A CO-CONSTRUCTED SUPPORT PROGRAMME TO FACILITATE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR BEGINNER FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS IN THE WESTERN CAPE

by

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ABSTRACT

Research suggests beginner teachers face challenges when transitioning from pre-service to in-service teaching. International research found that transitioning from pre-service to newly qualified teachers can be problematic. Similar studies conducted in South Africa concur with global findings regarding the needs and challenges experienced by beginner teachers. The national teachers' audit of 1994-1995 found poor quality of teaching and learning, lack of leadership and a fragmented teacher education system. The teacher preparation and training landscape has significantly changed, leading to a crucial gap in the existing research related to the Foundation Phase Grade Reception Year teacher preparation. This study unequivocally delves into the learning experiences of beginner teachers who have completed their Bachelor of Education at a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institution. Despite restructuring, TVET colleges decided to offer the Bachelor of Education programme in 2008. In contrast to universities, which have the resources to provide comprehensive teacher training programmes, TVET colleges need to be equipped to offer such programmes. As a result, TVET colleges need to improve in developing the necessary capacity to provide high-quality teacher training.

The study aimed to determine how the mentoring experiences impacted a support program co-constructed through dialogue at three schools in the Western Province of South Africa. The primary goal was to develop a support programme in collaboration with beginner teachers and their department heads. Semi-structured interviews, journal entries and classroom observations were used to gather the learning experiences of teacher participants who had been purposefully selected. The research became more credible, reliable and trustworthy due to various data sources and data-gathering techniques. The sample consisted of six beginner Foundation Phase Grade Reception Year teachers and three Heads of Department from a target population of seventy-four teachers. The mentoring experiences of the Heads of Department and beginner teachers' learning experiences were analysed using an interpretivist data analysis approach.

According to the research, beginner Foundation Phase Grade Reception Year teachers faced several challenges. From working with non-English speaking learners, limited parental involvement, implementing the curriculum, demands with classroom management, and the need for more communication, collegiality, and collaboration between beginner teachers and their heads of department. It was found that beginner teachers needed help implementing the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) due to a lack of training and Department of Education support. They also needed help implementing theory, as they were expected to do the same duties as more experienced teachers.

The findings show that beginner teachers needed more organisation and prioritisation skills to put everything together when teaching. In light of the findings, to improve the lives of beginning Foundation Phase Grade Reception Year teachers early in their careers and to assist their professional development, a mentoring programme was collaboratively developed by beginner teachers and their Heads of Department through dialogue. The framework for a mentoring programme promoted awareness amongst beginner Foundation Phase Grade Reception Year teachers and added to the corpus of information for Foundation Phase teachers just starting their careers. The findings of this study recommended that beginner Foundation Phase Grade Reception Year teachers' (i) preparation programmes should employ a comprehensive method to prepare beginner teachers for practice, (ii) provide student teachers with knowledge of multilingual teaching methods, (iii) Improve parent-teacher relations can increase learner motivation and performance, (iv) continued professional development, (v) implementation of a co-constructive mentorship framework to advance beginner teachers' professional development.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to

my three angels, Naazneen, Waheed and Riyaadh Jamodien

Also, to

My parents, Agnes and Gabriel Ferreira, I sincerely appreciate the invaluable guidance and inspiration you have imparted to me. Your influence has been instrumental in shaping me into the person I am today. I am blessed that both of you have instilled in me a love for hard work.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
BEd	Bachelor of Education
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
CCMM	Co-Constructive Mentoring Model
CPUT	Cape Peninsula University of Technology
DoE	Department of Education
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECDE	Early Childhood Development and Education
ECE	Early Childhood Education
GRADE R	Grade Reception Year
HOD(s)	Head(s) of Department
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
INSET	In-service Education and Training
LiEP	Language in Education Policy
LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OBE	Outcomes-Based Education
PAM	Personnel Administrative Measures
PSP	Primary Science Programme
RSA	Republic of South Africa
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SASA	South African Schools Act
TVET	Technical Vocational Educational Training
UNISA	University of South Africa
WCED	Western Cape Education Department
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

Beginner teacher	A person with less than three to five years of experience and who is just beginning their teaching career.
Co-construction	Co-construction is a unique way of learning that focuses on teamwork or partnership functioning. This strategy incorporates different interactional processes, including coordination and collaboration.
Collaboration	The partnership between beginner teachers and their department heads in exchanging teaching and learning knowledge or working together to obtain a common goal.
Dialogue	In this study, "dialogue" refers to a discourse between two or more persons, namely between beginner teachers and their HODs.
Early Childhood Education	Activities or experiences in early childhood education are meant to influence developmental changes in children before they start Grade 1.
Foundation Phase Grade Reception Year (Grade R) teachers	In South African schools, foundation phase teaching is given to learners in Grades R–3. Since reading, writing and numeracy are taught at this time, it is an introductory period where one teacher is often in charge of teaching all subjects.
Heads of Departments	Heads of Departments (HODs) are experts in their fields and guide and support the teachers in their departments.
Mentor teachers	Teachers with experience help and guide beginner teachers as they advance their teaching careers.
Mentoring	To help beginner teachers (mentees) accomplish their personal and professional goals through a connection with an experienced teacher (mentor).
Professional development	The process of advancing one's abilities, knowledge and competencies.

CHAPTER 1
CONTEXT AND STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

1.1   Introduction

Before 1994, universities and colleges of education were teacher training providers in South Africa. However, the teacher education system was structured along racial lines (Ogunniyi and Mushayikwa, 2015:71). Subsequent to 1994 and after a long history of apartheid, significant changes took place and education colleges were closed or integrated into universities. With this, a four-year curriculum has become the standard for a teaching qualification, which has kept pace with international trends (Department of Education [DoE]; 2011:8-9; Botman, 2016:52). Through a structured series of legislation, White Papers and Commissions, the South African government laid the basis for transforming the higher education sector to serve the needs of the people better. South Africa's triumph over apartheid was a remarkable achievement. By doing so, the country transcended the shackles of discrimination and inequality (Centre for Evaluation and Assessment [CEA], Centre for Education Policy Development [CEPD], Human Sciences Research Council [HSRC], South African Institute for Distance Education [SAIDE] and University of Pretoria, 2005:3). The South African government took action to rectify the disadvantages faced by non-white populations as a result of apartheid. They began actively expanding access to higher education for underprivileged groups, as evidenced by sources such as Botman (2016:52) and Ogunniyi and Mushayikwa (2015:73). As a result, in 1995, the South African government also committed itself to providing quality education to the people of South Africa and developed a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) to:

> *Provide a set of principles and guidelines by which records of learner achievements are registered to recognise acquired skills and knowledge, thereby using an integrated system that encourages lifelong learning* (South African Qualifications Association [SAQA], 2001:1).

Teachers who were untrained or underqualified may obtain in-service training to update their qualifications through the NQF, which was viewed as a transformational instrument (Ogunniyi & Mushayikwa, 2015:76). Based on this view, it can be argued that teacher education and the whole education system had transformed. Still, the restructuring and transformation proved to be a complicated process. According to the national teacher's audit, which was carried out from 1994 to 1995, examples of these difficulties included poor quality of teaching and learning, lack of leadership and a disjointed (different teaching institutions, for other groups) teacher education system (Gordon, 2013:16-17; Ogunniyi and Mushayikwa, 2015:73; Botman, 2016:52). In 2008, despite the restructuring of teacher education, TVET colleges made a

significant change in the landscape of teacher preparation and training. They started offering the Bachelor of Education (BEd) programme in partnership with the University of South Africa (UNISA). This change created an essential gap in the existing research around preparing Foundation Phase Grade Reception Year (Grade R) teachers. TVET institutions cannot offer comprehensive teacher training programmes, whereas universities are equipped to deliver such. Consequently, TVET colleges are disadvantaged when building the capability required to provide quality teacher preparation—additionally, TVET colleges issue certificates, not degrees, as they admit students without matric.

The objective of the study was to assess the impact of mentoring experiences on a support programme that was co-constructed through dialogue at three schools in South Africa located in the Western Cape. The main aim was to work collaboratively with beginner teachers and their department heads to design a support programme. It is believed that this research may eventually contribute towards the professional learning experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers in South African schools and improved teacher education for pre-service and in-service teachers. This study can also make a meaningful contribution to the development of stakeholders in the Department of Basic Education (DBE) (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2015).

A large body of research asserts that beginner teachers face numerous and diverse challenges as they transition from pre-service to in-service teaching (Edwards and Osei-Mensah, 2019:391; Abdurrahman, 2016:311). Research studies conducted internationally have shown that beginner teachers often face difficulties during their initial years of teaching. According to Abdurrahman (2016:311) and Armah (2017:1), there has been a growing awareness of the challenges faced by beginner teachers. Studies conducted in South Africa also agree with these international findings, highlighting the needs and challenges experienced by beginner teachers, including the reality shock they experience during their first years of teaching (Pitsoe, 2013:309; Koca, 2016:92).

Furthermore, other authors believe that many beginner teachers resign within the first three to five years of teaching, contributing to the high attrition rate in schools (Buchanan, Prescott, Schuck, Aubusson and Burke, 2013:140). Pitsoe (2013:314) concurs with this and states that some of the factors affecting the attrition of beginner teachers are a global problem with adverse working conditions and a lack of resources, support, and leadership. Moreover, they found that between 40% and 50% of teachers leave the profession within the first five years (Buchanan et al., 2013:140). I consider this state of attrition troubling because capable teachers have the most significant influence on learners' achievement and academic growth. It is further disturbing that some problems (as noted above) have long-lasting, adverse effects on the South African education system (Pitsoe, 2013:314) - a statement discussed in this study.

Teacher preparation programmes are crucial in equipping aspiring teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to start and succeed in their teaching careers. Therefore, it is essential for pre-service programmes to prepare beginner teachers for the challenges they may face as they progress in their careers. According to Cakmak, Gunduz, and Emstad (2018:2) and La Maistre and Pare (2010:3), these programmes should be designed to provide pre-service teachers with the knowledge and competencies they need to succeed in the classroom. However, Cakmak, Gunduz, and Emstad (2019:2) argue that most teacher preparation programmes do not adequately equip beginner teachers with the necessary pedagogical knowledge and skills for effective teaching. Fry (2010: 92) agrees with Cakmak, Gunduz and Emstad (2019:2) that beginner teachers feel their pre-service training is inadequate in preparing them for real classroom situations and that some classroom problems can be challenging for various reasons. As a result, beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers often start their teaching career with limited understanding and knowledge of the context of their initial appointment. Cakmak, Gunduz & Emstad (2019:2) stance is sensible. I support their argument when they assert that many beginner teachers need to develop their teaching skills through trial and error during their first years of teaching. A review of the literature suggests that beginner teachers worldwide face common challenges at the start of their careers (Pitsoe, 2013:311; Edwards and Osei-Mensah, 2019:391).

At the start of their careers, beginner teachers often focus on basic survival because they are typically assigned the same responsibilities as experienced teachers, including unpopular and challenging tasks that experienced teachers may not want to undertake (Smit, 2014:22). As a result, beginner teachers may face various overwhelming difficulties without adequate support (Senom, Zakaria and Shar, 2013). Caused by a lack of preparation for the arduous demands of teaching and a general lack of well-coordinated support programmes for beginner teachers, they almost invariably experience an actual reality shock (Hobson and Ashby, 2012:177; Senom, Zakaria and Shar, 2013). Öztürk and Yildirim (2013) suggest that transitioning from pre-service to professional practice is challenging for beginner teachers. This problem of a lack of preparation for the demands of teaching is exacerbated by the fact that while they have to contend with a teacher's total workload, they also have to learn how to deal with other issues such as conflict with parents, learners' behavioural problems (causing unfavourable working conditions), severe overcrowding of classrooms, adjust to full-time teaching demands, understanding the cultural context of the school, policy overload, role conflict, diverse needs, classroom management, insufficient resources, as well as professional and emotional isolation (Buchanan et al., 2013:113; Pitsoe, 2013:31). These problems have the potential to be devastating to teacher morale. Thus far, most schools' status quo has remained, and the South African government seems to remain inert.

In view of the aforementioned, I think that by ascertaining and analysing the experiences of beginner teachers in the Foundation Phase, one will begin to understand how to design support programmes that are suited to their needs and will help them deal effectively with the challenges that currently exist in South African schools (Darling-Hammond, 2017:303; Mukeredzi, 2013:512). Against this backdrop, this study delves into the professional learning experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers as they transition from pre-service to in-service. Moreover, the study focuses on a support programme in collaboration with beginner teachers and department heads to provide a comprehensive understanding of their learning journey.

Ten years ago, I taught in the BEd programme at a TVET college, which sparked my interest in beginner Foundation Phase teachers. After the student teachers completed their practical teaching training, many expressed concerns about feeling unprepared and under-equipped for the workplace. I also found that student teachers in South Africa's province of the Western Cape experienced many classroom challenges during their practical teaching sessions at schools and could not manage the workload, which led to the problem statement. These reasons compelled me to pursue this doctoral research on the professional development of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers who had completed their BEd degrees at a TVET college. Therefore, in light of the identified knowledge gaps mentioned above, I deemed it viable and timely to contribute or improve knowledge in this field by investigating the learning experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers that influence their professional development.

The history of South African education is presented in the following section, emphasising the past connection between teachers of Grade R and Early Childhood Education (ECE). This historical analysis of ECE in South Africa aims to clarify the justifications behind previous governments' conviction that the community, parents and families, rather than the government, should be in charge of ECE. This historical overview is further compared with other countries that have experienced significant or comparable challenges in teacher education.

1.2   Background to Early Childhood Education in South Africa

1.2.1   A South African view

Since the end of apartheid, when racial segregation was enacted, ECE in South Africa has been divided and inconsistent. Apartheid saw the introduction of "rigorous *de jure* and *de facto* racial segregation measures", with schools segregated along racial lines (Atmore, 2013; Lewis, 2008:24). The ideologies of apartheid promised monitoring, control and order (Msila, 2009:149). After the Bantu Education Act was passed in 1953, all schools had to register with

the government (Atmore, 2013). Considering that the government ran the schools, the curriculum was altered. This was considered the beginning of apartheid schooling, a strategy for maintaining the master-servant relationship (Msila, 2009:149). Learners (children) in White schools were indoctrinated to believe that White people were superior to other races and that White boys should defend their country from communists and Black people (Msila, 2009:149).

On the other hand, Bantu education for Black South Africans had been used to restrain learners' development by fabricating academic content to control learners' and teachers' intellectual capabilities and advancing government propaganda (Kallaway, 2021; Msila, 2009). In 1969, the (White Nationalist) provincial education departments were given the legal authority to assume control of early education and establish teacher preparation programmes. At the same time, it was also signalled by the then Minister of National Education that provincial governments would be in charge of early education for White children (Behr, 1988; Vos and Brits, 1990). Under the apartheid system, ECE for children of colour was considered less important. In actuality, very few Black children in South Africa had access to any preschool services (Excell and Linington, 2015:1). That was because the previous government believed ECD was the responsibility of (Black) parents and community rather than the government (Kallaway, 2021). Ebrahim (2007:22) says that ECE is the ideal environment for embracing racial and ethnic separation.

In 1994, the democratically elected government of South Africa took over an uneven educational system. For instance, South Africa had 19 distinct education ministries under apartheid, divided according to race, location and philosophy (Gallant, 2012:26). Immediately after the elections, when the National Education and Training Forum started a process of syllabus reform and subject streamlining, South Africa's educational system changed (DoE, 2005). Implementing Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) and Curriculum 2005 has been the main initiative since 1997 (Chrisholm, 2004; DBE, 2012). The key objective was to overcome the curricular divisions of the past. A set of ideals related to social justice, human rights, equity and development, as well as a learner-centred approach to learning, were at the core of Curriculum 2005 (Gallant, 2012:26). The Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) for Grades R-9 (DoE, 2002) was put into effect in 2004 by DoE. After that, the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) was updated to improve implementation, and the changes took effect in January 2011. Subject Statements, Learning Programme Guidelines and Subject Assessment Guidelines were all replaced with a single inclusive Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement document for Grades R–12 (DBE, 2011). Thus, a policy statement for education (teaching and learning) in South African schools, relevant to private and public schools, included early learning (DBE, 2011).

Green, Parkes, Deacon and Hall (2011) draw attention to the growing public interest in early learning or ECD in South Africa. They claim that early learning experiences substantially affect

later learning development. Atmore, van Niekerk and Ashley-Cooper (2012:122) and Excell and Linington (2015:1) echo this statement and say that ECD is recognised as the foundation for success in future learning. The National Department of Education (DoE) describes ECD as a holistic solution to policies and programmes that foster children's physical, mental, emotional, moral and social development from birth to age nine to protect a child's right to develop cognitively to their full potential (DoE, 2001). This method was created to provide effective interventions for all early learners (including Grade R learners), focusing mainly on children from poor communities (White Paper 5, 2001). Grade R is used by Shaik (2016:1) to describe its function as the first grade in the Foundation Phase of primary education in South Africa. In other words, Grade R is the final year of preschool because it occurs the year before the child begins official schooling in Grade 1 (Excell and Linington, 2015:1).

Some authors, such as Excell and Linington (2015:1), say that Grade R is the official start of primary schooling, while others say that Grade R is not a 'formal learning year' since this year takes place predominantly through play (Excell and Linington, 2015:1; Janse van Rensburg, 2015). The White Paper on Education (1995) advocated the inclusion of Grade R in the mandatory first ten years of education to address historical injustices. South Africa has not achieved its aim of having all primary schools offer Grade R classes for children aged five to six. By 2019, it was planned for all public and private primary schools to provide at least one Grade R class, making it a requirement for the preschool year (DoE, 2011), however, Grade R is still not mandatory.

The uneven status of South African teacher education, specifically the early childhood teacher education system, is the product of persistent under-resourcing. Teachers who provide early childhood development (ECD) teaching are called ECD practitioners (DHET, 2017:8), with minimum or no formal qualifications. In addition, the role that teacher education, specifically early childhood teacher education, played during the apartheid era was strangely linked with the vision of an apartheid society (Ogunniyi and Mushayikwa, 2015:75). The term 'practitioner' refers to those who teach children with minimum qualifications or without formal teachers' qualifications. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and community organisations took over the majority of ECD teacher training courses and TVET colleges during the 1980s and 1990s (Atmore, van Niekerk and Ashley-Cooper, 2012:133). While the government took a back seat due to political reasons during the 1980s and 1990s, they did not establish early childhood teacher training facilities for institutions; they subsidised facilities that NGOs would set up.

For this reason, many NGOs were actively calling for children's rights and undertaking alternative systems of providing early childhood teacher training (DoE, 2001:10). In 1990, the National Interim Working Committee (NIWC) was launched in favour of early childhood teacher training. In 1994, after a gruelling process, the NIWC and the South African Association for Early Childhood Education (SAAECE) formed the South African Early Childhood Development

(SAECD) to represent early childhood teachers (DoE, 2001:10). Despite this amalgamation of the two organisations, early childhood teachers' salaries were unacceptably low. The National Audit (2001:2) states that almost all ECD teachers have received their training from NGOs, which was government-approved. Still, strangely enough, teachers remained unqualified according to the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ) policy. In addition, the proposed NQF offered an opportunity for those trained through the NGO sector to be acknowledged and accredited for their training and experience. To date, accreditation has not happened because early childhood teachers have not received any recognition from the South African government for their training by NGOs and have remained unqualified, which contradicts the NQF.

Post-1994 interventions and developments showed progress because of the continual public and private sector policy changes. The NGOs and later TVET colleges provided various training and education opportunities through short courses and qualifications. These courses and programmes assist potential early childhood teachers in becoming 'qualified' in ECE, with the potential for further studies. However, early childhood teachers' qualifications from these institutions remained 'unqualified'. The service provider or institution must be accredited to provide an early childhood teacher qualification (Atmore, van Niekerk and Ashley-Cooper, 2012:133). To ensure high-quality ECD teaching and learning, there is now considerable demand for qualified ECD teachers and accredited ECD practitioners (Janse van Rensburg, 2015:8). Graduation from the BEd Foundation Phase now includes Grade R training, which dates back to 2002, when teacher training colleges were either shut down or amalgamated with universities. Although more pre-primary (Grade R) teachers were supposed to be brought into the system as a result (of the amalgamation), this did not occur (Janse van Rensburg, 2015:8). Students who have earned a BEd Foundation Phase degrees typically apply for Grade 1, 2, or 3 posts due to the potential financial and professional benefits (Janse van Rensburg, 2015:8).

South Africa witnessed considerable reorganisation and educational adjustments during the post-apartheid era, notably in early childhood teacher preparation. The curriculum changes are a component of initiatives addressing urgent policy concerns. New challenges exist, particularly regarding the quality of early schooling; for instance, Grade R teachers and Grade R teaching do not have a high professional status. Despite all the improvements, apartheid's legacy negatively impacts South Africa's educational system.

In the following section, I discuss the history of teacher education and early childhood teacher education globally to paint a broader historical view of how teacher education in South Africa compares with international trends and what we can learn from international practice. The reason for choosing these countries is that China, like South Africa, struggled to build a quality education and teacher education system (Zhou, 2011). Some of these educational changes

and political challenges are similar to what we, as South Africans, experienced during the apartheid era. Kenya, part of Africa, was also revolutionised by the British, similar to South Africa. Additionally, looking at teacher education's development and growth, it is envisaged to clarify one of the research questions of this study: How can a support programme facilitate the professional development of beginner Foundation Phase teachers?

1.2.2   Early childhood teacher education in China

Teachers, in general, and early childhood teachers, have had a long-honoured standing in Chinese history for more than 100 years (Li, 2012:418; Polgampala, Shen and Huang, 2016:1138). For instance, early childhood teacher education dates back to 1889, when a middle school in the southern Chinese city of Suzhou launched the first course to train nursery teachers (Li, 2012:418; Polgampala, Shen and Huang, 2016:1138). However, despite the long-standing history of teacher education, Li (2012:418) maintains that formal education of teachers is a moderately new development that emerged at the beginning of the 20th century. In 'old' China, teaching was seen as simply transferring knowledge, and formal education was only for the elite class (Hu and Verdugo, 2015:37), similar to what happened in South Africa. The fundamental changes regarding teacher education started after the 'new' China was established in 1949.

These changes referred to above were divided into three time periods, viz., the first period started from 1949–1965, and the second period (Cultural Revolution) lasted from 1966–1976. During this second period, teacher education almost collapsed, and many teachers were prohibited from teaching (Li, 2012: 418; Hu and Verdugo, 2015:37). The third period started after the death of Mao Zedong in 1976 which, incidentally, was also the end of the Cultural Revolution. This third period was the start of the social and educational recovery (Li, 2012:418; Hu and Verdugo, 2015:37). During all this time, China was no exception under the tide of change; for example, in 1900, China followed the Japanese Model, in 1922, the American Model, followed by the Russian Model, which eventually resulted in the Development of a Chinese Teacher Education Model in 1980. Similarly, as with teacher education, China used foreign people to set up teachers' schools for early childhood teacher programmes; for example, ECD Russian experts were invited to China as educational consultants and provided on-site consultations in numerous kindergartens and provided training at Beijing Normal University (Hu and Szente, 2009:247). On the other hand, early childhood teachers' training differed according to the local economy in each city, town and hamlet (Hu and Szente, 2009:251). In 1952, the Teachers' School Regulations were issued, which specified the significant role of early childhood teacher education and teacher education (Hu and Szente, 2009:251). In 1987, early childhood teacher training started to grow in China and was offered at 22 colleges and universities and by 1992, there were a total of 9 620 000 early childhood teachers and 58,8% had degrees (Zhou, 2011:29). But despite all the advancements in the

field of early childhood teacher education, it is still quite difficult for many communities to provide early education (Zhou, 2011:29). For instance, the number of public ECD programmes has been phased out and private service providers have taken over the ECD arena (Zhou, 2011:29). After 1989, which could be called a fourth period, had been characterised by remarkable changes in preparing qualified teachers and passing legislation to improve teacher education (Hu and Verdugo, 2015:38; Li, 2012: 420). Normal universities (a term used in China) offer a four-year course, while colleges offer a three-year teacher training course and train teachers for junior and secondary schools (Li, 2012:420; Polgampala, Shen and Huang, 2016:1140).

Regardless of the many changes, China's teacher education system is driven by a rigid curriculum, narrowly designed and lacks a focus on teaching skills (Li, 2012: 420; Hu and Verdugo, 2015:38). Despite the rigid curriculum of teacher education Western philosophies made a strong influence on early Chinese education and early childhood teacher education (Hu and Szente, 2009:250). For instance, perspectives written by Dewey (1963), Piaget (1932) and Vygotsky (1978) are widely introduced among early childhood teachers in contemporary China (Hu and Verdugo, 2015). Also, Chinese teacher education schools were initially set up for religious purposes. However, the education system in China was started for political purposes, based on the Confucian tradition that teachers were (always) the foundation of education for individual and societal development (Li, 2012:422). Conversely, after 1980, the Chinese government started searching for ways of educating teachers in anticipation of rapid economic and social growth. In setting up and providing teacher education, China took five potential routes, i.e., preparation in universities, correspondence education, broadcast radio and television education, self-study examination and teaching and research (Li, 2012:419;). In view of that, the teacher education programmes include Teachers' universities (referred to as the aforementioned normal university) or colleges that offer a four-year first-degree (initial teachers' degree), which prepares learners to teach in senior secondary schools. Junior teachers' colleges provide two-year certificate programmes to complete senior secondary school by age 19. These programmes are secondary teachers' schools, which offer two to three-year teacher education programmes for potential learners who want to teach in elementary schools or at the kindergarten level (Li, 2012:419). Although much emphasis is placed on in-service teaching, not enough practical exposure is given to teachers before they start teaching. According to their syllabi, only a 6–8-week valuable exposure forms part of their pre-service teachers' programme (Li, 2012:419).

Polgampala, Shen and Huang (2016:1138) maintain that during the last 50 years, the government has given great care to teacher education and has developed a teacher education system that meets basic education needs. However, the Chinese government at various levels needs to take more responsibility for ECE (Zhou, 2011:36). China has a financially free teacher

education policy, meaning learners admitted to the teachers' programme will not pay any intuition fees. However, this 'free teacher education' binds teachers to ten years of teaching (Hu and Verdugo, 2015:47). In short, the Chinese education system is also adversely affected because such a policy may stop a teacher from contributing to society in any other way or even from becoming a better teacher. In South Africa, beginner teachers may decide to stay or leave the profession and are not obligated to repay the government if they have received a bursary.

From the aforementioned, it is clear that teacher education and early childhood teacher education have been used as political tools to meet specific goals and reforms, as was the case in South Africa. In China, as in South Africa, the government proposed policy reforms for various political and economic reasons rather than for educating teachers as professionals or for the needs of the people (Gumede and Biyase, 2016:69). Despite the educational reforms, the 'sluggish' growing field of early childhood teacher education in China has positively impacted the ECD programme quality and outcomes (Hu and Szente, 2009:252). In South Africa, too, there have been some changes in the ECD sector since 1994; however, there are specific policy questions that are not yet fully addressed, viz., the quality of education in post-apartheid South Africa (Gumede and Biyase, 2016:69). Another notable similarity between China and South Africa is that both countries are placing much emphasis on early education in recent years.

1.2.3   Early childhood teacher education in Kenya

Like South Africa, Kenya is an African country formerly colonised by the British. The result was that many of Kenya's institutions are heavily influenced by British culture (Nganga, 2010:227). For instance, despite the solid indigenous communities in Kenya, the early childhood curricula are moulded after various British school cultures (Lokshin, Glinskaya and Garcia, 2008). The major problem is that colonial powers formulated educational structures with a different cultural background than Africans. Back in 2000, Duncan (2000; 2022:15) requested an African Renaissance in conjunction with advocates such as Botman (2008), Boesak (2005), Maluleke (2010) and Wa Thiong'o (1993), who stated that "much of what has been taken for education in Africa is not African. Lebakeng, Phalane and Dalindjebo (2006) claim that the curriculum is not African but a mirror of Africa's Europe. Because it "does not represent the realities of their surroundings, "the curriculum fails to respond to the learners' experiences. Andraos (2012:6) points out that the occupation of the British (i.e., colonisation) has brought about "colonised minds and education systems" (Andraos 2012:6). Moreover, (Andraos 2016:377) is of the view that despite decades of independence, Africans (including South Africans) have not yet succeeded in empowering themselves to determine their own indigenous African educational framework, which is the case with Kenya. Therefore, the first formal ECE programme was started in 1940, primarily to serve Asian and European children (Nganga, 2010:227). In addition, the British government mandated that the ECD centres in Kenya should follow the

British curriculum and did not allow Kenyan children of African origin admission to these centres (Nganga, 2010:227).

Consequently, after Kenya became independent in 1963, the new government made tremendous gains in developing ECD programmes and expanded them to serve all children (Nganga, 2010:227; Wangila, 2017:218). The new government's main goal was to improve the quality of ECE across the country and established the Preschool Education Project (PEP) and many parents enrolled their children in various ECD programmes, causing a tremendous increase in the ECD population (Nganga, 2010:227; Wangila, 2017:218). For instance, a 2005 UNESCO report estimated that enrolment in ECD programmes increased from 200,000 children in 1969 to 1,281,846 in 2002 (Nganga, 2010:228). Despite this significant enrolment increase, only a third (35%) of Kenya's preschool-aged children attend formal ECD programmes, which include more boys than girls due to economic, cultural and environmental factors (Nganga, 2010:228; Wangila, 2017:218). Another problem that hampers young children is the safety and the long distances some of them have to walk to reach their schools, which makes parents reluctant to enrol their children, especially girls (Wangila, 2017:219). On top of this, there is inadequate government funding (1.00 US$ per child per year), resulting in ineffective policy implementation and a high learner-teacher ratio (1:100), with poor remuneration (Nganga, 2010:228; Kariuki, 2014; Wangila, 2017:222). Unfortunately, despite the great importance of early education, not enough is done to uphold this, and the government's interest in ECD has dwindled (Nganga, 2010:228; Wangila, 2017:218).

Kenya offers different ways of training ECD teachers through various agencies, such as the district and national systems. The certificate in Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) is offered through theory and practice (pre-service and in-service) with 810 contact hours (Wangila, 2017:221). The pre-service programme is covered for one year, in three terms, with one term of practice teaching (Otunga, Odeo and Barasa, 2011; Wangila, 2017:221). Since its introduction in 1985, the ECDE diploma has been a bridge between the certificate and degree programmes in this field (Otunga et al., 2011; Wangila, 2017:221). The diploma in ECDE is a two-year course through pre and in-service with 780 contact hours, and the student-teacher must be attached to an ECDE centre for at least three months (Kenya Institute of Education [KIE], 2006; Otunga et al., 2011). From 1990, ECDE teacher training was offered at five universities, which offered a BEd in ECDE (Otunga et al., 2011).

The European Christian missionaries introduced formal teacher education in Kenya, which was the case in South Africa due to the colonisation of these two countries. Kenya had many small teacher colleges scattered across the country, which later closed down and established the Kenyan Institute of Education (KIE) in 1964, Kenyatta College in 1965 and the Kenya Science Teachers College in 1966 (Otieno, 2016:3). In 1970, some of these colleges became universities and offered the Bachelor of Education degree (Otieno, 2016:5). Since 1970,

tremendous growth has taken place regarding teacher training, for instance, there are eight public universities, 13 constituent colleges and 17 private universities offering teacher education programmes (Otieno, 2016:6).

An article by Brian Levy on 5 March 2018 suggested that South Africa might spend more money on education but can learn from Kenya regarding improving schooling.

Levy (2018:1) further pointed out that:

> *Weak governance is a general scapegoat for the poor results achieved by South Africa's education system. And there is no doubt that many aspects of the education bureaucracy's operation are problematic.*

According to Levy (2018), Kenya has a lower per capita income than South Africa and spends one-fifth on education per learner compared to South Africa. In addition, Kenya's educational bureaucracy is somewhat messy. Still, despite this, it has been an over-performer in the southern and eastern African continent, both relative to South Africa and broadly.

In sum, the historical perspectives on early education in South Africa, Kenya and China have distinct similarities and differences. South Africa and Kenya were colonised and offered British education to African children, far from their cultural roots. On the other hand, China 'borrowed' education systems from Western countries and Russia. All three countries struggled with teacher education, but despite this, all three countries have made great strides. The following section discusses teacher training in ECE in South Africa.

1.3   Teacher training in Early Childhood Education in South Africa

In South Africa, ECE and Grade R teaching have low professional status (Excell and Linington, 2015:85). In addition, the provision of ECE services based on race defined early care and education its focus during the apartheid era and has been viewed as fragmented (Harrison, 2020:1), as mentioned earlier. However, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) has recently demonstrated a commitment to enhancing qualification options dedicated to ECE teachers (Department of Higher Education and Training [DHET], 2017:10) and to bringing together this mainly fragmented area of education (Excell and Linington, 2015:85; Harrison, 2020:1; DBE, 2022;10). The Department of Basic Education and Universities currently offer education for Grade R teachers (Excell and Linington, 2015:8). The primary objective of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) is to improve the qualifications of Grade R teachers by the new Higher Education Qualifications Framework, the Teacher Education Plan, and DHET regulations (DHET, 2017; 2010).

 A person who teaches young children in Grade R between the ages of five and six is known as a Grade R teacher (Excell and Linington, 2015:8). Therefore, for children to learn and be

taught effectively, teacher training is essential in developing the young child. According to Ebrahim, Killian and Rule (2011:2), trained teachers or practitioners must provide high-quality early childhood care and education. The terms 'teacher', 'practitioner', or 'educator' may describe someone who teaches Grade R, depending on the situation and their credentials. The term 'teacher', which is utilised in this study, is in vogue right now.

Furthermore, the training of ECE teachers, typically categorised as vocational and occupational, has not received significant academic support from higher education institutions (Biersteker, 2007; Ebrahim, Seleti and Dawes, 2013). One of the reasons is that universities did not participate (previously) in the training of ECE teachers, which caused a mismatch between an NQF Level 5 and admission to a university (Biersteker, 2007; Ebrahim, Seleti and Dawes, 2013). The lack of clearly defined career trajectories and possibilities for ECE teachers and the fact that current programmes need to produce the number or the kind of teachers required for the diverse ECD setting have been brought to light in research (Biersteker, 2008; SAIDE, 2011). As a result, the Policy on Minimum Requirements for Programmes Leading to Qualifications in Higher Education for ECD Educators and the Policy on the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ) have been prepared as part of the policy framework where universities and TVET colleges can collaborate on programme creation (SAIDE, 2011:5; DHET, 2017:12). The minimum certification teachers will need to teach Grade R is a Level 6, 360 credit Diploma in Grade R Teaching, according to MRTEQ (SAIDE, 2011:5; DHET, 2015:41). Teachers of Grade R who have earned a Level 6 Diploma may enrol in a BEd programme in Foundation Phase teaching if they want to improve their ability to teach learners in Grades 1 to 3 (DHET, 2015:41).

The prerequisite for teaching Grade R is a Diploma in Grade R education. Therefore, the Diploma in Grade R Teaching is designed to provide teachers who can demonstrate broad concepts and specific knowledge and abilities in Grade R practices (DHET, 2015:42). Furthermore, the qualification aims for extensive knowledge in a particular field, as well as practical expertise and teaching experience in a Grade R classroom setting (DHET, 2015:42). There are currently very few specialised training programmes for Grade R teachers in the Western Cape and consequently few Grade R specialists. Grade R is also part of a four-year Foundation Phase training programme in higher education, which does not produce specialised Grade R teachers. TVET colleges provide full-time and part-time formats, an NQF 4 National Certificate, a Level 5 Higher Certificate and a Level 5 National Diploma in ECD. ECD practitioners without recognised academic credentials may use the Higher Certificate to access higher education (Harrison, 2020:3). However, these certificates and diplomas do not guarantee university admission and no credit is given for prior learning. The question arises: How can these challenges be addressed between universities and TVET colleges regarding

ECE teacher training, and should ECE teachers be measured against the same Norms and Standards for Educators (2000) as all South African teachers?

When discussing teacher training in ECE, one cannot disregard South Africa's education reform, which has been positioned within a policy framework that eliminates historical backlogs. Building a just and equitable system to deliver high-quality education and training to learners of all ages across the nation was the post-1994 government's main priority (DoE, 1995; ECD Discussion Document, 1995). Introducing new education legislation and policies and ratifying the new South African Constitution in 1996 were crucial steps in establishing a foundation for high-quality instruction for all learners (DoE, 1997). The acceptance and implementation of the South African Constitution, which outlined and guaranteed several human rights, including those of children, may have been ECD's most crucial policy document during the democratic era. The next part discusses the strategic changes and the emergence of democracy that prompted the reconstruction and formulation of policies for the ECE sector.

Considering the aforementioned, two fundamental principles—correcting historical injustices and defending children's rights—form the foundation of South Africa's ECE policies (DBE, 2001; DoE, 2001; Department of Social Development [DSD], 2014). Some of these policies that impacted ECE are discussed in the following section.

1.3.1 South African policies guiding the training of ECE teachers

Since numerous stakeholders are involved in educating young children in the ECE sector, various government departments' policies that impact ECE teachers' preparation are considered.

1.3.1.1 The White Paper on Education and Training

After 1994 and after the first democratic elections, the government published the first White Paper on Education in 1995, laying out the guiding principles for the new government's efforts in educational reform (DoE, 1995). The White Paper on Education and Training envisioned an integrated learning approach for the educational sector. Another perspective was that all South Africans, without exception, share the same freedoms and rights and equal citizenship, which support establishing and flourishing a democratic, free, equal and peaceful society (DoE 1995, Chapter 2 No 4). The White Paper on Education and Training also emphasises the significance of developing a high-quality, non-discriminatory educational system (DoE, 1995:13).

There has been progress since 1994, and young children now have access to Grade R, which forms part of the government primary schools' system, Foundation Phase, but it is still not mandatory. Since then, 67% of 5-year-old children have been enrolled in Grade R, which suggests steady progress toward the government's goal of universal access to Grade R (Jamieson, Bray, Viviers, Lake, Pendlebury and Smith; Atmore, 2013). More children are in

better quality provision than before (Jamieson et al., 2011; Atmore, 2013). However, there remains much to be done regarding the enrolment of young children in Grade R before we can be confident that the needs of young children are being met. In the following section, I discuss the Grade R curriculum. To establish a framework for recognising early childhood education (ECE) and providing quality education for all learners, South Africa introduced new education legislation and policies in 1996, aligning with adopting the South African Constitution (DoE, 1997). This is discussed further in the following section.

