Exploring factors influencing teachers' self-efficacy at rural schools during the Covid-19 pandemic

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*Abstract—*The worldwide COVID-19 pandemic greatly affected our normal life. People had to adapt to new living styles to prevent the spread of disease. COVID-19 created enormous challenges and changes in educational systems. Teachers at work faced many challenges, increasing their stress levels and forcing them into early retirement. Some teachers remained positive, committed, and inspired by the challenges. These factors influenced teachers to work hard and believe they could overcome obstacles. This study explored factors influencing teachers' self-efficacy at rural schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. It employed a qualitative approach and interpretive paradigm. It used the phenomenological research design. This study found various factors influenced teachers' self-efficacy during the COVID-19 pandemic such as technology, electricity, and overcrowded classrooms. It concludes that teachers remain positive, committed, and inspired by the challenges.

Keywords: Effective Teaching and Learning, Rural Schools, Teachers' Self-Efficacy, COVID-19 Pandemic

I. INTRODUCTION

THE worldwide COVID-19 pandemic greatly affected our regular lives, and people had to adapt to new lifestyles to prevent the spread of the disease. There is an increasing development of research on teachers' efficacy in the COVID-19 pandemic. Some scholars examined teachers' remote teaching self-efficacy during the pandemic (Cardullo, Wang, Burton & Dong, 2021). Others explored predictors of teachers' self-efficacy for online teaching in the Arab world amid COVID-19 (Baroudi & Shaya, 2022). Others found that self-efficacy could predict educational performance among university students (Ahmed & Jabeen, 2011). The changes affected people in various ways, including psychosocially. The COVID-19 pandemic has created huge challenges and changes in educational systems, affecting many learners worldwide (Mukuna & Aloka, 2020; Zwane & Mukuna, 2023). This situation made teachers, learners, and parents less effective at school.

There are more explanations of efficacy being experienced in school. Self-efficacy refers to the individual's capacity to produce essential effects. For example, it is the individual awareness of making a difference, feeling good, and taking initiative. Those who perceive themselves as helpless are unhappy and unmotivated to be active (Kulcar, Siller & Juen, 2022). This emphasizes that in a school environment, efficacy is the effect of being able to teach learners effectively and thus achieve the best result. According to Bandura (1977 as cited in Baraudi et al., 2022, p. 2), self-efficacy is a vital concept for schools because teachers with high levels of self-efficacy can stay motivated and take the proper actions to improve their performance and that of their learners. In this study, self-efficacy is how a person improves and works hard during a tough or challenging time. This means individuals never give up on themselves to continue doing great work. Teachers' self-efficacy is believed to influence learners'

achievement and motivation and has been shown to positively affect teachers' beliefs about teaching and instructional behaviour (Klassen, Durksen, & Tze, 2014). In this study, teacher self-efficacy is how a teacher performs at work and is a good and motivated teacher in their interactions with colleagues, learners, community, and school stakeholders.

Self-efficacy is essential for schools as educators with high self-efficacy can make the right decisions and keep improving personal factors and learners' performance (Baroudi & Shaya, 2022). Gloudemans (2013) identified self-efficacy as the individuals' belief to arrange and implement the causes of effort to produce given achievements and beliefs that cause a difference in how people think, act, feel, and control human actions. Because efficacy is psychological, it influences how individuals perceive themselves under these four principal sources of information: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, and social and emotional states (Phan & Locke, 2015). People act and depend on many circumstances, like thinking about circumstances and experiences in daily life. How well an individual acts includes cognitive and affective processing. They are developing ways to control them in advance through effective cognitive processing of information and testing individual judgment (Grossmann, 2018). Self-efficacy beliefs affect the stress and anxiety experienced in aggressive and problematic situations. The third description of efficacy is teachers' self-efficacy. This factor can promote the ability of learners to learn, influence learners' ability, and help learners who have difficulty learning (Schwarzer, 2014). Klassen et al. (2014) defined teachers' self-efficacy as a belief in how to influence learners' achievement and motivation to get positive results, teachers' beliefs on teaching and learning instructional behaviour. Klassen et al. (2014, p. 101) adds that teachers with a lower self-efficacy experience more problems in teaching; for example, a lower level of job satisfaction and a higher level of job-related stress. Teachers' self-efficacy involves a higher level of planning and brings learners joy and interest. Justine (J 322 student) emphasizes that internet access is the biggest challenge.

