Teacher A).

"*Another problem I had is that sometimes I finished the lessons early or could not cover what I had planned for the day. This resulted in giving unplanned activities to my learners just to keep them occupied*" (Teacher C).

Pressure from the school administration

The interviews with teachers indicated that pressure from school management could be a challenge for teachers during COVID-19. Pressure from school management means the burden of physical or mental distress from school management. It is the use of persuasion or intimidation to make someone do something. The statement from a teacher illustrates the following:

"*Another challenge I face is performance pressure from school*

administration, and serious competitors are in every field. I must ensure my learners pass their examinations because it is the school's rules" (Teacher A).

Face mask

The interviews from teachers indicated that wearing a face mask could be teachers' challenge at a school during COVID-19. A face mask is a protective covering for the face or part of the face to prevent something. The statement from a teacher illustrates the following:

"*One of the challenges I faced is teaching wearing a face mask. I could not project my voice well as I also had to breathe. Learners were continuously asking me to repeat most of the things I taught*" (Teacher C)

Effects affecting novice teachers' well-being

Frustration

The interviews with teachers indicated that frustration could affect novice teachers' well-being at a school during COVID-19. Frustration is the feeling of being upset or annoyed due to the inability to change or achieve something. It is also a feeling of dissatisfaction often accompanied by anxiety or depression resulting from unfulfilled needs or unresolved problems. A typical emotional response to opposition is anger, annoyance, and disappointment. Frustration arises from the perceived resistance to fulfilling an individual goal and is likely to increase when a will or goal is denied or blocked. The statement from a teacher illustrates the following:

"*I felt confused and frustrated because I was new in the environment. I was unable to focus on class, and sometimes I found myself shouting at the learners*" (Teacher C).

Discouragement

The interviews with teachers indicated that discouragement could affect novice teachers' well-being at a school during COVID-19. Discouragement makes someone feel less confident, enthusiastic, and optimistic about or unwilling to do something. It is to try to prevent something or someone from doing something, especially by making it difficult and showing that you disapprove of it. The statement from a teacher illustrates the following:

"*I felt so discouraged by the attitudes of my learners, and it somehow affected the teaching and learning process. It is tiring because I must repeat the same thing every day*" (Teacher B).

Insomnia

The interviews with teachers indicated that insomnia could affect novice teachers' well-being at a school during COVID-19. Insomnia is the feeling of inadequate or poor sleep. It is known as sleeplessness, is a sleep disorder in which people have trouble sleeping. They have difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep as long as desired. Insomnia is typically followed by daytime sleepiness. The statement from a teacher illustrates the following:

"*I am experiencing sleepless nights because I always think about the progress of my learners*" (Teacher A).

Moods

The teacher interviews indicated that mood swings could affect novice teachers' well-being at a school during COVID-19. A mood swing is an extreme or rapid change in mood. During a mood swing, a person may quickly switch from happy and upbeat to sad, irritable, or angry. It is an alternation of a person's emotional state between periods of euphoria and depression. The statement from a teacher illustrates the following:

"*I spend most of my time in this school, and these challenges change my mood towards my colleagues. Sometimes I feel happy, then the next minute I am sad*" (Teacher D).

Feeling of being a novice teacher

The interviews from the teachers showed a feeling of being a novice teacher at a rural school. Some are uncomfortable being a novice teacher at rural schools, and some mentioned they are comfortable being a novice teacher.

Comfortable

The interviews with novice teachers indicated they are comfortable being a novice teacher. Comfortable means something that makes you feel relaxed. It can mean feeling free from stress or worry. People also experience a nice feeling when they are around other people. The statement from a teacher illustrates the following:

"*Yes, I am comfortable being a novice teacher at a rural school. I grew up in two rural environments that are completely different from each other geographically and in developmental aspects. What I noticed is how they both believed in mutual respect. They promoted respect among the members of society, were always within them, and wanted learners to get educated. Since I am teaching at a rural school, there is no adaptation process I must go through because I am used to rural life. The way teachers are respected in rural areas makes me always work hard and concentrate on my work. I see teaching in a rural school as an opportunity for me to change the way people view the teaching career*" (Teacher B).

