



Exploring novice teachers' experiences in coping with adversities at a rural school in the Thabo Mofutsanyane district in COVID-19: A wellbeing programme

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Abstract— This study explored how a wellbeing programme helps novice teachers cope with adversity at a rural school. It adopted a qualitative approach and case study research design. This study employed in-depth semi-structured interviews in data collection. Four novice teachers were selected to participate in the study from a rural school in the Thabo Mofutsanyane district, Free State Province, South Africa. It used thematic analysis to analyse qualitative data. The results revealed that novice teachers experienced a lack of cooperation, no sense of belonging, no warm welcome, conflict, discouragement, job dissatisfaction, and traumatised and ill-disciplined learners during the COVID-19 pandemic. There are various reasons why most of them find it difficult to cope with adversities at a rural school. This study recommended that the National Department of Basic Education create a policy allowing teachers to submit necessary documents needed by the administration of the department of basic education.

Keywords: Wellbeing Programme, Novice Teachers, School Adversities, Rural Schools

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I. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDENT

TEACHERS' wellbeing plays a critical role in children's development and growth. It might negatively or positively affect their psychological factors. Teachers face challenges daily at the workplace, and these can either build them up or break them down. Thus, teachers have the right to equal treatment, respect, and dignity. They are deserved to work in a safe and secure environment. They should not be exposed to any form of violence or inhumane treatment. However, novice teachers are psychologically affected during their first year in South African schools. They experience depression, stress, and anxiety due to hardship and their daily working conditions. A recent study conducted in Nigeria indicated that most teachers develop stress while a few suffer from depression (Rodrigues, Lago, Almeida, Ribeiro, & Mesquita, 2020). According to Wessels and Wood's (2020) study on positive psychology, teachers concentrate on improving core professional duties rather than enhancing their wellbeing. Many factors influenced the teachers' wellbeing. However, Wessels and Wood (2019) highlighted five components of wellbeing: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishments. In this model, positive emotions relate to belonging, happiness, warmth, and being welcomed into the work environment without unhealthy emotional pressure. This would enable novice workers to have a positive attitude and be more proactive in given tasks. Engagement means workers must display interest, focus, and attention in their activities. Good relationships among colleagues, staff, and clients would make novice workers perform their work effectively. Meaning entails that novice workers have a sense of purpose in what they are doing and

find their work meaningful. Accomplishments reward workers when they complete tasks and achieve goals. As Seligman (2011) affirmed, there is also "flourishing", which refers to three essential aspects of wellbeing: psychological health, happiness, and positive affective states.

Therefore, the prevailing conditions in the education sector in South Africa, particularly in rural schools in the Thabo Mofutsanyane district, are opposed to the basic principles of this model. Members of the community do not have respect for the profession and its members and ignore the vital role that teachers play in their children's lives (Fedorov et al., 2020). As Zhukova (2018) affirmed, novice teachers are challenged to adapt to the culture of the schools where they are stationed. They lack institutional support, individual training (workshops), development systems, and adequate remuneration. They also fear for their lives due to unsafe environments and ill-disciplined learners. They encounter bullying, overcrowded classes, and a general lack of resources. Moreover, they are not paid on time and are afraid of losing employment.

Thus, there is a need for transparency in communication between novice teachers and the Department of Basic Education regarding human resource processes. For instance, novice teachers experience a delay in payments because principals delay the submission of their documents to the DBE or do not submit them at all. The DBE administration may also delay the process. Therefore, novice teachers need to be able to check on payment processes and receive feedback since the South African Council for Educators (SACE) (2008, p.5) policy clearly states that teachers have the right "to be paid on time". The COVID-19 pandemic has led to the shutdown of schools across the globe, with far-reaching consequences for African countries that are most affected by this pandemic economically. The pandemic has critically affected teaching and learning in rural schools, leaving

children and teachers in dire straits. Although education in rural schools had slightly improved in post-apartheid South Africa, novice teachers' wellbeing has been severely affected by this global pandemic in terms of educational values, teaching, and learning settings. Due to the lack of electronic gadgets and internet connectivity, online teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in South African rural schools is problematic (Mukuna & Aloka, 2020). Teachers and learners in rural areas lack the understanding and expertise to utilise internet technology during this COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, the significance of a wellbeing programme in helping novice teachers overcome their hardship becomes indispensable in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and such adversities as school-based violence, gangsterism, drug abuse, and lack of remuneration.

Factors influencing novice teachers' wellbeing

Although there is a lot of literature on negative influences on teachers' wellbeing, there is a shortage of information that focuses specifically on how a wellbeing programme could help novice teachers cope with adversity in rural schools in Thabo Mofutsanyane District. As Zhukova (2018) points out, novice teachers find applying practical teaching skills like classroom management, improvising teaching resources, organising class work, instilling discipline, motivating learners, and attending to different learners' needs difficult. This concurs with Du Plessis and Mestry's (2019) view that rural learners do not attend school regularly as they are forced to work on the farms and lack educational support from their parents. Moreover, the basic infrastructural resources like roads, transport, electricity, and information and communication technology are a major challenge in rural areas. Most South African rural schools are still marginalised and under-resourced. As Du Plessis and Mestry (2019) suggest, the School Governing Body, the Department of Basic Education (DBE), stakeholders, and parents should all provide teachers with extra rural allowance and materials to ensure that the learners are provided with quality education. This would enhance the wellbeing of novice teachers in rural schools, which is the study's focus.