1.3.1.2   The South African Constitution

The South African Constitution guarantees fundamental human rights to its residents (Act 108 of 1996). One of these fundamental liberties is the right to education. The South African Constitution already included the foundation of the ECD policy (RSA, 1996). Therefore, no element of the education programme may be in opposition to fundamental rights. The following basic right to ECD is listed in Chapter 2 of the Constitution, "Everyone has the right to basic education and equal access to education" (RSA, 1996:13).

The above right prohibits discrimination against children and access to education. In this way, the South African government undertook to uphold a constitution that defends the dignity and the rights of all citizens, including learners. Moreover, the Constitution emphasises the necessity of implementing an educational system that would cater to the requirements of all learners (RSA, 1996). Teachers should instil these philosophies as the foundational principles and values of the Constitution in all classrooms.

1.3.1.3 The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS)

On 15 April 2002, the RNCS was adopted and implemented in 2004, beginning with Grade R. Guidelines on what should be taught in Grades R to 3 were provided by the RNCS.

The CAPS was made public on 3 September 2010 by the South African government (DBE 2011:3). The National Curriculum, which has undergone reform, was created with the intention of unifying curriculum instruction for all learners. The DBE began distributing CAPS in 2011 and worked hard to prepare everything for adoption between 2012 and 2014. The CAPS were distributed by the DBE in 2011 and were implemented in 2012. According to du Plessis and Marais (2015:1), CAPS is a change to what we teach rather than how we teach. The CAPS curriculum for Grades R–12 upgrades the previous curriculum and clarifies what is to be prepared and learned (DBE, 2011: iii).

Furthermore, Continuous Assessment (CASS) accounts for all learner achievement in the Foundation Phase (Grades R–3). Continuous assessment is a systematic, ongoing process for identifying, gathering and analysing learner performance. It includes both informal and formal assessments, and regular learning evaluations are conducted. Informal evaluation

occurs in the Grade R classroom by observing the learners while they engage in independent, cooperative, or group oral and practical demonstrations (Excell and Linington, 2015:174). The formal evaluation provides a systematic approach to measuring and evaluating the learner's development. The teacher may also suggest self- or peer assessment fostering critical evaluation abilities among learners (Excell and Linington, 2015:174). Formal assessment assignments are meticulously prepared and documented for all three Learning Programmes: Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills, which are mainly informal and ongoing (DBE, 2010:3; Excell and Linington, 2015:180).

In sum, the South African Constitution is the strongest statement of children's rights anywhere in the world; some are highlighted above. The country's diverse educational history significantly impacted the transformation to a single, national, non-racial system in South Africa, which aligns with international trends. The above policies are some of the guidelines that influenced ECE teacher training. Consequently, each policy offers instructions on what standards to aim for, the fundamental values to uphold and the kind of teacher one should become.

The bulk of this study is the discussion to follow on mentorship in South Africa as it relates to beginner Foundation Phase teachers.

1.4   Mentoring in South Africa

According to Gholam (2018) and Heikkinen and Tynjälä (2020), mentoring is a significant way for student teachers to develop their professional and personal abilities in a real-world teaching and learning setting. Mentorship covers many topics, including informal and formal collaboration among mentors and mentees, learning experiences and imparting pedagogical information (Duse, Duse and Karkowska, 2017).

To gain practical teaching experience, student teachers receive guidance from university lecturers while being placed in classrooms (Mahofa and Adendorff, 2022:1). Mahofa and Adendorff further contend that competent and experienced mentors are required for the mentoring process to be effective. According to Msila (2015:3), there is a growing understanding that mentors must receive adequate training to create successful schools. Mentors and mentees face challenges, such as needing trained subject heads to guide beginner teachers. Additionally, mentorship is still a relatively new concept in South Africa, making it more challenging for beginner teachers to advance professionally (Msila, 2015:3). For instance, the findings of a research study by Msila (2015) show that there is a lack of mentoring, low staff morale, arrogant district administrators, a lack of material and human resources that adds to the challenges faced by beginner teachers.

There is a rising awareness that mentors, who act as the link between leadership and classroom teachers, need to be well-trained to establish successful schools, which is not

always the case in South African schools, claims Msila (2015:4). Msila (2015) further indicates that professional development will stop when mentors are unsuitable, which impacts both the mentee and the school's operations. Mahofa and Adendorff (2022:9) also found that mentoring was typically carried out informally or spontaneously despite the assumption that schools should have well-planned mentorship programmes, according to SACE, DHET and DoE.

As inferred from the preceding information, much has to be done in the mentoring process, including mentor training and enlisting the help of key stakeholders, including the DoE, colleges, universities and teacher unions. In the following section, I discuss policies influencing mentoring in South African schools.

1.5   Policies guiding mentoring in South Africa

1.5.1   The Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa 2011-2025

The South African Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development (2011-2025) (The Plan) aims to improve teaching standards by enhancing the quality of teacher preparation and professional development. The Plan recommends training mentor teachers, lead professional teachers and subject advisors to mentor beginner teachers and lead teachers of professional learning communities (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011:9). With regard to Activity 3.1, Provincial Teacher Development Institutes (PTDIs), the Plan further states that "PTDIs will house the offices of provincial teacher development officials and other officials who deal with the support and development of teachers and teaching" (DHET, 2011:13).

In short, the Plan allows teachers to take control of their development and growth while ensuring that all teachers have access to high-quality opportunities for teacher education and development, with the assistance of the DBE, DHET and SACE (DBE and DHET, 2011:1).

1.5.2   New Teacher Induction Guidelines for the orientation programme

The New Teacher Induction Guidelines focus on the critical period immediately following the hiring or promotion of beginner teachers; during this time, they go through a complete induction procedure that includes teacher orientation (DBE, 2017:2). This ensures they transition smoothly into their new school environment and the educational system. Furthermore, although schools should use every opportunity to support newly appointed teachers during their first year of employment, the support should not end there but continue beyond orientation and induction (DBE, 2017:2).

The purpose of teacher orientation and mentorship, according to the New Teacher Induction Guidelines, is to provide beginner teachers with the necessary tools to become effective

teachers who will improve learning and teaching conditions for school learners, ultimately impacting learners' learning outcomes (DBE, 2017:2). In other words, beginner teachers are more likely to impact learners when they have access to the information they need, are prepared and are aware of what is expected of them (DBE, 2017:13).

1.5.3   The South African Council for Educators (SACE)

According to the SACE mission statement, SACE is a professional organisation that seeks to increase the credibility of the teaching profession and the growth of educators (SACE, 2002:17), which is their primary responsibility. Act No. 31 of 2000 and the 2007 National Policy Framework on Teacher Education and Development (NPFTED) in South Africa give SACE the authority to carry out its mandate for professional development.

The SACE Act No. 31 specifies professional development discretionary functions, such as creating training programmes and resource materials in conjunction with employers and creating a facility for professional support for educators.

In sum, the New Teacher Induction Guidelines for the Orientation Programme, the SACE, and NPFTED 2011–2025 are all legislation that directs and guides mentoring procedures in schools. In the following section, I discuss the justification for my study.

1.6   Justification for the study

In any civilisation, education is the primary means of growth and transformation. As a result, concerns about teacher development and the challenges of beginner teachers' readiness to teach in South Africa's public school system must receive the most consideration on a societal level. Moreover, entering the formal schooling sector as a beginner teacher can be a challenging and demanding experience. Research has shown that the first year of teaching can be one of the most challenging stages in a teacher's professional life (Eret, 2013; Hallam, Tetty and Creech, 2012:1). Furthermore, since beginner teachers are assigned the same obligations as veteran teachers, their initial priorities focus more on survival (Smith, 2014:22). Along with a teacher's challenging workload, other factors such as policy overload, high expectations in the classroom and isolation can have a devastating effect on a beginner teacher's morale (Buchanan et al., 2013:113).

Despite completing teacher training programmes, beginner teachers often face a lack of formal training, leadership, resources, and expert help (Armah, 2017:5). Additionally, the professional development opportunities for teachers are often insufficient and questionable (Armah, 2017:5). Lee (2011) highlighted the need to prepare student teachers to meet the challenges of the interconnected world to move beyond their comfort zone to see the world from a different perspective and develop alternative solutions to problems they face.

Suppose these beginner teachers need to be supported and handle the teaching environment; they could become demotivated, resulting in poor-quality teaching and possibly leaving the profession. It is, therefore, evident from the concerns mentioned above and the research studies' motivation that beginner teachers require guidance.

1.7 Gaps in the research

This research fills a gap in the literature by providing accounts of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers' experiences moving from pre-service to in-service and the lack of support programmes offered to them within a South African context. This study intends to incorporate the voices of the beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers and their Heads of Department (HODs) to derive insight and understanding of their learning experiences and to inform significant stakeholders in education. This research closes a knowledge gap by demonstrating how beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers and their HODs may develop a support programme framework through their learning experiences.

This study may be helpful to WCED curriculum advisers, teachers, policymakers and potential education students. It can be utilised as a future reference for researchers on the experiences of beginner teachers regarding their in-service professional development and support. The focus of this research could be considered indispensable in promoting teacher education and professional development of teachers, especially for promoting professional development in the Foundation Phase (Thomson and Turner, 2019:10). Lastly and most importantly, this study explains the beginner teachers' views, voices, thinking, beliefs and feelings regarding their professional development (achievement) in learning to teach Foundation Phase and their ongoing development as Foundation Phase teachers (Thomson and Turner, 2019:10). This study sets out to discover, from beginner teachers' perspectives, the improvement in their learning experiences in their early teaching years. Ultimately, the research (findings) would spell out the needs of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers, which can be used as a plan and strategy for facilitating a smooth transition from pre-service to in-service.

1.8 Main research question

The main research question is:
How can a support programme for beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers in the Western Cape facilitate professional development?

To clarify and respond to the main research question, additional sub-questions were considered and investigated:

- What are the learning experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers in the Western Cape, South Africa?

- What are the mentoring experiences of mentor teachers in the Foundation Phase?

- How do beginner and mentor teachers participate in the professional development programme facilitated through dialogue and co-construction?

- How do these experiences influence a support programme co-constructed through dialogue?

Concerning the research questions stated above, the research aim and study objectives are as follows:

1.9   Research aim

The study aimed to develop a formal support programme to facilitate the professional development of Foundation Phase Grade R teachers.

1.10   Objectives of the study

The following research objectives served to guide and direct my research:

- To acquire an understanding of the learning experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R beginner teachers.

- To obtain an understanding of mentor teachers' mentoring experiences (HODs) in the Foundation Phase.

- To determine how beginner and mentor teachers participate in the professional development programme facilitated through dialogue and co-construction.

- To establish how the learning experiences of beginner teachers and the mentoring experiences influence a support programme that is co-constructed through dialogue.

1.11   The researcher's role

My position as the researcher refers to the researcher's objectivity or subjectivity. Being the researcher confers power, i.e., the power to mediate and interpret (Creswell, 2013:56). It is almost impossible for a qualitative researcher to be completely objective. The concept of positionality is relevant to this study because of the relationship between the research teacher participants and me, my connection to the BEd programme, and my familiarity with the research topic. I have previously taught in the BEd programme and am familiar with the programme and the participants.

I taught the research participants during their second year, which influenced the dynamics of the data collection processes, especially in the semi-structured interviews; for instance, participants were familiar with and relaxed in my presence. In other words, the participants were comfortable with me, which lessened the tension inherent to interviews. I collected the data as an observer participant insider. Hiring an outside academic advisor is one effective strategy for reducing the influence of prejudice, and this is a sensible course of action (Rooney, 2005).

1.12   Structure of the study

Chapter 1 presents the foundation for the study by providing the background, justification for my study, gaps in the research and research questions. To better understand the present, this chapter offers an overview of South Africa's past regarding teacher education, specifically Early Childhood teacher education. I also briefly touched on the development of educational policies. Additionally, this chapter provides an overview of the objectives and problem statements motivated by the problem being studied. The final section briefly discusses the study's limitations and the researcher's position.

Chapter 2 focuses on the learning experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers, the mentoring experiences of mentor teachers, and the support mentor teachers provide beginner teachers. The study's foundational literature is split into two sections: the experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers and the mentoring support provided by their HODs. This chapter's concluding section covered the theoretical framework underpinning this study.

Chapter 3 presents the methodology and procedures for processing the data collected during the study. The qualitative method approach, data gathering, and data analysis are all covered in this chapter. The participants, study methods, data collection and analysis are discussed. The data analysis presented in Chapter 3 is connected to Chapter 1 and explains the findings and recommendations provided in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. This chapter describes and discusses all the significant elements and specifics of the observations, journal entries and interviews.

Chapter 4 deals with the presentation and discussion of the research findings, as well as the discussion and interpretation of the data regarding the learning experiences of beginner teachers and the mentoring experiences of mentor teachers in the Foundation Phase. The data presented in Chapter 3 are categorised, reviewed, and interpreted to arrive at the findings.

Chapter 5 forms the second section of the presentation and discussion of the research findings. It focuses on analysing the results to support beginner Foundation Phase teachers and their HODs in co-constructing a framework for a mentoring programme through dialogue. This chapter outlines and explains all the key components and details of the dialogues between the teacher participants and their department heads to co-construct a mentoring programme.

Chapter 6 summarises the research findings, conclusions and recommendations based on the data analysed and interpreted.

1.13   Chapter summary

Chapter 1 serves as an introduction, outlining the aims and objectives of the study. It outlines the framework by describing the background of ECE, unfolding the uneven status of teacher

education and, specifically, ECE teacher education in South Africa. The timeline of South African education highlights the previous relationship between teachers of Grade R and ECE. This historical review of ECE in South Africa sheds light on the rationale behind earlier administrations' belief that the community, families and parents—rather than the government—should be responsible for educating young children. ECE has been fragmented in South Africa since the implementation of racial segregation after the conclusion of apartheid (Harrison, 2020).

Further comparisons were made between this historical overview and other countries that have faced sizable or similar difficulties with teacher preparation, specifically early childhood teacher education. The selection of countries such as China and Kenya was motivated by the fact that China, like South Africa, still needs to establish an effective teacher preparation system (Zhou, 2011). These political and educational changes share some similarities with the apartheid period experiences that we South Africans had. Like South Africa, Kenya is a country in Africa that the British people revolutionised. Similar to what occurred in South Africa under the apartheid system, formal education in China was restricted to members of the affluent elite. In this chapter, I have also touched on the need for more professional status and teacher preparation programmes for ECE in South Africa. Moreover, the various policies that influence ECE have been mentioned in this section. For instance, the first White Paper on Education and Training was published after apartheid was abolished.

With the above in mind, the global perspective provides a more comprehensive understanding of how South African teacher education compares to worldwide trends and what can be learned from international practice. Early Childhood teacher training and how pertinent policies affect the educational system in South Africa are also discussed. Mentoring and the policies influencing mentoring in South Africa are briefly touched on. This chapter concludes with the justification of this study and the research gaps.

The following chapter provides a perspective on the experiences of Foundation Phase Grade R teachers during their first years of teaching and the mentoring experiences of mentor teachers. Chapter 2 will also highlight the theoretical framework underpinning this study.

CHAPTER 2

PERSPECTIVES OF LEARNING EXPERIENCES OF BEGINNER FOUNDATION PHASE GRADE R TEACHERS

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 included the motivation for the study, the problem statement and the research objectives. This chapter reviews the literature, which consists of the learning experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers and the support provided by their HODs. Local and international journal articles, seminar papers and research reports are analysed to understand the learning experiences of beginner teachers better as they enter the teaching profession and the learning experiences of their HODs in supporting them. The research's theoretical underpinning is covered in this chapter's concluding section.

2.2 Beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers

The term "beginner teacher" refers to a newly qualified teacher with less than five years of classroom experience (Makoa and Segalo, 2021:930). In Ghana and Botswana, a beginner teacher is in the probationary year, the first year following pre-service training (Nyoagbe, 2010). An individual who has a Diploma in Education and has worked as a teacher for less than five years is referred to as a beginner teacher in Zimbabwe (Mpofu and de Jager, 2018:58). A beginner teacher in Canada is permanently engaged by the Education Board and must finish the New Teacher Induction Programme before becoming certified as a professional teacher (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2017). In a country like China, obtaining a teaching license, a national certificate and passing the formative assessment and final evaluation are prerequisites for first-year teachers before they start working as formal teachers (Xuan, 2019:1).

In South Africa, beginner teachers are graduates who have completed their professional qualifications at higher institutions and will be appointed to public schools for the first time (DBE, 2017:4). For this study, beginner teachers are defined according to the DBE. Moreover, beginner teachers in South Africa are expected to adhere to the standards outlined in the National Policy Framework (NPF) for teacher education when they begin their careers (DoE, 2006, 11). During their early years of teaching, considered the most critical period, beginner teachers face a constant flow of challenges and battles to survive (Xuan, 2019:65). Poom-Valicks (2014) emphasises that once a teacher develops a sense of who they are as teachers, their experiences and newfound knowledge may eventually have an impact on how they grow professionally. Hollins (2011) advocates that accepting responsibility for one's professional role is a vital character element of a teacher's efficacy.

Research indicates that as beginner teachers shift from pre-service to in-service, the first year of teaching is a time of transition (Schollaert, 2011; Hobson and Ashby, 2012:177). The transition from student to teacher is often called "practice or reality shock", described by a person's inability to react to the conditions they encounter (Hobson and Ashby, 2012:177; Casperen and Raaeni, 2014:192;). Casperen and Raaeni (2014) note that beginner teachers often experience a reality shock characterised by patterns such as 'sink or swim' and metaphors like 'immigrants in a new country' (Dickson, Riddlebarger, Stringer, Tennant, & Kennetz, 2014). A study conducted in England over at least 30 years has recognised that this is a critical phase in a beginner teacher's mental and physical development (Hobson and Ashby, 2012). Rees (2015) also investigated first-year teachers' challenges and found results similar to those of Hobson and Ashby (2012). According to the literature, beginner teachers join the teaching field with high expectations for themselves, the school and the educational system (Meanwell and Kleiner, 2013:19). If these are realised, these expectations may lead to satisfaction, but if not, they may cause discontent and demotivation (Mudzingwa and Magudu, 2013:33). Powell and Pescosolido (2011) outline a three-phase emotional transitional phase that beginner teachers go through. Initially, there will be a period of anticipation, delight, and worry; then, there will be a period of emotional calm; and finally, a time of revival and reconciliation (Powell and Pescosolido, 2011).

Postareff and Lindblom-Ylänne (2011) note that teachers still refining their pedagogical strategies exhibit good feelings but also confusion and anxiety about implementing new methods. Hollins (2011) believes that by assisting beginner teachers in transitioning from student to teacher, teacher education programmes must consciously coordinate teaching and learning duties for them during their pre-service training. I agree with Hollins (2011) that the more teaching and learning activities pre-service teachers participate in, the better equipped they will be for the classroom environment. The school environment places various demands on beginner teachers and how well they manage the tension between expectations and difficulties impacts their professional progress and general well-being (Mudzingwa and Magudu, 2013:37). In other words, one might infer that the results could be disastrous if beginner teachers are not supported in the early phases of entering the profession. According to research, for beginner teachers to succeed in the classroom, HODs must provide them with a significant amount of training and support to foster professional development (Mudzingwa and Magudu, 2013:39). Shin (2012) stated that to promote professional development, beginner teachers need dialogues on dispositions and chances for reflection. In response to Shin's (2012) suggestion, this study examines the challenges faced by beginner teachers and explores supporting strategies for preparing them for the practical requirements of the field.

The support should help beginner teachers to adapt quickly to the new school environment and eventually realise more effortless transitions into the teaching profession. Therefore,

HODs and principals must be prepared and actively participate in beginner teacher training and orientation. Moreover, no teacher preparation programme, according to Gravett (2012), can adequately prepare teachers for the complexity of actual classrooms. In other words, no matter the level of preparation and training a beginner teacher receives, some teaching elements can only be acquired in a school, such as handling every circumstance they may encounter in their profession or registering instances. Universities give future teachers theoretical information that they might use as filters to interpret their experiences and knowledge, but they need help to transfer the theory they have learned from their training to the classroom (Gravit, 2012; Mudzingwa and Magudu, 2013). Scholars have disagreed on bridging the theory-practice divide (Gravit, 2012; Mudzingwa and Magudu, 2013). Some authors claim that beginner teachers only acquire a minimal competence package during their initial training. However, once they have their qualifications and are exposed to classroom realities, they may learn how to teach (Gravit, 2012; Mudzingwa and Magudu, 2013). Research suggests that those who receive adequate support become more productive sooner in their careers (Mudzingwa and Magudu, 2013; Casperen and Raaen, 2014). Since teaching requires a connection with others, Lave and Wenger (1991) believe that from a social constructivist perspective, beginner teacher learning and induction may also be described as joining a sustained community of practice.

In brief, the above shows that the first years of a teacher's career are typically the most challenging. In other words, a teacher's first year in the profession should be viewed as a time of scaffolding to help them progress toward proficiency (Vygotsky, 1978; Mudzingwa and Magudu, 2013; Casperen and Raaen, 2014). At a DBE Teacher Development Summit designed to address teacher education matters, DBE (2017) highlighted that beginner teachers often feel like failures due to their isolation and lack of awareness of expectations (DBE, 2017). On the other hand, Casperen and Raaen (2014) argue that high-quality induction programmes can overcome these challenges and speed up the professional progress of beginner teachers. I agree with Casperen and Raaen (2014) that induction programmes promote the professional growth of beginner teachers by enhancing their efficacy at the outset of their careers. Xuan (2019:65) believes informal orientation plays a significant role in the first probationary year by offering beginner teachers ongoing assistance and support. Therefore, it makes sense that if the school and HODs continue supporting beginner teachers, they will succeed in their personal and professional development. In the following section, I discuss the learning experiences of beginner teachers.

2.3 Learning experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers

Beginner teachers' first years of teaching are considered the most challenging and demanding times of their professional careers (Dickson, Riddlebarger, Stringer, Tennant and Kennetz, 2014:1). Moreover, teachers' longevity in education can be determined in the first year of their

careers. Numerous studies have found that beginner teachers have a range of challenges in the classroom (Dickson et al., 2014:1; Koca, 2016:92; Dias-Lacy and Guirguis, 2017:265; Petersen, 2017:1). Some metaphors have been used to depict the experiences of beginner teachers, such as a "sink or swim boot-camp" and a "revolving door" (Dickson et al. 2014:1). It seems to reason that beginner teachers have no or little control over their environment when they are associated with these metaphors. Only the most resilient teachers make it through their initial years of teaching. In the South African literature on the challenges faced by beginner teachers, many problems can be identified, which include a lack of confidence, lack of professional development, isolation, inability to plan, a lack of administrative support, scarce resources, poor retention, inability to manage personal and professional expectations, attrition and heavy workloads (Vallice, 2011; Dias-Lacy and Guirguis, 2017:265; Petersen, 2017:1). It stands to reason that these challenges are exacerbated when no professional development structure is in place at schools.

Guarino, Santibaez and Daley's (2016) study found that attrition is very high for beginner teachers. This finding is in harmony with other studies that show beginner teachers tend to prioritise basic survival before all other aspects of teaching (Dias-Lacy and Guirguis, 2017:265). The attrition rate impacts educational quality, which affects children's developmental opportunities. For instance, through education, one generation can pass on its culture to a subsequent one. If this process is not supported (by the government), an increase in teacher attrition may result. The educational system in South Africa still has many things that could be improved. For example, university faculties have needed help filling spaces in their Initial Teacher Education programme (DoE, 2005). For the DoE, teacher attrition is expensive since it necessitates higher recruitment costs and extra expenses for beginner teachers' professional development (Vallice, 2011:3).

In a research study in Ghana on the challenges and attrition of beginner teachers, Armah (2017:4) noted the discrepancy between the professional ideals and skills required of a 21st-century teacher and those available within the teaching community, especially beginner teachers. It would seem that beginner teachers in Ghana were not sufficiently prepared to teach in Ghanaian classrooms with a Diploma in Basic Education (Armah, 2017:4). Armah also argues that there is little overlap between the curriculum and the demands of teachers in the classroom and that qualifications and years of teaching experience determine the salary than classroom effectiveness, which prompt beginner teachers to leave the teaching profession prematurely. A curriculum that is designed to satisfy everyone's needs may not necessarily solve the challenges that teachers and learners experience (Blease and Condy 2014:1). Thus, equality is crucial to ensure that all South African children have access to high-quality education and can study in a setting free from prejudice and discrimination. Due to this, Blease and Condy (2014:2) emphasise the need for South Africa to establish its indigenous answers

to any challenges that may arise from developing indigenous curricula. For this reason, Blease and Condy stress that South Africa needs its indigenous solutions to indigenous problems arising from curriculum development.

The shift from student teacher to professional is a big challenge for beginner Foundation Phase teachers. With various circumstances affecting beginner teachers, the transitional phase from university to school is marked by uncertainty and doubt (Petersen, 2017:1). One may infer that due to the unique demands of young learners, specifically Grade R learners, beginner teachers in the Foundation Phase, may find it challenging to cope. Petersen (2017) notes various reasons beginner teachers find it difficult to enter and adapt to the early primary school teaching profession and why only a small percentage of beginner teachers persevere. A research study done by Öztürk (2013:294) on the transition of beginner teachers found that beginner teachers experienced the process from student to teacher unnerving because of its rapidness. It is further stated that from the first day in the classroom, the beginner teacher was held to the same performance criteria as an experienced teacher and was obligated to meet classroom requirements (Vallice, 2011:3; Dickson et al., 2014:2). The implication is that there is no distinction between the veteran teacher and the beginner teacher when it comes to working requirements. Somdut (2012:1) contends that when a beginner teacher is appointed, they nearly immediately assume the same responsibilities as an experienced teacher, necessitating that they carry all the duties of an experienced teacher. In addition, beginner teachers are said to enter the profession with preconceived beliefs about teaching that are heavily impacted by their own experiences, according to Garza, Werner and Wendler (2016:19). They add that these preconceived notions might facilitate or obstruct learning, and, in turn, affect how beginner teachers perceive their experiences when they first come into contact with learners and other teachers. In other words, the experiences that beginner teachers gain during their pre-service training frequently serve as the basis for these expectations.

Additionally, there is no transition period during which the duties will be gradually introduced because beginner teachers must quickly adapt to their schools' rules, culture and learners. The experiences that beginner teachers face during their transition from pre-service to in-service often result in them becoming demotivated and leaving the profession (Day and Gu, 2010:83). For beginner teachers to be successful in the classroom, more realistic practice teaching is required, along with sufficient mentoring, which might ease their transition into the school environment. Professional development programmes could even incorporate teacher induction to help familiarise and adequately prepare beginner teachers with their work environment. According to Sharma (2012), the socialisation of teachers during the early stages of their career plays a pivotal role in determining their progression from beginner teacher to expert.

Mohan (2016:167) asserts that the lack of proper professional induction for teachers before they are plunged into classrooms has had a detrimental impact on their overall effectiveness. As a result, induction programmes are essential in many countries, focusing on fostering strong professional relationships and enhancing teaching practice (Mohan, 2016:168).

Another major challenge that beginner teachers are experiencing is the linguistic diversity of learners in many schools, specifically in Grade R in the Western Cape of South Africa. Many black isiXhosa-speaking parents often choose to enrol their children in schools where English is the primary language of instruction (Chataika, McKenzie, Swarts, and Lyner-Cleophas, 2012; Kotzé, van der Westhuizen, and Barnard, 2017:1). This is because English is considered the language of opportunity and mobility (Pluddemann, 2015) and has many resources available (Owen-Smith, 2010: Heugh, 2013). This is contrary to the CAPS document that states that all learners have the right to receive education in their mother tongue through to Grade 3 (DBE, 2011). The Language-in-Education Policy (LiEP) aimed to promote language diversity and break down racial, language and religious barriers in South Africa. It was part of the government's efforts to build a non-racial society. Implementing the policy would enable better communication between people of different backgrounds while encouraging respect for languages other than one's own. The LiEP is part of a national language plan that includes all sectors of society, including the deaf community and is viewed as an ongoing process (DoE, 1997).

Unfortunately, not all learners and teachers speak the same language (Balfour and Mkize, 2019:299), which challenges beginner teachers. The teacher's responsibility in the Western Cape, South Africa, is to meet the varied demands of learners in the Grade R classroom, including the need to teach in their mother tongue (Balfour and Mkize, 2019:299). Moreover, teachers are urged to instil in their learners a regard for human dignity, social justice, equality and democracy. However, teachers and learners need help achieving NCS-mandated curricular goals (DoE, 2001). A study by Chataika, Mckenzie, Swarts and Lyner-Cleophas (2012) in South Africa notes that most beginner teachers generally experience a lack of knowledge and skills regarding the diverse use of languages to be offered as Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) in the classroom, specifically in the Western Cape. South African schools must adopt more inclusive language policies, catering to all languages according to the Constitution and LiEP requirements. Since the Foundation Phase is the first year of formal education, this is where all new curricular innovations are introduced. These shifts are supported by Erden (2010:1), who emphasises that "nothing remains the same; everything changes." The Western Cape and South Africa have seen fast curriculum changes due to the rapid advancement of information, technology and skills worldwide.

In other research studies on the challenges facing beginner teachers in Zimbabwe, it was shown that beginner teachers are placed in areas (isolated schools) with entirely different

cultural backgrounds and that they have difficulty relating to the kinds of behaviours that are permissible (Mudzingwa and Magudu, 2013:40). They further contend that rural communities tend to lean conservative and are distrustful of other viewpoints and behaviours, which cause cultural confrontations in the social, cultural and political arenas. For instance, many of the parents might not work with schools and can have different opinions on how to deal with disruptive learners, which strains the relationship between communities and beginner teachers (Mudzingwa and Magudu, 2013:40). It makes sense to assume that beginner teachers face significant pressure to innovate while keeping their composure when teaching in a second language.

Beginner teachers face the same challenges as veteran teachers concerning the overwhelming workloads in schools, despite their inexperience (Vallice, 2011:3). In addition, the most challenging jobs that veteran teachers do not want to take on frequently are given to beginner teachers (Mudzingwa and Magudu, 2013:40). Conflict may arise between beginner and veteran staff members, particularly about the division of labour and exploitation of newly qualified teachers (Somdut, 2012:23). Given their inexperience and the complexity of the tasks assigned to them, beginner teachers often become more frustrated, which hinders their ability to work with others and contribute to the curriculum of the school (Mudzingwa and Magudu, 2013:40). Beginner teachers who face these challenges are overcome by stress, aggravation and demotivation, which impacts their ability to continue in their teaching career and contribute to the achievement of educational goals. Aslam (2011) echoes this and emphasises that a teacher's first year on the job contributes to teacher burnout, causing them to have decreased job satisfaction and choose to leave the profession.

Of all these challenges, concerns with teacher recruitment in South Africa are caused mainly by perceptions about teachers' status within society, particularly Foundation Phase teachers, who are seen as the lowest in the teacher hierarchy (Henning, 2012). Moreover, the Foundation Phase has seen a general fall in black students enrolling in initial professional education and training (Green et al., 2011). In contrast to the preceding, Clark (2011) believes that all beginner teachers need mentoring to assist them in getting over the various challenges they face while doing their in-service training. For instance, induction programmes can help new teachers make better arrangements for their ongoing professional development. For example, induction programmes can assist beginner teachers in improving provisions for their continued professional development. According to Clark (2011), induction programmes may ease the workload for beginner teachers, boost their self-confidence in the classroom and lessen the isolation they experience at work.

In sum, beginner teachers count on department heads and veteran teachers to mentor and provide peer support at the beginning of their careers. According to international research, beginner teachers need a significant amount of support and training to successfully adjust to

their new surroundings and start their careers as teachers (Mudzingwa and Magudu, 2013:40). This is due to the inability of beginner teachers to apply the theory they have learned during pre-service training to the classroom environment. The theory/practice divide has been examined by many authors who hold the view that while initial teacher education provides student teachers with a minimum competency 'kit', learning to teach begins when a beginner teacher is faced with the realities of the classroom (Gravett, 2012:5; Boakye and Ampiah, 2017).

2.4   Heads of Department (Mentors)

The Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) document issued by South Africa's national DBE states that the official aim of a HOD is to "engage in class teaching, be responsible for the effective operation of the department and to organise relevant extracurricular activities to ensure that the subject, learning area or phase and the learner's education are promoted properly" (DBE, 2016:7). The term HODs or mentors will be used interchangeably in this study). Although the PAM document states that HODs are expected to participate in school management, in general, teaching and learning, the primary purpose of schools is directly related to their supervisory roles (Mthiyane, Naidoo and Bertram, 2019:2). As a result, the PAM document views the HOD as a teacher, subject matter expert, mentor of peers and staff development and monitoring role player (PAM, 1999:8). In addition to other contributing factors, HODs must be capable of carrying out their duties to guarantee that learners advance favourably in the Foundation Phase, particularly in numeracy and literacy (Bipath and Nkabinde, 2018:1).

In this study, the more experienced teacher functions as the mentor, supporting and guiding the beginner teacher who is still in the process of switching from student to teacher. Since the mentor is familiar with the culture and environment in which teaching occurs, they are well-suited for supporting a beginner teacher. Alternatively, the mentor is in an excellent position to support the beginner teacher's professional development as they (beginner teachers) acquire new techniques and classroom survival skills. According to Hudson (2013), mentoring takes centre stage as more institutions and schools begin to see its potential for expanding their operations and promoting innovation. As has already been noted, mentoring is used in schools to raise learner achievement and improve the quality of teaching. According to Msila (2015:2), South African schools need mentors with solid leadership qualities who are also avid readers and lifelong learners. Msila (2015) argues further that mentors must be able to foster professionalism in both themselves and the colleagues they work with. For mentors to promote professionalism, they need to comprehend their schools to guide their teachers toward successful outcomes (Msila, 2015).

In a study of schools with high levels of poverty, Sheils and Rutherford (2014:6) discovered that when these teachers receive mentoring, impoverished learners have a higher and more realistic chance of succeeding. For this reason, Thornton (2014) refers to mentors as leaders in education and change agents and maintains that mentees' professional progress depends on their mentors' support. Moreover, Msila (2015) believes that mentors need to be able to give staff the assistance they need to follow effective school, curricular and teaching practices. Msila (2015) contends that mentoring should occur between teachers and mentors and between teachers, principals, parents and learners to develop an environment for learning in their schools. He further asserts that mentorship is a crucial professional development component for teachers who want to become reflective and critical practitioners. This is because mentors equip teachers with the skills and knowledge necessary to effect positive change in their own lives and the lives of the educators they work with, enabling them to support beginner teachers' transition from dependence to independence (Msila, 2015). However, it must be noted that choosing the right mentor is essential for guaranteeing a valuable and lasting mentor-mentee bond (Bush et al., 2011; Moorosi, 2012; Msila, 2014). Msila (2014:8) holds the opinion that mentors, as well as mentees, have common characteristics that they highlighted as fundamental to the mentor-mentee process, as can be seen in Figure 2.1 below:

Evaluation → Presentation

Identifying the dynamics of the gap

Understanding school

Sharing challenges or successes

Explicating expectations
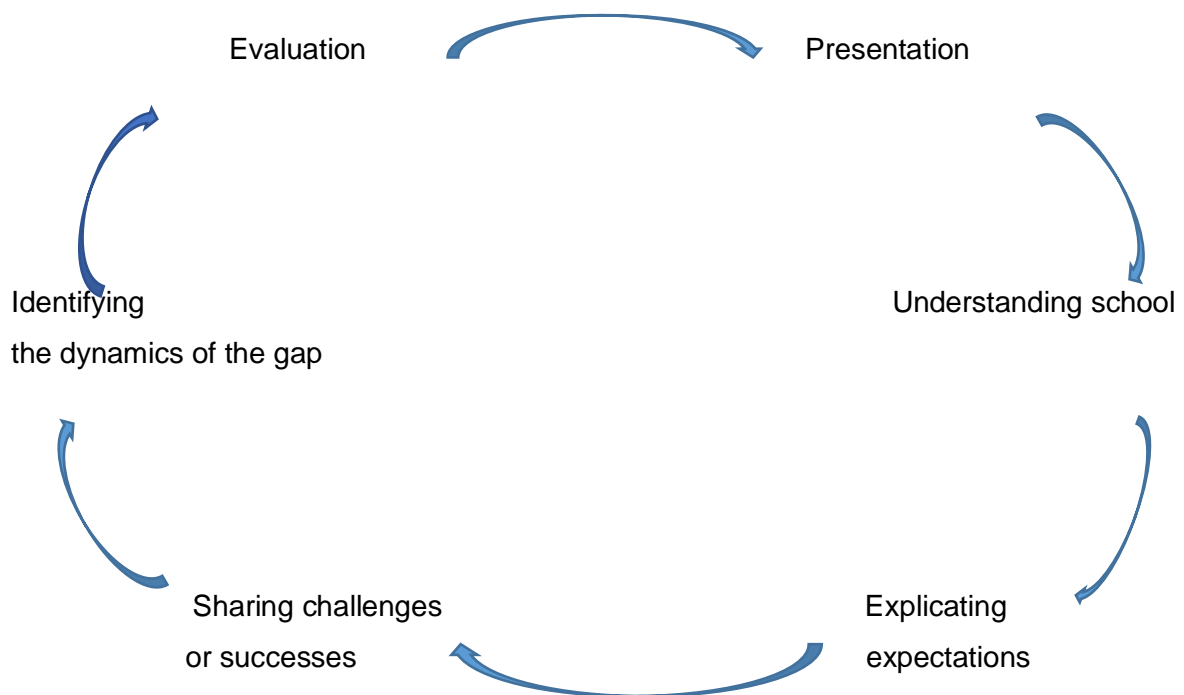
Figure 2.1: The mentoring cycle

Source: Msila (2014:8)

The illustration highlights the ongoing mentoring process, a long-term partnership between a beginner teacher and an experienced teacher who must support the beginner teacher, foster their professional growth and make it easier for them to integrate into the teaching culture. According to Msila (2015:2), mentors guide their mentees through standard stages.

A brief description of every stage follows:

Presentations in which mentees discuss their school's culture and mentors share their opinions and perspectives. According to Msila (2014), the second step is comprehending the dynamics at school, where mentors perform an essential role. Mentees discuss their objectives for the mentor-mentee partnership in the next stage, and mentors take notice and determine the gaps.