"*I am comfortable working at a rural school because I grew up in a rural area, and I do not have to adapt to a new environment*" (Teacher D).

Uncomfortable

The interviews with novice teachers indicated they were uncomfortable being a novice teacher. Uncomfortable means not feeling comfortable and pleasant. It is a bad feeling when you are around other people. The statement from a teacher illustrates the following.

"*No, I am not comfortable. In my school, teachers have groups. Most of the teachers here are 20+ years older than me. I am failing to make friends. I have joined a group of guys who are my age mates. Mind you, I am the only female there. I faced many challenges alone because I could not discuss some with male teachers. I must adapt to the new environment*" (Teacher A).

"*I am uncomfortable because rural schools are suffering in getting resources. As a novice teacher, I need resources to expand and enrich my knowledge of the teaching profession. At the same time, I am comfortable because making my resources could be an advantage that will make it easy for me to adapt to any situation*" (Teacher C).

Novice teachers' relationship with colleagues

The teachers' interviews showed that some have a positive relationship with their colleagues, and some have a negative one.

Positive relationships

The interviews with novice teachers indicated positive relationships among colleagues. A positive relationship is a good relationship between two or more people and involves honesty, trust, respect, and open communication between colleagues. It is a good relationship where people can work together to achieve a common goal. People respect each other's independence, can make decisions without fear of retribution or retaliation, and share decisions. The statement from a teacher illustrates the following:

"*I have a good relationship with my colleagues and good communication. What I like the most is that I am the youngest of them all, which makes it easy for them to open up to me about almost everything towards my growth in the field. I take them as my family since I spend most of my time with them and enjoy being in the same environment. I always reach them if there is something that I do not understand, and they are always willing to help professionally. They also advise me to behave in a way that lasts a long time in the field*" (Teacher B).

"*Communication with my colleagues is good even though there are some challenges between Zulu and Sotho people. As a male teacher, I do not face any difficulties communicating with other colleagues*" (Teacher D).

Negative relationships

The interviews with novice teachers indicated a negative relationship between colleagues. A negative relationship is between two people or groups that do not work together. A negative relationship is a bad one where both parties do not do something in common. The statement from a teacher illustrates the following:

"*I do not communicate with some of my colleagues; we just greet each other. I only communicate with those guys with whom I have joined their group. I also get advice from those guys. I sometimes feel like we are two different schools in one compound, and we are not that close, particularly in academics. We attend common staff meetings for all teachers and work under the same headmaster. Other than that, we have our classes, and they have theirs; we do not share very much. Some regular teachers have never even stepped into our classroom to see what is happening*" (Teacher A).

"*I do not communicate with my colleagues and am uncomfortable with some*

of them. They like to cause unnecessary drama when we have meetings. Most of them have the mentality that they are older than all of us at school, even the principal. Teachers only respect those who are close to them. They do not want to listen to our views. Most of my colleagues are unsupportive, which is why I get bored. Since I am new in the field, I need them always to be my mentor" (Teacher C).

Strategies employed by novice teachers in coping with COVID-19 pandemic

The interviews with novice teachers indicated that extra lessons, teacher and learner-centered approaches, COVID-19 regulations, teaching materials, improvisation, class rules, and assessing support are different strategies using novice teachers in coping with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Extra lessons

The interviews with novice teachers indicated that extra lessons could be the teachers' strategies for coping with the covid-19. Extra lessons are given to learners outside normal school hours to improve their understanding of key concepts from the syllabi. It is more than what is usual or expected. The extra lessons come from the teacher's realm to support learning faculties. The teacher ideally sees individual learners for one hour or twice a week. It is a programme that is based on the premise that learning difficulties. The statement from a teacher illustrates the following:

"I am doing extra classes with my learners in the morning and on weekends. I am doing it because the time is insufficient due to the rotation classes. I must ensure that her learners fully understand the content so they will pass at the end of the year" (Teacher A).