Personal responses to teachers' work

Bullying is defined as repetitive repression, which can be psychological or physical, of a less powerful person by an influential or more dominant group (Manyibe & Anyona, 2018). Bullying is rampant in South African schools and exists in different forms, including learner-to-learner, learner-to-teacher, and teacher-to-learner. In a recent South African news report, a grade ten learner in Limpopo called Lufuno Mavhungu allegedly committed suicide after being bullied (Tshikalange, 2021). In most cases, novice and learner teachers are the primary victims of learner-to-teacher bullying. Thus, bullying is a significant factor that makes novice teachers unable to manage their workload. It exists in the form of threats of violence, threats of losing the job, and physical abuse. This undermines novice teachers' integrity, leading to emotional exhaustion.

Abuse of power is also a burning issue in most South African schools. According to Masuku and Makwakwa (2021), a teacher was assaulted by the school governing body at one of the high schools in Durban as she was denied an opportunity to be part of parents' meeting, where she intended to break her silence and speak to parents about what happens at the school. The principal was accused of unprofessional conduct, as some teachers were falsely accused of not doing their job. However, the Department of Education failed to intervene after receiving several letters from the abused teachers. Emotions play an essential role in teaching and learning, and they can affect both learners and teachers negatively, leading to a decrease in teaching and learning outcomes. Sources of emotional stress in the school setting include ill-disciplined learners, parents, colleagues, and staff members. Novice teachers may also experience negative emotions which result from violent learner behaviours and poor academic performance (Cogan, 2017). According to Mukuna and Aloka (2020), one learner allegedly assaulted a teacher when he announced temporary school closure due to increased COVID-19 cases. A grade 12 learner head-butted his teacher, as revealed in a

video clip that went viral on social media (Shange, 2019).

Moreover, in 2018, a teacher was stabbed to death by a learner in the same district. Such shocking incidents can lead novice teachers to quit teaching as they would not be able to perform their duties effectively due to fear. Thus, information on the emotional competence of teachers is essential because when they are feeling good, they perform their tasks well.

Resilience and self-efficacy

Richardson et al. (1990, as cited in Brouskeli, Kaltsi, & Maria, 2018, p.43) alluded to resilience as "the way toward adapting to adversities, disruptive, distressing, or challenging life occasions, in a way that furnishes the person with extra defensive and adapting abilities than before the disturbance". Teacher resilience is a challenge in the teaching profession throughout the world. Resilience is the ability to "conquer chances" and exhibit the individual qualities expected to adapt to difficulty or adversity (Boniwell & Ryan, 2012, as cited in Brouskeli et al., 2018, p.43). Consequently, teacher resilience is the ability to bounce back from an unpleasant situation. Novice teachers in rural schools face significant career challenges and thus need social support to overcome their hardships.

Self-efficacy refers to teachers' perceptions of their abilities to influence learner outcomes, particularly for learners who look uninterested or difficult to instruct (Rossel 2005 et al., cited in McCallum, Price, Graham, & Morrison, 2017). Teachers with high self-efficacy believe they can be effective, even in difficult situations with learners. Such teachers do not only believe in the role of personal talents and competencies but also in how resources and other contextual factors can influence effective teaching and learner understanding (McCallum, et al., 2017).

Novice teachers' transition, induction, and mentoring

Induction focuses on educating novice teachers about the school culture and infrastructure to improve their teaching abilities (Hudson, 2012). Related literature has revealed that novice teachers experience frustration and feelings of failure from isolation, poor understanding of what is expected of them, heavy workloads, extra assignments that they are unprepared to handle, and lack of social support from experienced teachers or supervisors. The management should establish a framework for extensive induction of novice teachers. It should provide orientation on their new working environment, including teachers, learners, ancillary staff, and assets. Novice teachers in most rural schools in South Africa were not given any induction, training, workshops, or even mentors during their first working days. Through the Department of Basic Education, the government must ensure that the school leaders and other staff members practice the culture of treating novice teachers respectfully and giving them induction, training, and all the support, they need.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study utilised Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory as the theoretical framework. According to Lopez-Garrido (2020), self-efficacy is how well one can execute the courses of action required to deal with prospective situations. Even though Bandura simplified the theory, psychologists have contemplated self-efficacy from various perspectives. Self-efficacy can also be seen as an individual's specific faith-based expectations that decide how well they can execute a course of action in their current circumstances (Maddux & Gosselin, 2012). In simpler terms, self-efficacy is a person's belief in their abilities to prosper and reach their goals.

The theory is often utilised in Applied Psychology. Lopez-Garrido (2020) proposes that people build self-efficacy convictions by deciphering information from four fundamental causes of impact. The first cause is Mastery Experiences (or Performance Outcomes), which can be described as a novice teacher's experiences of new challenges at the school in this context. Vicarious is a stage in which the novice teacher can fail or pass. Believing that one will succeed engenders personal

efficacy and helps one come up with solutions to tackle any adversity that one may come across at school. A positive mind triggers positive energy. This stage is followed by Vicarious Experiences (Social Role Models) in which novice teachers observe experienced teachers who work hard, succeed in their schoolwork, produce good results for learners, and focus on their daily work without distraction. They carefully observe the experienced teachers while performing and view them as mentors.