At this point, both parties participate in interactive sessions where they look for solutions to problems or ways to improve successful schools. The mentees are primarily responsible for suggestions. Both mentors and mentees review their respective aspects - mentors evaluate the mentoring effects, and mentees assess their school practice. The mentees were able to spot the gaps during this time. For example, one of the potential causes of difficulty for the mentees could be unavailable parents. According to Msila (2014), mentors allowed mentees to evaluate their practice, enabling them to implement some of the mentors' recommendations. Moreover, according to Msila (2014), mutual trust between the mentor and mentee is essential for the mentoring cycle to be successful.

He emphasises that a rapport must be built immediately for the process to be genuine and for mentees to be open about everything. According to Msila (2014), collaboration will result in a successful mentorship where growth will occur, and the mentoring will result in transformative learning. The dialogue will be led by mentees who demonstrate self-development and self-criticism.

Supovitz Sirinides and May (2014) claim that mentors' interactions with beginner teachers affect the teaching approach and how learners learn. In other words, mentors and school leaders influence what happens in the classroom. The mentorship cycle exemplifies how mentors may positively impact school culture. Msila (2015:10) claims that school culture helps beginner teachers act professionally and be committed to their learners' achievement. Msila goes on to state that this is the outcome of several regional and international studies that demonstrate the importance of mentors and other leaders to the performance of schools.

2.4.1 Mentoring experiences of mentors (Heads of Departments) in the Foundation Phase

In the Foundation Phase, HODs have many responsibilities; for instance, they must create cooperative connections with teachers and strengthen communication with them (Bipath and Nikabinde, 2018:2). They further contend that HODs have the apparent challenge of running

a department and teaching classes at the same time or overseeing two grades. One of the HODs' primary responsibilities, according to Mthiyane et al. (2019), should be managing teaching and learning in schools. In other words, HODs must collaborate with teachers to seek solutions to any problems in their division. Additionally, HODs are also class teachers who supervise the distribution of teaching loads as well as general administrative activities, including keeping track of book inventories, collecting money and overseeing staff well-being in addition to secretarial and timetabling responsibilities (Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu and van Rooyen, 2010; Mthiyane et al., 2019:2).

Thus, HODs play a crucial role in providing structural leadership, acting as change agents in their respective departments and driving supervision of teaching and learning at schools (Leithwood and Sun, 2012). According to Ghavifekr and Ibrahim (2014), the roles of HODs also include mobilising the teachers under their direct supervision and developing school curriculum assistance by working with teachers, routinely checking their tracking of the curriculum and supporting them in professional conversations when they encounter issues with the curricula. According to Irvine and Price (2014), the promotion and collaboration of reflection through professional discussions are vital for professional learning communities and transformational learning, which results in improved practice. Furthermore, one can assume that HODs are crucial in developing thorough environments and structures within beginner teachers' teaching and learning contexts. As a case in point, HODs must possess the skills and knowledge necessary to carry out their roles and responsibilities to create and establish these environments. In addition, HODs are also required to support and mentor veteran and beginner teachers with their plans for professional development. The DBE sees HODs as teacher leaders responsible for fostering professional development among their peers (Nicholson, Capitelli, Richert, Bauer and Bonetti, 2016). Moreover, HODs must continuously enhance their instructional strategies and translate policy intents into classroom practices to succeed in their leadership roles.

In contrast, however, HODs or mentors for beginner Foundation Phase teachers need to be more appreciated middle leaders in their schools. They not only give local leadership in their contexts through their work with beginners in the profession, but they also impact and help mould the work of the next generation of teachers (Beutel, Crosswell, Willis, Spooner-Lane, Curtis and Churchward, 2017:2).

2.4.1.1   The Head of Department as a mentor teacher

Focus areas for instructional leadership include managing the instructional programme, fostering a positive school climate and concentrating on teaching and learning (Manaseh, 2016). Bush and Glover (2012) state that the primary responsibility of HODs is overseeing the teaching and learning process. In other words, HODs support teachers, provide advice on

designing lessons to make teaching and learning enjoyable in classrooms and give guidance. In other words, as HODs are the ones who provide education to teachers, they also offer advice on how to create instruction so that teaching and learning are both possible and engaging in schools. Bush and Glover (2012) contend that to affect learner learning through teachers and simultaneously improve teaching practices, HODs must offer guidance and support to teachers.

Moreover, HODs can also support teachers in their day-to-day tasks and school meetings, where they serve as learning leaders. This will automatically affect what the beginner teacher does in the classroom. Bush et al. (2010) make the case in the Western Cape, South Africa, that what teachers do in the classroom may impact learners' academic achievement. I concur with what they say since teachers significantly affect learners, particularly those in Grade R. HODs who effectively oversee the curriculum and instruction generally establish the school's mission and advance teaching and learning (Bush and Glover, 2014).

Since 1994, educational leadership has been popular in South Africa due to its competitive socioeconomic needs and expectations for its educational systems (Munje, Tsakeni and Jita, 2020). The role of HODs (regarding teacher leadership) is aimed at democratising schools and implementing a team-based management style, which can serve as an instrument that could transform South African schools (Grant, 2016). According to Naicker, Chikoko, and Mthiyane (2013), HODs are considered subject experts whose primary responsibility is to ensure appropriate teaching and learning occur. Nkabinde (2013) echoes this view and says that the HODs' primary responsibility is to offer post-level one teachers with direct supervision. The duties of the Foundation Phase HOD include classroom observation and giving post-observation feedback to individual teachers. HODs also plan and implement educational programmes that maximise beginner teachers' potential talents. They should be well-versed and be actively involved in staff and classroom professional development activities.

Naicker and Mestry (2013) and Bhengu and Mkize (2013) suggest that principals in South Africa should promote teaching and learning by using HODs as those who monitor teaching and learning, as previously mentioned. In the Foundation Phase, HODs should take the lead in delivering the curriculum and offer teachers support and direction. As a result, leadership in schools is shared by teachers rather than being the primary function of school principals. HODs were introduced mainly to help school principals with issues relating to curriculum management; their primary responsibility is to oversee and control the quality of teaching (Heystek, Niemann, van Rooyen, Mosoge and Bipath, 2008).

In a study done on HODs and instructional leadership in Indonesia, Sofa, Fitzgerald and Jawas (2012) and Ng, Nguyen, Wong, Weng and Choy (2015) argue that instructional leadership is a multi-tasks leadership strategy that involves overseeing teachers, developing curriculum, planning, organising, supporting change and inspiring teachers. The study also provided

insight into Singaporean principals' methods of implementing instructional leadership (Ng et al. 2015). Principals in primary schools appear to demonstrate more prominent instructional roles than those in senior phases, according to Ng et al. (2015). Furthermore, they claim that Singaporean principals understand that they cannot effectively provide instructional leadership independently. Instead, they effectively utilise the expertise and abilities of teaching and non-teaching staff members inside the school community and outside resources. Though Singaporean principals tend to exercise greater top-down instructional leadership during the early stages of a school transition process, they later provide HODs instructional functions once teachers, staff and learners have adjusted to the change (Ng et al., 2015).

2.4.1.2 The Head of Department as a distributive mentor

Distributive leadership can be defined as a collective effort by members of an organisation, such as a school, whereby leadership is the responsibility of members in the organisation and tasks are stretched, collaborative and shared among individuals (Munje et al., 2020). Collaboration is practised by HODs, teachers and other school members to improve school effectiveness, teaching and learning (Ali, 2015:16). It is, therefore, essential to investigate and gain a better understanding of HODs' leadership styles as well as how their daily actions and activities may affect the Foundation Phase's teaching and learning. One can assume that the influence of school leaders on learning outcomes may have a favourable outcome. Ineffective leadership could contribute to low performance, so research on school development projects increasingly emphasises teacher leadership. This assertion reflects the notion that inadequate leadership is just one factor contributing to South Africa's underperformance (Bipath and Nkabinde, 2018).

Distributed leadership has been emphasised because it enables various voices to take the lead within the leadership structure (Munje et al., 2020). To achieve a common goal, distributed leadership also requires using diverse human resources inside a school to accomplish a shared objective. Distributed leadership, for example, enables the roles and contributions of all other players to be considered and acknowledged rather than attributing school achievements to the actions of specific individuals (Spillane, 2006). Additionally, distributed leadership is a form of collective leadership in which teachers develop their knowledge through teamwork, as opposed to traditional notions of leadership (Harris, 2011:11). Harris (2011:11) further contends that this teamwork is based on a single individual in charge of hierarchical structures and organisations. The roles that each individual performs, both formal and informal, are elements that considerably contribute to the achievement of set goals, such as those in the Foundation Phase, giving teachers the ability to empower other teachers by developing their leadership abilities (Bush, 2018). Thus, it is crucial to acknowledge the contributions that teachers and their HODs make individually and collectively to the school's advancement. Education leadership and supervision have been identified by Syomwene (2018) as essential

elements for ensuring high-quality curriculum implementation to highlight the HODs' responsibilities. In the case of this study, HODs are responsible for overseeing and managing education in the Foundation Phase, which involves giving teachers, specifically beginner teachers, the necessary support and direction (Mpisane, 2015; Syomwene, 2018). In addition, by building strong professional relationships, HODs are supposed to inspire teachers and serve as positive role models (Bipath and Nkabinde, 2018).

In a nutshell, HODs have a significant duty to oversee and monitor teaching and assume the responsibility of facilitating professional learning for their colleagues (Nicholson, Capitelli, Richert, Bauer, and Bonetti, 2016). According to Mokoena (2017:284), HODs play various roles in their efforts to ensure the efficient implementation of the curriculum, some of which are evident in different school settings. Some tasks entail making judgments based on evidence, reflecting on one's actions and working in highly skilled teams. When done correctly, the supervision of teaching and learning can favour learner performance, teacher professional practices, and the school atmosphere, even though the actual effects may be disputed (Ankoma-Sey and Maina, 2016).

2.5 Mentoring experiences of mentors (Heads of Department) while supporting beginner foundation phase Grade R teachers

Wasonga, Wanzare and Dawo (2015:6) state that mentoring is a collaborative process, however, HODs have several challenges when doing their jobs that impair their effectiveness. For instance, role vagueness, a lack of professional development, limited support from the principal, misinterpreting their role as HOD, mistrust from teachers, a demanding workload, the demotivation of teachers, a lack of or insufficient training and an excessive amount of paperwork are just some of the difficulties HODs experience in the Foundation Phase (Acheson and Gall, 2010; Bambi, 2012; Jaca, 2013). Due to the absence of training in leadership skills, these difficulties may considerably limit HODs' capacity to carry out their responsibilities optimally.

Gordon (2013), who researched the professional development of HODs in the US, found that HODs are expected to set an example for learners regarding current educational issues, enforce necessary changes, promote new policies and serve as the crucial middleman when figuring out how to carry out these educational priorities amidst the hectic environment of the department and school. Gordon (2013) further contends that HODs are responsible for creating the proper connections between the staff in their department and their school's top leadership (principal), which can sometimes be very challenging. According to Zepeda (2015), professional development will enable HODs to lead and contribute more effectively to the school. Therefore, it is logical to believe that professional development will result in better educational leadership and improved classroom teaching quality.

According to a study conducted in Kenya by Gichobi (2012), HODs in the Foundation Phase are being asked to take on extra duties; for instance, they are expected to serve on panels for hiring teachers, which is part of the Human Resources functions. This means that in their capacities as administrators, managers and leaders, HODs face additional challenges, which can be described as the duality of their roles. Gichobi (2012) highlights that HODs have not obtained the education or preparation necessary to equip themselves with the skills to manage extra tasks, which occasionally results in stress.

In a study on Chinese school leadership, Zhang and Koshmanova (2021:2) claim principals and HODs are crucial to school transformation and creating a professional learning community for learner accomplishment. Despite incorporating numerous Western and Russian educational practices, China still lags in school leadership. The HODs and principals asserted that contextualising leadership could result in education reform; however, Chinese schools frequently use power to promote change (Celik and Konan, 2021), which serves as a reminder of South Africa's former apartheid system in education. The need to use "factory-style" educational approaches is just another one of the challenges facing HODs in China. For instance, to achieve the highest scores, teachers must implement "devil training", which requires learners to labour from 8:00 am to 11:00 pm (Zhao, 2019). As a result, HODs fail to provide teachers with professional development support and focus more on the rigorous standards learners must meet (Zhao, 2019).

Most studies on the professional growth of HODs and their competencies in the Western Cape, South Africa, imply that the standard of classroom management is still inadequate (du Plessis, 2014; Munje et al., 2020). Du Plessis (2014) researched the functions of HODs and found that these positions are poorly prepared for them and that HODs must manage many administrative requirements, which leaves little time for planning. Due to heavy workloads, other areas, such as the quality of their teaching, worsened and HODs had difficulty observing and assessing teaching and learning outcomes (du Plessis, 2014). According to Scott (2015), HODs battle to control their workload, internal stresses and a variety of expectations, which could lead to conflicts between principals and themselves.

It would seem that many HODs in the Foundation Phase lack the expertise and capabilities necessary to fulfil their duties as HODs (Jaca, 2013). For instance, HODs might not be specialists in Grade R teaching and were still assigned to the HOD post. Consequently, because of this oversight, the Foundation Phase department and its teachers might experience slower growth and advancement. Smith (2014) reaffirms that the abilities and knowledge of the HOD are crucial for staff development and the support given to beginner teachers. This might not be possible if personality dynamics bring on relationship issues between the HOD and beginner teachers. For instance, HODs may occasionally impede their ability to evaluate beginner teachers' methods or appear less critical to avoid dealing with different viewpoints. In

other words, a HOD's capacity to manage people is essential for teachers to collaborate, for the department to go forward on the path they see fit and for their department to cultivate a culture of cooperation (Scott, 2015).

In a broader sense, teacher mentoring, whether informal or formal, improves the educational sector as a whole. Schools will deliver better results if their teaching staff is more effective at what they do, which can be done through mentoring. The significance of mentoring support for beginner teachers in the Foundation Phase is emphasised in the following section as it outlines mentorship programmes abroad and at home.

2.6   Mentoring support for beginner Foundation Grade R teachers

Programmes for pre-service training that prepare future teachers differ considerably from one institution to the other and country to country (Wasonga et al., 2015). However, as mentioned before, when teachers first enter the profession, they face the same pressure to perform as veteran teachers. For this reason, these beginner teachers require knowledgeable mentors to work with them in a classroom setting to become better teachers. Mentoring, for instance, must be purposeful and planned to support and encourage beginner teachers (Zeichner, 2010:9). Furthermore, by assisting teachers in enhancing their professional practices, mentoring can be used as a tool that promotes schools in becoming professional learning communities, particularly Foundation Phase teachers (Kadji-Beltan, Zacharou, Liarakou and Flogaiatis, 2013:2). It can be assumed that the formation of professional learning communities will encourage collaboration among teachers. The objective is to advance beginner teachers from being 'untrained' to becoming knowledgeable and skilled in their field. Therefore, HODs should support beginner teachers during the challenging times when they are dealing with uncertainty, inexperience, personal issues and professional pressures (Wasonga et al., 2015:5). Muriuki, Onyango and Kithinji (2020:147) parallel the notion that effective support measures offered by HODs help the beginner Foundation Phase teacher prepare for the classroom and to feel part of a community.

Moreover, HODs also help beginner Foundation Phase teachers join a professional community where they engage in professional dialogue on an equitable basis with a focus on their own and the group's personal and professional growth (Kemmis, Heikkinen, Fransson, Asphfors and Edwards-Groves, 2014:157). As a result, it is imperative that HODs understand the needs of beginner teachers and the significance of collaborative mentoring to offer better support for beginner teachers as they (beginner teachers) develop their skills (Hobson, 2016). Along with providing stronger linkages to practice, HODs are required to support beginner teachers in connecting their academic theory and the actual work of teaching (Welch, Willis and Beutel, 2013). Research has shown that HODs offer support in more individualised and contextualised knowledge, such as emotional support for resilience and comprehension of local communities

and school cultures (White, 2013; Johnson, Down, Le Cornu, Peters, Sullivan, Pearce and Hunter, 2014; Willis, Crosswell, Morrison, Gibson and Ryan, 2017). In other words, HODs are expected to establish these connections frequently to translate the many kinds of knowledge for and with their beginner Foundation Phase teachers.

In a study conducted in the UK, Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) found that support in educational settings needs to be creative and ongoing to support teachers further. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) contend that intentional staff capacity building in educational contexts is a concerted effort to alter learner results, classroom practices and teachers' attitudes and views. Furthermore, HODs are expected to support beginner teachers by mentoring them and providing professional development to advance their careers; this is covered in more detail in the section below.

2.6.1 Professional development

It would be helpful to briefly describe professional development in general and its significance, focusing on Foundation Phase. I frame the discussion in this part using the following terms. According to Sayed and McDonald (2017:2), "Professional development can be described as activities that increase the knowledge and skills base of teachers". According to Houtveen, Kuijpers and Wubbels (2010), professional growth is a "process of personal and professional empowerment within one's field of expertise". This strategy contends that teachers must advance in their professional development due to the numerous developments made in their area of specialisation over the years and the dynamic and changing nature of the workplace. Additionally, professional development must start with teacher preparation and continue throughout their professional service.

It can, therefore, be argued that professional development can be considered a process that occurs over a long period and includes consistent experiences and opportunities that are thoroughly and methodically planned to promote the growth and development of teachers (Steyn, 2010).

Teachers may occasionally participate in events like workshops, conferences and seminars to accumulate points from the district office or the DoE. This professional development is predicated on the idea that learners would gain from teachers who attend these one-shot workshops. However, professional development initiatives such as this way have a minimal long-term influence on teachers' learning (Zepeda, 2015:46). Rutgers (2012) echoes this same viewpoint by saying that professional development is ongoing as opposed to traditional one-shot activities such as workshops or training sessions.

A study by Bantwini (2012:519) in South Africa identifies that most teacher professional development programmes have not achieved the necessary goals. Bantwini (2012) further

stressed that teachers believed that professional development programmes could not allow them to increase their content knowledge or equip them with the learning aids they required to be successful teachers. Steyn (2010) concurs with Bantwini (2012) and states that formal professional development programmes offered by the DoE had little to no impact on their schools since they were overly theoretical and of little use in the classroom. Which means or indicates a theory and practice divide. Practice needs to be intimately integrated with theory, and I, therefore, agree with Steyn (2010) and Bantwini (2012) concerning the aforementioned.

According to Msila (2012:48), beginner teachers frequently struggle since they lack the proper training and guidance for their new positions and professions. Professional development opportunities must be available to beginner teachers to help them develop and improve their skills (Tait, 2008). It makes sense that beginner teachers must sharpen their skills, given that they are developing personally and because the experience and information they gain lay the foundation for their future professions. Beginner teachers must be empowered with curricular knowledge, learner knowledge, subject-matter expertise and an understanding of the school rules and environment to succeed throughout their first few years of teaching (Poom-Valickis, 2014). This can be linked to how capable beginner teachers can become subject experts by understanding both the subject and pedagogy. In other words, integrating professional development with school improvement is essential for growth in the classroom (Steyn, 2010).

To further describe some of the fundamental learnings crucial to individuals who have engaged a successful path in their professional development as teachers, I adopted a schematic framework, Figure 2.2, developed by Avalos (2011:2).
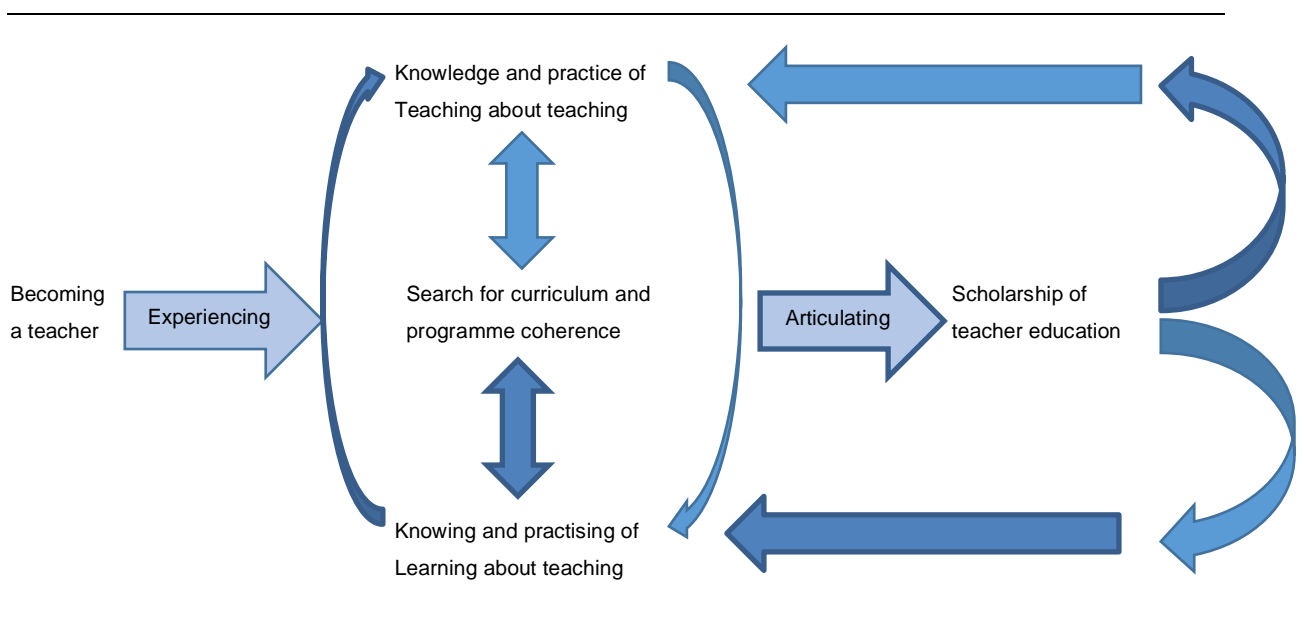
Figure 2.2: Schematic representation of a journey that shapes a teacher's professional development

Source: Avalos (2011:2)

Figure 2.2 above illustrates the professional growth of a beginner teacher through professional development and how it might be realised in practice. The illustration shows the close relationship between the development of teachers' knowledge, practice and learning about teaching and their understanding of identity. It also highlights the challenges and demands of the teacher education industry and the significance of research as a market for knowledge, expertise and ability. Additionally, Figure 2.2 conceptualises the significant turning points beginner teachers encounter on their path to professional development (Avalos, 2011:2).

Many beginner teachers, as indicated before, do not have the skills and professional ability to cope in the teaching profession, thus resulting in many of them leaving it (Stewart, 2014; Bernadine, 2019). This can be prevented by suggesting ways SACE can respond to beginner teachers across South Africa, form support networks for newly qualified teachers and offer sufficient professional development training programmes (Makoa and Segalo, 2021:932). In the subsequent section, I discuss the role of the SACE, which is involved with the professional development of teachers.

2.6.2 The South African Council for Educators (SACE) provides professional development to beginner teachers

SACE is a professional body that was founded in terms of the SACE Act No. 31 of 2000 (SACE, 2011:6). The SACE is required by the SACE Act to construct a facility for providing professional support to teachers for the advancement of their training (SACE, 2011:6).

Despite the numerous educational changes that have occurred in the country over the past years, SACE's mission statement, "Towards Excellence in Education", has remained constant (SACE, 2011:4). The SACE Code of Professional Ethics, which is primarily aimed toward classroom teachers, was created in 2002 to address the "unacceptable behaviours perpetuated by some members of the teaching profession" (SACE 2002:1). With the use of the Code of Professional Ethics, SACE can hold teacher accountable when they violate the rules. Formal disciplinary actions may result in their removal of registration (SACE, 2009:1), which is uncommon in South Africa.

After completing their academic prerequisites, South African student teachers apply immediately to be certified by SACE. The processes for certification and qualifying occur concurrently and SACE registers qualified teachers and supports ongoing professional development programmes. Providing professional teaching standards for teachers in South Africa is also required. Although South Africa does not mandate mentoring for newly certified teachers, each school must make the teacher's formal introduction and professional development programme available. This matter was raised in the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) statement, "It is contradictory that there is no formal support/induction for newly qualified teachers in countries where poor quality instruction

has resulted in low learner accomplishment" (UNESCO, 2005). SACE is responsible for issuing registration certificates to teachers and offering official support or induction, which is impossible in practice. Despite the government's so-called efforts, neither SACE nor the DoE has been able to make this aim a reality thus far (Steyn, 2010:16).

In addition, there is no official, mandated induction programme for beginner teachers in South Africa. The South African education policy appears to be seriously lacking in the DoE's commitment to beginner teachers' professional development. It clarifies why beginner Foundation Phase teachers are under pressure in their teaching environments (Steyn, 2010:16), showing gaps in the current system of the DoE.

Moreover, despite the current global economic crisis, several governments continue to fund teacher professional development (King, 2015:89), which is regrettably not the case in South Africa, as was previously indicated. Yet, given this sustained investment in these challenging times and a global push toward accountability, there is a rising emphasis on the impact of teacher professional development (King, 2015:90). For this reason, professional development is being promoted as a tool for learning that enhances both the quality of learner outcomes and continuing professional development (Earley and Porritt, 2010:147). According to Earley and Porritt (2010) and Guskey (2000), professional development positively impacts learner outcomes. In the next section, I discuss how to support strategies that may aid the professional development of beginner Foundation Phase teachers.

2.6.3 Mentoring

The word "mentoring" is thought to have originated from the Greek story of Mentor, a friend of Ulysses who was tasked with watching over his son before he set out on his famous journeys (Wasonga et al., 2015:3). Mentor provided the son with comprehensive care, helping him become a moral, spiritual, emotionally and mentally mature person (Wasonga et al., 2015:3). Putting it another way, mentoring is the practice of supporting the development of a person who is relatively inexperienced by someone comparable or more experienced and skilled. Since 1980, the idea of mentoring has been used more and more frequently in educational settings as a means of improving teaching and teacher development (Wasonga et al., 2015:3). At present, mentoring seems to be taking the limelight as more institutions start to recognise its potential for expansion and growth (Msila, 2015:1).

Despite the many attempts made by the DoE to attract and recruit many students into education, too many beginner teachers are resigning in the first three years of teaching (Fantilli and McDougall, 2009; Lunenburg, 2011). They leave the profession for various reasons, but one main reason is that beginner Foundation Phase teachers do not get enough support from the government in the form of orientation, ongoing professional development programmes, or the necessary support and mentorship from their schools and heads of departments (Fantilli

and McDougall, 2009; Lunenburg, 2011). A well-designed support structure is fundamental in inducting beginner teachers into the profession and keeping them in the education system (Arends and Phurutse, 2009). If beginner Foundation Phase teachers, specifically Grade R teachers, are provided with the necessary support and mentorship, they are less likely to leave the teaching profession (Arends and Phurutse, 2009; Fantilli and McDougall, 2009).

In a research study on mentoring beginner teachers in China, Salleh and Tan (2013:154) found that mentorship is practised in almost all schools and is primarily done in two ways: one-on-one and in groups. All schools were said to have a structured teacher mentorship system (*Shitu dajia* [教师辅导]) for one-on-one or group mentoring. Under this system, beginner teachers are paired with a mentor teacher, an experienced colleague and typically a teacher-guide (*Gŭgàn* [拼音]) for approximately three years. Their mentoring process covers all facets of teaching, including discussions of teaching methods, daily collaboration, resources, lesson planning, observation and critique (Salleh and Tan, 2013:154). The beginner teacher and mentor teacher (HOD) must collaborate closely, and the mentor and the school's top management must closely monitor the beginner teacher's progress.

Additionally, the HOD is accountable for the professional growth of the teacher under their supervision (Salleh and Tan, 2013:154). In addition to the mentoring programme for beginner teachers, other forms of mentoring are available. For instance, the gugan teacher selects teachers who have the potential to become experts and places them in specialised training. The aims of this programme, which has been in China since the late 1950s, are to promote teacher thinking, raise professional standards, and enhance the effectiveness of teaching (Wu, 2009), which will improve teachers' professional development. The study above demonstrates how experienced and beginner teachers collaborate to enhance pedagogical and learning methods, ultimately improving learner results. The Chinese government recognises the need for highly qualified teachers to produce highly competent learners (Wu, 2009). Since there is little tolerance for individualism in Western society, I would conclude that the mentorship framework in China is too rigid and somewhat unrealistic.

In research on the induction of beginner teachers in Kenya, Saoke (2010) reported that orientation, mentorship, seminars and workshops were among the shortcomings that beginner teachers encountered. Furthermore, Saoke (2010) argues that the deficiencies led to a deviation between pre-service and in-service training and detrimentally impacted how beginner teachers were perceived. Moreover, Mollel's (2010) research revealed that curriculum implementation requires HODs to be resource persons for beginner teachers and advisors in developing curricular topics. Mollel (2010) further stated that HODs oversee the formation of lesson plans, ensuring that they reflect the goals of the school curriculum. To further support

and mentor beginner teachers, the HODs also guide teachers as they implement teacher-learning methods and keep abreast of advances in professional development (Mollel, 2010).

Mosoge and Taunyane (2012) report that teachers in the US participate in rigorous workshops designed to enhance their subject-matter knowledge and that teachers who participate offer good feedback about the effect of the workshops. Mthiyane, Naidoo, and Bertram (2019:2) emphasise that workshops deepen teachers' understanding of children's cognitive processes, improve their pedagogical skills, and foster more effective teaching and learning strategies. Mthiyane, Naidoo, and Bertram (2019:2) further strongly assert that the quality of mentoring and professional development programmes is decisive in driving teachers to improve their teaching practices and foster a lifelong learning attitude. In other words, mentoring for beginner teachers is a highly effective collaborative process in which heads of departments work with colleagues and other members of the school community to enhance teaching and learning practices, leading to significant improvements in academic outcomes for learners.

In South Africa, teaching and teacher education have emerged from a very disorganised past and mentoring is relatively new in the South African education system. For instance, teachers with different backgrounds often work together in schools where there may not be a shared language of practice or understanding of the professional teaching process (Kimathi and Rusznyak, 2018:1), creating challenges for teachers and schools. Since the beginning of South Africa's democracy, there have been several policy changes to correct the past and have sought to professionalise teaching (Kimathi and Rusznyak, 2018:2). The policy adjustments represented an attempt to make amends for the past.

An example is a mentoring project started by the Western Cape Primary Science Programme (PSP) in 2018 when it recognised the need to assist beginner teachers. Since I participated in the PSP programme for almost a year, I adopted the support programme to establish a model for helping beginning Foundation Phase Grade R teachers. In the following section, I provide a step-by-step guide for the schematic illustration in Figure 2.3.

Step 1: The support programme starts by recruiting beginner teachers who completed their BEd degree from TVET colleges.

Step 2: The first evaluation of the pedagogical content knowledge and response to the needs of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers is done via a questionnaire.

Step 3: All the beginner Foundation Phase teachers are invited where they meet and an explanation of the support programme is given to them in detail.

Step 4: Visiting schools to observe the beginner Foundation Phase teachers' abilities and needs. The sites are visited and the beginner teachers are observed to identify their needs. Three observations per term take place, or how time will allow.

Step 5: Workshops: Beginner teachers are encouraged to attend workshops based on the everyday needs of all the beginner Foundation Phase teachers.

Step 6: Conferences: Best Practices Cases are presented by beginner Foundation Phase teachers to principals, other teaching staff and family members.

Step 7: Final results: Final evaluation of the pedagogical content knowledge–see how the beginner Foundation teacher has changed, who has gone through the cycle and what changes occurred.

Figure 2.3 below is a schematic illustration of the above.

1.Recruiting and selection process

Beginner teachers are recruited from TVET colleges and selected by letter.

7. Final results

Final evaluation of the pedagogical content knowledge.

2. First Evaluation

Of the pedagogical content knowledge

6. Conference

Cases of best practices will be presented by beginner Foundation Phase teachers to principals, other teachers and family members.

3. Support ProgrammeProgramme

Introducing the support programmeprogramme to the beginner Foundation Phase

Three observations per term

Reflection by individual defined criteria

5. Workshop

Workshops are based on common needs of all participants (beginner teachers).

4. First Observation

Visit beginner teachers in school to observe teaching abilities

Figure 2.3: Framework for a support programme to facilitate professional development

Source: Adapted from Western Cape Primary Science Programme (2014)

In contrast to the above steps on how to support the professional development of beginner teachers during their first years of teaching, mentors' professional development is a subject that receives little attention (Bullough, 2012). For instance, how mentors' skills and knowledge are developed during mentoring (Bullough, 2012). According to research (Clark, Killeavy and

Molony, 2013; Ulvik and Sunde, 2013), mentors' professional knowledge is extremely practice-oriented and drawn mainly from their own professional experiences. Furthermore, instructional contexts have strongly influenced mentors' conceptions and practices of mentoring. It is also highlighted that mentors can learn current knowledge or new perspectives from beginner teachers. For instance, in a study of beginner teachers and their mentors, Ulvik and Langørgen (2012) found that mentors learn from beginner teachers about issues such as youth culture and computer training, gain up-to-date information about the curriculum and subject matter and listen to alternative perspectives of beginner teachers. In an early study, Gilles and Wilson (2004) found that mentors learn how to work with adults, read situations and their mentees, when and how to challenge mentees' thinking and make tacit expertise visible and conscious. Koballa, Kittleson, Bradbury and Dias (2010) point out that a lot of mentoring is learned by engaging in it and that it is a learning process that takes time, years, rather than months.

In brief, mentorship needs to be used in classrooms to support learners and raise the bar of teaching Msila (2012:50). Therefore, schools require mentors with in-depth knowledge of teaching approaches and classroom procedures that support learner achievement and guide their teachers toward successful outcomes. Furthermore, the demands on mentors have become so immense that they need to understand their schools in order to lead their teachers toward positive results. In the case of this study, HODs need to provide mentoring support to beginner teachers, for instance, understanding school dynamics, clarifying expectations, sharing challenges or successes, identifying possible gaps and evaluating, as indicated in the mentoring cycle in Figure 2.1. Effective teachers can be retained with meaningful, structured professional development and mentor support (Davis, 2014). The theoretical framework for this investigation is covered in the following section.

2.7   Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework consists of the joint theories in which a study is embedded (Kumar, 2014). I decided to incorporate the theories of Vygotsky (1978), Freire (1972) and Guskey (1986) to frame my study. Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist approach, Freire's (1972) Dialogical Theory and Guskey's (1986) Change Theory provided compelling, comprehensive and integrative insights into professional development, adult learning, discussions and support, but most importantly, the relationships between beginner teachers and others (mentees and mentors). These relationships, essentially built on trust, are essential building blocks to enhance the growth of beginner teachers into professional teaching and related responsibilities. These different yet closely related and interconnected approaches will underpin the theoretical framework for this study.

2.7.1 Vygotskian perspective on mentoring and professional development

By utilising the social constructivist approach to teachers' mentoring support for professional development, this study incorporates Vygotsky's (1978) constructivism theory. According to Mvududu and Thiel-Burgess (2012), constructivism is frequently regarded as assessing children's comprehension levels and demonstrating how understanding may grow and transform into higher-level thinking. Constructivism thus outlines the best ways to teach the content and the best practices for learners to understand it. Teachers should consider constructivism an educational theory and allow their learners to apply what they have learned and put it into practice (Mvududu and Thiel-Burgess, 2012). The constructivist viewpoint and the socio-constructivist perspective, also known as the socio-cultural perspective, are the two main constructivist perspectives (Kanselaar, 2002). This study will use the terms socio-cultural and social-constructivist perspectives interchangeably.

Shabani (2016) agrees that Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory is a foundational theory in developmental psychology that provides the most comprehensive description of mental development to date. Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory has three central tenets: knowledge is created, learning necessitates social interaction and learning is situated (Richardson, 2003; Graves, 2010). Falk (2009) references Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) in support of this notion, in which learners progress from what is known to what is unknown under the direction of an expert.

In Vygotsky's (1978) view, social constructivist involvement is the engine for cognitive development. His premise is that people learn and develop in particular social and cultural environments due to interactions between humans and their social surroundings. De Valenzuela (2006) correctly notes that interactions within a cultural and historical framework are perceived as emerging rather than cognitive development being understood as unfolding in a biologically driven sequence. In line with this perspective, learning promotes or leads to cognitive development. By applying this principle of Vygotsky (1978), the school should lead in promoting and implementing teacher mentorship by orientating beginner teachers into the school environment. For instance, an orientation programme will allow beginner teachers to become familiarised with the school and bond with other staff members. Acquiring knowledge is not an isolated experience, according to (Vygotsky, 1978). He explained that knowledge is socially produced through interactions using cultural tools and experiences rather than being transferred from one person to another. In the case of this study, the beginner teacher in the new position can be compared to a learner.

In line with Vygotskian theory, knowledge is co-constructed between a person with more knowledge and one with less knowledge in social interactions, not in mind (Lantolf, 2004). In the same way, the tools used to build knowledge are social constructivist-mediated processes influenced by them (Lantolf, 2008). Vygotsky (1978) argues that while the child's biological

maturation and curiosity are vital drives to learn, they do not take them very far in a learning situation. According to Mutekwe (2018:1), learners can make the most of their natural abilities by seeking guidance from those with more significant expertise, such as parents, teachers, and friends. With the support of such experts, learners can acquire the necessary psychological tools to navigate and succeed in different cultures. In other words, to develop new cognitive structures, children must first learn to use the cultural tools the environment offers in a shared activity with other people with more skills. Development and its social-cultural setting are inextricably linked, according to Vygotsky (1978). To put it into context, the educational and school systems should make mentoring beginner teachers simple. Older, veteran teachers who have accumulated significant experience should expect to mentor beginner teachers and be able to impart their practical skills, integrated theory and knowledge to them.

On the other hand, as beginner teachers embark on their teaching journey, they often seek the support and guidance of their more experienced counterparts (Salleh and Tan, 2013). This hierarchical structure aligns with the values of a collectivist society, where individuals work together towards a common goal (Mustafa, Glavee-Geo and Rice, 2017). Through teacher mentorship, when ideas, expertise and resources are communicated and discussed, the link between beginner and veteran teachers should develop into a positive working partnership (Salleh and Tan, 2013). Integrating behaviour and consciousness, or the unification of mind and social interaction, is a significant characteristic of Vygotsky's (1978) developmental theories because it defines human development. Vygotsky (1978) distinguished clearly between socio-historical and biological forms of development. He claimed that biological maturations throughout time do not always represent development but should result in new behaviours or social interactions. Following Vygotsky's (1978) theory, interaction with other people rather than maturation automatically improves a person's knowledge. Thus, the need for collaboration among the staff members (both beginner teachers and veterans) will increase the effectiveness of mentoring supported by social and cultural norms (Smith and Ingersoll, 2004).