"As a new teacher, it is hard to find an effective teaching strategy to use during this pandemic. I usually give them more homework from previous question papers to do class work" (Teacher B).

Teacher and Learners centred approach

The interviews with novice teachers indicated that teacher- and learner-centred approaches could be the novice teachers' strategies for coping with COVID-19. A learner-centred approach views learners as active agent. Learners can bring their knowledge, past experiences, education, and ideas, impacting how they take on board new information and learn. It is an approach to teaching that focuses on the learners and their development rather than content transmission. In contrast, a centred approach is a teaching method where the teacher is actively involved in teaching while the learners are in a passive, receptive mode, listening as the teacher teaches. Learners put all their focus on the teacher. The teacher talks while the learners exclusively listen. The statement from a teacher illustrates the following:

"I also put learners at the centre of the classroom with active learning strategies; learners work in pairs, in groups, or alone depending on the purpose of the activity" (Teacher A).

"I used the teacher-centred method, and since learners are not attending every day, I give them activities so that they can do them at home, the work alone" (Teacher D).

COVID-19 regulations

The interviews with novice teachers indicated that COVID-19 regulations could be the novice teachers' strategies for coping with COVID-19. The best way to prevent COVID-19 is to avoid being exposed to this virus. COVID-19 regulations are those rules people must follow to avoid being affected by the virus since it is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person. The statement from a teacher illustrates the following:

"I make sure that learners follow COVID-19 regulations by practicing social distancing of one meter. Many taps around the school and small Jojo tanks were made for learners and teachers to wash their hands. Every entrance at school has a sanitizer. I ensure that every learner wears their face mask and avoids touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. I ensure that learners always cover their mouth and nose with tissue when they cough, sneeze, or use the inside of their elbow" (Teacher B).

"For this pandemic, we are isolating ourselves from people. We are following COVID-19 regulations by sanitizing our hands and practicing social distancing. I always tell my learners to throw used tissues in the trash.

Everyone at school wears a mask in public settings and around people not living in their household, especially when social distancing is difficult to maintain. We wash our hands before and after eating. I always clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces. This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, and keyboards" (Teacher C).

Teaching materials

The interviews with novice teachers indicated that teaching materials could be the novice teachers' strategies for coping with COVID-19. Teaching materials refer to the resources and lesson materials teachers use. These educational materials are used to support learning aims for all subjects. Teaching materials enable teachers to offer more interactive, interesting, and engaging learning activities. It encompasses everything a teacher can use to facilitate learning for their learners. The statement from a teacher illustrates the following:

"We normally use the locally made teaching materials found within our local environments such as textbooks, board, chalk and study guides" (Teacher A).

"Since we have a low budget from the Government, we use only locally made teaching materials for examples, previous question papers, textbooks, and worksheets" (Teacher B).

"I am using the textbook, study guides, and previous question papers" (Teacher C).

"I mainly use textbooks and previous question papers. I use textbooks when teaching and question papers for assessments. Using question papers exposes them to different questioning styles that equip them with different methods of answering similar questions during the examination. I am satisfied with how I integrated the resources" (Teacher D).

Improvisation

The interviews with novice teachers indicated that improvisation could be the novice teachers' strategies in coping with the covid-19. Improvisation is making or doing something not planned before, using whatever can be found. Improvisation is putting existing pieces together in a new combination for a purpose. The pieces could be information about a problem or parts of a melody. Teachers or learners apply tools or methods to these pieces very flexibly. In education, teachers try to supplement, substitute, or devise means in inadequate material and equipment to facilitate effective teaching and learning among the learners. The statement from a teacher illustrates the following:

"Sometimes, I used old books that were not in use. It was helpful to them because there would always be two to three chapters in the old books, like the new books' content. I gathered old books at and from other schools for my learners" (Teacher A).

"I allow learners to work in pairs in the classroom so they can share their materials" (Teacher B).