The third cause is Social Persuasion, in which one would focus on verbal feedback on the task given at school (Bandura, 1977, as cited in Lopez-Garrido, 2020). For example, the principal or head of Department should make the time to look at the work of novice teachers and encourage them to work hard. They should show faith in the teacher and highlight where they have improved. If the feedback is only negative, it will discourage the novice teacher. Lastly, there are Emotional and Physiological States. It is challenging to maintain wellbeing if one suffers from depression, stress, and anxiety (Lopez-Garrido, 2020). It is also impossible to gain self-efficacy while novice teachers are afraid for their lives due to unsafe environments and ill-disciplined learners, and while they struggle with overcrowded classes, a lack of resources, and not being paid on time.

Lopez-Garrido (2020) identified the fifth main source of self-efficacy as Imaginal Experiences/Visualisation, in which one visualises the goal one has set and imagines how close one is to reaching it. Novice teachers may start visualising the completion of their work, and this would spur them on to work even harder. Self-efficacy is an important element of this study because novice teacher's thoughts, beliefs, and feelings form part of their wellbeing. Those thoughts may influence their actions in the workplace and their reactions when they are faced with adversities at school. Novice teachers must stay strong and know their rights and responsibilities to produce the desired outcomes. Bandura's (1977) theory provides insight into the relationship between the novice teachers' sense of self-efficacy and their ability to cope with adversities in rural schools. The study is relevant to newly appointed teachers, who are referred to in this study as novice teachers. It can be utilised as an assessment model to determine how well novice teachers can cope with the adversities they face in rural schools and the strategies they use to tackle these problems. It encourages novice teachers to assist the upcoming generation who have a passion for the teaching career and would also need mentors to help them where they encounter difficulties.

III. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDENT

The study explores novice teachers' experiences coping with adversities at a rural school through a wellbeing programme in the Thabo Mofutsanyane district during the COVID-19 pandemic.

IV. METHODS

This study adopted a qualitative approach. According to Aspers and Corte (2019), a qualitative research approach is an iterative interaction in which researchers improve their understanding by making new differentiations by drawing nearer to the phenomenon studied. Aspers and Corte (2019) note that qualitative research is interdisciplinary, trans-disciplinary, and sometimes counter disciplinary. A qualitative approach is appropriate for social science research, which works with non-numerical data and usually analyses words. It helps to interpret and understand the data of social life collected from the selected or target participants. Qualitative researchers examine implications, understandings, symbols, and the progressions and relations of social life (Aspers & Corte, 2019). This approach helped gather in-depth information on novice teachers' experiences related to wellbeing programmes and how they cope with their adversities at a rural school.

Research paradigm

This study used the interpretive paradigm model, which helps us understand and explore the world in which we live. Rahi (2017)

discusses how scientists shape subjective interpretations of their perceptions or attitudes toward specific objects or things. This paradigm was helpful for this study, which examined the situation at a rural school and sought to understand how novice teachers cope with their adversities. It further allowed the selection of multiple participants with different perspectives. It assisted in better understanding novice teachers' wellbeing and sharing their beliefs, values, and personal experiences in coping with adversities at a rural school.

Research design

This study utilised a case study design to explore the novice teachers' experiences of coping with adversities at a rural school through a wellbeing programme. According to Maree (2014), a case study is a systematic inquiry into an event that aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest. This design was appropriate because it comprises conceptual validity, a theoretical legitimacy related to identifying and estimating the markers that best present the hypothetical ideas a researcher needs to investigate (Starman, 2013). It allows detailed contextual investigations into the activity of causal mechanisms in singular cases (Starman, 2013).

Data collection instrument

This study used in-depth semi-structured interviews to collect data from the four novice teachers chosen from a rural school in Thabo Mofutsanyane District, in Free State province. In-depth semi-structured interviews can elicit powerful narratives by transforming queries about a topic into storytelling invites (Mahat-Shamir, Mahat-Shamir, Neimeyer & Pitcho-Prelorentzos, 2019). This interview style is seen as 'talking,' and talking is a natural part of the process (Mahat-Shamir et al., 2019). As a qualitative data-gathering method, this technique can record rich, descriptive data about how individuals think, react, and unfold complicated processes. The questions were asked of each teacher using an interview guide. During this study, there was no deviation from the protocol. The In-depth semi-structured interviews focused on the teachers' understanding of what teacher wellbeing is, how it affects them, and the adversities they face at the school in their first years of teaching as novice teachers. The in-depth semi-structured interviews further focused on the recommendations to improve the novice teacher's health and ways to assist them in coping with their adversities. In-depth semi-structured interviews were audio-recorded with the novice teachers' knowledge; notes were taken, and the data were transcribed and analysed.

Participants

This study used a personal judgmental technique to select participants. Four novice teachers were selected as participants in this study. They had two to three years of teaching experience. They were male and female, and their ages ranged from 25 to 35. All participants were Sesotho and IsiXhosa speakers selected from a rural school in the Thabo Mofutsanyane district in Free State province, South Africa.