2.7.1.1 Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is another educational paradigm that can be utilised in the Western Cape and South African schools (Vygotsky, 1978). The ZPD, as described by Vygotsky (1978:86), is the "distance between the degree of actual development as measured by independent problem-solving and the level of potential development as measured by problem-solving with the assistance of adults or in collaboration with more skilful peers". The theory behind this is that people learn best when collaborating with others and that new ideas, techniques and abilities can only be understood and internalised through guidance and collaborative endeavours with more experienced people. The ZPD connects what is

known and what is possible to know, and it is now widely used in studies about teaching and learning in many subject areas. It is associated with scaffolding in the literature (Vygotsky, 1978).

Tappan (2012) and Gholson (2010) argue that education, from a Vygotskian perspective, aims to keep learners in their ZPD for as long as possible. This is achieved by providing them with engaging and culturally relevant learning tasks and problem-solving activities that are more challenging than what they can complete independently. The ultimate goal is to help learners gradually develop new skills and knowledge through collaborative efforts with teachers, peers, and other resources. This will require them to collaborate with a teacher or other adult, a more experienced peer, or both to complete the task. For instance, the same ZPD principle can be applied when veteran teachers mentor beginner teachers in teaching groups. Such situations emphasise the gap and difference between beginner teachers and veterans by exposing beginner teachers to a wide range of experiences from several veterans where collaboration and co-construction of pedagogical content knowledge can occur. According to Gillen (2010), beginner teachers can significantly enhance their performance and understanding, provided they receive support and guidance from experienced colleagues. As stated by Vygotsky (1978), one's abilities with the support of trained assistants (veteran teachers) serve as a more accurate indicator of intelligence. The usefulness of working in small groups is especially stressed by this theory when at least one person is more competent than the others. For instance, beginner teachers gain new skills when a HOD guides them through task-oriented interactions. Thus, beginner teachers can develop their knowledge as they take control and become less dependent on veteran teachers or HODs.

Moreover, by providing personalised support, HODs can empower beginner teachers to reach their full potential and achieve the most proximal level of development possible. The collaboration will allow beginner teachers to discuss and share ideas, abilities and challenges during professional development encounters. Similarly, by sharing curriculum resources, ideas, and assessment guidelines, beginner teachers can incorporate what they have learned with other elements of the education setting. A professional culture can be created through collaboration, with a shared knowledge of instructional objectives, approaches, issues and solutions (Salleh and Tan, 2013:158). In harmony with the view above, learning is a social and cultural process related to mentorship and beginner teachers' professional development. Veteran teachers, for instance, can set up a learning environment where beginner teachers can engage in activities that could promote and support learning. In my opinion, Vygotsky gives beginner teachers an essential framework for mentoring and professional growth. In other words, Vygotsky's theory emphasises the necessity of learning through a social constructivist perspective. In addition, Vygotsky (1978) provided some ideal insights into the potential ways beginner teachers can progress. Furthermore, Vygotsky illustrated the critical part that peers

play in supporting beginner teachers through engagement, communication, co-construction, language and collaboration.

Moreover, while pairing a beginner teacher with a more experienced teacher is a crucial component of the process, it is merely the first step in Vygotsky's theory. Beginner teachers will only be able to perform a task without the assistance of their HODs or other veteran teachers when they have reached the ZPD. The following figure illustrates how the ZPD relates to the development of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers.
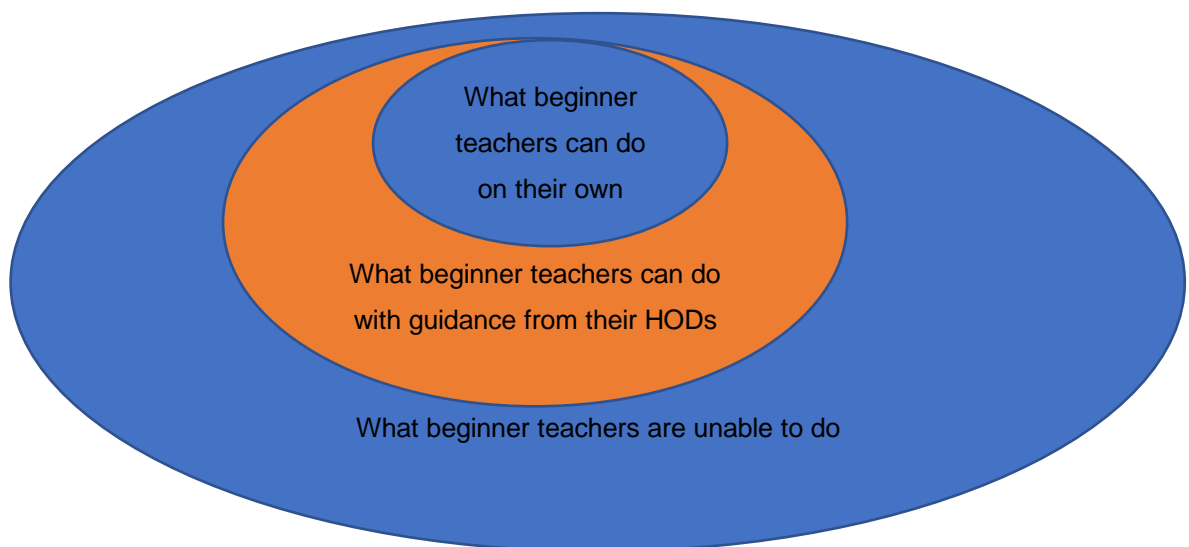
Figure 2.4: Development of beginner Foundation Phase teachers through their Zone of Proximal Development

Source: Author's own construct

As seen in Figure 2.4 above, beginner teachers must be mentored by their HODs to realise their full development potential. The beginner teacher's level of development can then be seen when they are operating independently of their HODs or other veteran teachers.

2.7.1.2 Scaffolding

In line with the above, (ZPD) scaffolding, on the other hand, explains the interaction between the HOD and the beginner teacher. Scaffolding between the HOD and beginner teacher must start from what is familiar to beginner teachers' experience and progress onto what is unfamiliar to their experience, that is, from the concrete to the abstract (Vygotsky, 1978:62). For instance, the HOD is in the position of creating training in manageable steps depending on what beginner teachers are already able to achieve on their own. After that, beginner teachers are given more complex tasks to independently figure out and acquire knowledge. According to Vygotsky (1978:62), as time accumulates, the adult (in the instance at hand, the

HOD) would continuously modify the level of assistance according to the child's (in this case, the beginner teacher's) performance level. In terms of this study, beginner teachers will soon be able to function without the support of the HOD and solve problems independently. It makes sense that scaffolding would be tightly tied to each individual's demands and needs.

In short, Vygotsky (1978) argued that learning is a social process and noted that the knowledge that people (beginner teachers in this instance) generated initially manifested on their own as inter-psychological and later as intra-psychological, which occurs between people. Moreover, Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective posits a nuanced relationship between learning and development. From a Vygotskian perspective, teaching is accomplished through social interaction; it happens before development, assisting individuals in mastering material they would not be able to grasp on their own right away (Vygotsky, 1978:89). In other words, beginner teachers can learn a lot from their HODs through interaction and dialogue. Vygotsky's theory of the Zone of Proximal Development suggests that in order for beginner teachers to achieve optimal development through collaborative learning, it is helpful for them to collaborate with individuals who possess more excellent knowledge or expertise (Vygotsky, 1978). This approach encourages cooperative learning and enables teachers to benefit from the experience and knowledge of their peers.

From Vygotsky's point of view, teaching is achieved through social interaction and is ahead of development, helping people master material that they could not immediately master on their own (Vygotsky, 1978:89).

2.7.2   Guskeyian perspective on mentoring and professional development

In this section, I discuss Guskey's (1986) theory on change, which contends that professional development can change teachers' knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs. I will also mention Guskey's (1998) professional development, which consists of five components and how these components influence learner performance. According to Guskey (2000), the main objective of professional development initiatives is to improve teaching practice and enhance learner accomplishment. Guskey's (1986) Change Theory aligns with the Vygotskian social constructivist approach, which supports effective teacher-learner interactions.

Guskey (1986:383) argues that what attracts teachers to professional development is their belief that it will intensify their knowledge and skills and improve their efficacy with learners. Teachers also see professional development as the pathway to improved competence and professional satisfaction (Guskey and Huberman, 1995). Guskey (1986:384) further contends that professional development programmes initiate teachers' perceptions and beliefs. In other words, successful professional development should lead to specific improvements in teachers' teaching knowledge, abilities, attitudes, beliefs, or behaviours as they pursue their teaching objectives (Guskey, 2000).

Guskey (1986:384) designed a model to illustrate that significant changes in teachers' attitudes and beliefs occur after they have gained evidence of improvements in learners' learning abilities (see Figure 2.5 below). These improvements result from changes teachers make in their classroom practices, such as using new materials or modifying teaching procedures or classroom format. Also, the successful implementation experience may facilitate changes in teachers' attitudes and beliefs. According to this model, the framework emphasises teachers' change process when participating in professional development programmes (Guskey, 1986:386). Furthermore, Figure 2.5 illustrates the three main results of professional development: change in teacher classroom practices, change in learners' learning outcomes and the change in teachers' beliefs and attitudes, a model of the teacher-change procedure.
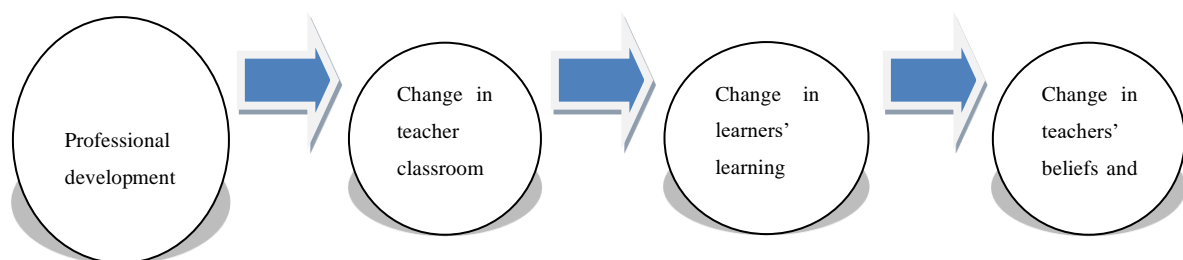
Figure 2.5: Model of teacher change
Source: Adopted from Guskey (1986:384)

In essence, ongoing professional development encourages change in teachers to advance their careers. Guskey's (1986) concept of the teacher-change process is predicated on the notion that change is a progressive learning process for teachers. According to Clark and Hollingsworth (2002), further explaining Guskey's (1986) change model, significant changes in beliefs and attitudes are likely to occur after changes in learners' learning results are apparent.

According to Guskey's (1986) illustration, a significant change in teachers' beliefs and attitudes will probably occur only after changes in the learners' learning become evident. This model explains how beginner teachers transform through professional development to improve learners' learning, which will permanently change teachers' beliefs and attitudes. The model provides a structured framework for better understanding and describing the dynamics of the teacher transformation process (Guskey, 1986:7). The critical aspect, according to Guskey (2002), is that (proof) of improvement in learners' learning outcomes typically occurs before and may even be a requirement of significant change in the beliefs and attitudes of many teachers.

Authors supporting this model of teacher change include Opfer and Pedder (2011), who propose an explanation for the complexity of the learning process by introducing the concept

of a "complex teacher activity system". They suggest that teacher change occurs within a highly dynamic and influential set of nested systems but with a more fluid orientation between them. Opfer and Pedder (2011) emphasise the importance of the teacher's orientation to the learning activity system, as it is central to the teacher's relationship to professional learning. They suggest that a teacher may have a personal preference for a specific 'learning activity' within the professional development activity or programme, such as collaborating with colleagues from other departments. Opfer and Pedder's (2011) research highlights the significance of three critical subsystems that are pivotal in shaping the learning experiences of individuals. These subsystems comprise the teacher, the school and the learning activity system, each playing a crucial role in facilitating a conducive learning environment. Additionally, the interconnected systems that impact teacher learning are complex and multi-faceted. Their interactions occur in various ways and with different strengths, making understanding how they work together crucial. Recognising these interdependencies can create a robust foundation for effective teacher development and change.

Desimone (2009) proposed a model of professional development that includes a set of "core features" and a "core conceptual framework". These core features are based on a consensus among researchers and lead to improved learner-learning outcomes through a causal chain. Although similar to Guskey's model, Desimone's model describes the elements differently and emphasises the importance of specific professional development features in achieving better learner-learning outcomes.

In an earlier study, Harootunian and Yargar (1980:4) produce evidence from a study of teachers that "regardless of teaching level, most teachers define their success in terms of their learners' behaviours and activities, rather than in terms of themselves or other criteria". A study by Bobis, Way, Anderson and Martin (2016) that used Guskey's (1986) model of teacher change emphasised that improvements in teachers' knowledge and beliefs lead to improvements in learners' academic achievement. Lau and Yuen (2013) conducted a research study using Guskey's (1986) approach, which showed that as teachers' knowledge and beliefs evolve, it leads to improved academic achievements for learners according to Guskey's (2000) approach. This highlights the importance of continuously enhancing teachers' understanding and beliefs to promote better learner outcomes.

What these authors say in support of Guskey (1986) is significant to this study because it acknowledges that change in teachers' beliefs and attitudes will likely occur only after differences in learners' learning outcomes become evident. Guskey's (1986) change theory enables this study to understand professional development within the changing context that beginner teachers experience. To put it into perspective, beginner teachers can reflect on their teaching practices and learners' learning. HODs and veterans who draw connections between theory and practice can act as mentors in this situation by observing the lessons of beginner

teachers. The implication is that teachers must collaborate as they plan, implement and exchange learning activities and that HODs can support beginner teachers fulfil their learning potential through scaffolding, thereby developing a more profound comprehension of new information (Warren, 2009:23). This aligns with Guskey's (1986) model, which highlights the three guiding concepts for professional development: acknowledge that change is challenging and takes time; require teachers to provide feedback on learners' learning; and that professional development should continue beyond workshops.

According to Guskey (2002), significant changes in teachers' beliefs and attitudes are only likely to happen when clear improvements in learners' learning outcomes are observed. For instance, if learners excel, it may boost teachers' confidence and attitude toward the newly acquired knowledge for professional development. To put it differently, the model contends that teachers' beliefs and attitudes will change significantly only once they see evidence of improved learners' learning outcomes. This theory is predicated on the concept that in an ideal learning environment, methods that assist teachers in supporting learners would be retained. At the same time, those who did not work would be eliminated (Tinoca and Valente, 2015). The argument suggests that creating efficient professional development programmes will lead to more significant educational advancements.

In a critique of the above, the theory has some inherent weaknesses, one being that changes only occur when training and implementation combine with evidence of improved learner learning (Guskey and Huberman, 1995). Also, changes that promise to increase teachers' competence and enhance learner learning will likely require extra work in the beginning stages, which can significantly add to any beginner teachers' workload. Woodbury and Gess-Newsome (2002:772) mention that teacher change can be regarded as a highly intricate and cyclic contextual process, not linear. For example, beginner teachers in some Foundation Phase classes face many contextual problems, such as scores of children from diverse backgrounds. Another example is that most learners attend schools where their teachers cannot speak their mother tongue and find communicating difficult. Furthermore, the relationship between teachers and (their) professional contexts determines the willingness, pace and eventual success of teacher change (Woodbury and Gess-Newsome, 2002:772).

Looking at Guskey's (1986) theory, however and what his critics have to say about his approach, I think that Guskey's (1986) theory still succeeds in showing how the teacher transforms through professional development and could, therefore, add much to the understanding of beginner teachers' professional development, but also how this theory will be used to develop the framework. I further believe that Guskey (1986) offers some incredible insights into how beginner teachers can change and how the change could lead to a change in learner behaviour and possibly improved learning, which is significant to this study.

In sum, schools must start professional development initiatives directly related to the challenges in teaching and learning and not the once-off workshops the DoE offers. These workshops are sometimes poorly organised and outdated and do not help teachers with their teaching practices.

This study uses Guskey's (1986) model to assess the efficacy of professional development initiatives in South Africa. The model seems to imply that professional development must be planned appropriately because it is complicated. For instance, change is gradual and challenging for teachers, specifically beginner teachers; therefore, they need constant feedback and continued follow-up sessions. Additionally, the effectiveness of professional development programmes should be evaluated to determine their value and to improve learner performance. Furthermore, ongoing professional development helps teachers strengthen their inductive and deductive reasoning and advance their subject and pedagogical content knowledge (Warren, 2009:24). Beginner teachers who are part of a group of teachers and who participate in the ongoing inquiry will unintentionally develop quick-thinking skills. In the following section, I discuss Freire's (1972) perspective on dialogical pedagogy as a framework for identifying and examining potential challenges in the interaction between beginner teachers and their HODs.

2.7.3   Freireian dialogical pedagogy

According to Freire (1972), dialogue is an exchange of ideas between teachers and their learners in which everyone contributes to constructing new and different knowledge. Freire (1972) further explains that dialogue is neither a routine debate carried out by taking turns in the classroom nor a psychological discussion intended to make learners feel good without changing the facts. Freire (1972) uses dialogue to serve as the main teaching technique. In this case, HODs listen to beginner teachers to determine the issues that are most concerning. HODs might be better positioned to assist beginner teachers by raising consciousness if they consider why specific problems emerge and what possible solutions they might implement through dialogue.

To better comprehend Freire's (1972) concept of dialogic behaviour, he framed anti-dialogue behaviour as authoritarian and oppressive and contrasted this by seeing dialogic behaviour as the way to liberation. Anti-dialogue is represented when one (person) forces opinions on those who have less knowledge or who are only waiting for someone to fill them with knowledge (Freire, 1972:72). An example of anti-dialogue is the banking method, which appears simple and straightforward in theory but is easy to misinterpret in practice. According to Freire (1972), the traditional teacher-centred classroom uses a banking education model, in which learners passively receive information from the teacher, who is supposed to be a source of knowledge, as if they were empty vessels. In other words, dialogue cannot be simplified to the conduct of

one person "depositing" ideas in another, nor can it turn into a straightforward interchange of ideas that are "consumed" by the participants in a discussion, as stated by Freire (1972:61).

In this instance, beginner teachers and HODs exchange their views non-hierarchically, which aligns with Freire's (1972) suggestion that education should be a dialogical process. According to Freire's (1972) proposal, education should be a dialogical process in which beginner teachers and HODs share non-hierarchical experiences. The non-hierarchical way is illustrated in Figure 2.6 below, where there is mutual respect for the individuality of each person (HOD and beginner teacher). This makes it possible for social and personal reform to happen in a non-threatening way.
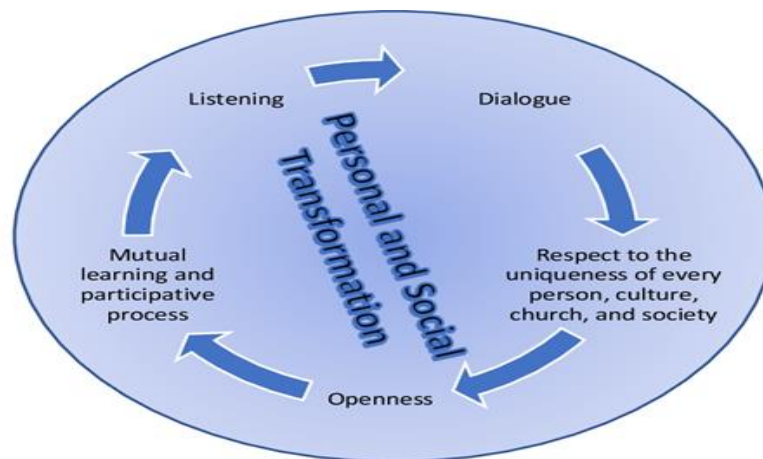
Figure 2.6: Transformation through dialogue

Source: Adopted from Moreno (2018)

The following section is based on Freire's (1972) dialogical pedagogy with beginner teachers and their HODs.

2.7.3.1   Mentoring of beginner teachers using a dialogical approach to learning

Freire (1972) supports the idea that interaction between teachers (in this case, HODs) and their students (in this case, beginner teachers) and the environment aims to build a relationship of trust among them. Freire further suggests that the problem-posing education system is an accessible and transformative way in which HODs and beginner teachers share educational content and learn collaboratively through dialogical interaction. According to him, HODs present the problem in this method, but both HODs and beginner teachers learn together (Freire, 1970:79-81). In other words, the HODs and beginner teachers investigate a problem together and challenge each other by sharing, comparing, reflecting and reforming old ideas (Freire, 1981:71). HODs should respect beginner teachers' opinions on given issues and, therefore, have the right to disagree with their HODs (Freire, 1972:61). Moreover, HODS should encourage beginner teachers' views through dialogical co-investigation which will

eventually develop a democratic attitude. Freire's (1972) dialogical approach to learning compared to the banking education model adds philosophical "strength to the use of problem-based learning as a primary learning modality". For HODs, the dialogical approach suggests the importance of engaging beginner teachers to develop critical questioning and thinking, reinforcing transformative learning. Freire (1997) believes that dialogue can produce a different and more effective relationship between parties. As a result, fostering a dialogue that encourages cooperation co-construction and aims to bring HODs and beginner teachers together is crucial. Stewart and McClure (2013:97) contend that it can only be done if HODs see beginner teachers as co-constructors of knowledge whose views are appreciated and acknowledged.

In the case of this study, the role of the HODs is to provide mentoring and leadership during the problem-posing process, facilitate discussion, and provide support when beginner teachers' participation is lacking. The HODs' goal should be to empower beginner teachers to help create collective knowledge by sharing experiences, taking their knowledge and applying it in the classroom. Freire (1994) identifies qualities of the progressive teacher as humility, the ability to respect others and the ability to listen to every voice regardless of intellectual level. Furthermore, HODs and beginner teachers may learn new information and broaden their knowledge in various subjects by cooperating in a collaborative dialogic method.

Other authors supporting Freire's (1972) dialogical approach include Ramis-Salas (2018:279), who mentions that Freire's dialogical approach has transformed how education is understood in diverse fields and its impact on society. Flecha and Soler (2013) also state that Freire's (1997) dialogue proposal extends learning and education to the community. According to Vella (1994), using a dialogic method in adult education has several benefits, mainly because it allows learners to serve as teachers and promotes learning success. Wallerstein and Bernstein (1988) evaluated Freire's dialogic method as a powerful therapeutic approach in 1988. They claim that being a part of a conversation group raises participants' consciousness and gives them more faith in their ability to impact others' lives (Wallerstein and Bernstein, 1988).

In a critique of Freire's (1997) dialogical theory, Roberts (2003:456) argues that post-modernists think that there is no universal oppression but different oppressive situations that emerge from a concrete context, for example, gender, race, class, religion, culture and that there is no universal liberation, but only different approaches of coping with various problems. Bowers (2004), too, weighs in on the dialogical approach by disagreeing with Freire (1972) that teachers and learners are equal in the learning process. He is saying that while the teacher and learner each adopt or incorporate the role of the other, the teacher has a particular leadership role in enacting (Freire, 1972).

In the above section, I discussed the mentoring relationship between HODs and beginner teachers using Freire's (1972) dialogical pedagogy approach. From this viewpoint, a core element of dialogical pedagogy is the mutual respect and trust between HODs and beginner teachers.

In my view, the combined employment (or amalgamation) of the theories of Guskey (1986), Vygotsky (1978) and Freire (1972) provides an essential framework for the professional development of adults in general and teachers in particular. Guskey (2002:381) mentions that professional development programmes are "efforts to bring about changes in the classroom practices of teachers, in their attitudes and beliefs". However, the main objective of the purpose to change the teachers' attitudes and beliefs is the change to an articulated end, which is the change in the learning outcomes of learners. In other words, Guskey's (1986) change theory is not only about the teacher but, ultimately, the improvement of learners' learning, as shown in diagram 2.3. Guskey (1986:383) believes that "professional development programmes are systematic efforts to change teachers' classroom practices". Therefore, it can be said that Guskey's (1986) change theory is not only about the teacher but ultimately about the improvement of learners, learning through the improvement in the teacher's classroom practices, behaviours and beliefs, as shown in diagram 2.3, which appropriately fits in with the study.

From a Vygotskian perspective on learning and development from a social constructivist viewpoint, beginner teachers and their HODs are actively involved, and interaction becomes essential in learning. According to the constructivist view, how beginner teachers and HODs interpret their experiences in this study exemplifies how learning is a process of creating and constructing meaning. Additionally, the ZPD is used in situations where HODs support and assist beginner teachers before gradually reducing that support and allowing those teachers to become independent.

Freire's (1972) dialogical pedagogy concentrates on the dialogical interaction between the HODs and beginner teachers and highlights ways of avoiding the top-down structure of HODs over beginner teachers. By applying Freire's (1972) theory, beginner teachers should have the right to think critically and to present their ideas to HODs in meetings and discussions without fear of victimisation or retribution. Freire's (1972) theory also states that HODs and beginner teachers progress intellectually due to joint learning. Furthermore, by engaging in a dialogic process, teachers and HODs can experience changes in their thinking and teaching.

In sum, I gave views on Guskey's (1986) change theory, Vygotsky's (1978) constructivist theory and Freire's (1972) dialogical theory. In the subsequent section, I share a schematic representation of the three approaches, illustrated in Figure 2.7 below and how these three theories may be utilised to demonstrate beginner teachers' professional development and how

to effect change in learners through transformative learning. Figure 2.7 illustrates the amalgamation of the three theoretical frameworks and how each underpins this study.

Beginner teachers

Guskey's Change theory

Vygotsky's constructivist theory

Freire's Dialogical theory

Variables influencing the teaching and learning process

A search for meaning and trying to make sense of the situation

Knowledge is co-constructed and individuals benefit from each other

Education as an act of cognition taking place through dialogue

Support and change

Learning happens with the assistance of other people

Beginner teacher are continuously experiencing everyday challenges in the classrooms

New knowledge and skills

Mentors and mentees become fully engaged through dialogue in creative thinking about challenges

Professional and personal growth

ZPD - the variety of activities that are too challenging for one to complete alone but are possible with assistance from others

Mentors and mentees form a partnership and become jointly responsible for teaching and learning - dialogue

Social support
Cognitive processing
Basic and emotional needs
Self-esteem and self-efficacy
Connecting and sharing

Scaffolding–giving the learner the appropriate help at the appropriate time

Mentors rearticulates reflections based on the reflections of mentees–share experience in supportive and constructive

Outcome

Change in practice, developing new expertise

If learners work in pairs they are interacting with people and can learn from one another

Critical thinking lends to transformation - change in beginner teachers

Change in learners' learning

Figure 2.7: Schematic representation of the amalgamation of the three theoretical frameworks

Source: Author's own construct

2.8   Chapter summary

The main focus in the discussions until now was on the learning experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers in the Western Cape, South Africa, as they transitioned from student to professional teachers. During this transition period, teachers decide to 'fight or flight, which considerably impacts teachers' attrition rate. Other challenges included lack of parental involvement, work overload, isolation, lack of support from HODs and inexperience. The reviewed literature indicates that beginner teachers encounter complex challenges and frequently lack the confidence to handle them.

I also touched on the HOD's duties and leadership roles, which are required to mentor teachers, especially beginner teachers. Literature highlights the challenges that HODs experience in supporting beginner teachers, for instance, the lack of enough support from principals to fulfil their duties as teachers and mentors. Additionally, I explained that beginner Foundation Phase teachers go through various changes if professional development is part of the ongoing support they receive from their schools. This chapter also highlights SACE's vital duties, responsibilities, and significant role in the teacher registration process, which were brought to the forefront, providing valuable insights and clarity.

Finally, I pointed out that the study primarily aims to develop a framework for a support programme to facilitate the professional development of Foundation Phase teachers, strengthen their content knowledge and skills and help them become more informed and better prepared. I concluded this chapter with Guskey, Vygotsky's (1978) and Freire's (1972) theories and how their theories jointly underpin this study. To structure my study, I chose to combine the theories (as mentioned in Section 2.7) of Vygotsky (1978), Guskey (1986) and Freire (1972), which are referred to together as the theoretical framework (Kumar, 2005:37).

The following chapter focuses on the qualitative research design and the procedures used in the study.

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1   Introduction

The preceding chapters discussed the history of education and teacher education policies from 1948 to the present. The focus was on transforming the education system and teacher education in South Africa, one of the first tasks of the Government of National Unity. South Africa had different educational histories, which played a vital role in transitioning to a single national, non-racial system. However, the main focus of the preceding chapters was on the experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers, specifically the transition from student teacher to teacher of learners. Additionally, I explained that beginner teachers undergo various changes if professional development is part of the ongoing support they receive from their schools.

The main research question was to investigate how a support programme can facilitate the professional development of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers and to explore the factors that influence their learning experiences. Therefore, the data relating to the learning experiences and the support or lack thereof was collected. On this point, an in-depth study on Grade R teacher education, a historical background, the perspectives and challenges of teacher education in South Africa and a global perspective of Grade R teacher education provided the basis for the data collection.

This chapter, therefore, describes the research design and processes used in the investigation, including the sampling procedures and selection thereof. To achieve this aim, a qualitative interpretivist research approach was considered suitable since this is an exploratory study aimed at gaining an understanding of beginner teachers' experiences during their first years of teaching. Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011) believe that qualitative researchers often use multiple forms of data in any single study, which is applied in this research since observations, interviews, and reflective journaling were used to answer the research questions. Qualitative research can be differentiated from quantitative research based on this fundamental distinction. Interpretive qualitative methodology entails getting close to research subjects in their natural setting in order to describe and understand the world through their eyes. It focuses on the process rather than on outcomes, and its primary aim is to provide an in-depth description and understanding of actions and events (Babbie & Mouton, 2004).

A qualitative research design using an interpretivist approach to collect classroom data was chosen. According to Valadez & Bamberger:

> Qualitative methods can also be justified on ethical grounds. Because many programmes produce major changes in the lives of the population (not all of which are positive),

planners have a moral obligation to understand how people feel about these programmes and how they affect them. Not trying to understand the point of view of a community resident (who will perhaps suffer if the project does not go as expected) is tantamount to ignoring democratic principles of social participation. Although quantitative methods can describe some behavioural changes that occur, they usually cannot reveal how people feel about these changes. Direct face-to-face contact with the affected population may often be the best way to find out (1994, p. 331).

With the above in mind, the primary purpose of this chapter was to describe how the data was collected and what procedures were adopted to answer the research questions (Kumar 2005:84). As a starting point, this chapter discusses the rationale and design for the research methods used. The following sections discuss the many different approaches and instruments used in the data collection to lead the way for data presentation.

3.2   Research approach

This section offers an overview of the qualitative research approach and why it fits this study. A research approach is an action plan that directs how to conduct the research systematically. Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2012:2) make it clear that the research design (approach) is about making choices and articulating the rationale for the choices one has made. As mentioned in the introductory paragraph, the present study follows a qualitative, interpretivist approach. Creswell (2013:44) defines qualitative research as follows:

> *Qualitative research begins with assumptions and interpretive theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, collecting data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes participants' voices, the researcher's reflexivity, a complex description and interpretation of the problem and its contribution to the literature or a call for change.*

Creswell adds that this term emphasises the research process I used in my study, which flows from philosophical assumptions to interpretative lenses to the methods used to analyse social or human problems. Qualitative researchers approach the setting intending to become immersed; for instance, "they listen to individuals' accounts of phenomena, engaging and integrating new perspectives into their ways of understanding participants, the context and the phenomena" (Hays and Singh, 2012:4). In other words, the guiding purposes of qualitative research serve one or more of the following: description, interpretation, verification and evaluation and tend to include research questions that address the *how* or *what* versus *why*

aspects of a phenomenon (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001:149; Hays and Singh, 2012:4). These purposes are discussed later in this chapter.

It is important to note that the qualitative methodological approach is deemed well-suited for the proposed research and should not be misconstrued as disregarding the possibility of quantitatively measuring qualitative data. The reasoning is to understand the learning experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers in their first years of teaching and the efficacy of existing support programmes.

In contrast, quantitative research answers questions about relationships among measured variables, such as the quantifying extent of variation, prediction and control phenomena (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001:101; Kumar, 2005:17). Therefore, I used a qualitative research approach to do an in-depth study of beginner teachers' experiences at the research sites, which can be done through an unstructured, flexible approach. Moreover, with the qualitative approach, I could describe the phenomenon from the participant's point of view, which cannot be done in a quantitative approach (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001:101; Kumar, 2005). In contrast to quantitative research, which looks for patterns and develops theories, qualitative research explores experiences, meanings, perceptions and feelings in an effort to provide an understanding of the complex causes and sequences that influence human behaviour (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001:101; Kumar, 2005; Creswell, 2013).

In the following discussion, I highlight the characteristics of qualitative research methods to strengthen my argument further about why I chose a qualitative approach for this study.

3.2.1 Characteristics of qualitative research methods

Creswell (2013:44) and Mohajan (2018:17) offer similar characteristics of qualitative research:

- Natural setting – qualitative researchers often collect data in the field at the site where participants experience the issue or problem;

- Researcher as a critical instrument – the qualitative researchers collect data themselves by examining documents, observing behaviour and interviewing participants;

- Multiple methods – qualitative researchers typically gather various forms of data, such as interviews, observations and documents, rather than rely on a single data source;

- Complex reasoning through inductive and deductive logic – qualitative researchers build their patterns, categories and themes from the "bottom-up" by organising the data inductively into increasingly more abstract units of information;

- Participants' meanings – in the entire qualitative research process, the researcher keeps a focus on learning the importance that the participants hold about the problem or issue, not the meaning that the researchers bring to the research;

- Emergent design – the research process for qualitative researchers is emergent;

- Reflexivity – researchers 'position themselves in a qualitative research study and

- Holistic account - qualitative researchers try to develop a complex picture of the problem or issue under study.

The characteristics mentioned above have been applied in this study, considering the intention to explore the experiences of beginner teachers in their natural settings. Creswell (2013:47) mentions that one of the main reasons why it is appropriate to use qualitative research is because a problem needs to be explored. In the case of this study, this exploration is required, in turn, because of a need to study a group of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers, which cannot be measured. Another reason why I chose the qualitative approach is to understand better the problem, which can be established by talking directly to the participants, going to their places of work (schools) and allowing them to tell their stories (Creswell, 2013:48). By allowing the participants to tell their stories, they are empowered to share their stories and let their voices be heard.

By looking at the advantages of qualitative research, as mentioned above, I had to consider the disadvantages to determine if there were any shortcomings in this study. Yauch and Steudel (2003) and Bowen (2006) have highlighted that qualitative data results cannot be objectively verified. They have further pointed out that primary data collection through interviews requires skilled interviewers and that demonstrating the scientific rigour of the data collection process is challenging. Personal experience and knowledge can also influence the observations and conclusions made based on qualitative data. Despite these disadvantages, I found that the qualitative approach enabled me to make sense of reality and afforded me the opportunity and scope to explore the problem.

Furthermore, the qualitative approach allowed me to describe the phenomenon from the participants' viewpoints. In other words, the descriptive nature of this approach unfolded as I explained how the research sites and subjects were selected and how data were collected (observations, interviews and reflective journals). I looked in-depth at the entire group, a group that shared a common culture. I also studied the group in its natural setting, i.e., their places of work, for some time, as suggested by (Pham, 2018:3; Mohajan, 2018:23). The focus of the investigation was on the learning experiences, daily behaviours, interactions and cultures of beginner Foundation Phase teachers to identify norms, beliefs and patterns in the data collection (Leedy and Ormrod 2001:148; Reeves, Kuper and Hodges, 2008:512). Consistent with these statements, Schensul, Schensul and Le Compte (1999) mention that the qualitative approach begins with a set of connected ideas that undergoes continuous redefinition throughout the life of the study until the ideas are finalised and interpreted at the end.

There are several different approaches to conducting qualitative research. Leedy and Ormrod (2001:149) suggest the following five research designs: case study, ethnography, interpretivist, grounded theory and content analysis. However, case studies and phenomenology are appropriate for studying individuals, making them suitable for this study. Creswell (2013: 97) suggests that case study research involves a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life context or setting (case) over time. In this instance, I explored the learning experiences of beginner Foundation Phase teachers and the mentoring experiences of their mentors. Creswell (2013:97) further argues that the data collection for a case study is detailed and in-depth and draws from multiple sources of information, such as observations, interviews and reflective journals, which were applied in this study. I also spent time on-site and regularly interacted with the studied participants, as suggested by both Creswell (2013) and Leedy and Ormrod (2001). Therefore, the case study research allowed me to explore and better understand the experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers since not much is known about their experiences.

That said, I selected Athlone and Mitchell's Plain to do the research and carefully chose a small number of participants as the study subjects. I decided on the Athlone and Mitchell's Plain areas since I could locate teacher participants who met the requirements to participate in the study. In other words, Foundation Phase Grade R teachers who completed their degrees at the College via UNISA.

I chose the Athlone and Mitchell's Plain areas because I found the participants who fit the criteria for the research. With the case study, I observed the data at the micro-level, which is contrary to quantitative research, which follows patterns in data at the macro level based on the frequency of occurrence of the phenomena (Zainal, 2007:1). In this study, the case study was used to explore the phenomena in the data which served as a point of interest to me as the researcher. For instance, I asked general questions, which opened the door for further examination of the phenomenon observed. I also described the data as they occurred, as Leedy and Ormrod (2001) and Creswell (2013) suggested.

I chose the qualitative case study approach for the reasons stated below by Tellis (1997). These are still relevant today and have been applied in this study:

- It is the only viable method to elicit detailed data from the subjects.

- It is appropriate to the research question.

- It allows the set of procedures to be correctly applied.

- The scientific conventions used in social sciences are strictly followed.

- A chain of evidence is systematically recorded and archived, mainly when interviews and the researcher's direct observation are the primary data sources.

- The case study is linked to a theoretical framework.

As mentioned in the last point by Tellis (1997), "the case study is linked to a theoretical framework". A suitable research framework, therefore, provides the foundation for conceptualising and designing research studies and gives meaning to data. In the case of this research, I had a long, intense process in search of a suitable framework. I linked the interpretive framework to this study to explore the learning experiences of a group of beginner teachers. Pham (2018:3) mentions that interpretivist research aims to capture participants' lives to understand and interpret the meaning of their experiences.