Teachers from rural schools were also affected by internet access as some schools are located where there are mountains, thus making it difficult for teachers to share learning and teaching information. Buabeng-Andoh-Andoh and Totimeh (2012) indicated that teachers must be confident that technology can make their teaching interesting, easier, fun, and motivating for both learners and teachers. This study focuses on factors influencing teachers' self-efficacy in rural schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. Rural schools experienced the biggest obstacle related to their area (environment). Effective education was limited by various problems, such as poorly qualified teachers, multi-grade teaching, insufficient governmental finances, lack of resources, and parental involvement in their children's education. Different factors, including internal school structure and part of the outside environment like local communities and education authorities, might be responsible for problems (Du Plessis, 2014). The quality of rural education has shown little improvement in the past 28 years of democracy.

In the grade 3 class, the teacher's roles were as follows: Teaching four subjects- English, Sesotho, Mathematics, and Life Skills and planning for lessons as per the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement. Monitoring and marking all learners' work and workbooks and monitoring each learner's progress to report to the departmental head of the school and parents during school meetings and developing each learner's interests and abilities through activities and ensuring classroom cleanliness. Over and above that, the researcher had to participate in staff meetings and school committees. They researched various teaching aids and support materials that are inclusive for all learners, especially those with learning barriers. They monitor learners during break time to maintain order in the feeding scheme queues. In addition, there was administration work- filling learners' profiles and filing. In January 2018, the researcher was promoted to the intermediate phase and experienced shifts from the foundation phase. They attended the lessons according to the timetable, had to plan, do an activity book, and mark all learners' activity books and formal assessments. For an assessment task as a teacher, you type it before you hand it to your departmental head to monitor it. The methods used in teaching and learning are traditional methods of teaching. In the intermediate class, learners are overcrowded, and a teacher is challenged to discipline them during lessons and treat them equally. This study will lead the reader to the factors influencing teachers' school self-efficacy. Teachers work hard under difficult circumstances but still do good work. This study explored how teachers' self-efficacy could be improved in the workplace and examined factors that affected teachers' self-efficacy in a rural school during COVID-19.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Factors that influenced teachers' self-efficacy during the COVID-19 pandemic

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, South African public schools faced overcrowded classrooms, limited classroom space, insufficient resources, a shortage of educators, poor teaching and learning, a lack of clean water, and insufficient toilets (Maree, 2022). These issues were further exacerbated by the scourge of the pandemic, especially in rural schools. Guthrie, Tordoff, and Meisner (2020) state that the Government implemented methods for reopening schools focused on developing teachers' efficacy. Mukuna and Aloka (2020) confirm that some schools have renovated, adding mobile classrooms for additional floor space to permit social distancing guidelines. According to United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) (2021), the Department of Basic Education (DBE) offered schools to select attendance timetables suitable for learners. Maree (2022) and Tseeke (2021) agree that most schools selected weekly rotation and platooning timetables. That implementation helped schools as learners did not have to share furniture, such as desks, to maintain social distancing. However, Maree (2022) argued that schools continuously used

traditional class timetables because they had enough space for learners. Play (2018) pointed out that most South African public schools have infrastructural issues. These issues mainly pertain to water and sanitation infrastructure. Ma and Cavanagh (2018) agree that personal behaviour can influence self-efficacy.

Furthermore, Rabaglietti, Lattke, Tesauri, Settanni, and De Lorenzo (2021) wrote that during the COVID-19 lockdown, classes shifting from face-to-face to virtual learning caused stress to most teachers and learners. Ramakrishnan and Salleh (2018) supported that stress-related circumstances differ depending on the individual teachers' awareness and preparedness. Considering the issues raised, Mokoena and Hlalele (2021) advised that teachers could use skills such as self-efficacy and self-regulation to address issues relating to distress and frustrations in the workplace.