Research setting

This study was conducted in a selected rural school in Thabo Mofutsanyane district, Free State Province, South Africa. The study utilised a qualitative research paradigm to explore the significance of a wellbeing programme in helping novice teachers overcome their adversities and understand their thoughts, beliefs, and views on specific issues. The classroom buildings were observed to be too small and overcrowded with learners. Most teachers and learners are Sesotho-speaking and Christians. The school has a water problem, and the general hygiene is poor, which frequently caused the learners and school members to get sick during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Data analysis

This study used narrative analysis to analyse qualitative data. A narrative is a tale ranging from oral historical narratives to personal experiences. Therefore, it is a story told in the first person, which differs from one person to the next. According to Maree (2014), narrative analysis refers to various ways to interpret and make sense of narratives produced in research. The narrative research chosen is personal experiences, suitable for this research involving in-depth semi-

structured interviews with novice teachers. The researcher gathered the stories told by individuals based on their own experiences through interviews. The researcher has utilised the narratives gathered from in-depth semi-structured interviews with all four participants based on their experiences as novice teachers at a rural school. The researcher then examined how the personal stories of novice teachers were developed, organised, and ended. The researcher tracked down the data provided by novice teachers in chronological order to maintain the flow of the narrative. The researcher analysed the data in search of narrative cords (Maree, 2014). This technique was advantageous.

Narrative analysis is easily accessible, and participants can use their voices for narration. Individuals understand their own experiences, and the data captures such day-to-day experiences. However, in narrative analysis the participants may own the story and not explain themselves clearly, or they may fake the data (Mellor, Lancaster, & Ritter, 2021). In this study, narrative analysis was utilised by the researcher to enable participants to express their true feelings and to tell their own stories according to their own experiences. The researcher was permitted to interview the novice teachers at a rural school in the Free State province. The data was easily accessible, and the novice teachers could tell their stories from personal experiences. However, the information from some of the novice teachers was not clearly explained. Also, since the data provided by novice teachers could not be proven to be correct, some participants may have created their own stories. The researcher ensured the participants' lives were safe as the interviews were conducted at the school premises. They were familiar with the workplace, and the interview sessions were conducted after school hours for convenience. The researcher informed the participants that this study was only for academic purposes, and no one would get paid after the interview. The participants were also notified that they could withdraw from the study whenever they felt uncomfortable participating. The study participants were guaranteed that the study was voluntary, and their personal information was confidential and anonymous.

Ethical considerations

The researcher applied high ethical standards during the study. Data collected were kept confidential and the participants' identities were kept anonymous. The researcher applied for permission to conduct the study from the University of the Free State Research Committee, the Faculty of Education Ethics Review Committee, and the school principal where the research was conducted. After that, the researcher asked participants to partake in the study, and consent forms were signed. With the principal's permission, it was agreed that interviews would take place after school hours for convenience's sake. They were done as one-on-one, in-depth, semi-structured interviews.

V. RESULTS

Biographic results

Data was collected from one rural school in the Thabo Mofutsanyane district in the Free State province. The principal of the rural school granted permission to interview the novice teachers after school hours. The name of the school was not mentioned to protect the participant's identity. The study mainly focused on novice teachers from the rural area setting. Four participants would be labelled Teachers A, B, C, and D to protect their identity.

Table 4.1: Biographic results of participants

Participants	Gender	Age	Marital status	Home language	Highest qualification	Residential area
A	Male	25-34	Single	IsiZulu	Bed Degree	Rural
B	Female	25-34	Single	Sesotho	Bed Degree	Rural
C	Male	25-34	Single	Sesotho	Bed Degree	Rural
D	Female	25-34	Single	Sesotho	PGCE	Rural

Table 4.2 Employment data of participants

Participants	Teaching subjects	Number of learners (COVID-19 regulations)	Working experience
A	History and Social Science	Not more than 10 learners	3years
B	English and Sesotho	15-20 learners.	1 year
C	English (FAL)	10 - 15 learners	2 years
D	Life Orientation, History, and Social Science	10 - 15 learners	1year

NARRATIVE RESULTS

NEGATIVE

Lack of cooperation

The findings showed that novice teachers lacked cooperation from other teachers in the rural school. Experienced staff members refused to share their knowledge with novice teachers. The participants also revealed that they were being discouraged by other workmates fighting to teach the grade 12 classes that have incentives during the holiday school. Moreover, other teachers resisted change and viewed new ideas as challenging their authority. One participant shared the following.

"There is no cooperation between colleagues" (Participant 2).

Lack of sense of belonging

The findings revealed that novice teachers experience a lack of sense of belonging at a rural school. The way they were received on their first days engenders continuous feelings of exclusion. Some participants mentioned they had proposed a welcome party for the new members, but the committee rejected it. One participant felt as if he was not part of the school. Thus, novice teachers have no sense of belonging to the school, and this negatively affects their wellbeing. The following responses from the interview sessions support this:

"We do not feel any sense of belonging...." (Participant 2).

"Work environment is not a friendly one...." (Participant 2).

"Felt like maybe people do not want to be here..." (Participant 2).

"...you are not in that community. We will not listen to you" (Participant 3).

"What I feel is like I do not feel any sense of belonging..." (Participant 4).

Lack of a warm welcome

The findings indicated that novice teachers experience feelings of exclusion due to the lack of a warm welcome at the rural school. Whenever novice teachers go to their workplace, they feel down and depressed as they are not happy at the workplace. Some participants intimated that they were not properly introduced to the staff members on their first day at work. The following responses from the interview sessions support this:

"When I enter the school gate, I feel so down" (Participant 4).

"It is not a welcoming environment ..." (Participant 2).