According to Bhattacherjee (2012:103), interpretive research is:

> *Based on the assumption that social reality is not singular or objective but somewhat shaped by human experiences and social contexts, it is best studied within its socio-historic context by reconciling the subjective interpretations of its various participants [epistemology].*

Henning, van Rensburg and Smith (2004:20) believe that when using the interpretivist paradigm, the researcher has to look at different places and things to understand a phenomenon. Henning et al. (2004:21) and Dean (2018:3) further contend that the interpretive paradigm does not concern itself with the search for broadly applicable laws and rules but instead seeks to produce "descriptive analyses that emphasise deep, interpretive understanding of social phenomena". This ties in with the purpose of this study, which is to obtain a deep understanding of the learning experiences of a group of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers who completed their BEd degrees at a TVET college. More specifically, interpretive research was employed to probe the everyday learning experiences and how teachers make meaning in their lives. Dean (2018:3) and Henning et al. (2004:21) argue that the foundational assumption of interpretivism is that most of our knowledge is gained, or at least filtered, through social constructions such as language, consciousness, shared meanings, documents and other artefacts.

Another reason why I also selected the interpretivist approach is "to understand the experiences from the participant's point of view" (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001:153; Creswell, 2013:76). In addition, it is to comprehend people's viewpoints, perceptions and understandings of a specific circumstance (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001:153; Creswell, 2013:76). Creswell (2013:81) suggests that it would be essential to understand these shared experiences to develop a deeper understanding of the features of the phenomenon, such as the learning experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers. Creswell (2013:83) recommends that the participants in the interpretivist study be carefully chosen, i.e., individuals

who have experienced the phenomena so that the researcher can build a shared understanding of their experiences to try and answer the research question.

Creswell (2013:79) further mentions that the final result for an interpretivist approach is a general description of the phenomenon, as seen through the eyes of participants who experienced it first-hand. The focus is also on the common themes in the experience despite the differences in the individuals and settings studied. Merriam (2009:7) and Dean (2018:4) point out that people's experiences are compared and analysed to identify the phenomenon's essence, which I have applied in this study.

In short, I have combined the two research approaches, viz., the case study and interpretivist methods, into one study since both research approaches are relevant to the purpose and enrichment of this research. For instance, with the case study, the researcher needs to understand a person(s) or situation in great depth. With interpretivist research, the researcher needs to understand an experience from the participant's point of view (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001:157). Therefore, the research questions of this study allowed me to believe that both qualitative research approaches, i.e., case study and interpretivist designs, within the qualitative framework, are relevant to this study.

Before discussing the actual data collection and a description of the research setting, I will briefly touch on gaining access to and selecting the schools.

3.3   Gaining entry

Hays and Singh (2012:159) believe entering the field is essential to any qualitative inquiry. The field is a qualitative method of collecting data through observations and interviews and understanding participants in their natural surroundings (Hays and Singh, 2012:159; Creswell, 2013:171). Hays and Singh (2012:160) also suggest that it is important for participants to be able to select the spaces in which they feel comfortable being interviewed. Thus, the field involved numerous locations for this study, from participants' classrooms to office areas. Since this study included participants who completed their BEd degree at a TVET college, I had to choose schools where I could find these participants and selected the Mitchell's Plain and Athlone areas. After that, I had to consider that the schools and the participants had to be receptive to the idea that I would spend considerable time in the classrooms and recording everything. Lastly, the participants had to consent to be interviewed about their experiences in the Foundation Phase classrooms. Two schools are in the Athlone area, while another is in Mitchell's Plain, the Western Cape, South Africa.

Creswell (2013:147) believes that one of the most fundamental tasks in undertaking fieldwork in the research process is finding people to study and gaining access to and establishing

rapport with participants who will provide the data. In this study, I tried to spend a considerable amount of time in the study areas because the aim was to collect data on the participants' lived experiences. Creswell (2013:147) further contends that a closely interrelated step involves determining a strategy for selecting individuals or sites. With this in mind, I tried to familiarise myself with the settings through regular visits and constant communication with all participants.

Gaining access involves convincing people to participate who would provide the information necessary for the research (Hays and Singh, 2012:160; Creswell, 2013:172). To illustrate, I had to build a respectful and trusting partnership with all the participants before they disclosed any information regarding their knowledge and experience. Moreover, researchers need to develop a good character regarding consistency and integrity and find someone in the community to vouch for their presence (Shenton and Hayter, 2004:223; Flick, 2006:116). For this study, I had to find someone in the community to vouch for me and assist in building relationships with the different school principals. By doing this, I secured entry into the relevant schools and ensured that the principals and heads of department (HODs) would allow me to do my research at the schools. Another factor that secured my entry was to agree to share my findings with the particular schools and to promise them a copy of the data collection so that participants could check if it were correct as indicated by the participants. (Shenton and Hayter, 2004:225).

The second step was to persuade the participants (teachers) to contribute data via reflective journals, semi-structured interviews and observations. However, before I started with the second step, it was necessary to gain the trust of the principal, HODs and the participants–I had to build a working relationship in which the research became possible (Flick, 2006:117). After gaining their trust, I regularly contacted and visited the participants to uphold an open communication channel. For instance, during my first contact with the participants, I informed them about the ethical considerations of the study. By doing so, I convinced the participants of the importance of their participation in the research. However, I only started to gain the trust of all participants after some time because it was challenging to gain the confidence of some of the participants in the beginning. Others were not keen to be part of the research since they had no monetary value.

The study is focused on the South African province of the Western Cape and the purpose behind focusing on this province is that the Western Cape is the only province where a TVET college trains teachers. Moreover, I have worked at a TVET college as a lecturer in the education department. The study's selection process lasted approximately three months and is discussed in the following section.

3.4   Participant selection

The participants for this study were purposefully selected who could best inform the research questions and enhance understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2013:179). A purposeful selection of six beginner teachers and three HODs from three schools were selected. Purposeful (purposive) sampling is when a researcher seeks out groups, settings, or individuals because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem that will fit the purpose of this study (Silverman 2006:306; Creswell, 2013:156).

Several factors influenced the selection of the three schools for this research study; for instance, I had to select schools where I could find participants who completed their BEd degree at a TVET College. I selected the three schools under the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) jurisdiction in the Athlone and Mitchell's Plain areas because I found two participants at each school. The schools all had to have had the same socio-economic conditions to make data collection the same. In other words, one school could not be private and the other public because of the significant differences between the two types of schools. These differences include the quality of education learners receive from private schools, which differs from public schools, and insufficient physical resources not found at private schools. Furthermore, the school and the participants had to be receptive to the idea that I would spend considerable time in the classroom doing observations. Also, the participants would have to consent to be interviewed about various topics regarding their experiences in the Grade R classroom.

To conduct my research at the schools, I contacted the principals to set up meetings with all the role-players. Although I presented the research consent letter that WCED issued and a copy of my proposal, I had to explain my research to all the principals. All of the principals permitted me to conduct my research at their schools. I met the teacher participants after I visited the principals. I met with the teacher participants in their classrooms, where I again explained the purpose of my research. I also provided all the teachers with a copy of my proposal so that they could better understand what my research was about.

To maintain the anonymity of the chosen schools and the participants, I refer to the schools as School A, B and C, as well as the HODs and teachers, for instance, Teacher A1 and Teacher A2 of School A, as presented in Table 3.1 below. Tables 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 summarise the learners and teachers who attend the school.

Table 3.1: Selected schools and teachers

Name of School	Heads of Department (HODs)	Teachers	Age of teachers	Experience of teachers in years
School A	HOD A	Teacher A1	26	6 months
		Teacher A2	28	2
School B	HOD B	Teacher B1	26	1
		Teacher B2	30	2
School C	HOD C	Teacher C1	25	6 months
		Teacher C2	35	2

Table 3.2: Description of School A

Name of School		Learners			Teacher		
School A		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
		400	350	750	6	21	27

Table 3.3: Description of School B

Name of School	Learners			Teacher		
School B	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
	320	351	371	4	16	20

Table 3.4: Description of School C

Name of School	Learners			Teacher		
School C	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
	515	233	746	10	17	27

The above table indicates the selected sites and participants, which were purposefully chosen and can inform an understanding of the research problem and phenomenon in the study (Creswell, 2013:156). Given this, six beginner teachers were selected from three schools. I

chose three first-year and three second-year teachers (together with their HODs, who were drawn from three different WCED) primary schools, as mentioned in Chapter 1. The purpose was to ascertain the differences between their perceived professional development after their first and second years of teaching. Participants were asked to share their learning experiences, challenges and perceptions as beginner teachers. This small number of participants provided sufficient opportunity to identify the themes of the cases for the study (Creswell, 2013:157). I have used pseudonyms for the participants and schools (Tables 3.1 to 3.4) so that any data collected cannot be traced back to the participants (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001:158; Creswell, 2013). Data collection is discussed in the following section.

3.5   Data collection

After identifying the research design and methodology, I had to address the ethical implications of this study; therefore, I had to decide how to acquire and interpret the data necessary to resolve the research problem. To bring my research planning and design into clear focus, I was guided by the four fundamental questions of Leedy and Ormrod (2001:111):

- What data are needed?
- Where is the data located?
- How will the data be secured?
- How will the data be interpreted?

As one of the core aspects of any research project, the decisions and choices regarding the methods and processes for data collection deserve careful consideration, which was the case with the current study. Maxwell (2005) reiterates that the research questions guide data collection methods, which require flexibility and particular attention to trustworthiness issues.

Data collection may be defined as information collected during inquiry processes to answer the research problem (Kumar, 2005:23; Creswell, 2013:157). In qualitative research, the potential data sources are limited only by the researcher's open-mindedness and creativity. In other words, researchers can use any method to help them answer their research question (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001:158).

Considering what the above theorists mentioned, I have selected different data collection methods since they provided the data required to produce a complete piece of research. I also made many decisions regarding the best-suited techniques for this particular study before finalising the data-collection instruments. As the study followed a qualitative approach, I employed triangulation by collecting data from different sources and using different methods. For instance, I interviewed beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers, conducted observations at their sites (schools) that included recordings and had informal discussions with

teachers and other participants. Additionally, teachers kept reflective journals in narrative story writing where they could voice their opinions and speak about burning issues through a non-threatening medium. The data collection methods are discussed in detail in sections 3.5.1– 3.5.4.

Kumar (2005:119) mentions a few fundamental points regarding data collection methods, which were helpful during the data collection process of this study: "You should know as much as possible about the characteristics of the study population; their interest in and attitude towards participation in the study". These points were helpful because some participants felt uncomfortable being interviewed or expressing their opinions for various unknown reasons.

The table below offers the data collection techniques and activities, which aim to show the different methods, sources and purposes.

Table 3.5: Data collection techniques

METHOD/TECHNIQUE	SOURCES	PURPOSE
Observations Fieldnotes	Grade R beginner teachers from three primary schools were selected, Notes were taken during participant observations - logging was done to capture everyday life experiences in the classroom in concrete detail.	The purpose of the observations was to enable me to discover the experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers that might have gone unnoticed and undocumented. Field notes were used as a source of comparison or validation.
Interviews	Semi-structured individual interviews with HODs. Focus group interviews were conducted with beginner Grade R teachers (first year and second year).	Data were obtained through semi-structured, open-ended individual and focus group interviews, which were recorded.
Reflective journals	Teachers were asked to do reflective entries to record their varied experiences in the school setting. Another reason was to give a voice to the participants through the reflecting journals.	The reflective journals aimed to probe deeper and better understand the experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers in the school setting.

Table 3.5 above is discussed in detail in the section below. This study used multi-method data collection through observations, reflective journals, focus groups and individual semi-structured interviews, which are covered in more detail in the section below.

3.5.1   Individual interviews with HODs

Individual interviews with the three HODs were fundamental since this allowed me to explore an authentic account of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers' experiences, competencies and challenges and the existence or non-existence of a support programme. Also, I wanted to learn more about the relationship and interactions between beginner teachers and the HODs. I followed the views of Creswell (2013) and Leedy and Ormrod (2001:159), who mention that research is about creating new knowledge and that the open-minded researcher cannot be sure how the study will go.

The objective of individual semi-structured interviews was to ensure that "rich data" from the HODs' perspectives were obtained on the relevant topic (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007:51). Another reason was that this method allowed me to extract data that were not directly observable: facial expressions, hesitation, tone of voice, thoughts and attitudes that lie behind the behaviour that can provide information that a written response would conceal. This way, I could follow up on ideas, probe responses and investigate motives and feelings, which cannot be done without a questionnaire (Showkat and Parveen, 2017:3). For example, the semi-structured interviews allowed more profound insight into the phenomena than a quantitative questionnaire. I agree with Showkat and Parveen (2017:3) that semi-structured interview data are helpful to collect when the research deals with sensitive issues or topics.

Creswell (2013:163) mentions the seven stages of an interview—thematising the inquiry, designing the study, transcribing the interview, analysing the data and verifying the credibility, dependability and generalisability of the findings to reporting the study. These seven stages helped me with the interview process. Furthermore, I decided to use semi-structured interviews with the HODs because of the two-way communication processes, adaptability, open-ended questions, and flexibility guided by predetermined questions. The reasoning is that semi-structured interviews allowed the participants and me the freedom to explore views authentically (McTeer, 2013:55). Using this method of data collection allowed the HODs to divert in case the idea was to be explored in more detail (Showkat and Parveen, 2017:3). This method was helpful to this study, as it goes beyond the spontaneous exchange of views as a conversation to the point where it became a highly effective mode of communication. This method also helped me establish rapport with the participants and gave me access to people's perceptions, including the thoughts and attitudes behind their behaviour (Showkat and Parveen, 2017:3).

Before I started the data collection process, all the HODs were briefed about the purpose of the semi-structured interviews. They also felt at ease when I ensured their names would be kept confidential. A letter was given beforehand to obtain their permission regarding the interviews. The interviews were conducted at different times and sites (Schools A, B and C) for three weeks. Each interview lasted 45–60 minutes and was conducted face-to-face to build trust and establish rapport between the participants and me. Interview guides, which served as an outline of the questions asked, were used during all the interviews. However, some questions were also added or changed as the interview progressed. For instance, I occasionally ask a question outside the guide for clarity.

In the data collection process, I viewed the following steps as helpful in my research, as suggested by Creswell (2013):

- Decide on the research questions that interviewees will answer.

- Identify interviewees who can best answer these questions.

- Determine what type of interview is practical and will net the most helpful information to answer the research questions.

- Use adequate recording procedures when conducting one-on-one interviews.

- Design and use an interview guide.

- Refine the interview questions and the procedures through pilot testing.

- Determine the place for conducting the interview.

- Obtain consent from the interviewees to participate in the study.

- Use reasonable procedures during the interview, stay with the questions and complete the interview within the specified time (Creswell, 2013:166).

I interviewed all the participant HODs in their offices, in familiar surroundings and where they felt comfortable. Also, I used my cell phone to record the various conversations of the participants. Every interview was recorded with the permission of the participants. Although I did not embark on note-taking during the interviews, I made some notes to review the process to identify possible gaps. Interviews were transcribed, and a copy was given to each participant to verify the content. The quality of the interviews varied since some HODs gave much more information than others, which was rich and comprehensive. This variation could be attributed to the different personalities of the interviewees as well as their knowledge and experiences with the issue at hand. Showkat and Parveen (2017:4) argue that during semi-structured interviews, the questions are more informal, spontaneous and free-flowing than in structured interviews.

Leedy and Ormrod (2001:153) and Creswell (2013) point out that the data collection method of interpretivist research is through lengthy semi-structured interviews to comprehend a

participant's understanding of an event. I had to listen attentively to participants describing their everyday experiences related to the phenomenon and be alert for subtle yet meaningful cues in their questions and expressions (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001:153). I also had to probe to make better sense of their utterances. The structure and contents of the semi-structured interviews are discussed in detail in the next chapter, and the interview guides are included in an appendix. What follows below is a discussion of the focus group interviews.

3.5.2   Focus group interviews with beginner teachers

I decided to use focus group interviews during this study because I could collect data from many participants simultaneously. I started with the focus group interviews two weeks after the semi-structured interviews due to the unavailability of some of the teachers. I used six beginner teachers to share and compare ideas regarding the research topic (Morgan, 2012:162).

Focus groups refer to groups of 6 to 9 participants who have been purposefully gathered at a specific place to partake in a group discussion on a relevant topic (Showkat and Parveen, 2017:3). Flick (2006:198) and Maree (2007) define focus group interviews as a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a designated area of interest in a non-threatening environment, as in the case of this study, the focus was on the experiences and perceptions of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers. The benefits derived from focus group interviews are that "participants were able to build on each other's ideas and comment to provide an in-depth view not attainable from individual interviews" (Flick 2006:199; Maree 2007:90). Furthermore, focus groups are valued because "group interactions may accentuate members' similarities and differences and give rich information about the range of perspectives and experiences" (Lambert and Loiselle, 2008:229).

The focus group interviews were done with the six beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers with the aim that participants were able to build on each other's ideas and comments to provide an in-depth view not attainable from individual interviews (Flick, 2006:199; Maree, 2007:90). Another benefit of the focus group interviews was the interactive discussion which enabled participants to express their opinions and ideas in a non-threatening manner. Therefore, the focus group interviews were semi-structured and open-ended to allow time for comments and to probe for further information. I did not place any time constraints on the responses. As a result, the participants were clear and focused on the questions asked. The aim was to ease participants into a process where they actively debated the issues. When the interaction increased, I became more structured in my questioning to cover the topics and to generate as many views and perceptions as possible from the group. The focus group interview was conducted in English, and no participants were required to have an interpreter. I conducted the session in English during the focus group interview, and all participants could communicate effectively without needing an interpreter. The focus group interviews lasted

between 60–90 minutes. An interview guide was used for this process, and participants were permitted to record the interviews. The recording was done to avoid forgetting or mixing valuable information. Recording the session allowed me to focus on the participants' words since I took only a few notes during the focus group interview. Although time-consuming, the recordings proved valuable because I could listen to the interviews several times to identify categories or themes during the analysis process. The only challenge I experienced with the recordings was the room's acoustics. I also had to protect the participants' privacy by ensuring them that the recordings would be stored securely. The focus group interviews were thoughtfully organised at a convenient and accommodating venue for all participants, providing a conducive and collaborative environment for the session.

The interviews aimed to gather information from beginner teachers and HODs. Appendices K and L include the interview guides used during all interviews. These guides provided a general idea of the questions asked, but some additional questions were also included while others were not. This approach allowed for a more flexible and open-ended interview process rather than a rigid and predetermined one. The researcher carefully handpicked participants based on their expertise and clearly explained the interview guide to ensure everyone understood.

3.5.3   Observations with beginner teachers

Observations were selected to determine what takes place inside the workplace concerning the learning experiences of beginner teachers. Thus, I have started the observation broadly but was guided by the research questions: What are the learning experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers in the province of the Western Cape in South Africa? I was also fully involved with the participants I observed since I needed to establish rapport with them. However, I did not want to jeopardise the site's natural environment with my ideas, so I took notes of all the activities, events, and people and considered the four guiding principles below.

Observation is a purposeful, systematic and selective way of watching and listening to an interaction or phenomenon as it is happening. Flick (2006:216) pointed out that all senses, i.e. seeing, hearing, smelling and touching, integrate into observations. Observation occurs naturally without predetermined categories of responses.

This method is referred to as 'naturalistic observation' and has four guiding principles (Hays and Singh, 2012:224; Creswell, 2013:166):

- There is typically non-interference on the part of the researcher; for instance, the
- The researcher can interact with participants but should not intrude too much as to change naturally occurring events;

- The observation should involve naturally occurring behaviours, for instance, teamwork and group processes;

- Observation should be used for exploratory purposes;

- The researcher should provide a detailed description of the setting so that an outsider can imagine the sensory and behavioural aspects and fully experience it.

Observations were made during the second term and were spread over two months, as discussed with the teachers during our meetings. I spent two days (from 08:00 to 12:30) in each school per week and rotated the days so that the observations were made on different days. During the observation sessions, notes were made immediately so that the details of the session would not be lost. I wrote down the teachers' events, movements, and gestures, none captured by questioning. At first, I wrote down everything (events, movements and gestures), but as I narrowed my focus, I increasingly concentrated on the learning experiences of the beginner teachers and other staff members. After observing the participants, I would make additional notes and write down thoughts on the experiences and perceptions of interaction between teachers, learners and other staff members. By having close interaction and keeping a record of the study subjects (teachers), I started understanding how the research subjects perceived and interpreted the situations in which they functioned. I also better understood how beginner teachers interpreted different learning experiences and how their interpretations impacted their teaching and learning.

"By keeping a record of the main decisions and events during the research process, you construct a historical record of the whole process to which you can return later if necessary" (Mouton 2001:107; Hays and Singh, 2012:228). Mouton (2001) and Hays and Singh (2012) suggest that researchers should make field notes in qualitative research since they participate in the fieldwork, often in natural field settings. Influenced by Mouton (2001), I have used a research journal that allowed me to describe the overall impressions of the situation during the observation process, the actual expressions of feelings. Field notes were obtained when I entered the 'field' to collect, select and analyse data (Mouton 2001:109; Flick 2006:114). Keeping field notes was a way of reporting observations, reflections, and reactions from the beginner teachers under investigation. These field notes were typed up later and became my field journal record. When I analysed the data, I used my field notes to compare and validate (Mouton, 2001). In short, the observation focused on the experiences of the beginner teachers, which gave me first-hand information about what transpires on the sites. As I continued with the observations, I realised I would not get all the answers to my research questions through only this research method. This motivated me to use other research methods to probe deeper, gain clarity and use reflective journals to hear the participants' voices.

3.5.4   Reflective journals with beginner teachers

To probe deeper and better understand the experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers, I asked them to do reflective entries to record their varied experiences in the school setting. The use of reflective journals provided an opportunity to hear the voices of participants, which is not always achieved through other ways of data collection. The main purpose of the reflective journals was to give beginner teachers a voice and to acquire evidence of their experiences.

Reflective journals constitute a source of narrative research (Lindroth, 2014:3; Bashan and Holsblat, 2017:2). Dewey (1963) defines reflective journals as the "active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it and further conclusions to which it tends". This suggests that purposeful reflections allow individuals to scrutinize information before making choices, resulting in purposeful thinking (Lindroth, 2014:3).

For this study, participants were asked to keep and submit a reflective journal once per month (via e-mail over six months) to record their reflections, perceptions and experiences. They were also asked to discuss personal and private life experiences over six months. Creswell (2012) mentions that in 'gathering data for qualitative research, a researcher seeks an in-depth description of a phenomenon. Instructions and guidance were given to all participants before writing their journals. The journals aimed to reflect the teachers' voices in the research and allow them to express their emotions about their experiences, an essential aspect of their voice (Hays and Singh, 2012:149). Furthermore, the reflective journals have effectively encouraged reflective thought, which was an avenue to share perceptions and experiences. When the participants started with their reflective journals, they wrote about the ordinary happenings in the classroom. Still, later on, the reflective journals showed evidence of complaints about difficulties they were facing.

The participants gave their consent for their journals to be used in the research of this study. Each month, I read and re-read all of the reflective journals, which gave me a better understanding of the experiences and perceptions of the beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers. The journal entries were transcribed and analysed along with the other data sources. Reflective journals can be a helpful tool for promoting critical reflection on experiences (Cunliffe, 2004:78; Chirema, 2006:34; Mills, 2007:69). The next stage involves data analysis.

3.6   Data analysis

For this study, I employed a mixed method of data analysis, which involved using both exploratory case study and interpretivist approaches consistent with the research design. Yin (2018:13) defines a case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary

phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when boundaries between phenomenon and context are not evident. In contrast to unusual cases, common cases happen on a daily basis. Yin (2018:51) suggests that the purpose of a common case is to "capture the circumstances and conditions of an everyday situation". As Christensen and Johnson (2008, 37) explain, a case study is a detailed examination of a specific case, which could be an individual, such as a teacher, learner, principal, or parent. Furthermore, case studies aim to describe 'what it is like' to be in any particular situation.

In the context of this study, I examined a beginner teacher's experiences in the Foundation Phase. This study aims to delve into the experiences of newly qualified Foundation Phase teachers as they embark on their career path. By conducting an in-depth analysis of the teacher's growth, challenges and successes, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of beginner teachers' complexities. Creswell (2017) is of the opinion that In an exploratory vein, qualitative research is usually preferred for the phenomenon in its natural context to generate an in-depth and multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue under investigation. In this instance, the involvement of participants in a case study provides them with a platform to express personal reflections, challenges and concerns. The teachers' unique perspective was the focal point of this investigation, with the findings contributing to developing an effective support programme for beginner teachers. Creswell (2013) believes there is no single "right" way to analyse data in a qualitative study. The analysis of the semi-structured individual interviews, focus group interviews, observations and reflective journals are discussed in the following section:

3.6.1   Analysis of interviews

The data analysis of the individual semi-structured and focus group interviews was influenced by Creswell (2013), who described a data analysis spiral. Using this spiral analysis approach, I went through all the data several times, taking the following steps:

I started with a large body of information through inductive reasoning and gradually sorted and categorised the data into a small set of abstract underlying themes, as mentioned above. I perused the data several times to understand what it contained. After that, I identified general themes—listed the themes and classified each piece of data according to the theme. After that, I integrated and summarised the data and made conclusions and recommendations accordingly. The advantage of Creswell's (2013) approach to data analysis is that it provides a clear series of steps, which helped analyse the semi-structured interviews. Using these steps, I went through the data several times, taking following steps:

- Organising the data–breaking it down into smaller units.
- Peruse all the data several times to make sense of what it contains.

- Identify general categories or themes to understand what the data means.

- Integrate and summarise the data (Creswell, 2013).

The focus group interview analysis was very overwhelming and time-consuming. The central aim was to reduce the data (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001:163; Creswell, 2013). The focus group interview data analysis started during the data collection process. This was done by skillfully facilitating the discussion and generating rich data from the focus group interviews and recorded information. This stage was followed when I had to familiarise myself with the data by listening and re-listening to the recordings of the focus group interviews. Before breaking the data into smaller parts and starting the process of organising and structuring the data, which increased my awareness of patterns and themes in the data, I had to familiarise myself with the details to get a sense of the focus group interviews as a whole. I examined and categorised the data and re-scrutinised the evidence to address the primary purpose of this study. This meant that I had to get rid of extra, irrelevant information.

I transcribed the interview recordings; however, I had someone assisting me who also listened to the recording and compared her notes with mine. The final transcription was sent to the participants so that they could ensure the correctness of the recordings. After the interview transcripts were returned from the participants, all the corrections were made, and the coding started, which was manually done.

By following this method, I discovered evidence that increased the data's dependability, consistency and conformity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The focus group interviews will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

3.6.2 Analysis of observations

The data analysis process regarding the observations started during the data collection process. Creswell (1998; 2013) recommends a five-step progression of analysing interpretivist data, which is as follows:

- Organisation of details about the case–I arranged the specific facts in a logical order here.

- Categorisation data–categories that helped cluster the data into meaningful themes were identified.

- Interpretation of single instances–specific documents, occurrences and other bits of data are examined for their particular meanings concerning the case.

- Identifying patterns–the data and their interpretations are scrutinised for underlying themes and practices that characterise the case more broadly than a single piece of information can.

- Synthesis and generalisations–an overall portrait of the case is constructed. Conclusions are drawn that may have implications beyond (Creswell, 1998; 2013).

After I had followed the above steps, I prepared the data for coding by reading and re-reading through the transcripts, composing substantive issues of any impression of emergent motifs. As themes were developed, I assigned a working definition to each code. Using constant comparison, I compared the themes and codes of new transcripts with existing themes for the individual codes. This process continued until saturation was reached or until no new codes or themes emerged. The following section is the analysis of reflective journals.

3.6.3   Analysis of reflective journals

With the reflective journals, I have followed the approach of interpretivist analysis. This analysis was informed by intuition and reflection based on an intensive and repetitive reading of the collected reflective journals.

- The first step was to identify statements that relate to the topic, separate relevant information from irrelevant information in the reflective journals, and break the relevant information into small, manageable units.

- Group statements are divided into meaning units, i.e., themes that reflect the phenomenon.

- Seek divergent perspectives—different perspectives of different people and how they experience the phenomenon.

- Construct a composite—use various meanings identified to describe the phenomenon as people typically experience it (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001:153).

The central task during the analysis was identifying common themes in the participants' descriptions of their experiences. The themes helped me discover the meaning of the text (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001:153). The analysis consists of preparing and organising data, then reducing the data into themes through coding and condensing the codes and finally representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion. In this case, the analysis process involves interpreting and concluding the data relating to the beginner teachers' professional learning experiences, in line with the research questions posed in the study.

I made sense of the raw data and information obtained from the semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, observations and reflective journals (Best and Kahn, 1998; Leedy and Ormrod, 2001:155). This method involved organising the data, conducting a preliminary read-through of the database, coding and organising themes, representing the data and forming an interpretation of them (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010; Creswell, 2013), as I have done with the interviews and the observations. The coding process helped break down the responses

into smaller manageable units. These aspects are unpacked in the data analysis chapter. In the next section, I discuss the confidentiality and ethical considerations of the study.

3.7   Ethical considerations

A set of moral guidelines called ethics provides behavioural expectations about the most proper conduct towards participants (de Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport, 2005). Leedy and Ormrod (2001:107) and Mouton (2001:238) explain that when research involves human conduct, it follows that such conduct has to conform to generally accepted norms and values, for example, protection from harm, informed consent, right to privacy and honesty with professional colleagues.

Leedy and Ormrod (2001:107) mention that researchers should not expose participants to undue physical or psychological harm; participants should not be subjected to unusual stress, embarrassment, or loss of self-esteem. As the researcher, I followed the critical rule of permission to gain "entry into the field". Before approaching the schools, I obtained permission from Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) to start my investigation. Firstly, I had to get my proposal approved by the faculty research committee and, after that, get ethical clearance from the ethics committee, for which I received an ethics certificate. CPUT's research policy was strictly observed throughout the research process. A copy of the CPUT research committee letter can be seen in Appendix A. Significant aspects of the policy were closely adhered to in the following manner:

Permission was granted to conduct my research following the policies of CPUT. The Director of Research at WCED, the school principals, the HODs and beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers also permitted me to conduct interviews, observations and other information regarding the research. I also had to get my ethical clearance letter from CPUT. After that, I had to apply for ethical clearance from WCED. After I received a letter of consent from the Director of Research at WCED, I approached the schools and arranged meetings with the principals. As mentioned earlier, I handed all three principals a copy of the letter of permission and a copy of my research proposal for them to peruse. I also gave them a letter explaining the aims and importance of the research, assuring them of confidentiality and anonymity. The letters were drafted while considering the suggestions of Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007, 2017). These letters formed the basis for the principle of informed consent necessary in conducting the research (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007:15, 2017). All the participants were asked to complete an informed consent form on which permission could be granted before I could start with the research process.

Participants were assured of their anonymity and the confidentiality of information (as mentioned above) as well as of the fact that all data provided by participants will be used solely for the proposed research and will be securely stored out of reach of public scrutiny to ensure the privacy of all participants involved as recommended by Creswell (2013). The school was also assured that the findings, reporting and dissemination would be used appropriately. All participants in the study were assured that objectivity would be upheld throughout the process and that distance between the researcher and the study material would always be maintained to avoid emphasising the researcher's preferences and aversions, as suggested by Mouton (2001:240).

3.7.1   Trustworthiness

Triangulation was applied to improve the analysis and understanding of the construction of others. In triangulation, I have used multiple sources, such as interviews, observations and reflective journals, to look for common themes in the data to provide corroborating evidence (Merriam, 2009; Creswell (2013:251). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2008; 2011), triangulation is cross-validation among data sources: different sources, methods and situations were compared to see whether the same patterns recur. Concerning the current study, I have put together the multiple viewpoints necessary to understand what occurs in Grade R classrooms regarding the experiences of beginner teachers. Such triangulation of perspectives enlarges the focus on the phenomenon under study (Flick, 2006). Triangulation is a suitable method for establishing the credibility of the information and ensuring honesty and sincerity of the responses, as information can also be 'cross-checked'. Creswell (2013:251) states that the rationale for triangulation is that the project will be rigorous, credible, and justifiable, as research.

The ability and efforts of the researcher influence the credibility of qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Creswell (1998) have suggested that words such as credibility, dependability, conformability, verification, and transferability be used instead of validity. Also, reliability and validity are conceptualised as trustworthiness, rigour and quality in a qualitative paradigm.

3.8   Chapter summary

This chapter illustrated how multiple data collection methods were incorporated to construct evidence. The aim was to obtain as wide a range of responses as possible to enable me to fulfil the objectives of the study and get answers to critical questions. For this reason, I have utilised both the case study and interpretivist research approaches. The significance and core of an interpretivist research method is its ability to investigate, explore and interpret lived experiences of the research participants, as with a case study. In a case study, a particular

individual is studied in-depth for some time. Both case studies and interpretivist approaches are appropriate for studying specific individuals.

The research methodology was detailed and included the research aims and objectives, the research design and methods, ethical issues, participants, materials, apparatus and procedure. I also gave a detailed account of my activities during the research, the methods used to collect data for this study and the research subjects. In addition, I have illustrated how multiple data collection methods can be included to gain evidence.

I refer to the three schools, School A, B and C, as well as the HODs and teachers—for instance, Teacher A1 and Teacher A2 of School A—to preserve the anonymity of the selected schools and the participants, which was given in Tables 3.1, 3.2 and 3.4 to provide an overview of the learners and teachers who attend the schools.

The data obtained in the next chapter are presented and analysed through the theoretical framework established in the literature review chapter.

CHAPTER 4
LEARNING AND TEACHING EXPERIENCES OF MENTEES AND MENTOR TEACHERS

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 discussed the research methodology, presenting the data collection and analysis methods. This chapter focuses on the first two sub-questions, exploring the learning experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers and the mentoring experiences of their department heads, which are mentioned in Chapter 1 but also restated here as follows:

- What are the learning experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers in the Western Cape, South Africa?

- What are the mentoring experiences of mentor teachers in the Foundation Phase?

4.2 Themes and sub-themes

Having collected data from the teacher participants (mentees who are beginner teachers) and HODs (mentors who are HODs of beginner teachers) through semi-structured interviews and reflective journals, I created detailed descriptions, developed themes and sub-themes and provided interpretations based on teacher participants' viewpoints and perspectives (Creswell, 2013:184). The semi-structured interviews and reflective journals of teacher participants and HODs aim to clarify their professional learning and mentoring experiences. Four significant themes were formed from the ideas that emerged from the data analysis; only two are explored in this chapter, and the other two are discussed in Chapter 5.

The findings provided a detailed account of the challenges faced by the teacher participants and their HODs. The primary categories of beginner teachers' and HODs' learning experiences identified in the individual semi-structured interviews and journal entry transcripts are shown in the following section:

4.3 Research findings

This section organises the discussion of the research findings into themes and sub-themes based on the analysis. The responses of the teacher participants were analysed and compared to literature related to the themes. By conducting the interviews and journal entries, I sought to explore how beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers experience their first years of teaching and the mentoring experiences of HODs supporting beginner teachers. The themes and sub-themes emerging from the analysis processes are discussed in the following sections.

4.3.1 Theme 1: Learning experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers

The Foundation Phase Grade R teachers who participated in the discussion were found to have experienced various challenges. They often developed coping mechanisms or strategies to overcome obstacles while learning to teach. In this following section, I concentrate on the experiences of beginner teachers regarding their difficulties in curriculum delivery while learning to teach.

4.3.1.1 Challenging encounters in curriculum delivery when learning to teach

The primary responsibility of HODs, who interact with teachers daily, is the implementation of the curriculum (Atieno and Ong'ondo, 2021). Education leadership and supervision have been identified by Syomwene (2018) as critical components in ensuring effective curriculum implementation. Sözen (2018:278) suggests beginner teachers can better understand effective teaching practices and discuss their ideas about teaching and learning in a supportive school environment. According to a study by Mollel (2010), HODs must provide teachers, specifically beginner teachers, with advice on curriculum matters to apply the curriculum effectively. One can suppose that when HODs assist teachers in executing the curriculum, they automatically ensure that learners are taught the necessary standards and skills to improve their performance.

HODs are required to oversee teaching and give teachers the necessary support and direction because they are experts in the subject areas where they hold leadership positions (Mpisane, 2015; Syomwene, 2018). In other words, the HOD for Foundation Phase Grade R teachers plays a crucial role in curriculum implementation to ensure that policy standards are met.