III.   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Background of the theory

The study was guided by the self-efficacy theory that Albert Bandura introduced in 1977. He first developed this theory as an individual's decision on how well an individual can perform a task to deal with situations. According to Bandura (1977), four primary factors influence self-efficacy beliefs: (1) achieving performance goals relates to what individuals attempt to do, whether their efforts are successful or not; (2) vicarious performance relates to what we observe others doing; (3) verbal influence on how others perceive our abilities and limitations; and (4) imaginary performance, which is what we think we will be able to do well or poorly. Since Bandura (1977) developed the self-efficacy theory, it has influenced thousands of psychology studies in many relevant fields, including education, social work, workplaces, and others pertinent to social lives.

Objective, principles, and assumptions of the theory

In Bandura's view, the objective of self-efficacy theory is based on how an individual deals with challenges and tasks and achieves his/her goals (Kendra, 2019). People implement this theory of self-efficacy to achieve a particular task. According to the fundamental origins of this theory, people with high levels of self-efficacy are more likely to participate in activities than those without.

The four (4) main influences of self-efficacy are:

Performance Experiences: Individuals can be influenced by positive and negative experiences to perform tasks. Under this performance experience, teachers can be influenced by new plans brought by the Department of Education to continue with the excellent work.

Vicarious Experiences: Used as motivation by observing the performance of others and comparing their performance. For example, some individuals believe they can achieve or succeed in a particular task by observing or seeing someone achieve it.

Verbal: Positive or negative spoken conversations can encourage or discourage individuals.

Emotional state: If someone has self-confidence and positive emotions, the person can work harder to reach set goals. Teachers with high achievable goals and who develop a good learning environment are likely to have higher teacher self-efficacy.

Assumption of the theory

One of the self-efficacy theory assumptions is that a person's potential to perform target behaviour is based on psychological causes. Teachers were motivated by not teaching overcrowded classes due to the COVID-19 protocols. With a small group of learners in class, teachers could identify learners with barriers to learning and give them additional attention. Those learners were more likely to improve as some might have been affected by systemic barriers. Teachers showed willingness to participate in teaching activities during the difficult time of the COVID-19 lockdown, where they were supposed to help learners maintain social distance in the classroom and during break time. The teacher was responsible for cleaning and sanitizing the classroom before the learners arrived and during break time. Monitoring learners to

follow the teacher's rules created a positive attitude between teachers and learners.

Relevancy of the study

Self-efficacy theory is related to this study. Self-efficacy theory is based on the belief that individuals can achieve a lot by dealing positively with the state that distresses their lives. During the COVID-19 pandemic, one factor influencing teachers' self-efficacy at schools was the state of distress. Those factors played an important role for teachers at schools. For example, teachers with higher self-efficacy at work were able to contribute to achieving an effective teaching and learning situation. Most researchers have shown that the factors that affected teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic influenced teachers' efficacy. Teachers worked hard during that stressful time. Although they lost colleagues due to the virus, they did their jobs diligently. This study will help rural communities with other forms of decision-making and behavioural influences. Teachers participating in this study will benefit by bringing their knowledge to their classrooms and sharing how they overcame adversities during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown period. They developed a professional community within that society.

IV. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study explored how teachers' self-efficacy could improve in the workplace during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Its research question was: What factors influenced teachers' self-efficacy at rural schools during the COVID-19 pandemic?

V. METHODS

Research approach

Research methodology is essential to any research study because it guides the researcher in developing and synthesising ideas to solve the research problem and determining how the information will be collected from participants. There are three approaches under research methodology; however, the researcher in this study employed the qualitative research approach and its design for this study. According to Kothari (2019, p. 5), there are two main research methods: qualitative and quantitative. This study used the qualitative method because it involves the views of teachers. Bhat (2020) argued that a qualitative approach is a research process that focuses on finding data through open-ended and conversational communication. This approach is important because it allows the researcher to probe participants with questions that cannot be simply put into numbers to recognize human experiences (Cleland, 2017). The advantages of the qualitative approach are that it saves costs using a small sample size, is open-ended (there is no right or wrong answer), allows for detail-leaning information to be gathered, and helps create measurable results (Maree, 2015). A noted disadvantage of the approach is that it can miss information, meaning there is a level of trust in information collection methods that other forms of research do not involve (Maree, 2015).