Conflict

The findings indicated that novice teachers experience conflict with other staff members or witness conflict among staff members at the rural school. Novice teachers are affected by the way the management fights for positions. There is a massive division among staff members as to who must be the head of the school. If the participants were allowed to teach grade 12, they would be at loggerheads with experienced members who could not make extra income. Thus, conflict among colleagues at school is real and scary. Novice teachers are unhappy with the distribution of work duties and the allocation of classes. Novice teachers are denied Grade 12 classes. There was serious conflict at the school when a certain exam class happened to be allocated to a novice teacher. The following responses from the interview sessions support this:

"Because they are fighting to teach grade 12 learners, due to monetary incentives they get during weekend schools..." (Participant 2).

"There is too much conflict at the school. The school management is fighting for the post of principal" (Participant 4).

"... other teachers influence learners to fight novice teachers..." (Participant 4).

Discouragement

The findings suggested that novice teachers feel discouraged at a rural school. Novice teachers come from universities with fresh minds, and they are young and energetic and feel they can change the working environment and implement new ideas. However, experienced teachers discourage junior teachers from participating in sporting activities or school committees. The following responses from the interview sessions support this:

"Old teachers have got that fear that I won't be able to teach..." (Participant 2).

"They are discouraging us. Yeah, they are discouraging us..." (Participant 3).

"... So, there is no way that you were going to go through with your proposal" (Participant 3).

".....And then I must come up with a plan. I am teaching English. So, after the third term, I made a certificate for English learners who obtained good results and level seven" (Participant 3).

Job dissatisfaction

The findings demonstrated that novice teachers are not satisfied with their working conditions. The novice teachers are unhappy with how the Department of Education treats its workers. The government does not consider its employees as its priority but tends to favour the learners whom it considers as its clients. In most cases, teachers in the workplace fight, and the head of the school, as a government representative, does not intervene to stop the conflict. Even when teachers face difficulties in the workplace, they have nowhere to go and seek help. The following responses from the interview sessions support this:

"... the system does not serve teachers or save learners at all" (Participant 1).

"It is quite a hindrance for us to do our job... find someone difficult" (Participant 1).

"So, you see now they come up with systems that do not work; the systems that do not serve us but just a system" (Participant 1).

"... when teachers are satisfied there is no conflict at the workplace or among their colleagues..." (Participant 4).

Traumatized

The findings indicated that novice teachers experience trauma at rural schools. Some stated that they suffered from breakdowns and insomnia and were emotionally torn inside. The responses from two participants illustrate this:

"You see colleagues experiencing breakdowns..." (Participant 1).

"...if they do not perform, it's just a stress to you as a teacher..." (Participant 2).

"...I also suffered from insomnia and could not sleep or cope..." (Participant 2).

"...emotionally I was torn inside..." (Participant 2).

Ill-disciplined learners

The findings indicated that novice teachers must deal with ill-disciplined learners who lack respect for teachers at rural schools. They waste time maintaining discipline rather than teaching them content. Learners have a negative attitude, and they are rude to the teachers. Most novice teachers feel unsafe when they are among their learners. The following responses from the interview sessions support this:

"...is not always so easy when we are novice to discipline them as it is..." (Participant 1).

"...waste 5 minutes trying to calm the learners, discipline them, and tell them to stop making noise..." (Participant 4).

"...an ill-disciplined learner with some negative attitude to you as a teacher..." (Participant 2).

"...as a novice teacher, these learners just disrespect me..." (Participant 2).

"... I have encountered such a problem of rude learners..." (Participant 3).

POSITIVE

Understanding of wellbeing

The findings indicated that novice teachers understood their wellbeing differs from one person to another at the rural school. Teachers need to know the significance of wellbeing in their lives. Novice teachers' understanding of teacher's wellbeing can be categorised into themes: positive emotional state and emotional development, negative emotional state, lack of job satisfaction, teacher achievement, and good relationship.

Understanding of emotional status

The findings revealed that novice teachers understood their emotional status and development at the rural school. Their wellbeing and emotional development entail experience and growth in what they do, particularly in teaching. Some of them understand their wellbeing as a positive emotional state combined with emotional development, while others understand it as an environment free from conflict and negativity. They believe that working in a healthy environment entails positive thoughts, happy colleagues, and teachers who can be there for one another and support each other, especially novice teachers who are still new in the industry and need guidance. The following responses from the interview sessions support this:

"... developing equally holistically, It would be developing positively.... emotionally developing positively.....so spiritually developing and growing up into the very kind of career that we are in.....to develop as human beings and to develop professionally" (Participant 1).

"...is the positive emotional state.....positive feelings or emotion of a teacher..... positive atmosphere..." (Participant 2).

"a continuous state of mind, or being happy and prosperous" (Participant 3).

"It is how well the teachers should be.... teachers we need a positive environment.....healthy life ..." (Participant 4).

Achievement of goals

The findings suggested that novice teachers achieve their goals through good results at the rural school. Therefore, they should always be in good health psychologically. The following responses from the interview sessions support this:

"... master or perfect..." (Participant 1).

"..... goes well and you produce good results..." (Participant 2).

"And then knowing that you have achieved your outcomes" (Participant 3).