"I had to find a partner with whom I shared materials, and we assisted each other with lesson preparation and setting up tests and examination papers. The school had few books on the subject, so I decided to share the books with my colleagues who were teaching the same subjects. In this way, every learner would have a textbook during the lesson" (Teacher D).

Classroom rules

The interviews with novice teachers indicated that Classroom rules could be the novice teachers' strategies for coping with the covid-19. Classroom rules are a set of rules and guidelines that the teacher imposes on the class. These rules are designed to assist the teacher in behaviours' management and ensure a positive learning environment where all learners feel comfortable and safe. They are often drafted with learners' input, so everyone has a say on how they want everyone to participate in lessons. These rules vary depending on the school, teacher, and class. Classroom rules are the foundation for a functional and successful classroom in any setting. Rules vary from procedures as they determine what the classroom looks like, what behaviours are acceptable and encouraged, and help learners work towards a common goal. The statement from a teacher illustrates the following:

"I make it clear what my expectations are for behaviours in my class. I ensure that her learners know the rules" (Teacher A).

Assessing support

The interviews with novice teachers indicated that assessing support could be the novice teachers' strategies in coping with COVID-19.

Assessing support means requesting support from others or asking for help from people around you. The statement from a teacher illustrates the following:

"*I talked to my colleagues about my problems, and they helped me. I had a problem with syllabus interpretation, especially on the subject I did not major in. My colleagues aided me, and I was happy about it*" (Teacher A).

"*I used my free periods to observe other teachers delivering their lessons, which helped me structure them and present them accordingly*" (Teacher C).

Hope

The interviews with novice teachers indicated that hope could be the teachers' strategies for coping with COVID-19. Hope is an optimistic state of mind based on an expectation of positive outcomes to events and circumstances in one's life. It is to look forward to with desired and reasonable confidence. Hope is the ground for believing that something good may happen. The statement from a teacher illustrates the following:

"*I try to stay positive because I want what is best for learners. Some learners are eager to learn*" (Teacher C).

VII. DISCUSSION

This study found that novice teachers experienced several challenges at school during the COVID-19 pandemic. These included overcrowded classrooms, heavy workload, lack of resources, lack of support, tribalism, lack of orientation, lack of discipline, lack of knowledge of subject content, and pressure from school administration could be considered. This is consistent with previous studies, which revealed that overcrowded classes could affect teachers at school. Van Wyk (2008, p. 143) believes that overcrowded classrooms contribute to poor learning conditions because of the lack of space, fresh air, and high noise levels that could lead to a lack of attention and even create stress within learners. Novice teachers reported potential problems, such as the building needing significant repair, overcrowding, and inadequate instructional materials (Mullis et al., 2016, p. 41). Literature has indicated that overcrowded classrooms are one of the most common factors leading to didactical neglect, which refers to the teacher's inability to pay enough attention to each learner's educational needs (Weinstein, 2012; Marais, 2016; Van Wyk, 2008).

There is consistency with the previous studies, which revealed that Novice teachers complained about the lack of support from educators and their parents' concern for their children's learning (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1983; Veenman, 1984). Novice teachers receive little or no help to assist them with their problems. This is consistent with previous studies, which revealed that lack of subject knowledge is ascribed to several factors. Firstly, in 2007, a new curriculum was launched, and changes were made to the syllabus to improve its relevance. However, no in-service training was done to help novice teachers teach the new curriculum, especially those who did their teaching practice based on the old curriculum. This is consistent with previous studies, which also revealed that novice teachers experienced isolation from their colleagues. Senior teachers hardly had time to socialize with novices. Such a situation prevents teachers from being collaborative and decreases the possibilities of learning from each other. For novice teachers, this isolation can be very disadvantageous (Steyn & Schulze, 2005; Zepeda & Mayers, 2001).