Research design

This study used a case study as a research design method. According to Maree (2015), a case study examines an individual situation, and the investigation may be used on a person, professional, occasion, or a group of people. It is further stated that the advantages of case study design include turning participants' observations into practical information for accessibility to readers, allowing them to realize unfamiliar structures within the information to conclude. Case studies are efficient when the sample size is small.

Research paradigm

This study used the interpretive paradigm, arguing that reality and information are personal, social, and factually situated based on lived experiences and people's understanding of it (Ryan, 2018). Creswell (2014, as cited in Pham, 2018, p. 3) states that the interpretive paradigm seeks to understand the phenomenon and its unique context better. According to Pham (2018), the advantages of the interpretive paradigm are that it allows researchers to study and interrogate things that we cannot observe, including designated objects, humans, or events, to gain a deeper understanding of them in a social context. On the other hand, interpretivism fails to address the political and conceptual impact of knowledge and societal reality.

Participants

The population of this study comprised teachers from schools in the Thabo-Mofutsanyane District, Free State Province, South Africa. According to Majid (2018), the population is the study target for a research subject. This study used purposive sampling as a technique to select the participants. Campbell et al. (2020) argue that purposive sampling allows the researcher to focus on the population from which the sample is drawn and not on the entire population. According to Ayres (2020), the advantages of purposive sampling include a chance to create overviews from data collected, involving multiple stages, and saving time and costs while gathering data. One disadvantage is that participants in purposive sampling can manipulate the data. The sample size involved six participants (three males and three females). It considered their home language- Sesotho, residential areas, teaching experience, highest qualifications obtained, age, and the subjects they taught.

Instruments

This study used semi-structured interviews to collect qualitative data. According to Doyle (2020), semi-structured interviews can be face-to-face or telephonic meetings with the interviewee. The researcher chose semi-structured interviews to interrogate participants' feelings, thoughts, and beliefs regarding the subject matter. According to Cycle (2019), interviewers require consent from the interviewee rather than an immediate question-and-answer approach, offering engagements through open-ended questions for in-depth detail. It enables respondents to speak freely about complex themes and promotes two-way dialogue. However, open-ended interviews can be time-consuming as participants are not limited in how they respond to questions.

Research setting

This study was conducted at Meets Primary Farm School, Versien Farm, in Bethlehem. The school is located on a small farm, approximately 8.0 km from Bethlehem in the Free State Province. The school has six classrooms for learners from grades R to 6, a staff room, and the principal's office. The school management team comprises one principal and two Departmental heads - foundation and intermediate phases. The school had three hundred learners when the research was conducted.

Data analysis

This study employed thematic analysis to understand experiences, opinions, or behaviours across a data set (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). According to Caulfield (2019), thematic analysis helps to understand data and makes it easier to work with large amounts of information by categorizing them according to broad themes. Braun and Clark (2012 as cited in Caulfield, 2019) state that if you have decided that thematic analysis is a good method for your data, you can follow six steps of thematic analysis. Triangulation was used in this study because the researcher used interviews and observations to collect data. Data was sent to participants for validation of the information captured. The researcher contacted them until the data saturation point was reached.

Ethical considerations

Sekaran and Bougie (2016) maintain that several ethical considerations must be made when collecting information. The researcher must follow the correct steps to request ethical approval to collect the data. In this study, the University of the Free State gave the researcher ethical clearance before conducting fieldwork. Participants voluntarily participated in the study with informed consent, and all personal data was kept private. The participants were informed of their rights to decline to participate in the study without consequences. Also, they were made aware of the study's goal and any potential risks involved. The researchers adhered strictly to the University of the Free State's ethics committee rules regarding data collection.