Establishing good relationships

The findings revealed that novice teachers established good relationships with colleagues or learners at the rural school. Some suggested that teachers must be approachable to the other staff members. The teachers must always be happy at the workplace and assist learners with love. When every teacher has a passion for their work, they can achieve good results. Working with many people may be difficult, but the job is easier if one perceives the work as a calling. Happy teachers lead to happy and active learners since the teacher is a major source of inspiration to learners. The following responses from the interview sessions support this:

"... or expected to teach our learners" (Participant 1).

"...your inner mindset is even willing to do extra work in the classroom and at school" (Participant 2).

"... Teachers, you should be approachable and support learners" (Participant 3).

".....good relationship with the colleagues and learners" (Participant 4).

Late coming

The findings reported that novice teachers and learners experience late coming. Rural areas lack transport, and thus, most learners are always late, which affects their schoolwork as the teacher would have to wait for the latecomers to start a lesson. When some learners are absent from school, teachers are forced to repeat the lesson to help them catch up with the others. The following responses from the interview sessions support this:

"My learners would usually be late for class after break..." (Participant 1).

"I am always late, and I am not used to walking long distances..." (Participant 2).

Lack of teamwork/support

The findings showed that novice teachers experience a lack of teamwork and social support from other staff members. Novice teachers feel that the workplace is not friendly enough to assist those lacking the skills to deliver the lesson. Experienced teachers and the Department of Basic Education do not give novice teachers enough support. Fresh from college or university, novice teachers do not have enough experience to teach the learners and therefore need support from experienced teachers. The following responses from the interview sessions support this:

"... It is one of the difficulties to become part of the team" (Participant 1).

"...the fact that the colleagues we work with are hesitant about change..." (Participant 1).

"...work environment is not a friendly one..." (Participant 2).

"...I had to do a teacher profile, the teacher file alone..." (Participant 3).

Coping strategies with adversities at rural school

This study found that novice teachers have mixed emotions when considering their adversities at a rural school. Their coping strategies include taking advice from colleagues, being absent from school, working hard, parental involvement, and passive resistance. When novice teachers fail to cope with school adversities, they stay home and do not go to school. Some work extremely hard to see the work delivered, while others obtain social support from colleagues. Some of them are bold enough to call the parents to school to see how their children behave on school premises. Moreover, some novice teachers simply ignore colleagues who have bad attitudes toward them and continue their work, which is a strategy of passive resistance. The following responses from the interview sessions support this:

"I feel most frustrated, and when I cannot cope, I do not go to work" (Participant 1).

"...so, she advised me to say like other things..... I put more effort on my work, especially the grade 12..." (Participant 2).

"...I reported that I went to my deputy...the only thing that helped me is my English LF (Learning Facilitator)..." (Participant 3).

"If the learner keeps being silly, I call the parent to school...Moody principal, I just let him be and ignore all the negative energy..." (Participant 4).

Support programmes

The findings revealed that some novice teachers attended support programmes only for curriculum implementation.

"...we call as peers support groups..." (Participant 1).

"I went to his curriculum workshop, not the novice teacher one" (Participant 3).

Lack of support programmes for novice teachers

The findings revealed that there are no support programmes for novice teachers. Novice teachers have never received induction training at the school. They have neither received workshops, induction, mentoring, nor psychological help to deal with their adversities at the rural school. Novice teachers are left to themselves when they do their jobs because experienced teachers were never taken through any training in their first days at work. However, novice teachers experience serious hardship that needs urgent attention. Novice teachers must undergo the necessary training, mentoring, and social support to prepare them for the new challenges of the teaching profession. The following responses from the interview sessions support this:

"...now that is COVID-19, there are no workshops" (Participant 1).

"...I did not get support...No there is nothing, no psychology, and not good..." (Participant 2).

"They do not exist...No, we did not go through the induction and mentoring" (Participant 3).

"There are no existing programs" (Participant 4).

VI. DISCUSSION

This study found that most novice teachers experienced adversities when they were newly appointed to teach. It found that novice teachers had negative experiences, including a lack of cooperation at the rural school where this study was undertaken. These findings are consistent

with previous studies. McCallum et al. (2017) state that the school does not support the teacher's efforts in teaching the content, resulting in learners not getting good credits academically. The findings revealed that novice teachers face untold learner-related challenges, including late coming, ill-disciplined learners, assault and theft by learners, learners with learning barriers, poor learner performance, and lack of parental support. They also face institutional challenges, which include difficulties with teaching content, workload before and after COVID-19, overcrowded classes before COVID-19, lack of self-time, shortage of water, delayed payments, and lack of co-curricular activities, as well as transport issues. Rural areas lack transport, and thus, most learners are always late, affecting their schoolwork, as the teacher would have to wait for the latecomers to start a lesson. This is consistent with the findings of previous studies. According to Nonkonana and Kwendu (2020, as cited in Olowoyo, Ramaila & Mavuru, 2021), 20% of South African learners arrive late at school for various reasons. It is a norm to experience late coming in South African schools, affecting teaching and learning.

The study revealed that senior colleagues' lack of teamwork and social support discourages novice teachers from being energetic and enjoying their work on their first days. This finding is consistent with related literature. Du Plessis and Mestry (2019) suggest that teachers do not work together in rural schools to plan the curriculum. Hence, the lesson plans and the teaching aids are not the same because the DBE does not prepare novice and experienced teachers through training and workshops to plan the curriculum together. Bloch (2006, as cited in Price & McCallum, 2015) adds that the teachers' workplace is very exhausting due to a lack of support from the school stakeholders.