This is consistent with previous studies, which also revealed that novice teachers experienced a lack of discipline in rural schools. The challenges novice teachers encounter in managing learners' discipline problems have been well-documented by many authors Nambira, Kapenda, Tjipueja & Sichombe, 2010; Peloyahae, 2005; Jackson, 2012). Disciplinary problems in schools have been earmarked as a major problem experienced by novice teachers in rural secondary schools in South Africa, which has resulted in a tremendous negative impact on teaching and learning, thereby leading to poor quality of education in these areas (Adams, 2004). This is consistent with previous studies, which also revealed that novice teachers experienced a lack of resources in rural schools. Padayachee (2017) argued that a lack of resources could

potentially hamper the kind of education learners receive, affecting their performance.

Previous studies examining beginning teachers outline the challenges related to many tasks in the school setting. For instance, increased demands beyond pedagogical tasks, frequent curriculum changes, additional administrative work, a growing need for technological competence, and increasing learners' diversity (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007). School policies and administration demands could also influence novice teachers' feelings about job conditions and satisfaction (Coburn & Russell, 2008; Ivanitsky, 1998; Penuel et al., 2010; Powell, 2014).

The findings revealed that frustration, discouragement, insomnia, and mood swings affected novice teachers' well-being at school during the COVID-19 pandemic. There is consistency in the results pointed out the same views that novice teachers frequently fail to cope with the hard situations developed by learners' disruptive behaviours, and due to lack of experience and stress, they become emotional and show negative responses to learners, which later on prove to be major reasons for showing their dissatisfaction with the job and even deciding to leave teaching job (Karatas & Karaman, 2013; Koca, 2016). Professional isolation or loneliness is also another reason proving to be a cause of novice teachers' job attrition, as due to lack of experience, poor socialization or networking with senior teachers, stress, overburden of workload, harsh attitude of school heads develops elements of stress among them (Kelly & Saunders, 2010; Cuddihy, 2012; Razak, 2012). According to Thompson and Haskins (2014, p. 3), stress can arise from the chaos and unpredictability in closed environments such as overcrowded classrooms. According to Alloh, Hasan, Du, and Romanowski (2019), Participants expressed stress or exhaustion while working at government schools.

The findings indicated that novice teachers were uncomfortable in a rural school. Craig and Olson (2001) pointed out that the support they give to one another is not enough; some of the colleagues are not comfortable around other colleagues. Others are comfortable with being a novice teacher at a rural school. This is supported by Kelchtermans (1996), who linked good working conditions and teamwork as the categories of interests necessary to achieve maximum performance of professional tasks. The findings showed that novice teachers have positive relationships with their colleagues, and supportive relationships in the school setting remain paramount to the teachers. All possible efforts should create an environment conducive to more meaningful interactions and situation alliances (Bainer & Didham, 1994). Studies have also found that teachers with strong affiliations are more effective (Chubb, 1988; Little, 1982; Rosenholtz, 1985). Hence, supportive relationships among teachers have also been linked to higher learners' achievement and improved classroom discipline. Some novice teachers have a negative relationship with their colleagues, resulting in low job satisfaction (Friesen, Prokop & Sarros, 1988). This is cited as one of the major reasons for teachers' leaving the profession.

The findings showed that novice teachers used various strategies in coping with the COVID-19 pandemic. These included extra lessons, teacher and learner-centred approaches, COVID-19 regulations, teaching materials, improvisation, class rules, and assessing support and hope. There is consistency with the previous studies, which also revealed that novice teachers use classroom rules as a strategy to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic. All three studies that implemented classroom rules as a stand-alone intervention (Greenwood, 1974; Madsen, Becker & Thomas, 1968; O'Leary 1969) concluded that rules alone did not affect behaviours (Madsen et al., 1968, p. 139). Johnson, Stoner, and Green (1996) demonstrated greater efficacy with teaching classroom rules in one classroom rather than a syllabus/achievement assessment or learners' self-monitoring intervention in two other classrooms to improve learners' behaviours.

This is consistent with previous studies, which also revealed that novice teachers use it as a strategy to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic. According to (Austin, Shah & Muncer, 2005; Sharplin,

O'Neill & Chapman, 2011), Coping strategies are categorised into several areas. There are direct-action strategies that attempt to eliminate the source of stress. Direct-action strategies can include seeking assistance, obtaining information, improvisation, accessing professional development opportunities, connecting with others and reflecting, reframing, and establishing boundaries (Sharplin et al., 2011).