The CAPS document is based on the content to be taught and learned (Marsh, 2009; Thaanyane, 2010;). It also comprises the teaching and learning activities to achieve the desired learning goals and evaluate the learner's curricular knowledge (Maharajh, Nkosi and Mkhize, 2016:375). The findings, which focus on the experiences of six teachers from three different Western Cape primary schools, demonstrate how challenging it has been to apply the CAPS curriculum in the classroom. The beginner teachers of Schools A and C had the following to say:

> ...in terms of daily planning, the CAPS document, uhm… the annual teaching plans and how they should all work together... I do not know how to put everything together while teaching and prioritising tasks. It isn't easy. I was expected to perform the same responsibilities as the experienced teachers. (Interview: SA-TA1)

> My initial months of teaching are completely different from your practice. So, it would help to practise what you learned from the theory. So, when I was studying,

we didn't go to school that often or be in the classroom environment. I think that is why I am struggling with lesson plans. I was not exposed enough to planning lessons. Being a teacher is different from being a student. (Reflective Journal: SC-TC2)

Similarly, another teacher participant mentioned:

I find it difficult to link and prioritise specific tasks. I suppose it will improve if I do it more often… with experience. (Interview: SC-TC1)

The above excerpts indicate that the teacher participants experienced challenges with curriculum delivery. Some responses were: "I don't know how to put everything together while teaching and prioritising tasks". Teacher TC2 mentioned that "I am struggling with lesson plans", and Teacher TC1 indicated, "I find it difficult to link and prioritise specific tasks". This is consistent with Azhar and Kayani's (2016:212) assertion that beginner teachers struggle to develop and execute lesson plans. The reason might be that many experienced CAPS as highly rigid. This statement is echoed by Du Plessis and Marais (2015:11), who shed light on the significance of CAPS in assisting teachers with curriculum planning and execution. However, their research also highlights that the rigid structure of the CAPS curriculum significantly impedes teachers' creativity and severely limits their scope for innovation. For instance, du Plessis and Marais (2015:12) contend that CAPS directs what must be planned and taught against what must be assessed, allowing beginner teachers little choice of creativity for their lessons. In contrast to leaving teachers to their own decisions concerning the content, CAPS offers precise instructions on pacing, sequencing and curriculum coverage, guiding them in their teaching activities, which might add to the workload of the teachers, as indicated in the following excerpts from the beginner teachers of Schools C and B:

As beginner teachers, we need support and orientation to effectively plan and deliver the curriculum. As I said before, I am practical; therefore, you give me instructions. I'm struggling to provide the curriculum. The amount of work that must be covered for each term is too much. The workload is too much. (Reflective Journal: SC-TC1)

I find the paperwork requirements to be overwhelming. In addition to working with the learners, you ought to write more. You are more engaged in paperwork than simply teaching learners (laughing). (Interview: SB-TB1)

From the excerpts above, Teacher TC1 mentioned that "the amount of work that must be covered for each term is too much". Teacher SB1 echoed TC1 and indicated, "I find the paperwork requirements overwhelming". The above excerpts make it clear that CAPS exacerbates beginner teachers' workload. Teacher participants struggle to prepare effectively

for their classroom due to the lack of proper orientation. For instance, SC-TC1 mentioned, "…we need support and orientation on how to plan and deliver the curriculum effectively". Hagger, Mutton and Burn (2011) support teacher SC-TC1's assessment and reiterate that lesson planning is complex for teachers to acquire and that learning to plan is a crucial skill for beginner teachers. According to Nkabinde (2012), HODs must be engaged in offering training for lesson planning, that is, post-lesson reflections, on what went well, what did not, and how to improve next time. Vygotsky (1978) argues that social interactions are essential in cognitive development, emphasising the critical interplay between the social and cognitive domains. This underscores the significance of social engagement in shaping cognitive abilities. For instance, when guided by their HODs through task-oriented interactions, beginner teachers have the potential to develop new cognitive abilities and enhance their skills. The objective is to enable beginner teachers to work independently to the best of their abilities. At the same time, HODs assist when necessary to ensure the successful completion of tasks and lesson plans. As Vygotsky (1978:62) emphasised, learners benefit from engaging in challenging tasks that they can complete successfully with appropriate guidance.

For this reason, the relationship between the beginner teachers and their HODs presents an ideal opportunity to apply the Zone of Proximal Development theory, where the HOD guides and mentors the beginner teachers. While working with a more experienced peer (mentor) is a crucial aspect of the process, it is only the initial stage in Vygotsky's (1978) theory. Therefore, the best way for HODs to support beginner teachers is by using Vygotsky's (1978) theory of the ZPD, for instance, to assist them in getting to the point where they can operate independently, which is not happening according to the beginner teacher of School C. This idea is crucial since HODs and beginner teachers can use this ZPD as a roadmap to co-constructively monitor beginner teachers' growth and development.

In summary, one can assume that the teacher participants of this study may not have the necessary abilities to put what they have learned during their teacher training into practice and need guidance and mentoring to improve as teachers. One might also infer from the findings that the rigours of the teaching profession are demanding for the teacher participants, precisely the theory-to-practice flow. My supposition is in reaction to Gravett, Henning and Eiselen (2011) and Mudzingwa and Magudu (2013), who claim that universities cannot produce "completely prepared" teachers. Gravett (2012) contends that no teacher preparation programme can adequately prepare teachers for the complexity of real classrooms, where they first assume full responsibility. Gravett (2012:5) and Mudzingwa and Madudu (2013) say that theory and practice are two sides of the same coin. In other words, the universities provide theoretical knowledge to prospective teachers, which will serve as filters for making sense of the knowledge and experiences they encounter. On the other hand, schools offer an environment where that information is applied, as mentioned above. Therefore, HODs and principals must

be prepared and actively involved in training beginner teachers, which is another form of moderation for the educational system and impacts beginner teachers' development (Hudson, 2013:72).

4.3.1.2 Language barriers

The barriers of multilingual classrooms stood out among the various problems the teacher participants encountered with the curriculum delivery. According to South Africa's CAPS, all learners can receive instruction in their mother tongue up to Grade 3 (RSA, 1996). Since English is the primary language of teaching in the Grade R classroom, all teacher participants reported that many learners did not receive instruction in their mother tongues. Mother tongue instruction does not occur in the educational system at specific schools, notwithstanding the policy. Therefore, some parents prefer that their children learn English from a young age, as early as Grade R. (According to Merriam-Webster (2023), a parent is someone who begets, gives birth to, or raises a child. This can include a relative who acts as a guardian). Contrary to the language policy, many learners are frequently put in schools where English or Afrikaans, the learner's second or third language, is the medium of instruction. For many Grade R learners, starting school means adjusting to a new linguistic environment.

Furthermore, these learners are inundated with verbal cues from various sources. For instance, the busy school day offers countless possibilities for speaking, listening, reading and writing, which might confuse the Grade R learner whose first language is not English. The confusion could be one of the many reasons why beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers in this study experienced a challenge working with learners whose first language is not English, as can be seen in the following excerpts, according to beginner teachers of Schools C and B:

> Uhm… some learners are unable to communicate in English. Others respond to the questions in English and their Home Language. (Interview: SC-TC2)
>
> Parents believe that English is the only language to help their children progress academically later in life and for better work. When learners start in Grade R, their parents expect them to speak English fluently. Uhm…this cannot happen overnight; it is a process. It is that pressure that I feel most of the time. Some of the learners and I do not share the same language. It is not easy to help learners who have language barriers. (Interview: SC-TC1)
>
> Sometimes, I noticed that my learners speak softly in their mother tongue, isiXhosa. Some learners clearly do not understand the concepts or instructions I give them. They battle with instructions because many of them lack an understanding of English. I struggle to provide these learners with the necessary support. They also

do not get help from parents who work to speak English. (Reflective Journal: SB-TB2)

From the above quotations, teacher participants describe their challenges with learners who cannot speak English. Teacher TB2 said, "I noticed that my learners speak softly in isiXhosa". This aligns with Kotzé, van der Westhuizen and Barnard (2017:1), who state that many South African learners are placed in schools where the LOLT is English and the learners' second language. One can assume that learners are sometimes confused and anxious because they are in a disadvantaged situation, which is challenging for the teachers. Chataika et al. (2012:1) declare that teachers lack knowledge and abilities regarding the variety of languages that can be used as LOLT in the classroom to support learners. Teacher participants also expressed concern by mentioning that "it is not easy to help learners who have language barriers", which is in line with Landsberg, Krüger, and Swart (2011:138) and Maake (2014), who state that IsiXhosa-speaking learners who were not exposed to their language in Grade R may not be proficient in their mother tongue since these learners might experience learning challenges. Language is pivotal in various cognitive, emotional, and social factors influencing learning and thinking (Collier & Thomas, 2012:155). As per the DBE (2010:5), language is widely regarded as the means through which an individual learns to structure their experiences and thoughts. In multilingual societies like South Africa, the use of language as a teaching and learning tool is paramount, given the strong correlation between mother tongue education and academic achievement (DBE, 2010:5).

According to the Teacher SC-TC2, many isiXhosa-speaking parents prefer that their children receive an education in English instead of their mother tongue. Saneka and De Witt's (2019) observation that parents' social and economic aspirations for their children can reflect their desire to learn English as a second language lends credence to this. One of the reasons might be that parents (isiXhosa-speaking) may view English as a means of upward mobility and as the universal language. Beginner teacher participants also claimed they could not communicate with the learners in their language. Beginner teachers of Schools B and A shared the following:

It is a struggle and I …uh… struggle to teach math to learners who cannot speak or understand English. Uhm… explaining numbers, forms and other mathematical terms is challenging if they do not grasp English well and I cannot explain the terms in their language. (Interview: SB-TB1).

When learners need to interact, they look away, play with their fingers, or stare at each other. Learners' limited language skills and inabilities make them inhibited and unwilling to share their responses, if any. I have also found that they look bored

when I am busy with storytelling activities. Particular learners purposefully reached out to other learners searching for knowledge using gestures. (Interview–SA-TA1)

Teacher SB-TB1 stated that the learners had difficulty understanding the English language and she could not explain the mathematical terms to them in their mother tongue. In this instance, the teacher must get support from the HOD and engage with the parents. This is consistent with Saneka and De Witt's (2019:2) assertion that active home-school collaboration is crucial when teachers do not speak the home language. Further findings showed that Teacher SA-TA1 had similar challenges with non-English speaking learners who showed boredom or disinterest. It is worth noting that although English is not the primary language spoken in the Western Cape, the DBE views English as the medium of communication in South Africa (DBE, 2012). It is also observed that a considerable number of isiXhosa learners receive education in a second or third language, as highlighted by the DBE, 2012 and NEEDU, 2013. This statement is in line with Kotzé, Van der Westhuizen, and Barnard (2017:1), who say that there is an urgent need to address the language barriers faced by isiXhosa-speaking learners in English/Afrikaans classrooms in the Western Cape.

The findings above show that teachers struggle to interact with learners whose first language is not English. Furthermore, teachers unable to communicate with their learners in their mother tongue compounds the difficulty. The official languages and a child's right to education provide particular challenges for teachers, according to Kotzé et al. (2017:1). In other words, the responsibility for meeting the many needs of learners, including the requirement for instruction in their mother tongue, falls to the teachers. The findings show that learners experienced specific learning challenges, for instance, struggling to follow instructions and becoming bored while the teacher was busy with a lesson. Chataika et al. (2012) support this finding and state that when learners experience a language barrier, teachers find it challenging to integrate learners into a multilingual and inclusive environment. Owen-Smith (2010) says learners who cannot attend schools in their mother tongue are disadvantaged and are less likely to perform to their highest potential. In addition, teacher participants lack the knowledge and abilities to effectively employ a variety of languages to support their learners in mastering the learning content Owen-Smith (2010). In contrast, using mother tongues during early education leads to a better knowledge of the curriculum content and a more favourable attitude toward school (Salie, Moletsane and Mukuna, 2020:5). It also supports learners in reaffirming their cultural identities, which has an apparent effect on how they learn (Salie, Moletsane and Mukuna 2020:5).

4.3.1.3   Limited parental (legal guardians) involvement

Mansfield-Barry and Stwayi (2017:78) claim that parent-school partnerships require teachers to collaborate to protect each learner's right to education. Tabaeian (2016:2) agrees with them,

stating that parents are crucial in their children's education. According to this study, a partnership between parents (legal guardians) and teachers in their children's academic development is almost non-existent. Because parents are not active in their children's education, it is reasonable to suppose that there is a lack of communication between parents and teacher participants, resulting in a breakdown in the parent-teacher relationship (Mansfield-Barry and Stwayi, 2017:78). Barriers and challenges to parents (legal guardians) involved in their children's education have been noted in the literature. For instance, Antoine (2012) identified physical, cultural, social, emotional and psychological difficulties that may impact parental involvement. Parent-related problems, such as socioeconomic position, language skills and time, may hinder parental participation in this study. Smith (2011) affirms that communication and language are common barriers to parental involvement. The teacher participants of Schools B, A and C expressed similar challenges, as can be seen in the following excerpts:

> *It is a struggle and I …uh… struggle to teach math to learners who cannot speak or understand English. Uhm… explaining numbers, forms and other mathematical terms is challenging if they do not grasp English well and I cannot explain the terms in their language. (Interview: SB-TB1).*

> *There is not enough communication between my learners' parents and me. It makes me gloomy to see the limited involvement of parents. I keep them informed via our booklet. I …uhm.. do need parents to become involved and assist learners at home to read, write and support them. (Interview: SA-TA2)*

> *Some parents send their children to school, where their parental contribution starts and ends. They say they cannot assist their children because they do not understand what to do. The sad reality is that it seems as if these parents do not have enough time to spend with their children regarding schoolwork. It might be that they are working too much. (Reflective Journal: SC-TC2)*

From the above excerpts, all the teacher participants indicated an apparent lack of commitment and collaboration among staff and parents (legal guardians). Teacher SB-TB1 stated that "I do not get a response from them…" and Teacher SC-TC2 noted that some parents (legal guardians) "cannot assist because they do not understand what to do", which is supported by Badrasawi, Khalid and Humaer (2020:53), who indicated that parents (legal guardians) do not participate in their children's education because of the complexity of the subjects. The sad reality expressed in the above excerpt is that some parents (legal guardians) might not have enough time to spend with their children and their schoolwork because their socio-economic conditions might not allow them to (Msila, 2012). Some of them need to work long hours to support their children and might not have the time to assist them with schoolwork. This might

be a case where parents (legal guardians) do not have control, but on the other hand, it places an unfair burden on the teachers to take on responsibilities belonging to the parents (legal guardians).

In a comparable study, Snyder-Hogan (2010) discovered that language is also a barrier to parental involvement and a significant association between parental (legal guardians) involvement and family background. It is worth noting that schools can help by making strategies to connect with parents and collaborate with them to improve their skills in helping their children. It seems that teacher participants want parents (legal guardians) to participate in school activities and that parents' (legal guardians) absence inhibits the teachers' capacity to continue with the learners' academic development. Epstein (2018) states that few beginner teachers understand what it takes to start and sustain partnership programmes that inform and engage parents in their children's education.

Mansfield-Barry and Stwayi (2017:78) further argue that parent-school partnerships require them to 'work together to ensure each learner has the right to education'. Despite the South African Schools Act of 1996 (SASA), which gives parents (legal guardians) and communities formal power in education, a teacher participant stated that the envisaged collaboration between parents and the school was far from satisfactory (Republic of South Africa [RSA], 1996a). Other concerns raised by beginner teacher participants in all three schools were the following:

> *They never come to PTA meetings, but they quickly judge the teachers. Our parents here are in no way involved. I do not know what to do to get them involved. I invite them to meetings all the time. (Interview: SB-TB1)*

> *It bothers us when you phone a parent and they do not respond. You want to convey to the parent how the school and home can work together to improve the child's education, but they never show up. (Interview: SC-TC1)*

> *They tell their children they must work and do not have time. As a result, the teacher is responsible for the child's well-being in school, which places an extra burden on us. (Reflective Journal: SA-TA2)*

The excerpts above reflect the concerns of the beginner teachers at the other schools. It is unfortunate that parents (legal guardians), for various reasons, put the responsibility of their children's education on the teacher, as shown above. Parental involvement is crucial for a child's success in school, as highlighted by scholars such as Scott-Little, Kagan, Frelow (2006:97) and Msila (2012). To help Grade R learners build solid foundations for their education and settle into their new school environment while taking ownership of their learning, it is recommended that parents take an active role in supporting their children's academic journey.

Furthermore, researchers worldwide have emphasised the positive impact of active parental participation in their children's education (Chowa, Ansong and Osei-Akoto, 2012; Johnson and Hull, 2014; Luxomo & Motala, 2012; McDowall and Schaughency, 2017; Mncube, 2010). They believe that parental (legal guardians) involvement plays a crucial role in ensuring that children excel academically (Tekin, 2011).

In sum, HODs in the Foundation Phase must address parents' (legal guardians) lack of involvement and create links between the school and community by welcoming parents (legal guardians) into the school community and supporting teachers. Building connections with parents will automatically foster stronger bonds between parents and the school. For instance, HODs can host events like extensive walks or games evenings and involve the community, emphasising interaction with family and community members (Tekin, 2011; Msila, 2012).

According to Bipath and Nkabinde (2018), since boosting learners' achievement and performance levels will impact parents (legal guardians) becoming involved at the school level, HODs must support beginner teachers because most educational reform criteria rely on a combined effort of both parents and teachers. The effects of social and cultural elements on learning and growth are widely acknowledged in Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory. In other words, the community engagement of children with their family members is crucial for their learning and development.

4.3.1.4   Challenges with classroom management

Classroom management refers to setting up and running a classroom to optimise learning for learners (Kellough and Kellough, 2011). According to Wolff, van den Bogert, Jorozka and Boshuizen (2016:3), effective classroom management requires combining diverse knowledge and developing practical knowledge and abilities. Consequently, practical knowledge is the knowledge teachers learn as they build on their expertise and refer back to their classroom experiences (Wolff et al., 2016). Classroom experience makes classroom management a crucial component of practical teaching knowledge (Wolff et al., 2016). As can be seen from the teacher participants' responses below, classroom management is a challenging task that Zuckerman (2007) and Van Tartwijk, Veldman and Verloop (2011) indicate is commonly acknowledged as an everyday challenge for beginner teachers:

Too many administrative matters need my attention: the learners, lesson plans, parents, time management and my HODs' due dates. I had to figure out when to do what. I could not manage my time correctly. Everything is too overwhelming. I was feeling demotivated. My biggest frustration to date is getting things done. (Interview: SA-TA1)

I struggled with multiculturalism in my classroom. I recall feeling overpowered initially. I did not expect so many learners with various cultural backgrounds. I am still learning to figure out the best approach to get along with myself and my learners and find the best way to function well with myself and my learners. I am in the process of getting to know them. (Reflective Journal: SC-TC2)

The above-mentioned notions, namely work overload, struggling with multiculturalism, lack of preparation and administrative tasks overload, are supported (Sasidher, Vanaja and Parimalavenu, 2012), who argue that an unprepared and unmanaged classroom environment adversely affects learners' learning and activities, leading to further classroom management problems. The teacher participants showed that it was difficult to successfully manage their classrooms because they felt underprepared, overworked and unmotivated. Furthermore, they may be unable to manage their time effectively since they are inexperienced as teachers. This is consistent with a study by Sisidher et al. (2012), who discovered that time management issues were a significant cause of classroom management problems. Zubair (2013), who cited numerous scholars, including Duck (2007), Stoughton (2007) and Meister and Melnick (2008), mentioned that the majority of beginner teachers feel underprepared when it comes to classroom management techniques. One explanation might be that they needed work experience before being ready for the classroom. Teacher TA1 indicated, "I had to figure out when to do what, " suggesting that teacher participants struggled with time management. Beginner teachers need strong time management abilities to be effective in the classroom. Furthermore, teachers must understand time management since it impacts their capacity to be productive at school (Khan, Tahir, Ishfaq and Khan, 2017).

Inexperience may be another factor in beginner teachers' inability to manage their time effectively, according to a study by Sisidher et al. (2012), who found that time management issues were one of the leading causes of classroom management problems. As a result, they are frequently ill-equipped to manage administrative duties, the curriculum and behavioural issues in the classroom, as highlighted by the beginner teacher participants of this study:

Right now, I'd rather have the support, and assistance that a new teacher is meant to have. My HOD is always busy with meetings and other things… Uhm…. I need to get direction on how to manage everything. I do not want to subject my learners to a low-performing classroom environment. (Interview: SB-TB2)

I'm hurrying through lesson preparations and administrative tasks, a complete nightmare. I'm attempting to figure out how to manage the physical environment so that learning and teaching processes are as comfortable as possible. The workload is too much and I need support to manage my classroom. (Reflective Journal: SA-TA1)

teacher participants admitted they were "unsure how to apply theory…". These comments demonstrate that the teacher participants struggle to combine or marry theory and practice (Putman, Fox, Colvin and Becker, 2018).

The different classroom management problems that the teacher participants faced, such as work overload, demotivation, being unprepared and time management, created an 'uncomfortable' environment for both the beginner teachers and their learners. As can be seen from beginner Teacher SB-TB2, when she highlights: *"I do not want to subject my learners to a low-performing classroom environment"*. Qinglan, Junyan and Shongshan (2010) and Tuncay (2010) mention that creating a welcoming environment that supports learning is the goal of effective classroom management. However, it will be beneficial that HODs give beginner teachers the induction and orientation training they require to prepare them for the classroom. HODs must support teachers regarding academic policies, the design of the learning environment, lesson plans and other administrative issues. In contrast, if beginner teachers do not get the necessary support, the quality of teaching will most likely deteriorate (Habibi, Najwan, Sofwan and Haswindy, 2018:219).

In short, the first issue with classroom management raised by teacher participants was their lack of experience dealing with the challenges and various aspects of the classroom, including teaching and administrative responsibilities. This might be because beginner teachers were still finding their feet and could not handle their workload independently. Wolff et al. (2014:15) assert that beginner teachers lack the substantial practical knowledge that develops alongside classroom experience. In other words, one can assume that the teacher participants' inability to interpret events is hampered by their inexperience; in line with the above, Shamina and Mumthas (2018:42) further stress that beginner teachers frequently lack the experience necessary to handle situations where they must decide 'quickly' how to address a specific issue in the classroom. The second issue raised by the teacher participants was a sense of being unprepared for classroom management. As per Zubair (2013), most beginner teachers lack the necessary classroom management abilities, making it difficult for them to succeed in today's diverse classrooms. It is reasonable to assume that their sentiments of unpreparedness caused by limited exposure to classroom management content resulted from teacher participants' minimal classroom management training before they started to teach (Shamina and Mumthas, 2018:42).

4.3.1.5   Collaboration, dialogue and collegiality

In this section, teacher participants discussed their interactions with their HODs and other school staff members regarding mentoring support collaboration, dialogue and collegiality. For this study, mentorship is referred to as an all-encompassing approach to teaching and learning

that includes the professional, psychological and career components of a beginner teacher's growth (Mullen, 2009:12). According to Ingersoll and Strong (2011), collaboration and dialogue between HODs and beginner teachers is one of the critical elements that can lead to professional growth for beginner teachers, which is consistent with Mullen's point of view. Maton and Mantas (2020) assert that by promoting critical reflection on practice, dialogue can improve the interactions between mentors and mentees. In contrast, some teacher participants in this study reported that although they received support, they sometimes struggled to adapt to the collaboration and dialogue between them and their HODs. The beginner teachers of School A mentioned the following:

> *I appreciate it when the HOD creates time for us to collaborate. It developed a partnership in which all perspective was welcomed. It doesn't happen as frequently as it should. (Interview: SA-TA1)*

> *I wasn't confident speaking in front of a class when I first started... I know it's all small children, but that didn't matter. I had little faith in my ability to deliver a lesson without nervousness. As it turned out, my HOD helped me gain confidence by scaffolding my classroom experience, and I had to teach the same short lesson repeatedly. (Interview: SA-TA2)*

A mentoring partnership has significant consequences for fostering the growth of beginner teachers' professional identities. Teacher SA-TA1 noted that although not often, her HOD "creates time to collaborate", and she gained confidence by scaffolding her classroom experience under her HOD's tutelage. This aligns with Manton and Mantas (2020), who assert that a mentoring partnership has significant consequences for fostering the growth of beginner teachers' professional identities. Teacher SA-TA2 commented that she felt uneasy and nervous. She pointed out, "my HOD helped me gain confidence by scaffolding my classroom experience" and I repeated my lessons until they were satisfactory.

Teacher participants expressed their lack of confidence, doubt in their abilities, and anxiety, consistent with Freire and Shor's (1987) claim that the communicative, interactive technique would enable teachers to construct meaning based on their prior knowledge and experiences. The interactive approach emphasises dialogue as the primary way professional knowledge is formed.

Teacher participants of Schools C and B made the following points:

> *My HOD encouraged reflection so that I could recognise my strengths and shortcomings after she observed my lesson. As a result, I had an opportunity for introspection and development, which profoundly altered how I taught. (Reflective Journal: SC-TC2).*

Collaboration with the HOD helped me become more aware of and improve in several teaching-related aspects, such as emphasising diversity in the classroom. I received some excellent ideas from my HOD and we exchanged fantastic viewpoints. (Interview: SB-TB1)

My HOD allowed me to work with other teachers during a helpful team teaching session, but she did not avail herself to provide guidance. (Interview: SA-TA2)

Teacher TC2 indicated that her HOD "encouraged reflection so I could recognise my strengths and shortcomings". Connelly, Shaik and Mosito (2020) affirmed that beginner teachers might become more aware of their crucial role in setting up children for success in school by using reflective practice to guide effective classroom practices. Teacher SB-B1 emphasised that the collaborative talks "enhanced my awareness in several teaching areas", which supports the assertion of Whale, Jabri and Cluley (2014:1), who state that dialogue is essential because it allows participants to express their ideas and confirm their understanding and highlight common knowledge or disagreement areas.

In this study, HODs should be encouraging, engaging, open-minded, and knowledgeable and establish an environment fostering collaboration and dialogue. Moreover, beginner teachers require constructive feedback and developmental planning sessions to succeed. The findings show that beginner teachers benefit from being part of a teaching community where they may interact with HODs and learn through their everyday experiences (Munshi, 2018). Literature also confirms that when beginner teachers collaborate with experienced teachers in co-thinking interactions, they can better use their practice as a learning environment (Salleh and Tan, 2013:152). Furthermore, the collaboration will allow beginner teachers and HODs to share ideas about their teaching experiences and increase teachers' thinking, professional standards and teaching quality.

In brief, teacher participants indicated that many were unfamiliar with collaborative dialogue and that it was a new concept, making them feel uneasy and nervous about saying something that might offend someone else. Freire and Shor (1987:100) point out that dialoguing seals the teacher and the learners in the collaborative process of knowing and re-knowing the object of study. They further emphasise that this discourse could be seen as the "glue" that holds the mentor and mentee together in their relationships (Freire and Shor, 1987:100). Vangrieken, Raes, Dochy and Kyndt (2015:29) point out that effective teacher collaboration does not come by itself, it is a process between the particular parties.

Another aim of this study was to identify the mentoring experiences of HODs and the kind of guidance and support they provide (or do not offer) to beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers. See Section 4.3.2 below.

4.3.2 Theme 2: Learning experiences of mentors, supporting beginner teachers

Apart from exploring the learning experience of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers, this study also sought to understand the mentoring experiences of mentor teachers (HODs) and how they represent their interventions and mentoring. Moreover, I inquired about the kind of support beginner teachers required during their first few years of teaching from the teacher participants and their HODs. The challenges that beginner teachers encountered were discussed with their HODs. These HODs provided insight into the many forms of support they offer them (beginner teachers) to overcome these challenges, as seen from the sub-themes below.

4.3.2.1   Assistance with curriculum delivery

The teacher participants emphasised the challenges in delivering the curriculum in section 4.3.1.1. This section focuses on the experiences HODs have had supporting beginner teachers. One of the demands of the curriculum that beginner teachers of this study find challenging is lesson preparation, which requires direction and support from their HODs. At the same time, they plan their lessons, which supports Atieno and Ong'ondo's (2021) statement, claiming that the primary function of HODs is to oversee curriculum implementation. The difficulty level in managing lesson preparation may vary from teacher participant to teacher participant and some may find it quite challenging while others may find it less complicated. For instance, some teacher participants might need more support and assistance from their HODs, while others may need less help with lesson delivery. The HODs of Schools A and B said:

> *I don't think that beginner teachers have any idea of their responsibilities when they start teaching. I also believe that teachers have limited knowledge when it comes to planning. Also, the practice teaching does not prepare them enough for school. They need relevant practical exposure. How to present a lesson, how to conduct a writing lesson and how to conduct a reading lesson are all learned through practical experience. That is what beginner teachers need: practical experience! I expose them to the practice. I guide them on how to structure written lessons. (Interview: HOD A)*

> *Although beginner teachers have completed their studies, their initial training has proved to be limited and inadequate to meet the needs of their first years of entry into the profession. They are dealing with a tremendous workload and time constraints. I demonstrate to them how to create lesson plans. I attend their classrooms, sit next to them and guide them with their lesson preparation. (Interview: HOD B)*

In the above excerpt, HOD A indicated that "they need practical exposure". In this regard, the HOD refers to the beginner teachers as newly appointed, who are in the transition period and experiencing the inability to react to their new conditions (Hobson and Ashby, 2012:177). Furthermore, HOD A indicated that:

Practice teaching did not prepare teachers enough for the school. (Interview: HOD A)

Therefore, it would be a good idea if orientation programmes were organised for beginner teachers so they could become acquainted with the school atmosphere to succeed in the classrooms (Mudzingwa and Magudu, 2013:37). HOD B further pointed out that "I attend their classrooms, sit next to them and guide them with their lesson preparation", which supports Howe's (2006:287) statement when he contends that mentoring, as opposed to evaluating beginner teachers at the start of their teaching careers, is a preferred support method for their professional development. Additionally, mentorship draws on the expertise of current veteran teachers who could provide beginner teachers with immediate assistance because they frequently struggle to create a balance between the demands of the teaching profession and the delivery of curriculum (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Le Maistre and Paré, 2010). For instance, veteran teachers can assist beginner teachers with time management, easing their workload and improving classroom management. Moreover, HODs must plan orientation programmes for beginner teachers from the onset so that they can develop problem-solving strategies for handling the constant flow of initial challenges involved in contextual school and teaching situations (Le Maistre and Paré, 2010).

HODs B and C also hit the nail on the head when saying the following:

Learners are impacted when a teacher is struggling, but occasionally, uhm.. I'm also busy. I go to classes and observe what the teachers are doing. I would assist and advise them in a particular area, such as what activities to do to help the child with lateral midline problems. (Interview: HOD C)

It isn't easy to satisfy all beginner teachers with my busy schedule, but I try to assist as much as possible, for instance, with admin work. All of the beginner teachers struggle with admin work and lesson preparation. I try to help beginner teachers with how to complete their different forms, for instance, leave documents. These are simple administrative duties which are not taught at the university. I think some beginner teachers are feeling very overwhelmed. (Interview: HOD B)

HOD C indicates in the initial quote that "I go to classes and observe what the teachers are doing. I would assist and advise them in a particular area, " making it possible for HODs to offer advice on how beginner teachers might develop their instructional techniques. Therefore,

the aforementioned response of HOD B implies that HODs used lesson monitoring to determine areas in which beginner teachers may improve their teaching skills.

HOD B noted, "I think all beginner teachers struggle with the admin work and lesson preparation". She also indicated that pre-service training did not provide the teacher participants with the necessary support and assistance for administrative work related to lesson plans, which is an essential component of teaching and no actual examples of how to carry out such activities were offered during pre-service training. Planning entails knowing what to teach and how to teach it. HODs must assist the beginner teacher in making effective plans by going over lesson progression, activities and goals. Bin-Hady and Abdulsafi (2018) corroborate this by emphasising the need for support in lesson preparation in induction programmes. The HOD's function as an instructional mentor is to assist beginner teachers in creating lesson plans for their classrooms. The HOD oversees lesson plans, manages the curriculum, and coordinates goal-setting according to PAM policy requirements (Personnel Administration Measures [PAM], 1999).

Moreover, Mathur, Jugdev and Fung (2013) have found that mentorship programmes help mentors with their ability to reflect on their teaching. The findings further show that HODs are teachers with many other responsibilities and do not always have time to assist beginner teachers due to their heavy workload. Hudson (2013:72) believes that HODs must be involved in training beginner teachers as this type of moderation impacts their (beginner teachers') professional development. All role-players, parents, HODs, principals and WCED should support teachers, specifically beginner teachers, in their roles as Foundation Phase Grade R teachers. Moreover, HODs should guide and oversee education, including giving teachers essential support and direction as subject-matter experts in the Foundation Phase in which they serve in leadership capacities (Mpisane, 2015; Syomwene, 2018).

4.3.2.2 Guidance with language barriers

In Section 4.3.1.2, beginner teachers mentioned that it was challenging for some of them to work with learners who could not speak the medium of instruction, which was English. However, they had to consider the needs of the whole learner, including learning abilities, learning experiences and advancement in fundamental achievement. According to Zwane and Malale (2018), teachers did not receive inclusive education training and as a result, they were not taught how to respond to a particular learner facing learning challenges. Baba and Tshotsho (2013:39) contend that since 1994, the status quo has persisted, favouring English and Afrikaans over other languages at the expense of teachers and learners. In many South African schools, this has resulted in children frequently using their second language, English, as a medium of instruction, which has put a tremendous strain on beginner teachers who have to work with these learners in the classrooms. Working with learners in Grade R who did not

reach the necessary academic requirements presented challenges for both beginner teachers and their HODs, who noted the following:

> *Beginner teachers require skills on how to include all learners in their lessons. According to the policy, all learners must be given the necessary help to participate in class with their peers. When teaching learners who cannot speak English, I strive to support my teachers as much as possible. (Interview: HOD C).*

> *There is no simple strategy to remedy the language barrier situation; however, working together, parents and teachers may bring meaningful change. Therefore, beginner teachers must involve parents so that they can support their children at home with their homework in preparation for the classroom. (Interview: HOD A)*

From the excerpts above, it is clear that beginner teachers require the necessary skills to work with non-English-speaking learners and the support from their HODs to do so. HOD C mentioned, "I strive to be as supportive as I can to my teachers" when they have challenges with learners who cannot speak English. HOD A expresses claims similar to HOD C's and mentions that "working together, parents and teachers, may bring meaningful change". The HOD should encourage collaboration between parents and teachers to give the learners responsive and adaptable teaching and learning environment. This is in line with Excell and Linington (2015:34), who contend that teachers should keep in mind that learners in Grade R are deeply connected to their culture and language; as a result, a collaboration between parents and teachers is crucial in this regard. More importantly, HODs should support efforts to increase child participation. Children have a voice in what happens in the Grade R classroom, according to Excell and Linington (2015:34). This is also supported by (Shaik and Ebrahim, 2015:4), who assert that power is shared in this way when teachers listen to children's voices. However, what Excell and Linington (2015) and Shaik and Ebrahim (2015) say about children's voices is not happening in the classroom and there is a lack of awareness of children's rights to participate.

On the other hand, the DBE fail the schools in this regard by not providing them with enough support. Furthermore, the school language policy is guided by principles derived from the Republic of South Africa's Constitution (RSA, 1996a). The new policy was established in 2014 and required all schools to teach an African language (Davis, 2013). The idea, however, has failed miserably due to a lack of engagement before its implementation in schools. As a result, isiXhosa-speaking learners at schools with a LoLT that differs from their mother tongue have been given the bare minimum of support by the DBE, and HODs had to carry the extra burden because of the DBEs' lack of support.

The results of this study are in harmony with an earlier study by Goodlad (1990), who conducted a 5-year study of teacher education institutions in 1990 and concluded that "the

teacher education train is not on tracks... the engine is not attached to the vehicles, nor the cars to one another" (Goodlad, 1990). I agree with the earlier study of Goodlad (1990) that teacher education moves at a snail's pace; after twenty-eight years of democracy, education is still about where it started. For instance, there is no consistency between DBE policies and what is implemented and offered at the schools. The DBE is aware of the disparities, but it will take a long time to address them and improve educational quality. Meanwhile, schools, HODs and teachers must deal with the unfavourable end-course implications, which the HOD of School B pointed out in the following quotes:

> *Beginner teachers are overwhelmed because many learners speak isiXhosa and struggle with English as a medium of instruction. I encourage them to attend external programmes organised by WCED and other institutions since the school is not hosting enough workshops to assist teachers. I also do class visits and give teachers pointers on how to help the learners struggling with the medium of instruction. (Interview: HOD B)*

According to HOD B, beginner teachers are "overwhelmed", which has urged them to "attend external programmes organised by WCED" to help them with their challenges teaching learners who speak isiXhosa. The schools should have a well-structured framework to provide beginner teachers with the guidance they need; however, the need to develop beginner teachers places an additional burden on the HODs' responsibilities.

These findings imply that there could be a weakness in implementing the Language in Education Policy (LiEP) of 1997 to address language barriers (DBE, 1997). In other words, the lack of necessary support from the DBE places the obligation on the teachers and HODs to ensure that the isiXhosa learners are prepared for Grade 1. HODs also confirmed that by supporting beginner teachers in managing language barriers and involving their parents, learners with language barriers could make a difference by allowing them to express their thoughts and collaborate as a class community. The results of this study further show that although the LiEP is the responsibility of the DBE, the HODs need to mentor beginner teachers since the beginner teacher is too inexperienced in managing language barriers independently. Mentoring is integral to helping beginner teachers grow and become effective in a multilingual classroom. It is worth noting that teacher participants stated that their HODs' mentoring is not as frequent as they would like. According to the findings of this study, beginner teachers required regular feedback and monitoring, which was an essential element in mentoring and guiding the teacher participants. Bandura (1997) claims that effective feedback that vehemently challenges one's ingrained disbelief in one's abilities is a thing that can lead to improvements in self-efficacy. This assistance should provide beginner teachers with effective learning and classroom transformation opportunities. According to Mathur et al. (2013), mentoring programmes benefit both the mentor and the mentee because both can benefit from

the mentoring process. In addition, mentorship programmes also help mentors reflect on their teaching (Mathur et al., 2013). This opportunity for professional reflection leaves veteran teachers feeling refreshed and rewarded (Lafleur and White, 2010).

4.3.2.3 Support with parental involvement

Parents (legal guardians) are the primary role models for young children in their immediate environment. Parents and teachers must communicate and work together to jointly promote learners and their academic success. Support for the learners and teachers can be achieved when both parties cooperate for the learners' benefit and value each other's contributions. Vygotsky (1978) emphasised the relationship between human beings and their environment, both physical and social. Therefore, learners' interaction with family members is essential for their learning and development since their family is their first teacher (Tekin, 2011).

In this study, HODs state that their experiences support beginner teachers with insufficient parental (legal guardians) participation. HODs indicated that it was an effort to get many parents involved despite initiating many strategies:

> *Teachers become frustrated with parents (legal guardians) not actively engaged in their children's schoolwork. Most of the time, parents are too preoccupied with their jobs to help their children with schoolwork. I would support the teachers by communicating with the parents (legal guardians) via text messages or phone calls. (Reflective Journal: HOD C)*

> *We must keep trying to engage parents, even though many reasons affecting parental involvement are too complex to understand, putting teachers in a difficult situation and making intervention programmes a long shot in the dark. I advise teachers to give parents information and suggestions on supporting their children at home, such as reading activities that benefit learners. (Interview: HOD A)*

> *We arrange meetings where parents (legal guardians) are given information on how to help their children learn more effectively at home. We try to collaborate with the community by incorporating services from the community to improve school programmes, such as health services, which include visiting nurses from clinics to our Grade R classrooms. (Interview with HOD B.)*

The findings from the extracts, as mentioned earlier, show a lack of collaboration between parents (legal guardians) and beginner teachers regarding the development of their children. However, this does not stop HODs from supporting beginner teachers in incorporating parents in their children's academic success. HOD C reported, *"Teachers become frustrated with parents who are not involved in their children's schoolwork"*. These expressions of frustration and desperation might result from what might be perceived as parents' apathy and even

unwillingness to become involved in their children's formal education. There is a clear gap between what teachers desire from parents (legal guardians) and what parents are prepared to contribute. The beginner teachers' capacity to progress with the learners in their development seems hampered by the lack of parental (legal guardians) involvement. According to a study by Maluleke (2014), parents frequently lack understanding, inhibiting them from helping their children succeed academically.