This study showed that novice teachers experience a lack of respect from the learners. They waste more time in maintaining discipline rather than in teaching content. Learners have a bad attitude, and they are rude to them. Most novice teachers feel unsafe when they are among their learners. This finding is consistent with previous studies. Teachers are in an emotionally exhausting environment due to discipline issues (Daniels & Strauss, 2010, as cited in Prince & McCallum, 2015).

The study found that senior colleagues discourage novice teachers from doing their work. Novice teachers would have the passion and energy to bring changes to the school. However, because experienced teachers interpret this as a challenge to their authority, they discourage novice teachers from working hard and going the extra mile and providing the necessary help to the learners.

This study found that novice teachers experienced some difficulties in teaching content. Novice teachers are often given tasks they are not qualified for. For example, novice teachers would be made to teach Mathematics whereas they had studied Psychology and therefore qualified to teach Life Orientation. Since the teacher desperately needs the job, s/he takes the offer and works extra time. This is consistent with the findings of previous studies. According to Yalcinkaya (2002, as cited in Sezer, 2017), the challenges of novice teachers were perceived to be lack of experience. It adds more pressure and frustration to novice teachers and affects teaching and learning negatively.

This study found that novice teachers experienced a heavy school workload before the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world. School learners were reduced to smaller numbers during the pandemic, and the workload declined. According to Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2020, cited in Corbett, Phongsavan, Peralta, & Bauman, 2021), one factor that affects teachers is a large workload that results in occupational stress. This is in line with Price and McCallum' (2015) view that the workload of novice teachers should be reduced in their first year of appointment.

The results revealed that novice teachers experienced overcrowded classes before the COVID-19 pandemic, often with more than 50 learners in a class. Du Plessis and Mestry (2019) also noted that learners in rural schools are often crowded in one class due to poor infrastructure and facilities.

The results have revealed that novice teachers experience and

witness conflict as teachers fight with each other. Each workplace has its own conflict, making it hard for novice teachers to get the necessary support. When members of staff are always angry, they are not easily approachable. Therefore, novice teachers are afraid to seek help. Yalcinkaya (2002, as cited in Sezer, 2017) points out a conflict between pre-service training and in-service applications.

The research findings have revealed that novice teachers experience a lack of respect from the learners. They feel insecure and unsafe in the schoolyards and where they stay due to dangerous learner behaviours. The learners assault novice teachers and use force to take their belongings without their consent, which is considered theft and housebreaking. This is consistent with the findings of previous studies. OECD (2020, as cited in Corbett et al., 2021, p.2) proposes that another source of teacher stress is the "student behaviour, such as discipline, physical and verbal abuse". The learners do not respect their novice teachers, and they assault them. Consequently, novice teachers would not feel safe at the school premises.

This research has revealed that novice teachers face unprofessional colleagues who do not follow school protocols aligned with the Constitution of South Africa, the White Paper 6 document, and SACE guidelines. Both teachers and learners seem not to take the law seriously and involve themselves in unnecessary conflicts due to a lack of professionalism on the part of teachers. As the head of the school, the principal should be impartial when resolving conflicts. Novice teachers lack experience and knowledge to handle conflict situations because the school does not take them through the necessary mentorship and induction.

The findings suggested that novice teachers experience delayed payment as one of the most significant adversities in rural schools. There is no clear communication between the employer and employee, as the principal is the middleman to ensure that the teachers' documents are submitted to the DBE administration. In most cases, heads of schools fail to do their job and sometimes do not submit documents intentionally. Du Plessis and Mestry (2019, p. 54) also pointed out that "delays in the payment of teachers' salaries can sometimes extend up to three months." The Department of Basic Education should communicate directly with the teachers when they need the necessary documents like bank accounts and other particulars to process payment.

The findings of this research have shown that there are learners with language barriers, for instance, English, which is the language of instruction. Learners in rural areas take it as a second language, yet 90% of the subjects are written and taught in English. Du Plessis and Mestry (2019) argue that learners in rural schools often have language barriers. In most cases, the learners only hear English as a medium of instruction at school. When they get home, they speak their mother tongue. Thus, teachers must always translate the content into the learner's mother tongue. Similarly, de Jager (2013, p.80) states that teachers' workload adds up due to the learners with learning barriers requiring special time.

The findings of this study have revealed that novice teachers experience a lack of cooperation from experienced teachers. Experienced staff members refuse to share their knowledge with novice teachers. Moreover, they resist change and view new ideas as challenging their authority. Iwu, Gwija, Benedict and Tengeh (2013) argue that the lack of motivation among teachers has caused poor performance for high school learners.

This study found that novice teachers experience negative feelings and often consider resigning. Some novice teachers harbour thoughts of going to another school, and some think of resigning. This concurs with the findings from related literature. According to Eren et al. (2012, as cited in Sezer, 2017), novice teachers felt they were losing self-respect, so opted to leave the teaching profession. Similarly, as McCallum et al. (2017) state, work-related pressure and passionate work might bring about work disappointment, emotional wellbeing issues, and leaving the teaching profession early.

This study found that novice teachers experience transport issues as there are no adequate transport services in rural areas. Novice teachers

who are not used to walking to work are always late. A similar study revealed that transport issues often make the district visit panel fail to go to rural schools to check the progress and monitor the teachers' work (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019).