VIII. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate novice teachers' challenges and strategies in coping during the COVID-19 era at schools. The results demonstrated novice teachers faced interrelated challenges daily. The Department of Education in the Free State should provide mobile classrooms, so learners are comfortable and enjoy the lesson. Teachers will also be able to move around when presenting a lesson. The Minister of Education should ensure that novices' workloads are reduced and that they are not assigned challenging job assignments until they become acquainted with the job. The Ministry needs to provide resources to teachers, especially technological resources in rural schools, as they seem most disadvantaged. The Ministry needs to develop supportive social networks for novice teachers to limit the lack of support. Although teachers in this study indicated they could create relationships with their colleagues, these relationships were voluntary and did not benefit all novices.

Hence, all novice teachers should have a mentor to provide ongoing support, observations, and follow-up discussions about their teaching practice. Novice teachers who lacked communication skills could not create these relationships with their colleagues. However, the Ministry can create better supportive networks from which all novice teachers can benefit. The support and guidance are crucial for novice teachers to become competent, productive members of the profession and reduce teachers' stress. The Ministry of Education should allow teachers to do activities at school that will benefit all teachers to learn about other teachers' cultures. The Ministry should ensure that the schools give proper orientation and support to novice teachers during their first year of teaching, irrespective of whether they were previous learners or did their teaching practice at the school. Novice teachers need regular and consistent training on learner discipline through mentoring and coaching. A novice teacher's ability to manage learner discipline is a skill that can be developed over time with the correct training and guidance from learner discipline. The Ministry further needs to bridge the gap between teacher training institutions and schools to improve the pre-service teachers' training. These partnerships between schools and pre-service teacher training institutions would ensure that teacher educators know what is happening in schools.

Similarly, schools could be better acquainted with the institutions' curriculum and know where change is needed. The partnerships would unite educators, mentors, and student teachers to overcome the divide between theory and practice. The Ministry should ensure that more teachers are trained since most schools are short of teachers, which has led to teachers being overloaded and assigned to teach subjects they are not trained for. School heads may try their best to provide a conducive school environment and maximum administrative and academic support to novice teachers so they can perform their duties effectively. The school principal and Head of the Departments (HODs) seem to influence the lives of novice teachers at their schools. Most novice teachers would have a positive feeling at the schools if they had a warm welcome, especially from the principal or HOD.

Apart from the first-day orientation, novice teachers need continuous assistance regarding their teaching and other areas where they are experiencing problems. The school can organise internal professional development workshops about novice teachers' problems and their survival strategies. Schools can also organize meetings where novice teachers are given time to socialize with senior teachers, parents, and children rather than focusing only on schoolwork. Schools should then encourage teamwork between senior teachers and novice teachers to help them overcome the practical challenges and isolation novice

teachers might encounter in classrooms or school environments. Higher education institutions should provide pre-service teachers with two years of practical experience under an experienced teacher's mentorship before their undergraduate degree completion. This could aid in gaining knowledge and understanding more about the school environment teaching and its challenges by developing a shared vision between the programmes and schools. It could also be helpful to address teachers' work-related stressors, perceptions of coercion effectiveness, isolation or rejection, and their struggles in their daily work.

IX. LIMITATIONS

Little research has been done on the problems novice teachers in the Free State face and how they have dealt with them. Therefore, getting adequate information about novice teachers' problems and coping strategies in the Free State was difficult. Since this study was conducted in one region among other regions of the Free State, it cannot be generalised since different schools give different kinds of support to their novice teachers. There was a lack of HODs. Hence, some departments did not have HODs. There was a lack of teachers; therefore, only four participated in the study, which is not a good size on which to base generalization. The availability of participants delayed the commencement of the data collection process. Transcribing interviews and data analysis was a lengthy process.

X. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest.

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