HOD A mentioned, *"I advise teachers to give parents information and suggestions on how to support their children at home, such as reading activities that will benefit learners".* It appears that HOD A is trying to support her teachers by offering suggestions to parents on how to become more involved in their children's academic performance by messaging them to connect with them. This is consistent with Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn and Van Voorhis's (2002) assertion that improving parental (legal guardians) and school communication skills would benefit their children's academic performance. HOD B's statement that "we try and engage with the community by combining services from the community to better school activities" reflected the same goals as HOD A: to encourage parents (legal guardians) to become more involved in their children's academic pursuits, which is congruent with Msila's (2012) argument that schools can prevent parental (legal guardians) disengagement by implementing robust, inclusive activities that support parents (legal guardians) in realising their full potential and engaging in meaningful participation. Tekin (2011:1) underlines the constructive role of parental (legal guardians) involvement in their children's education.

Furthermore, Tekin (2011) encourages parents to share their valuable insights and perspectives with the school to foster a collaborative and positive approach to their child's education. Therefore, it is highly recommended that parents and teachers collaborate to provide the best learning experience for learners. To achieve this, parents (legal guardians) can work alongside teachers to create stimulating activities and participate as volunteers in the classroom. This partnership between parents (legal guardians) and teachers is critical to fostering a supportive and enriching environment for their children's education.

The results obtained from the HODs demonstrate that some parents (legal guardians) are apathetic in participating in their children's schooling. One can assume that based on socio-economic factors, parents (legal guardians) may not have enough time to spend at school because they are forced to work. Additionally, parents (legal guardians) with poor socio-economic positions might be unable to offer educational opportunities at home. This argument is echoed by Smith (2011) and Antoine (2012), who demonstrated how low socio-economic status, a hectic schedule for the parents (legal guardians), and low educational attainment contributed to reduced parental participation. HODs are crucial in ensuring that schools, parents and teachers work together to ensure collaboration and learner achievement. Msila (2012) contends that because parental (legal guardians) involvement is likely advantageous

to the school, HODs must form partnerships to promote greater family involvement. Moreover, to increase the likelihood of beginner teachers benefitting from better teaching and learning, HODs should lead initiatives to encourage parental involvement (Epstein, 2018).

4.3.2.4   Advice regarding classroom-management

As previously stated, beginner teachers found it difficult to effectively manage their classrooms in light of all the demands of the profession, which was consistent with Van Tartwijk et al. (2011) and Zuckerman (2007), who noted that was frequently acknowledged as a common barrier for beginner teachers. However, if the teacher does not have a proper classroom management system, teaching and learning cannot be conducted effectively (Isuku, 2018:1). Participant HODs observed that beginner teachers struggle with classroom management and require assistance in comprehending what is expected of them. The comments of the HODs are shared below:

> *I invite beginner teachers as a group to share their teaching experiences. We discuss the challenges and various strategies to overcome them, such as administrative matters, planning, and lesson preparations. For example, we would discuss the curriculum and how to incorporate classroom activities into the lessons. Adequate preparation would assist the teacher in managing the classroom better. (Reflective Journal: HOD A)*

> *I let teachers plan and deliver their lessons, then review the planning after observations. I'll talk to the teacher about the lesson and request that it be improved until they can plan it independently. I provide feedback on issues that may influence their teaching strategies and would prioritise lessening the teachers' workload. (Interview: HOD C)*

> *It's essential to give beginner teachers direction. I imagine you would want a friendly person to talk to when you first start at your school. To help you efficiently manage your classroom. The teacher's responsibility is to manage the classroom, and I am responsible for guiding them. (Interview: HOD B)*

According to the findings above, beginner teachers struggle to manage their classrooms successfully, and HODs need to provide a supportive environment that considers their (teachers') professional development. The HODs in this study suggest various strategies to support beginner teachers in overcoming their challenges regarding classroom management. HOD A stated that "adequate preparation would assist the teacher in managing the classroom better," Isuku (2018:3) agrees, arguing that a well-prepared lesson plan will make it easier for the teacher to give and for the learners to understand. Isuku (2018:3) further contends that minimising time and other instructional resource waste is a benefit of effective and adequate

planning, resulting in better classroom management. HOD C claims, "I provide feedback on issues that may influence their teaching strategies and would prioritise lessening the teachers' workload". The data of this study is consistent with researchers who suggest that constructive feedback is an integral part of the mentorship process for beginner teachers (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez and Tomlinson, 2009). In other words, constructive feedback enables teachers to reflect and improve their own teaching performance.

Furthermore, feedback is crucial for teaching and learning since feedback identifies areas for improvement and presents strategies for accomplishing goals. It is an essential element of the mentorship process for beginner teachers. This view agrees with Dias-Lacy and Guigruis (2017:270), who found that mentoring and some induction programmes for beginner teachers would increase the effectiveness of classroom management. The findings of this study showed that several factors connected to classroom management (lesson plans, time management, learners' parents and workloads) played a role in the problems experienced by teacher participants, which affected their teaching and learning. Schools and HODs should support beginner teachers in adequate training to manage their classrooms and teach efficiently and effectively. Classroom management issues must be part of the induction and training programme created for beginner teachers, which must be coordinated, effectively managed and ensured by the schools and HODs. Hobson et al. (2009:209) emphasised that one of the most commonly identified benefits for beginner teachers was the positive interactions between the mentoring experiences, which they describe as the provision of emotional and psychological support, which helped boost the confidence of beginner teachers.

4.3.2.5   Encourage collaboration, dialogue and collegiality

Freire (2005:40) mentions that critical pedagogy sees teaching as freedom and liberating through "dialogue and problem-posing instruction". In other words, teachers should develop their understanding and knowledge through dialogue. Dialogue, from this perspective, is an essential aspect of teaching and learning, and beginner teachers must maintain continual contact with HODs. Ehiobuche, Tu and Justus (2012:300) believe that through dialogue, people learn to listen to different viewpoints, foster cooperation, work on various challenges and improve skills. The findings of this study imply that beginner teachers require better collaboration and dialogue between them and their HODs. One of the HODs mentioned that:

> *I provide a space so that beginner teachers and I can exchange ideas. The dialogue is good and creates openness. Schools should require beginner teachers to shadow experienced teachers before they begin teaching. It must be a departmental initiative to provide mentorship and collaboration to beginner teachers. (Reflective Journal: HOD B)*

I strive to be as present as possible, talking to beginner teachers and giving them insight into what is required to manage their classes. I also respect their opinions and allow them to develop independently. I do not enforce my ideas but guide them in a way that will enable them to exchange ideas when they have challenges. (Reflective Journal: HOD C)

We have had a lot of dialogue on classroom management, policies, and subject files so they can refer to the discussions. Additionally, I would show how to design a lesson and guide the beginner teacher through the lesson execution process by ensuring the task is constructed correctly. (Interview: HOD A)

The responses in the preceding quotation demonstrate collaboration, dialogue and collegiality among the HOD and beginner teachers–which could lead to beginner teachers' professional development and growth. This study's findings align with the results of Sempowicz and Hudson (2011:1), which mention that effective mentoring is pivotal to beginner teachers' development and growth, enhancing learning. This is consistent with Freire (1972), who notes that dialogic pedagogy views students as equal participants and enables the sharing of power and decision-making in the classroom. This supports the findings of this study in that beginner teachers and HODs should follow a co-constructive decision-making process. The dialogic pedagogy approach enables a collaborative process of learning and teaching that is directed by many voices of beginner teachers and HODs (Freire, 1972). The findings also show that beginner teachers and HODs would collaborate on how they could address challenges through dialogue, which is in line with HOD A, who pointed out that "we have a lot of discussions on classroom management, policies, subject files so that they can refer to the discussions". This is supported by Whale et al. (2014:1), who contend that dialogue is a means through which individuals can communicate their ideas, confirm their understanding and find points of agreement or difference. However, this should not be done at the expense of honesty and openness; trust relationships must be built. Creating a relationship of trust is an integral characteristic of teacher education since trust allows participants to "approach learning as a collaborative venture" Adendorff (2007:52).

Furthermore, collegial cooperation and support give beginner teachers access to extra support networks and integrate them into a professional learning community, fostering growth and developing and enhancing teaching strategies. Beginner teachers collaborate with more experienced teachers to build and advance their professional abilities through collegial interaction. The process might also be facilitated by team post-lesson reflection and co-teaching.

The data suggests that beginner teachers and HODs are open to sharing ideas and addressing challenges. The results of this study show that during collaboration and dialogue with their

HODs, the teacher participants' voices were heard, implying that they are actively involved in constructing their knowledge and understanding. The findings corroborate with Freire (2005:40), who mentions that critical pedagogy considers teaching as liberation through dialogue and problem-posing education. In other words, "emancipation could also come in the form of the ability to work more smartly and effectively to overcome some restrictions placed on teaching the curriculum under most unfavourable conditions" (Adendorff, 2007:38).

4.4   Chapter summary

This chapter focused on the first two sub-questions, examining the learning experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers, the experiences of HODs and the support they provided to beginner teachers. The themes and sub-themes represented in this chapter illustrate the findings and conclusions from the data. According to the responses from the beginner teachers and their HODs, support is a process in which the beginner teachers and the HODs form a connection that aims to assist the latter with teaching and learning.

The challenges faced by beginner teachers involved curriculum delivery when learning to teach, language barriers, parental involvement, classroom management and collaboration, dialogue and collegiality. Since their teacher preparation did not cover many of these issues, beginner teachers said they required support in that regard. The experiences of beginner teachers were contrasted with the support offered by the schools and their HODs, which included induction programmes, observations, feedback, professional development, ongoing mentoring and dialogue. By providing these resources, schools can help beginner teachers effectively overcome their challenges and grow into successful educators.

The remaining two sub-questions focus on theorising and providing a structure for a support programme in the following chapter, which was co-constructed by the teacher participants and their HODs.

CHAPTER 5

CO-CONSTRUCTION OF A MENTORING PROGRAMME FOR BEGINNER TEACHERS

5.1   Introduction

Chapter 4 focused on the first two sub-questions, exploring the learning experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers and the mentoring experiences of their departmental heads (HODs). The primary goal of this chapter is to support beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers and their HODs in co-constructing a framework for a mentoring programme through dialogue (Freire, 1972). Their opinions on their experiences obtaining support from their schools are crucial for determining how to assist beginner teachers through a mentoring programme. In this study, HODs and beginner teachers identified different strategies for developing a mentoring programme. The mentoring programme is grounded in pertinent theories and research on mentoring, which are covered in Chapter 2. Furthermore, the final two sub-questions are the emphasis of this chapter and they are presented as follows:

- How do beginner and mentor teachers participate in the professional development programme facilitated through dialogue and co-construction and

- How do these experiences influence a support programme that is co-constructed through dialogue?

Gravett (2012:17) argues that adult students should be encouraged to engage in a "dialogic" approach, which entails cooperatively exploring the learning content rather than simply being more than conversation or exchanging ideas. Li, Zhang and Parr's (2020:3) study revealed that dialogue enables beginner teachers to generate content, provides them with collaborative problem-solving, clarifies information and encourages collective scaffolding for managing the ongoing process of their task. They assert further that through dialogue, beginner teachers will be able to express themselves or take a personal stand on specific topics while conceptualising knowledge to finish lesson planning (Li et al., 2020:3). In this instance, dialogic discussions with HODs and beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers were conducted at each school to gather data for the co-construction of the mentorship programme. According to Freire (1972), the dialogic classroom is the best setting for promoting open dialogue between teachers and learners, consistent with the dialogical methodology used in this study.

5.2   Justification for the mentoring programme

The main aim of the mentoring support is to co-construct the mentoring programme with HODs and beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers. Other objectives include developing a

mentoring programme to enhance the lives of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers early in their careers, contributing to their professional development and improving and strengthening educational opportunities for learners. High-quality mentoring for beginner teachers plays a significant role in developing their professional skills. HODs might provide beginner teachers with specific skills and guidance while beginner teachers also share their experiences as beginner teachers to co-construct a mentoring programme. This strategy fosters peer interaction for learning, which is co-constructivist (Vygotsky, 1978) and aids in beginner teachers' professional development (Rytivaara and Kershner, 2012; Farrell, 2015). Thus, beginner teachers and HODs can discuss various topics during mentorship meetings, fostering positive staff relationships built on trust, respect and collaboration.

Furthermore, mentoring strategies foster peer interaction for learning, which is constructivist and aids in beginner teachers' professional development (Rytivaara and Kershner, 2012; Farrel, 2015). Teachers must adapt to the always-evolving pedagogical situations and involve parents in teaching and learning (Heikkinen et al., 2018). Mentoring promotes lifelong learning by integrating social and educational processes (Heikkinen et al., 2018).

The HODs and beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers in this study determined what support strategies could effectively assist beginner teachers when facing challenges at the start of their careers. Below is a list of factors that make an effective mentoring programme crucial for beginner teachers, according to the findings of this study, based on the dialogue between myself, HODs and beginner teachers: Collaborative meetings, creating best practices, effective communication, genuine listening to one another, peer group mentorship, improving support strategies, enhancing the quality of teaching and learning, constructive dialogue, ongoing support, effective teamwork and assisting beginner teachers as they transition into the teaching and learning process. In line with the above, effective mentoring for beginner teachers positively affects both the growth of beginner teachers' professional development and learners' learning.

While semi-structured interviews were used to develop insight and understand the learning experiences of beginner teachers and the mentoring experiences of HODs, during the final phase of the study, I needed to use dialogic conversations between myself, HODs and beginner teachers to co-construct the mentoring programme. The strategies that emerged from the dialogue between beginner teachers and HODs about their challenges resulted in the development of the following sub-themes: strategies to improve orientation and induction, strategies to enhance curriculum implementation, strategies to improve parental involvement, strategies to reduce the workload of beginner teachers, strategies for enhancing collaboration and collegiality and beginner teachers' professional development. These sub-themes are discussed below:

5.3 Theme 1: Strategies for supporting beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers

In this study, the HODs and beginner teachers identified different strategies to provide a mentoring programme for beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers. The following sub-theme presents detailed discussions of these strategies:

5.3.1 Techniques to improve orientation and induction

Effective teacher orientation and induction are fundamental aspects of professional development, particularly for beginner teachers as they embark on their teaching careers (Mohan, 2016:168). As beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers transition into the workforce, induction and mentoring are essential resources to help them transition into the workplace. Programmes for beginner teachers' induction and orientation are intended to assist them in fitting in with the school's culture and participating in active mentoring relationships with veteran teachers (Eisenschmidt and Oder, 2018). Orientation and induction are used by HODs as support strategies, as highlighted by the beginner teacher participants below:

> *The school or HODs need to inform beginner teachers of the school policies during the first week of the induction. The school rules should be clarified so beginner teachers know what is expected of them. A tour of the school and explanations of the types of learners enrolled in our classes and the parents we would encounter should be explained. The HOD should set expectations, including what we should and shouldn't do. They should give you a lot of advice during the first week of school. (Interview: SA-TA1)*

> *Beginner teachers should receive an introduction to school management and at least two days should be devoted to the administrative aspect of their duties. For instance, how to complete a learner portfolio, register learners and make a Central Education Management Information System (CEMIS) list. HODs must communicate these things to us - communication plays a key role. (Interview: SB-TB2)*

Teacher TA1 mentioned, "HODs need to inform beginner teachers of the school policies during the first week of the induction". Teacher TB2 emphasised that "at least two days should be devoted to the administrative aspect of their duties". This is congruent with Gordan (2019:26), who claims that providing beginner teachers with continual support may increase their efficacy until they have established themselves as professionals. Moon (2014) contends that when employees are valued, mentored and guided, they are more likely to become innovators. I concur with Moon's (2014) assertion that schools must encourage innovation to keep up with the quick changes occurring in the field of education. According to Shiels and Rutherford (2014:6), the mentoring process, particularly during the orientation programme, enhances

teacher comprehension and changes practice to provide exceptional learning opportunities for learners. This is consistent with Guskey's (2002) argument that professional development programmes are systematic attempts to affect change in teachers' classroom practices, attitudes and beliefs, and learners' learning outcomes. However, Guskey (2002) further emphasises that change primarily happens after implementation and that there is evidence of increased learner learning, ongoing follow-up assistance, and engagement beyond the orientation programme, which is crucial.

According to a research study by Handiranto, Jusoh, Syuraini, Rouzi and Alghazo (2022:67), mentoring with HODs or more experienced teachers makes it easier for beginner teachers to adjust to the structure and culture of the school, which will speed up change. HODs must promote constructive dialogue between themselves and beginner teachers for successful induction and mentoring. The HOD of School A added the following in terms of time management, assessment and providing feedback:

> *Individual mentoring and frequent communication with beginner teachers are important. For instance, I'll focus on deadlines, discuss the term, monthly and weekly lesson plans and discuss the learners' results. I'll also look at the assessment plans so beginner teachers know what is expected of them. It's important to mentor beginner teachers when they start their careers at school, emphasising providing them with constructive feedback and helping them develop their confidence. (Interview: HOD A)*

In the above excerpt, the HOD of School A stated that dialogue is essential during orientation. Thus, the constant dialogue between HODs and beginner teachers allows for socialisation and beginner teachers to receive guidance from veteran teachers in daily interactions (Sikma, 2019). It, therefore, makes sense that beginner teachers' learning will be enhanced when they receive support from more experienced teachers and HODs. This is consistent with the Vygotskian theory that teamwork is most effective when a person with greater competence supports less competence (Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, creating an environment where beginner teachers feel appreciated and motivated should be the primary strategy that promotes collaboration between beginner teachers and HODs.

In sum, the mentorship provided to beginner teachers during orientation and induction will, in all likelihood, help them discover strategies for overcoming challenges, which may encourage development and improvement. Thus, "mentoring" means sharing the mentor's knowledge, attitude and skill with the mentee (Handiranto et al., 2022:67). To ensure that beginner teachers are able to develop their skills, it is important to plan mentorship programmes with great care. According to Mohan (2016:168), mentorship programmes (professional development) can equip beginner teachers with new knowledge and skills that can improve

their teaching performance and enhance the learning outcomes of their learners. In other words, providing adequate support for the professional development needs of beginner teachers has been found to positively impact their performance quality and productivity in meeting their various duties and responsibilities (Lingam, 2012; Sharma, 2012). Furthermore, HODs have the opportunity to offer valuable feedback to beginner teachers that can help them improve their performance and achieve their professional objectives.

5.3.2 Ideas for the improvement of curriculum implementation

The primary responsibility of school HODs who work with teachers daily is implementing the curriculum (Atieno, Jotham and Onyango, 2018). With the CAPS curriculum, teacher participants are challenged; they need to implement the curriculum effectively, with limited training and support from their schools and HODs, according to beginner teachers of this study. They further mentioned that they felt confused, overburdened with paperwork and lacked guidance regarding expectations. In addition, teacher participants indicated that they did not get enough support concerning all the changes in CAPS, which supported the assertions that a change in curriculum necessitated an adaptation of the function of the teacher (Van der Nest, 2012:5).

In light of the challenges above, beginner teachers indicated the crucial roles that HODs and beginner teachers played in implementing the curriculum and meeting policy requirements. The beginner teacher participants considered the following strategies:

> *Every grade needs a planning day to discuss their preparation. Beginner teachers need a specific day to sit down and create weekly plans as a support strategy. The HOD should use these weekly plans during observations to gauge whether the curriculum is followed. Beginner teachers should also form peer groups to discuss lesson planning and viewpoints with other, more experienced staff members. (Interview: SA-TA2)*

> *Asking questions about the weekly planning, activities and expectations, especially during meetings, is essential. Exchange ideas, but the HOD should provide guidance and inform beginner teachers where to improve after observations. Feedback will help beginner teachers to see where the gaps are and to improve. (Interview: SC-TC1)*

From the extracts above, it is clear that teacher participants felt mentoring sessions were a successful method for supporting beginner teachers in overcoming lesson preparation challenges. Teacher TA2 mentioned, "beginner teachers need a specific day to sit down and create weekly plans as a support strategy". Teacher TC1 noted, "exchange ideas, but the HOD should provide guidance and inform beginner teachers where to improve after observations".

According to Beek (2016:4), classroom observation is one of the key strategies used in the mentoring process, which gives HODs insight into the teaching practices of the beginner teachers they support. Making these observations will enable HODs and beginner teachers to constructively debate the benefits and drawbacks so that they (HODs) can better support beginner teachers (Wood and Stanulis, 2009). Regular meetings between HODs and beginner teachers can be highly beneficial, as they allow the HODs to offer constructive guidance and support, helping beginner teachers grow and succeed in their roles. HODs should also work proactively with beginner teachers to establish clear goals for feedback sessions. For instance, HODs can schedule meetings with beginner teachers before observations to agree on one to three specific areas where both parties would like to see progress. After evaluations, HODs can provide constructive feedback directly related to the agreed-upon goals. In this way, HODs can provide feedback in a helpful manner that supports the professional development of the beginner teacher.

The HOD at School C offered strategies for pursuing the function. HODs perform in carrying out the curriculum and implementing policy expectations:

> *Discuss the CAPS document to ascertain what is required and conclude the preparation for each week's topic. Focus on the knowledge learners need and consider the competencies they need to develop–do it in a group - teamwork is a good option. Do not overburden the teachers with work, but give them a general idea of what is required. I will also do classroom visits to see what is lacking and alert them if anything needs to be added, like an activity. (Interview: HOD C).*

From the above excerpt, it is evident that HOD C emphasises collaboration during their mentoring meetings. Harris and Jones (2010) support collaboration and contend a crucial element in facilitating professional learning is the close collaboration between beginner teachers and HODs. During the planning sessions, she (HOD) also emphasised the value of group planning and teamwork to support beginner teachers. Teamwork is an inherent component of partnership activities for members to help one another, according to Garvey and Westlander (2013). HOD C mentioned, "I will also do classroom visits to see what is lacking and alert them if anything needs to be added, like an activity". If feedback is timely, relevant, and supported by explanations, beginner teachers can benefit from it and stimulate professional development, Webb (2009:4) asserts. According to Mthiyane, Naidoo, and Bertram (2019:3), every beginner teacher must be 'closely monitored', and the HOD must document their curriculum progress. This involves checking that the teacher is using the curriculum tracker, a document that outlines the content and assessments to be covered each day, and ensuring that they are on track with the curriculum and have prepared appropriate lesson plans. Having routine behaviours such as planning, curriculum tracking of teachers' and learners' work, assessment, reflection, departmental one-on-one meetings, and working

collaboratively with beginner teachers to find solutions to challenges in their department gives HODs the tools to support beginner teachers better. This is a critical factor in improving learner outcomes (Mthiyane, Naidoo, and Bertram (2019:3).

In brief, engaging in collaborative dialogue as a learning activity facilitates the co-construction of mentoring and encourages active participation in the educational process (Freire, 1972). Mentoring, which includes classroom observations as a critical component and dialogue between HODs and beginner teachers on their pedagogical practices, is the strategy that beginner teachers and HODs suggested in this study. The strategies that beginner teachers and HODs have stated above should support beginner teachers as they develop their teaching skills.

5.3.3   Develop better parental involvement strategies

HODs and beginner teachers agreed to create methods to improve relations between parents (legal guardians) and the school to give ample learner support to overcome the challenges impeding parental (legal guardians) involvement. Beginner teachers and the HOD of School C shared the following strategies:

I would conduct a parent orientation at the beginning of the year and explain the requirements. I would invite them to discuss the material one afternoon or early evening. For instance, English is taught in this manner, and this is the approach we take in class because it occasionally happens that some parents want to assist their children with their homework but don't know how to go about it. I would teach the parents how reading must be done with their children and how they must carry on at home. So yes, orienting parents would be my strategy. (Interview: SA-TA2)

To allow parents to understand what is occurring in class and what they can do to support their child, I will photograph my work on the board and message it via WhatsApp. Then, parents can see how it is taught in the classroom and how they can assist their children with their homework while staying on the right path. (Interview: SC-TC1)

I would support beginner teachers by encouraging them to give homework to learners and provide activities, such as reading and mathematics, for parents to help their children. Any work completed in class should be sent home and parents should consider ways to help their children retain what they have learned. The learners' preparation for school can be improved by involving parents in their children's education. I believe parents should be viewed as partners to share educational responsibilities. Workshops are essential to equip parents with the necessary skills to know what is happening with their child's education. In addition,

I would regularly do home visits to see where the learners are if they have not attended school for more than two days. (Interview: HOD C)

According to the extracts above, HOD C and beginner teachers concurred that teacher-parent partnerships should be strengthened by establishing trustworthy relationships between parents and the school in the learners' best interests (Lau, Li and Rao, 2011:109). The bond between parents (legal guardians) and the school should be strengthened by viewing parents (legal guardians) as equal partners in the education of their children, which is in line with Lau et al.'s (2011:109) assertion that encouraging parental involvement in young children lays the groundwork for subsequent involvement and increased collaboration between teachers and parents to promote positive learners' learning results. Teacher TA2, a beginner teacher, echoed the above and mentioned, "I would conduct a parent orientation at the beginning of the year and explain the requirements". Teacher TC1 also said, "*to allow parents to understand what is occurring in class and what they can do to support their child, I will photograph my work on the board and message it to them via WhatsApp*". Durišić and Bunijevac (2017) believe trust is a critical principle of an effective partnership. In other words, for a teacher-parent collaboration to work, teachers need to maintain connections with parents that are trustworthy, honest and open.

Moreover, this teacher-parent partnership needs to be built on mutual respect, including differences in parents' (legal guardians) and teachers' viewpoints. In agreement with the teacher participants, HOD C commented, "I would regularly do home visits to see where the learners are if they do not attend school for more than two days". This is consistent with Munje and Mncube (2018:7), who claim that home visits are highly effective for fostering strong home-school relationships because they give parents (legal guardians) and teachers a chance to connect and discuss a child's academic and other learning needs. Additionally, HOD C stated that "in my view, parents (legal guardians) should be viewed as partners to share educational responsibilities." Munje and Mncube (2018) note that when parents (legal guardians) are aware of these methods, they may successfully encourage involvement.

In short, parents (legal guardians) should be offered the opportunity by the school to attend training sessions to learn the best practices for fostering positive relationships between home and school. When parents (legal guardians) engage in their children's education, it functions as a gel that makes learning enjoyable for learners and motivates them to put in extra effort because they want to make their family members proud (Ntekane, 2018:4). Furthermore, when parents (legal guardians) are involved, it also provides their children and themselves with a sense of belonging to the school (Formosinho and Formosinho, 2016). Tekin (2011) believes that parents play a crucial role in their children's education, especially during the early years of their life. Understanding how parents can be involved in various educational programmes is

essential. Furthermore, parental (legal guardians) involvement can take different forms to suit the diverse needs of children and families in different contexts (Tekin, 2011).

Moreover, parent (legal guardians) involvement benefits are not limited to children alone but extend to parents and teachers. Parent (legal guardians) involvement can positively impact children's social and emotional, cognitive-intellectual, and academic development (Tekin, 2011). Consequently, the participation of parents (legal guardians) has become a vital aspect of any education programme.

5.3.4 Approaches to reduce the workload of beginner teachers

Teachers in South African public schools have high-stress levels due to increasing workloads from inadequate support and low morale (Handiranto et al., 2022:69). The study participants noted that they were required to complete tasks beyond what was needed and felt overworked. Teacher participants and their HODs were asked to co-construct mentoring strategies to reduce the workload of beginner teachers. Beginner teacher participants advanced the following strategies:

> *An administration day where HODs could meet with beginner teachers and discuss the information we need to know, such as learner profiles. (Interview: SB-TB1)*

> *So yes, take beginner teachers through the process, even if they are fresh out of university. They need to know the practical side of things, for instance, how to compile the subject file–mentoring helps beginner teachers get through these challenges. (Interview: SC-TC2)*

Teacher TB1 said she "would suggest an administration day where HODs could meet with beginner teachers and discuss the information". The aforementioned suggestion is intended to prevent beginner teachers from running into administrative problems at the start of their professions and mentorship is required to help them cope when they start teaching. Teacher TC2 commented, "take beginner teachers through the process, even if they are fresh out of university. They need to know the practical side of things". It seems that beginner teachers need specific administrative skills, such as organising and maintaining records of learners and subject files, when they begin their careers. Pogodzinski (2013) concurs by saying that teachers have to deal with extreme workloads and are expected to handle multiple administrative responsibilities.

The HOD of School B also provided mentoring strategies to assist beginner teachers in lessening their workload when they start teaching:

> *Frequently meeting to discuss academic issues, like those that arise in the classroom and determine how to address them. Being constantly involved in*

dialogue and sharing information is a good way of staying in touch with beginner teachers, especially when experiencing challenges. I would encourage collaboration between peers and beginner teachers to discuss lesson plans and exchange ideas on various classroom matters for extra support. I would also emphasise the importance of critical reflection - have meetings, discuss their reflection and observe how reflection is integrated into their lessons. (Interview: HOD B)

HOD of School B said, *"Being constantly involved in dialogue and sharing information with peers is a good way of staying in touch with beginner teachers, especially when they are experiencing challenges".* The idea is that constant dialogue and information exchange be viewed as a strategy to improve learning experiences despite the stressful work settings of beginner teachers. This could enhance the learning experiences of beginner teachers into positive interactions. Therefore, effective induction procedures may provide the ongoing mentoring of beginner teachers with the necessary support required to transition challenging and perplexing times from the onset (Sadker, Zittleman and Sadker, 2012).

I concur with Sadker et al. (2012) that efficient mentoring practices would provide beginner teachers with continual guidance at the initial stages of their careers. These mentoring methods can support the school's commitment to becoming a learning community and scaffold situations to assist beginner teachers in transitioning smoothly into the workplace (Le Maistre and Paré, 2010). Supporting beginner teachers' transition is in keeping with Vygotsky's (1978) theory of the ZPD.

In brief, Osman and Warner (2020) argue that becoming a professional cannot be defined by receiving a degree in education from a university. Instead, it is a continuous process of learning and reflecting to improve practice. Guskey and Sparks (1996:34) suggest that teachers can enhance their effectiveness by proactively seeking and staying current with the latest knowledge. This can be viewed as a constructive approach to fulfilling their professional obligation and ensuring they are well-equipped to help their learners succeed (Guskey and Sparks, 1996:34). Beginner teachers require continual assistance and mentoring from peers, HODs and other more experienced teachers to support them as they learn through practice. Handiranto et al. (2022:72) support this by saying peer mentorship promotes collaborative learning between beginner and experienced teachers, which can be used as a strategy to mentor beginner teachers. As per Mohan (2016:168), teacher mentoring is an area of professional development that is absolutely critical to teacher education. It plays a pivotal role in initiating beginner teachers into the teaching fraternity. It is imperative for beginner teachers to realise that they are not fully prepared for their lifelong career on the day of their graduation. Rather, they are just beginning their journey towards professional growth as they step into the classrooms as teachers. Therefore, they require significant support and mentoring to develop

professionally, which can help them ease into their workspace as beginner teachers. On the contrary, plunging teachers into the classroom without proper mentoring or induction could be highly counterproductive and detrimental to the growth and development of beginner teachers.

5.3.5 Plans for enhancing collaboration and dialogue

It is crucial to consider ways of enhancing collaboration and dialogue. According to Freire and Shor (1987:100), dialoguing binds the teacher and the learners to a collaborative process of learning and rediscovering the subject of study. The strategies that beginner teachers can apply to enhance collaboration and dialogue are addressed in the following section. The beginner teachers in this study confirmed that collaboration and dialogue are strategies that HODs and beginner teachers can use to provide additional support. The HOD of School B said the following toward developing a culture for constructive discourse:

> *Beginner teachers should engage in group discussions, share thoughts and provide feedback. Beginner teachers may share similar learning goals when implementing the curriculum or arranging class activities to foster better collaboration and dialogue. Team planning, for instance, is advantageous; for example, beginner teachers would suggest merging technological skills to make planning easier and quicker. (Interview: HOD B)*

The above excerpt expresses the need for collaboration and shows that beginner teachers can learn from one another. The HOD at School B stated that "beginner teachers should engage in group discussions, share thoughts and provide feedback". These scheduled and unscheduled interactions with peers and HODs may assist beginner teachers in acquiring new knowledge and skills. Moreover, teachers could share their teaching approaches in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust by exchanging ideas and receiving feedback (Gravani, 2012) on improving or approaching specific tasks more efficiently. From this viewpoint, knowledge and meaning are co-constructed (Vygotsky 1992). Beginner teachers highlighted the following as strategies for collaboration:

> *Regular meetings to talk about planning are necessary. Connect with other beginner teachers to form a learning community where peers can help with challenging work by exchanging information or providing solutions to potential challenges. New teaching methods might be encouraged by collaborating and supporting one another. (Interview: SB-TB2)*

> *Before beginner teachers start teaching, their schools should require them to shadow experienced teachers so that they can be aware of what the school is about. Thus, more experienced teachers will support beginner teachers with the many uncertainties they experience during the initial stages. (Interview: SC-TC1)*

From the above excerpts, one may presume that HODs could rely on group and collegial support because of their extensive responsibilities to assist and support beginner teachers. TB2 highlighted "…to form a learning community where peers can help with challenging work by exchanging information". Teacher TC1, too, acknowledged the supportive roles that peers could provide by saying, *"beginner teachers will be supported by more experienced teachers with the many uncertainties that they experience during the initial stages"*. This suggests that beginner teachers can learn from and gain diverse abilities and information that more experienced teachers and HODs possess throughout their first few years of teaching. Through dialogue, participants practise listening to differing viewpoints, encouraging cooperation, tackling various difficulties and developing their skills (Ehiobuche, Tu and Justus, 2012:1). The use of dialogue as a learning activity, according to Whale et al. (2014:1), allows for the co-construction of meaning and promotes participation in the educational process.

Freire (1974) suggests a "liberatory" approach centred on a dialogical connection between teachers and learners on critical reasoning and social change. In this instance, interactions among beginner teachers, HODs and other more experienced teachers can result in a shift in which all parties learn from and with one another and beginner teachers transition from dependence to independence. Learning from one another will create a democratic environment where HODs and beginner teachers have a reciprocal relationship instead of the vertical banking method (as mentioned in 2.7.4). In other words, in this kind of relationship, HODs and beginner teachers are both willing to learn from each other, creating a democratic environment. Mutual respect is critical, as both acknowledge that they have different experiences and expertise to offer. This creates an opportunity for both to learn and grow together as human beings, with neither being above the other (Freire, 1974).

Moreover, in the context of Freire's (1974) critical pedagogy, or problem-posing education, a democratic approach is employed to ensure that the desired democratic ideal is achieved. As a result, the goal and the process are inherently aligned with one another. This is due to the fact that critical pedagogy—which promotes analytical thinking and dialogue—values the power of connecting as equals rather than enforcing oppressive tactics (Freire, 1974).

Collegial support, therefore, helps beginner teachers collaborate with their peers in the school community, which fosters their professional development (Shah, 2012). Additionally, beginner teachers and HODs assist one another in upholding school policies and accommodating the needs of teachers in terms of classroom instruction (Daly and Milton, 2017). Thus, reflective conversations, group discussions and a shared understanding among beginner teachers, peers and HODs are essential components of a mentoring programme.

5.3.6   Strategies for improving professional development

According to research, effective professional development is essential for teachers to continue learning and developing throughout their careers (Gurevich, Stein and Gorev, 2017). Thus, continuous learning will enable teachers, specifically beginner teachers, to acquire new skills, increase their competence and raise their confidence (Du Plessis, 2014). Participants in this study agreed that professional development was a strategy that could be utilised to support beginner teachers. The teacher participants stated the following concerning developing and offering growth opportunities:

> *Set aside a separate day for beginner teachers only, during which HODs are responsible for providing training on tasks related to teachers' work in the classroom, such as administrative and support files. (Interview: SC-TC2)*

> *There is internal and external training for beginner teachers. HODs can arrange internal workshops for beginner teachers, such as disability workshops. The Department of Education also provides external training and support with mathematics, for example. (Interview: SA-TA2)*

Beginner teachers must develop various skills and teaching methods to benefit and enrich learners. From the excerpts above, beginner teachers indicated that specific training, internal and external, benefited beginner teachers. Teacher TC2 pointed out, "set aside a separate day for beginner teachers only, during which HODs are responsible for providing training on tasks related to teachers' work in the classroom". A collaborative partnership between HODs and beginner teachers should, in all likelihood, support co-dependence and co-construction and enhance dialogical pedagogy, which aligns with Freire's (1972) dialogical pedagogy theory. The notion encourages opportunities for beginner teachers to collaborate with HODs to add new knowledge to already acquired knowledge, which can be aligned with Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory and Guskey's (2000) change theory.

In agreement with TA2, Teacher TC2 emphasised the interactions between HODs and beginner teachers by saying, *"HODs can arrange internal workshops for beginner teachers".* Professional development seems to give both beginner and experienced teachers a chance to interact and exchange practical advice and ideas, which could take the shape of a tandem teaching collaboration. According to Sulistyo, Rachmajanti, Suharyadi and Muniroh (2017:122), a collaborative approach made available to teachers aimed to provide them with skills and knowledge. According to Nkabule (2018), South African teachers are expected to attend workshops and seminars led by officials from WCED. However, research shows that these workshops and training do not always meet teachers' expectations because they frequently adopt a "one size fits all" approach and top-down technique. Furthermore, WCED recognise the significance of assessing event-driven professional development activities, such as

workshops and seminars. However, they tend to overlook the various informal and ongoing job-embedded professional development activities, such as study groups, collaborative planning, curriculum development, structured observations, peer coaching, mentoring and action research (Nkabule, 2018). Also, the absence of practical experience among WCED officials and insufficient curriculum knowledge among facilitators made it difficult for beginner teachers to deal with the challenges and changes that followed in 1994 regarding the policies and curriculum changes, as discussed in Chapter 1. Furthermore,

The HOD at School A had the following to add in terms of developing and empowering beginner teachers:

> *I would send beginner teachers on courses that cannot be offered internally. Do classroom observations to see where gaps are and provide training to beginner teachers. Also, most importantly, offer advice and seek beginner teachers' opinions regarding their development. By allowing beginner teachers to contribute to their development, HODs and those teachers will have a more productive working relationship. (Interview: HOD A)*

The HOD of School A suggested a strategy where she would meet with beginner teachers after classroom observations to provide professional development through constructive feedback to advance classroom practice. HOD A pointed out, "…observations to see where gaps are and provide training to beginner teachers". This is congruent with Musyoka, Maithya and Cheloti's (2017) claim that improved teaching strategies result in better learner performance. Additionally, Kadji-Beltran et al. (2013) found that conversing and sharing one's thoughts with peers was a psychologically and emotionally healthy exercise for teachers. According to Kadji-Beltran et al. (2013), since beginner teachers are still in the beginning stages of their careers and need support to improve their professions, the HOD's assistance should finally result in their independence. Sharma (2012) suggests that assistance from beginner teachers during their career's early stages significantly influences their journey from being a beginner to becoming an expert. Therefore, the main aim of the HOD teachers is not just to assist beginner teachers in understanding the scientific concepts of teaching and learning but also to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to apply in real-life classroom situations. This involves a self-initiated professional development process where beginner teachers take full responsibility for planning, implementing, and evaluating the learning process.