VI.   RESULTS

Participants' profiles

Table 1: Profiles of participants in this study

Participants (Pseudonym)	Gender	Age	Highest Qualifications	Teaching Experience
John Doe	Male	41-50	PTD and ACE	17 years
Richard Roe	Male	31-40	PGCE	2 years
Roe Boz	Male	31-40	B.Ed,	10 years
Jane Doe	Female	41-50	B.Ed.: Honours	19 years
Jane Roe	Female	51-65	PTC and ACE	16 years
Doe Bell	Female	51-60	PTC and ACE	20 years

PGCE: Post Graduate Certificate in Education
Bed: Bachelor of Education
ACE: Advanced Certificate in Education
PTD: Primary Teachers Diploma
PTC: Primary Teachers Certificate

This study explored how teachers' self-efficacy can be improved in the workplace during the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers signed a consent form to participate in a focus group and one-on-one interview. They were also required to answer five questions about their views and beliefs on the variables affecting teachers' self-efficacy. The problem addressed in this study was recognizing how well individuals can perform a task to deal with a particular situation.

Factors influencing teachers' self-efficacy at a rural school during the COVID-19 pandemic

Participants were asked what factors influenced teachers' self-efficacy during the COVID-19 pandemic. Most participants indicated factors such as technology, electricity, and overcrowded classrooms.

Shortage of technology material

"In our school, there is a shortage of technology. This makes it difficult for learners and educators to encourage problems and prohibits the flow of opportunities for all parties involved" (Jane Doe).

Lack of transport

"Transport is also challenging as social distancing had to be maintained" (John Doe).

"We take public transportation to work yet encounter difficulties like excessive wait times during rush hours" (Richard Roe).

Lack of resources

"Lack of facilities, like electricity and technology. The environment itself deprived the opportunities for teachers and learners to learn" (John Doe).

Absenteeism

"The COVID-19 protocols are responsible for social networking and absenteeism. Some learners see this as an advantage, coming to class whenever they want and making excuses" (Richard Roe).

"Shortage of educators in our school is a huge problem. Our school needs more educators because of the workload.'' (Jane Roe).

Lack of teaching materials

"Lack of teaching materials because of over-crowded learners in the classrooms. As we do not have a big school. It is challenging to work at a farm school" (Roe Boz).

Although many educators are aware of the technology available for teaching purposes, for various reasons, educators are not taking advantage of the chance to incorporate such tools into their classrooms. Those factors were important in this study because they influence teachers' self-efficacy at schools, whether positive or negative. Some factors influencing teachers' self-efficacy at schools caused distress in their lives. Different stress levels related to the situations occur depending on teachers' awareness and preparation skills.

Teachers' self-efficacy improved effective teaching and learning at rural school during the COVID-19 pandemic.

They all indicated that the new implementation introduced by the Department of Basic Education made them improve in the workplace.

Social distance

"Social distancing and practicing good hygiene e.g. (washing hands, wearing masks) to prevent COVID-19 is one that improved at the workplace" (John Doe).

"Keeping a regular distance as per COVID-19 regulations" (Richard Roe).

Practicing good hygiene

"Our staff and learners show a good improvement when it comes to practicing good hygiene e.g. (washing hands, wearing masks) to prevent COVID-19 one that improved at the workplace" (John Doe).

"As we know, learners come from different family backgrounds, and most have learned much about practicing good hygiene" (Jane Roe).

A small number of learners in class

"A small number of learners in class" (Roe Boz).

"Fewer learners in a class promotes a more positive learning environment for teachers and learners and makes a welcoming and secure environment" (Doe Bell).

Implementing the new Annual Teaching Plan

"The new Annual Teaching Plan (ATP) implementation from the Department of Education. Which makes us teach important content and makes our work easy" (Jane Doe).

"Yes, ATP makes our work easy, but it leaves some important information we need to teach learners" (Done Bell).