The findings showed that novice teachers experienced a lack of cooperation when working with other teachers and the school at large. The school administration, including the principal, does not recognise their extra efforts to teach the learners. This is consistent with the findings of previous studies. According to Pena et al. (2000, as cited in Mukuna, 2021), parents are not involved in their children's schoolwork, which affects teachers' wellbeing. The research findings have revealed that novice teachers experience a lack of self-time. They tend to focus more on schoolwork and the learners' achievements at the expense of their leisure and personal commitments. Novice teachers work even on weekends when they must rest, offering extra classes and marking learners' books. Each employee has working hours, which have been gazetted by the Department of Labour. The research findings have revealed that rural areas experience a shortage of water, which causes teachers to either go to school wearing unwashed clothes or be absent from work. Mulford & Johns (2004, as cited in Du Plessis & Mestry 2019) believe that most schools in rural areas lack infrastructure and essential resources like water, transportation, electricity, and communication and technology. The findings of this study have revealed that novice teachers feel that the lack of co-curricular activities in rural schools is one of the most significant adversities, since there are learners who can excel in their academics while others can excel in sports. Therefore, the Department of Basic Education and other school stakeholders should ensure that the learners' right to learn sporting activities at school is upheld even in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. The rural schools no longer participate in sports, which limits Black children's talent development. The lack of co-curricular activities at the school implies that learners who are not academically gifted will face limited career options in the future. Co-curricular activities are therefore critical in school since the learners who are active in sports also think critically and do well in the classroom. Such activities also keep learners away from drugs and alcohol.

VII. CONCLUSION

This study recommended that the National Department of Basic Education (DBE) create a policy that allows novice teachers to submit the documents needed by the administration of the DBE to process their payments directly to the Department. When they first hire novice teachers, there should be transparency between DBE administration, the school, and the employee (novice teacher). In that way, teachers would not be working for months without getting paid because of the outstanding documents that the head of the school did not submit. The study further suggested that the Department of Education should consider the novice teachers' wellbeing by providing them with training, like workshops on their first days at work, to assist them in being ready for the learners and knowing what is needed. This study recommended that the DBE ensure that every school, especially in the rural areas, has psychologists and social workers available for teachers and learners so that learning and teaching can take place smoothly. The head of the school must ensure that experienced teachers support the novice teachers and assist them where they need help.

The school stakeholders, the DBE, and the heads of the schools should ensure that every school participates in sports, as the learners have different talents. Some of them are gifted in sports, and others academically. The DBE and other school stakeholders should consider making the mother tongue the language of instruction in public schools and make it one of the education policies. Teachers should try to guide and support novice teachers where they are struggling, and the school head should ensure that they get the necessary training, induction, and mentoring. Novice teachers should always try to seek help from experienced teachers.

VIII. LIMITATIONS

The researcher encountered a few difficulties from two schools during the data collection process. The researcher requested an appointment to see the novice teachers, but neither school responded. At the third school, the researcher set an appointment with the principal and went to the school at the time set to interview the novice teachers, but the principal told the researcher that there was an injured learner at the school playground and therefore, the novice teachers were unavailable, because they took the child to the hospital. The researcher was given the novice teacher's contact details to conduct the interview via telephone. Still, only one novice teacher answered the call and said she was too busy, so they could reschedule the interview for another day. Indeed, the interview was rescheduled, but the novice teacher did not answer the phone call when it was time for the interview. Some participants were unavailable, so the researcher could not reach them. The researcher planned on going to QwaQwa to collect data, but there was a strike (community protest), and they eventually managed to travel to Petrus style to collect data. The wellbeing of teachers at large is very important in teaching and learning. Therefore, the DBE and other school stakeholders must ensure teachers are happy and always satisfied with their jobs to avoid poor academic performance. Also, they should be provided with the necessary resources like teaching aids and rural allowance to teach the learners effectively. The findings of this study have revealed that novice teachers face considerable adversities in rural schools.

It is important to take novice teachers through the necessary training as this is the norm in other companies. Even when one is trained, it is critical that the individual undergo an induction programme to understand a particular school's environment. Every school has its culture, and the way things are done in each school is different. Experienced teachers who have been in the school or the education system for a long time discourage energetic novice teachers coming up with new ideas because experienced teachers are afraid of challenges. Therefore, the research findings from in-depth interviews have revealed intense hatred, conflict, and adversities that the novice teacher encounters. The wellbeing of teachers is extremely important key since they play a pivotal role in the education system.

The South African government should consider implementing workshops that provide novice teachers with a platform to discuss freely the hardships they face in schools (Geldenhuys & Oosthuizen, 2015). Teachers need to remain effective in their workplace. This study would thus help strengthen novice teachers not to lose hope in their teaching careers. It encourages the Department of Education to provide novice teachers with the support they need and attend to their challenges. Novice teachers need a support structure to help them improve and grow. Their well-being should be maintained. Therefore, this research would assist novice teachers in overcoming the challenges they face and encourage the DBE to create better solutions to these problems to increase the productivity of teaching outcomes.

The quality of education has been a major concern in recent decades, and teacher health and wellbeing are closely related to this problem. Novice teachers face considerable hardship at the beginning of their careers. Therefore, awareness programmes are needed during and after the completion of a teaching qualification to prepare teachers to face challenges in the field. Before choosing a teaching career, learners need to know the teaching profession's merits, demerits, and challenges.

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