The ability of teachers to develop their knowledge, skills, and attitudes in the workplace is one of the ways that they can improve their efficacy in the workplace. According to Bandura, the best way to raise personal efficacy is through meaningful experiences.

Culture of the school

Participants were asked to talk about the culture of the school. They mainly indicated that the school culture was generally positive.

"To ensure that all learners participate in extra mural activities" (John Doe).

"CIVID-19 influences how often learners attend assemblies and other school events like awards for learners and sporting events" (Jane Doe).

English as a second language

"It is English and Sesotho speaking with LOADS of English and learners comes from the community where the school is located" (Richard Roe).

"Because spoken language integration includes a second language, the environment for a learner may become challenging" (Jane Roe).

"Educators report in time for duty and are very dedicated. On Wednesday, we observe sports activities" (Jane Doe).

"Having sports activities helps our learners to be exposed to different skills and understanding having different extracurricular activities" (Richard Roe).

Attending extra classes

"Grade 6 learners attended afternoon studies without being forced. In that way, it prepared them when they are going to do grade 7 township schools" (Jane Roe).

"Because we are not forcing them to attend extra classes studies, the number of learners who attend increases. We encouraged them by providing them with a meal after school so they could focus on their extracurricular activities" (Jane Doe).

Hardworking in unleashing

"The school management encourages teachers to work hard in unleashing the potential of every learner" (Doe Bell).

"We work hard on our learners because everyone is unique, and we create a supportive environment that motivates them" (Doe Bell).

Various aspects of life can be used to define a culture. Massman (2013: 114) refers to culture as all the parts of life, including mental, social, language, and physical form, and the ideas and relationships of the people who have them, the language they are fluent in, and they share.

Dedicating teaching

Participants showed more interest and a lot of love for being educators. They indicated that they love working with learners because of the knowledge and skills they share or gain from them. Participants demonstrated awareness of the ability to cooperate and have patience with learners.

"I love teaching because I learn from my learners as much as I teach them" (John Doe).

"Because I like to give the learners the best knowledge and the love of education" (Richard Roe).

"The main purpose of my loving teaching is that I want to transform the

lives of the young ones" (Roe Boz).

"I love teaching because I love kids (learners). It gives me a deeper understanding of the meaning of life. Working with kids from different backgrounds and contributing to making a difference in their lives satisfies me" (Jane Doe).

"I love teaching as a career because I enjoy teaching learners. Guide and motivate them to share ideas, listen attentively to one another, what they are talking" (Jane Roe).

"As a teacher, I have to commit myself to making the world a better place by ensuring that every child that gets into my hands succeeds in life" (Doe Bell).

Teaching requires patience and understanding, both of which are brought by love. Inspiring learners to think outside the box and pushing them to achieve their full potential are two things that teachers may do for learners. A good teacher involves communication, listening, patience, empathy, and adaptability. Teachers can also manage a class, modify curriculum, and work with learners from all backgrounds, which requires leadership abilities. A good teacher shows compassion for learners.

VII. DISCUSSION

The results showed that the COVID-19 pandemic influenced teachers' self-efficacy, in this case, causing distress in their lives. School culture significantly influences teachers' self-efficacy because management works with various stakeholders. Teachers could attend other activities and programs outside of the school curriculum. This shows that they love their work. The teachers' beliefs and attitudes strongly influence their behaviour, teaching style, and decisions (Khairuddin, Dally, & Foggett, 2016). Mitchell (2018) asserted that the reasons behind why people think, act, and behave the way they do need to be interrogated. Based on the participants' opinions on factors of teachers' self-efficacy, the discussion follows. The participants' responses indicated they understood the factors influencing teachers' self-efficacy. The participants were aware of the shortage of technology experienced in the other schools. During the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown period, the DBE implemented a new technology system to continue with the curriculum while learners were at home. Today, teachers are involved in teaching and learning using that technology. However, this technology has limitations, as the participants noted that electricity was an issue. The school could take up to three days without electricity, thus affecting access to online teaching materials and workshops aimed at professional development. Participants also raised the issue of overcrowded classes, making it difficult for learners to receive individual attention, especially when they had to return to school when the COVID-19 regulations were relaxed. Participants indicated that learners had to share their textbooks due to the lack of stationery and study materials provided by the DBE to the school. This affected teaching times and how the learners proceeded with their learning outcomes. Participants had greater confidence and knew that self-efficacy could be enhanced on the job. People who do not get the chance to work under difficult challenges are often bored, which affects their self-efficacy. They are less motivated or driven; they become stressed, etc. Participants indicated that social distancing, frequent hygiene practices, a limited number of learners in their classrooms, and the new ATPs improved teachers' self-efficacy in the workplace. Participants were motivated to work harder due to the limited number of learners in the school and could attend to learners' individual needs.

Good hygiene practices were improved during the lockdown, as cleanliness was emphasized. Learners improved their cleanliness as well as hand washing or sanitizing. Participants recognized the close connection between culture and education inside the school. Participants understood that each school has a different identity that influences how the school works and is connected to the governing body's culture. Participants indicated that the School Management Team (SMT) and educators worked together to encourage all learners to work hard, including learners with barriers to learning. Participants also

indicated that they encouraged learners to participate in extramural activities. This culture plays an important role within the school because some learners learn more effectively when doing physical activities. Other participants indicated they got full support from the SMT to work hard at school, meaning that the SMT encouraged a learning culture for the teachers and learners. Participants also indicated encouraging and motivating learners, especially grade 6, to attend afternoon studies is part of the school culture. Participants were asked if they loved teaching. The findings of this study showed that the teachers at Meets Farm School love their teaching work. One participant indicated that they love teaching because they get to learn from learners.

Furthermore, participants indicated their love of teaching came from it being a career. 83% of participants in this study had more than ten years of experience in teaching. This experience matters for guiding, motivating, sharing ideas, listening, and talking with learners.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The study aimed to investigate the factors that affected teachers' self-efficacy in a rural school during the COVID-19 pandemic in the Bethlehem region. It sought to conclude the research study and provide recommendations and lessons. Teachers face multiple challenges at work, increasing their stress and forcing some of them into early retirement. In those circumstances, they did not give up on going to work. As teachers, their experience is not easy because of the ups and downs of changing the curriculums. Some teachers remain positive, committed, and inspired by the challenges.

In contrast, others are concerned with complex issues because of disappointment. Some factors influence teachers to work hard and believe they can overcome the obstacles. This research was intended to get a full understanding of teachers' self-efficacy. It is anticipated that its findings will contribute valuable information to the rural teachers and show them the importance of factors influencing them to work hard and be committed to their work even if it is difficult. The study greatly benefited the researcher through the information the teachers shared. Teachers participating in this study also gained more information on the factors influencing them to work hard.

According to the study's findings, teachers at Meets Farm School love teaching as a career. This passion must be ignited by various professional development workshops and certifications by the DBE. Additionally, wards could be specifically focused on educators in farm and rural schools throughout the various provinces. The last recommendation would be to examine a teacher's qualifications as a factor in self-efficacy. The teachers in this study had undergraduate and graduate degrees as qualifications. In this study, some factors were discussed but not thoroughly explored, including lack of water, sanitation facilities, poor teaching and learning, and personal behaviours. Despite this research highlighting these factors, there was no detailed information from the participants; therefore, they would be worthwhile issues for future investigations.

The current study discovered that technology, electricity, shortage of educators, overcrowded learners in classrooms, teaching materials, and transport influenced teachers' self-efficacy at rural schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Department of Basic Education primarily focuses on township rather than rural and farm schools. Although the research design was open-ended interview questions, the researcher felt that the participants did not fully engage and discuss other critical issues faced by their farm school. In addition to the skills and knowledge component of teaching, it is advised that teachers be supported to boost their confidence that they can make a positive contribution to teaching. Increased teacher self-efficacy can promote learners' academic performance, teacher mental health, and satisfaction with their jobs. This study demonstrated that teachers' self-efficacy is higher when their work environment and personal values are complementary.

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