The following section (5.4) discusses the mentoring framework for beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers.

5.4 The co-constructive mentoring model (CCMM)

A mentoring programme framework for Foundation Phase, Grade R teachers, was jointly created by HODs and beginner teachers. Thus, the premise that guided the selection of the mentoring support was social constructivism, dialogue pedagogy and change, which incorporates collaboration and co-construction, peer group mentoring, teamwork and change strategy. CCMM, which stands for Co-Construction Mentoring Model, is the acronym I gave to the mentoring support framework to make it more understandable. This CCMM is developed and co-constructed by the participants (HODs and beginner teachers) on the premise that learning is cyclical and stems from the theories of Vygotsky (1978), Freire (1972) and Guskey (1986).

5.4.1 Collaboration and co-construction

In the context of this study, social constructivism refers to a collaborative learning approach centred on conversation, engagement and knowledge sharing among HODs, beginner teachers and the community (Goh and Abdul-Wahab, 2020). The focus of the co-construction of the mentoring programme has been on how beginner teachers and HODs are mentored and supported and what activities they can engage in within the classroom. The premise that effective co-construction of the mentoring programme is only achievable through interaction and dialogue between beginner teachers and their HODs forms the basis for this focus. In other words, teachers should interact through discussions with the community, school, norms, and culture (Goh and Abdul-Wahab, 2020). Through mentorship meetings, HODs and beginner teachers can develop strong bonds and progress toward becoming professionals in their fields of expertise (Malik, 2018).

Literature has recognised establishing professional learning communities as a successful strategy for allowing teachers to participate in collaborative learning to advance their teaching methods (Kelly and Cherkowski, 2015:2; Mullen and Klimatis, 2021). Furthermore, without considering their respective hierarchies, the mentor and mentee could participate jointly in projects where they can support one another (Handiranto et al., 2022:67), a strategy for this study. In other words, because each possesses special knowledge to share, mentors and mentees can benefit from one another. In this study, the essential component of the mentorship programme is that HODs and beginner teachers collaborate in a group setting to share ideas and identify strategies for challenges as they co-construct the mentorship programme (Akpan, Igwe, Mpamah and Okoro, 2020:1).

According to Vygotsky (1978), social learning promotes cognitive development and is necessary for growth. In light of this, any task, regardless of the difficulty level, can be accomplished by learners under supervision or in cooperation with peers. Additionally, this theory promotes collaboration and co-construction of knowledge (Akpan et al. 2020:3). Kapur

(2018) believes that knowledge construction can occur in various ways and can be accomplished through teamwork, participatory training and group work. Thus, teacher participants and HODs can cultivate reflective thinking abilities that assist in the in-depth analysis and comprehension of challenges. This enhances their ability to communicate and fosters understanding as they come to accept and value the opinions of others.

In brief, according to the social constructivism theory, learning can be viewed as a social process in which beginner teachers and HODs collaborate to create an atmosphere conducive to meaningful learning. Beginner teachers in this study can thus participate in cooperative learning. According to Vygotsky (1978), the social construction of knowledge occurs due to interactions with other people rather than being a transmission process from one person to the next. Through social constructivism, the beginner teacher, working in tandem with the HOD, transforms into a co-constructor of knowledge.

5.4.2   Dialogue pedagogy

Dialogue is the opportunity available to open up to the thinking of others. (Freire, 1970). Furthermore, Freire (1970:63) states dialogue is not a group conversation or debate because it is political and an "announced act of persuasion to attain specific results". Freire (2005) said that dialogue must allow for conflict, doubt, and criticism because these elements encourage exploring alternative viewpoints and emerging novel concepts. Concerning conflict, doubt and criticism, one must remember that the beginner teacher is developing a teacher identity, which might differ from the viewpoints of other colleagues. From this vantage point, it is reasonable to assume that HODs are part of this study and that beginner teachers should be receptive to collaborative learning. For instance, beginner teachers and HODs can discuss issues that promote strong staff relationships during mentorship sessions. The creation of an equal community of co-teachers—one in which everyone is on an equal footing, can be achieved by HODs and beginner teachers through a dialogical mentoring process.

One can draw from Freire's (2004) work that mentoring has excellent potential when constructing knowledge through an inquiry-oriented methodology. In this instance, the HODs and beginner teachers can participate in dialogical and iterative discussions to identify important issues in their practice. Moreover, according to Freire (1972:62), dialogue is not limited to the action from one person transferring ideas to another. In contrast to having knowledge imposed on one by another, Freire (1972) advocates that knowledge must be sought jointly, which is essential for fostering social transformation and independence. CCMM necessitates that both HODs and beginner teachers improve and evolve as they learn together, where HODs and beginner teachers are creators of their own knowledge and where interdependence should be respected (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 2004). Noddings (2004) echoes this by saying that trust between the mentee and mentor is essential for fostering

learning since it allows for developing independence. This viewpoint conceptualises dialogue as a collaborative act of inquiry rather than something the teacher controls unilaterally. I consider peer groups and teamwork as mentoring strategies to emphasise community-wide collaborative learning, which necessitates that the mentoring of beginner teachers is a joint responsibility (Livingston and Shiach, 2010:84).

5.4.2.1 Peer group mentoring

According to Crasborn and Hennissen (2010), teachers cannot advance their professional development independently; instead, they require assistance from more experienced teachers in mentoring sessions. From a general educational perspective, peer group mentoring promotes cooperative learning between beginner and experienced teachers. In contrast to one-on-one mentoring, peer group mentoring entails members working together to assist and advance one another's careers (Goodyear, 2006). Peers actively participate in group activities and co-mentor relationships with other group members, sharing knowledge and expanding personal and professional growth opportunities.

In the context of this study, peer group mentoring refers to interactions between HODs and beginner teachers that result in the co-construction of new knowledge for everyone (Freire, 1992). Peer group mentoring describes beginner teachers getting together routinely with HODs and veteran teachers to offer support, give and receive advice and exchange information about their careers and personal matters (Darwin and Palmer, 2009). Peer group mentoring entails constructive feedback as participants develop a shared comprehension of the topic, going above collaborative research (Rutgers, 2012:116). The dialogue mentoring paradigm incorporates the dialogic collaborative skills necessary for effective peer-group learning. Moreover, peer group mentoring enhances the benefits of peer group learning and fosters a sense of togetherness in overcoming challenges (Baldry-Currens, 2010). In other words, continuing group cohesion and action should be a part of peer group mentorship. All participants can collaborate for a common goal, for instance, working towards lesson planning objectives.

5.4.2.2 Teamwork

Mentoring requires cooperation and teamwork and promotes social understanding between mentees and mentors (Handiranto et al., 2022:67). According to Garvey and Westlander (2013), the teamwork approach supports teachers' mentorship for professional development. In this case, teamwork is a component of collaborative activities in which HODs, beginner teachers and veterans support one another as colleagues. During the mentorship meetings, beginner teachers and HODs can share their insights, expertise and suggestions to gain from the new information and HODs may also offer constructive feedback (Livingston and Shiach, 2010:85). The teamwork methodology promotes compassion, confidence and resiliency

among mentoring participants, which draws on Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory. In contrast, as opposed to working alone, a team tends to produce better results (Handiranto et al., 2022:67).

The above section highlighted peer group mentoring and teamwork as strategies that help beginner teachers promote professional development. According to Handiranto et al. (2022:75), cooperation and peer group mentoring are essential for encouraging professional development among beginner teachers. Furthermore, building lifelong learning to promote the school community's joint progress is the real benefit of mentoring.

5.4.3   The change strategy

The focus of CCMM is to support the development and change of Foundation Phase Grade R teachers, which also draws on Guskey's (1986) theory, based on the notion that teachers can alter their attitudes and beliefs by altering their practices and reviewing the outcomes. In this study, for beginner teachers and HODs to change, they must incorporate knowledge, new concepts and skills learned with and from one another at mentoring sessions into their lesson plans and assess learners' learning. Guskey (1986) asserts that for beginner teachers to change, they must first test new concepts, skills and knowledge in their classroom to ascertain the effects exerted on learners. In other words, when beginner teachers' behaviour changes, their classroom teaching must change.

Programmes for professional development are systematic attempts to modify and change teachers' classroom methods, attitudes and beliefs, as well as learners' academic performance (Guskey, 1986). It appears that teachers are drawn to professional development because they think it will increase their knowledge and abilities, help them grow and make them more effective with learners (Guskey, 2002:382). Moreover, the development of the school and other staff members will benefit from this enhanced performance (Huber, 2011:161; Bressman, Winter and Efron, 2018).

5.4.3.1 Teachers' attitudes

Teachers' attitudes correlate with teachers' instructional material and pedagogical style, which are critical components of professional development for teachers (Rutten, 2021). Teachers' attitudes might affect the mentoring strategy since they know how knowledge and skills are changing concerning teaching practices, which can change teachers' perspectives about their learners in the classroom (Handiranto et al., 2022:73). In this instance, beginner teachers can acquire classroom management strategies from the mentorship sessions, which they can apply in their classroom. HODs and beginner teachers can learn through collaborative inquiry, critical reflection, and supportive feedback during these mentorship sessions. As a result of

this process, beginner teachers and HODs have the opportunity to alter their values, attitudes and beliefs.

Although change can be stressful and daunting, collaboration with others, such as beginner teachers, HODs and veteran teachers, can also be liberating. The necessity for mentorship, particularly for beginner teachers, is cited by Learning Forward (2011:5) as to why it is utilised to support teachers' professional development and effect change. For instance, beginner teachers claimed that creating lesson plans with more experienced teachers and their HODs would improve their teaching style and result in positive transformation.

In short, if changes are perceived as a continuous and continuing endeavour, beginner teachers need constant feedback and support from their HODs regarding the results of their efforts. Change efforts must concentrate on changing teachers' experiences since experiences influence teachers' attitudes and beliefs (Guskey, 1986). In terms of this study, beginner teachers and HODs need to support one another to constantly translate new knowledge into practice.

In the following section, I give a diagrammatic representation of the mentorship support programme co-constructed by HODs and beginner teachers as participants in this study. The co-construction of the support programme, CCMM, was based on the learning experiences, requirements and challenges of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers who needed mentoring in their early years of teaching. This model was constructed based on the data received from participants; however, a follow-up dialogue took place where the model was shared with the participants and the final model was co-constructed, where participants gave their input regarding the model.
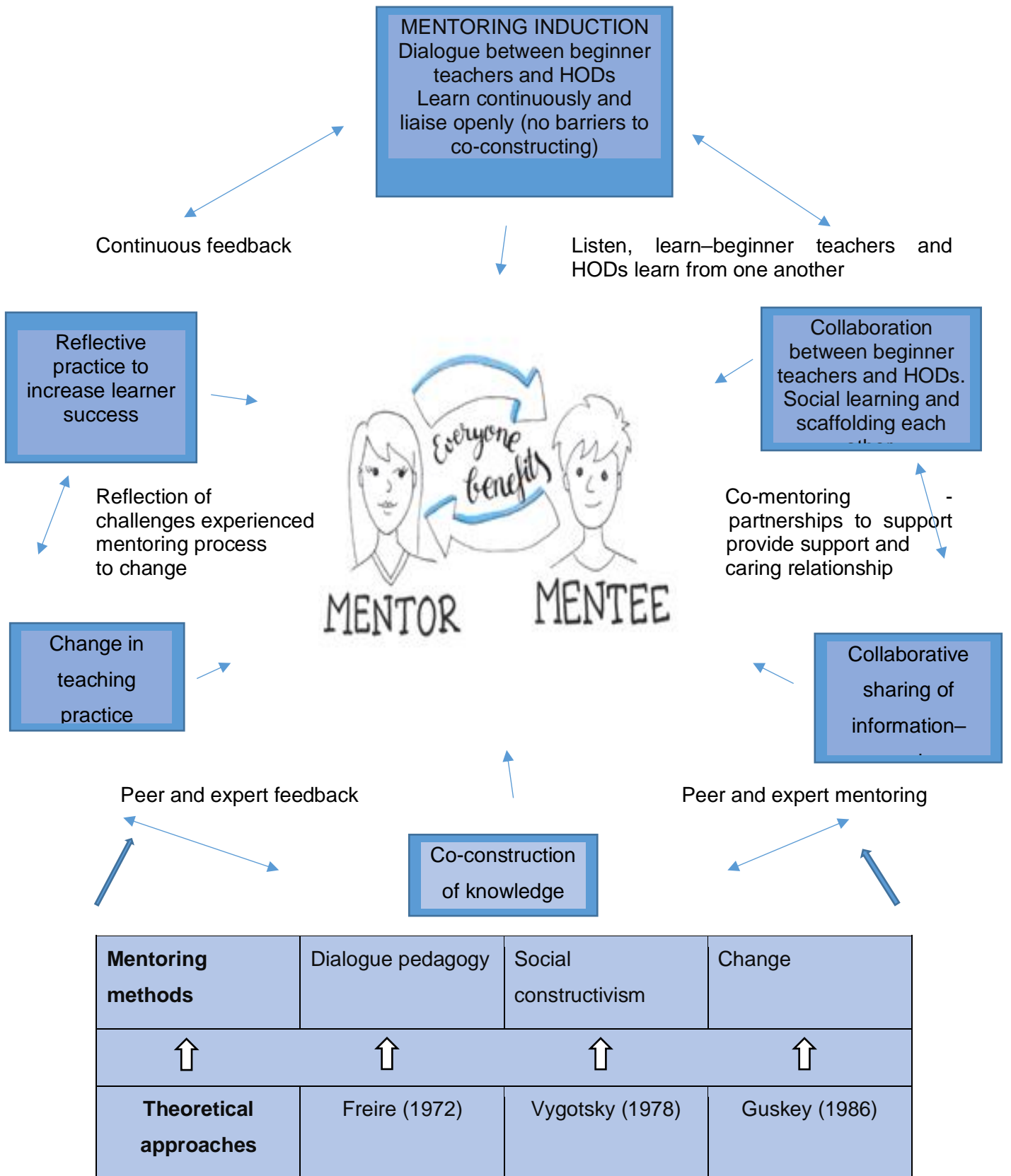
Figure 5.1: The co-constructive mentoring model

Source: Author's own construct (2023)

The figure shows a central illustration labelled MENTOR and MENTEE with "Everyone benefits". Surrounding boxes and arrows include:

- MENTORING INDUCTION — Dialogue between beginner teachers and HODs. Learn continuously and liaise openly (no barriers to co-constructing)
- Continuous feedback
- Listen, learn–beginner teachers and HODs learn from one another
- Reflective practice to increase learner success
- Collaboration between beginner teachers and HODs. Social learning and scaffolding each other
- Reflection of challenges experienced mentoring process to change
- Co-mentoring - partnerships to support provide support and caring relationship
- Change in teaching practice
- Collaborative sharing of information–
- Peer and expert feedback
- Peer and expert mentoring
- Co-construction of knowledge

Mentoring methods	Dialogue pedagogy	Social constructivism	Change
⇧	⇧	⇧	⇧
Theoretical approaches	Freire (1972)	Vygotsky (1978)	Guskey (1986)

5.5 The mentoring process

5.5.1 Induction

The induction programme starts with the co-construction of the mentoring programme. During the induction programme, the HOD can clarify the ongoing mentoring process and the purpose of the mentoring programme. The HODs and beginner teachers review their duties, roles and appropriate communication methods. For teachers just beginning their careers, induction programmes (through HODs) should be offered the support they need to deal with beginner teachers' challenges. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) contend that beginner teachers should be supported early in their careers because this may affect their retention and ability to improve.

In induction programmes, mentoring refers to the one-on-one support that HODs and more experienced teachers provide to beginner teachers. In this instance, the induction programme refers to the ongoing mentoring support that participants offer each other to encourage one another's growth by providing guidance based on their experiences and understanding of best practices. Thus, mentoring can be seen as a strategy to retain beginner teachers and is commonly mentioned as one of the essential elements of induction and orientation programmes (Ingersoll and Strong, 2011). Additionally, HODs and other veteran teachers should lessen the reality shock that beginner teachers go through in their first few years of teaching (Ghosh, 2012), which can be done through the induction and mentoring process. Furthermore, like beginner teachers, mentors should be encouraged and willing to participate in ongoing professional development programmes to improve their knowledge, skills and competence (American Institute for Research [AIR], 2015).

5.5.2 Collaboration between HODs and Beginner Teachers

The collaborative interaction between beginner teachers and HODs is intended to promote a strong relationship and mutual understanding (McKimm, Jollie and Hatter, 2015:10). For instance, the beginner teacher may benefit from joint planning time with the HOD, particularly if they intend to stay in the profession. Furthermore, beginner teachers can learn the finer points of planning daily lessons, arranging the school day and getting general advice on how to be a successful teacher by spending time in joint planning sessions with a HOD (Clark and Byrnes, 2012:6; McKimm, Jollie and Hatter, 2015:7). It is essential to emphasise that HODs frequently schedule time for engagement with beginner teachers to share knowledge between them (McKimm et al., 2015:7). This information-sharing can be viewed as opportunities for people to get to know one another and establish relationships of trust and care. For example, HODs might discuss policies, progress updates and what should be done when a learner lags. Alternatively, beginner teachers might support HODs with the latest technological skills in e-Subject filing, which does not include a physical file. Herman and Dimaggio (2007) contend that collaboration between HODs and beginner teachers should be debatable. Only if HODs

view beginner teachers as knowledge co-constructors whose views are valued and respected will this type of dialogue be possible.

5.5.3   Co-construction of knowledge

The primary method of learning should be "learning by doing" inside and alongside a "community that learns" for everyone involved in the educational process, including teachers and learners (Vujičić, Boneta and Lvković, 2015:1). To put it in another way, a social constructivist approach Vygotsky (1978) to education involves beginner teachers' learning by doing and discovering things together with other members of the educational community (HODs and veteran teachers). By doing this, beginner teachers in this study may contribute toward co-constructing knowledge and developing habits, causing them to become lifelong learners (Beck and Kosnik, 2006). Therefore, the co-construction of knowledge can be viewed as a dialogue between beginner teachers, HODs and veteran teachers. To transform themselves and their surroundings, each participant actively participates in the co-construction of knowledge (Vujičić et al., 2015:1).

A study by Vorkapi, Vujii and Boneta (2012) suggests that beginner teachers could better grasp their role through dialogue and co-construction with other staff members. First, beginner teachers should develop their educational expertise autonomously and collectively. As a result of the ongoing dialogue and co-construction of knowledge, beginner teachers can continue reflecting and developing their ideas, which could benefit the learners. Moreover, a strong sense of togetherness and a holistic learning experience that includes social aspects and emotional, aesthetic and physical expression may come from such "learning communities" based on social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978). Beck and Kosnik (2006:13) believe this method (involving social constructivism) might ensure the experience required for constructing and co-construction knowledge.

Alexander (2014) argued that one of the key qualities of dialogue is that it is collaborative. In this instance, beginner teachers and HODs collaborate to complete learning objectives; HODs and beginner teachers listen to each other during dialogue to exchange ideas and weigh different points of view; furthermore, dialogue is helpful when HODs and beginner teachers express their thoughts freely and help one another to attain a shared understanding (Alexander, 2014).

5.5.4   Change in teaching practice

The beginner teacher should be able to evaluate how effectively their learning and development requirements have been met by highlighting their important learning. For instance, HODs and the beginner teachers of this study could discuss ongoing, long-term plans and re-evaluate their approaches to learn from their errors, which could effect change. The plans

could involve implementing a curriculum, creating and adopting new teaching methods, or devising a unique approach to assessment (Sierra-Piedrahita, 2017:105). As a result, beginner teachers and HODs in this study often met to advance their development and their learners.

Wenger and Snyder (2000) assert that when group members (in this instance, HODs and beginner teachers) work toward a common goal, learning happens and this learning is the outcome of social interaction among community members. In this instance, HODs and beginner teachers collaborate, support one another, exchange knowledge and experiences and develop relationships because they are dedicated to pursuing a similar goal, which could effect change. When beginner teachers and HODs work together, as in this study, they may feel more empowered to make decisions about classrooms and learners and modify the way they teach.

5.5.5   Reflection

Reflection is the final stage of the CCMM. Throughout this process, beginner teachers evaluate their shortcomings and strong points and share that information with their peers and HODs. There should be open and honest dialogues and constructive feedback between HODs and beginner teachers and beginner teachers should feel comfortable discussing their developmental needs without worrying about criticism. It is possible to view reflection on the methods used by beginner teachers as a means of improving problem-solving. For instance, beginner teachers may select video clips of lessons and look at their teaching styles, which could encourage critical reflection on professional practice (Hardman, 2015:8). Reflection and feedback are personal and professional development for beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers.

According to Watt and Richardson (2010), we need teachers who approach their professions with a changing viewpoint. This perspective argues that ongoing reflection and review are essential and inherent components of the teaching role. Voerman, Meijer, Korthagen and Simons (2012) stress that beginner teachers' professional development depends on reflection and feedback. In the context of this study, feedback should be specific to enhance learning among beginner teachers and HODs.

As a way of testing the mentoring process, it is recommended that the school maintain a logbook or portfolio of each beginner teacher that documents and analyses how they progress from being uneasy in a new teaching environment to a confident professional. In this transformation process, the teacher can be considered a change agent and a learning catalyst who also attends to their own professional and personal development in the reflective role (Vujičić et al., 2015:10).

5.6   Chapter summary

This chapter focused mainly on the two sub-questions while also exploring the mentorship experiences of the HODs and the learning experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers. These participants have effectively co-constructed a framework for a mentoring programme through dialogue to support beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers during their first few years of teaching. Through dialogue and co-construction, HODs and beginner teachers identified different strategies for developing the mentoring programme grounded in pertinent theories and research on mentoring.

The CCMM programme, underpinned by a solid theoretical framework, blends three viewpoints: dialogue pedagogy, social constructivism and change. The model was co-constructed on the premise that learning is cyclical and stems from the theories of Vygotsky (1978), Freire (1972) and Guskey (1986). This chapter concludes with a description of the CCMM programme. In this chapter, I analysed and discussed the findings and formulated the mentoring framework co-constructed by the HODs and beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers.

In the following chapter, I summarise the study's conclusions and make some recommendations regarding the CCMM.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1   Introduction

This chapter presents the findings to identify shortcomings and recommend how beginner teachers and HODs can utilise the co-constructed mentoring model (discussed in Chapter 5). The chapter also provides an overview of the main conclusions derived from the data analysis. Furthermore, the discussion of the findings serves as a logical foundation for a conclusion and recommendations. I conclude this chapter by suggesting additional research.

This research investigated the mentoring experiences of HODs and the learning experiences and perspectives of beginner teachers during their first years of teaching. The study also examined the challenges experienced by beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers in addition to the support strategies and co-construction of a framework for a support programme. The research questions are restated for the reader's reference and as a reminder of the research focus.

The main research question is: How can a support programme for beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers in the Western Cape facilitate professional development?

To better understand and address the core research question, additional sub-questions must be submitted and investigated:

- What are the learning experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers in the Western Cape, South Africa?
- What are the mentoring experiences of mentor teachers in the Foundation Phase?
- How do beginner and mentor teachers participate in the professional development programme facilitated through dialogue and co-construction?
- How do these experiences influence a support programme that is co-constructed through dialogue?

I provide an overview of the chapters in Section 6.2 in an effort to explain and clarify the primary research question as stated above, to illustrate the justification for the investigation and to demonstrate my interest in comprehending the study. A co-constructive mentorship model (CCMM) for beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers was developed in response to the research questions. This CCMM addresses the findings of this study, which, in effect, showed

that beginner teachers do not feel sufficiently prepared to confront the realities of entering a classroom and being capable of managing the challenging reality as it is currently playing out in our South African schools.

The findings from beginner teachers' learning experiences and mentors' mentoring experiences are presented in this chapter. Strategies for the co-construction of the mentoring model are also suggested, along with recommendations. These suggestions could be a guideline for educating schools on how beginner teachers view school support and its significance. A qualitative approach was used to gather data from the sample group to accomplish the study's objectives. Six beginner teachers and three HODs from three primary public schools were selected as interviewees. The report, discussion and interpretation of the data were centred on the data derived from these semi-structured interviews, journal entries and observations, which also identified significant themes. Also, this chapter summarises how I have supported my thesis by responding to the questions presented above. The following discussion summarises the important findings of my research.

6.2   Summary of chapters

Beginner teachers often enter the classroom with great expectations, only to leave the profession prematurely when those expectations are unmet. The study is significant in that it adds to the national understanding of beginner teachers during their first years of teaching from the perspective of their perspectives on the support they receive to fulfil their roles and responsibilities as competent teachers. The mentoring model is anticipated to provide relevant and crucial information to support beginner teachers in preparing them during their initial years of teaching.

The literature study and data collection processes have provided invaluable data, summarised in this section. Hopefully, the findings and recommendations extrapolated and formulated from this data will benefit beginner teachers, mentors, and policymakers.

Chapter 1 served as an introduction to the research study, highlighting the purpose of the study as well as formulating the main research question and sub-questions. The history of South African education is presented in this chapter, emphasising the past connection between teachers of Grade R and ECE. This historical analysis of ECE in South Africa aims to clarify the justifications behind previous governments' conviction that the community, parents and families, rather than the government, should be in charge of ECE. This historical overview is further compared with other countries that have experienced significant or comparable challenges in teacher education. China, Kenya and South Africa struggled with teacher education, but despite this, all three countries have made great strides in teacher training.

Chapter 2 reviewed the learning experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers and their transition from student teacher to professional. I touch on the professional growth of beginner teachers and how it might be realised in practice. The roles of the Heads of the Department are discussed in this chapter and their mentoring experiences are highlighted. The theoretical underpinnings are covered in the final section of this chapter.

Chapter 3 provided discussions that included the research approach, participant selection, data collection, data analysis and interpretations thereof, validity and reliability of the study, ethical issues and study limitations.

Chapter 4 presented the findings regarding the learning experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers and the mentoring experiences of their HODs, which were thoroughly analysed. The experiences of beginner teachers were also contrasted with the support offered by the schools and their HODs. The themes and sub-themes of this chapter serve as an exposition of the research findings and conclusions.

Chapter 5 was dedicated to the proposed mentoring model framework to support beginner teachers during their first years of study. The strategies that beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers and HODs identified were used in co-constructing the mentorship model. The foundation of the mentoring programme is provided by relevant theories and research on mentoring, which are discussed in Chapter 2.

The most important findings are presented in Chapter 6, and recommendations are thoroughly examined. In this chapter, the significance of this study is emphasised. The relevance of the study is outlined, its shortcomings and limits are highlighted and recommendations for further research are provided.

6.3   Results of the study

The findings from this study that address the above-mentioned research questions are presented in the following section. Data from semi-structured interviews, journal entries and observations were analysed and used to discuss the findings. The data was obtained from the learning experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers, mentors' mentoring experiences, mentoring beginner teachers and the co-construction of a framework for a mentoring support model through dialogue.

The data were derived from the learning experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers, the mentoring experiences of mentors, mentoring beginner teachers and the strategies for the co-construction of the mentoring support model.

6.3.1 Learning experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers

The findings of this research indicate that the Foundation Phase Grade R teachers experienced a wide range of challenges. The challenges identified by beginner teachers showed they were experiencing difficulties in implementing the curriculum for various reasons. They encountered challenges with non-English-speaking learners, limited parental involvement, problems with classroom management and collaboration, dialogue and collegiality among the beginner teachers and their HODs.

The educational system in South Africa has undergone numerous changes since apartheid was abolished in 1994. Social justice, human rights, equity and development, learner-centeredness and learning facilitation were the main topics of the 2005 curriculum. The RNCS was implemented in 2004 to foster conceptual understanding and critical awareness of the issues relating to society, morality, the economy and ethics. To accomplish educational advances between previously financed and under-resourced schools, the CAPS was proposed and implemented in 2012. With the CAPS curriculum, beginner teacher participants were challenged; they needed to implement the curriculum effectively, with limited training and support from DOE.

The findings show that beginner teachers lacked the organisation and prioritisation skills to put everything together when teaching. The results show that beginner teachers (Teachers TA1, TC1 and TC2 of Schools A and C) found it challenging to put what they learned in theory into practice and experience the classroom setting because teaching differs from being a student. It was also evident that beginner teachers (Teachers SB1 and TC1 of Schools B and C) required direction on performing activities preparing and organising classes since they could not plan appropriately. The results revealed that beginner teachers were expected to perform the same responsibilities as older, more experienced teachers and found that the workload was too much. The findings indicated that HODs need to mentor and guide beginner teachers on post-lesson reflection, which is a crucial skill for improvement and development since universities cannot produce student teachers who are fully prepared for the workplace.

The language difficulties that learners encountered in class were another finding that indicated that they had an impact on the learning experiences of inexperienced Foundation Phase Grade R teachers. The data analysis showed (Teacher TB1, TC1 and TC2 of Schools B and C) that parents thought their children must acquire English since it was considered a "high-status" language in education. Additionally, parents believed that knowing English gave one access to international travel and employment, a higher chance at success in life, improved academic performance, and a better career. The findings show that these challenges impacted teaching and learning since learners were learning a second or third language under duress. According to the findings, beginner teachers (Teacher TC1 and SB2 of Schools C and B) indicated that

parents believed their children could attain academic success solely by being proficient in English since it is the only language employed in higher education institutions. Even though some parents could not speak the language, several enrolled their children in an English class. The findings (Teacher TA1 and TB1 of Schools A and B) also showed that it was frequently challenging for some parents to read to their children at home or to respond to notes brought home by the school due to their limited English skills. Learners experienced specific learning challenges, such as struggling to follow instructions and becoming bored while the teacher was busy with a lesson (Teachers TB2 and TC1 of Schools B and C). Chataika et al. (2012) found that when learners experience a language barrier, beginner teachers find it challenging to integrate them into a multilingual and inclusive environment. Owen-Smith (2010) states that learners who cannot attend schools in their mother tongue are disadvantaged and are less likely to perform to their highest potential.

Using mother tongues during early education leads to a better knowledge of the curriculum content and a more favourable attitude toward school. It also helps learners reaffirm their cultural identities, which affects their learning. The findings revealed that beginner teachers (Teacher TA1 and TB1 of Schools A and B) struggled to interact with learners whose first language was not English. The implication is that the LiEP conflicts with the interests of most learners and their parents. In other words, teachers experienced challenges in the classroom because of the official languages and children's rights to an education, as revealed by the findings of this study. The results showed that because of the differences in their native languages, beginner teachers (Teachers TB1 and TA1 of Schools B and A) could not assist their learners academically and required support from their HODs to manage the situation.

The third finding centred on challenges teacher participants in this study encountered when interacting with parents. The challenge concerning parental involvement that teacher participants highlighted was the need for collaboration and communication between the parents, teachers and the school. According to the findings of this study, the beginner teachers (Teachers TB1, TA2 and TC2 of Schools B, A and C) emphasised that the required parental and school collaboration on regular educational topics was insufficient. Parents and teachers both have the child's best interests in mind, but Howe (2006) notes that they could have conflicting ideas about how to help the child succeed academically. For instance, some schools would anticipate parents assisting their children with schoolwork.

Some schools (Teachers TA2, TB1 and TC1 of Schools A, B and C) could expect parents to be involved in committee meetings, which could cause parents to resist, resulting in a breakdown in communication and collaboration and, ultimately, relationships. The miscommunication may also be because beginner teachers and parents may have different ideas about parental engagement since the findings show a lack of cooperation between parents, teachers and the school. The results show some parents do not have enough time to

spend with their children at home since some of them have to work two or three jobs to assist with the household, which places additional responsibilities on the shoulders of beginner teachers.

Beginner teachers in this survey found it difficult to manage their workloads, responsibilities and expectations. The findings on classroom management show that the beginner teachers (Teachers TA1 and TC2 of Schools A and C) were unprepared for classroom management. When beginner teachers feel unprepared for the teaching environment, they are seriously threatening their and their learners' morale and hinder teachers' capacity to stay in their positions. The findings further revealed that beginner teachers lack the necessary classroom management abilities, making it difficult for them to succeed. The results show that beginner teachers (Teachers SB2 and TA1 of Schools B and A) struggled to combine theory and practice and showed signs of anxiety and uneasiness due to the lack of support from the HODs and the schools.

The findings related to collaboration, dialogue and collegiality showed that many beginner teachers (Teachers TA1 and TA2 of School A) often felt uncomfortable and anxious about saying something that would upset someone else and mentioned experiencing a loss of autonomy and increased pressure to fit in with the majority. The findings indicated that teacher participants thought they were relatively new in their positions and that their voices were not valued enough to impact the group. The results also showed that some beginner teachers (TC2, TB1 and TA2 of Schools C, B and A) struggled to adapt to the collaboration and dialogue between them and their HODs since it takes time to nurture such a relationship. There might also be doubt from the side of teacher participants since collaboration may also serve as a control mechanism at the school level, limiting teachers' autonomy and tying them to predetermined performance goals (Helstad and Lund, 2012; Vangrieken et al., 2015:29).

6.3.2   Mentoring experiences of mentor teachers

Findings regarding this theme show mentors experience many challenges when mentoring beginner teachers. The results show that HODs provided insight into the many types of support they offered beginner teachers. That includes support with curriculum delivery, support with language barriers, support with parental involvement, support with classroom management, collaboration, dialogue and collegiality.

The results demonstrated that pre-service training fell short of giving beginner teachers the direction and expertise to execute tasks effectively. Furthermore, there is a discrepancy between the knowledge and abilities offered during training and what beginner teachers are expected to do, which adds to the responsibilities of HODs. The findings show that HODs (Schools A and B) oversee how the curriculum is implemented and provide beginner teachers guidance and support. The results further show that each teacher participant has varied

difficulty organising the preparation for their classes. Some may need more assistance than others, impacting HODs' support (School A). Since training beginner teachers is a form of moderation and affects their professional development, HODs must be involved. The findings indicate that HODs (Schools B and C) who are also teachers frequently lack time to support beginner teachers due to their (HODs) extensive workload. According to the beginner teachers, the findings show that their HODs (Schools A and C) do not mentor them as frequently as they would want. Consistent feedback and supervision are crucial for mentoring and directing the teacher participants.

Concerning parental involvement, HODs (Schools C and A) have shared their support for beginner teachers who struggle with low parental involvement. The findings imply that parents and beginner teachers do not cooperate to foster children's development, which prevents beginner teachers from keeping up with their learners' developmental progress. The findings further indicate that the lack of parental involvement in their children's education is another issue that HODs (School B) encounter. This hinders communication between them, teacher participants and parents. Due to work obligations or a lack of educational possibilities at home, it is realistic to assume that parents may not have enough time to dedicate to their children's education based on socioeconomic circumstances. The findings reveal a clear gap between what teacher participants desire from parents and what parents are prepared to contribute (Schools A, B and C).

This study found that beginner teachers struggle to run their classrooms effectively; thus, HODs (Schools A and C) must foster a friendly environment that considers beginner teachers' professional development. The results show that to help beginner teachers overcome challenges, the HODs (School B) advise various steps, including thorough planning, reducing time and resource waste, and offering constructive criticism or feedback. The results also show that HODs (Schools A and C) offered beginner teachers constructive feedback so they (beginner teachers) could evaluate and improve their instruction. The findings also show that HODs (School B and C) feedback is crucial for teaching and learning and forms a vital part of the mentorship process for beginner teachers. Feedback highlights problem areas and recommends accomplishing goals and reducing teachers' workloads, leading to better classroom management.

Data analysis showed that collegiality, collaboration and dialogue support beginner teachers' professional development and strengthen bonds with mentors. The findings also demonstrated that dialogue between beginner teachers and HODs (Schools A, B and C) fostered openness, which allowed beginner teachers insight into what was necessary for managing their classes and that they should cooperate through dialogue to resolve problems.

According to the findings, collegiality, collaboration, and dialogue boost beginner teachers' professional development and strengthen their relationships with mentors (Schools B and C). The results also showed how the dialogue between beginner teachers and HODs encouraged openness, gave beginner teachers insight into what was required for managing their classes and showed how they would cooperate through communication to find solutions to issues (Schools A and C). HODs are informed on what beginner teachers do or fail to do in the classroom through frequent dialogue and collaboration with them.

6.3.3 Strategies for the co-construction of a mentoring programme to support beginner teachers

During the final stage of the study, I had to use dialogic conversations with HODs, beginner teachers, and myself to co-construct the mentoring programme. Semi-structured interviews were used to gain insight and comprehend the learning experiences of beginner teachers and the mentoring experiences of HODs. The following sub-themes were created as a result of the strategies that developed from the dialogues between beginner teachers and HODs about their challenges: procedures to improve orientation and induction, plans to enhance curriculum implementation, approaches to improve parental involvement, tactics to reduce the workload of beginner teachers, strategies for enhancing collaboration and collegiality and beginner teachers' professional development.

According to the results, mentoring sessions helped beginner teachers overcome difficulties with lesson planning. The findings showed that mentoring sessions successfully supported beginner teachers in overcoming lesson preparation challenges. The results indicated that as a support strategy, beginner teachers and HODs emphasised the requirement for a specified day to produce weekly plans. Beginner teachers and HODs further mentioned that other strategies that could prove successful are the exchange of ideas (through dialogue) and observation between them. The analysed data also indicated that HODs and beginner teachers highlighted group work and teamwork when working on complex tasks, which means collaboration is critical to professional learning.

The findings show that parent orientation at the beginning of the year and explaining the requirements are strategies to improve the involvement of parents. The results reveal that a primary approach for involving parents was to teach parents how lessons are being done in class and that parents should continue with the tasks at home. A further plan was to educate parents on what is happening in class, that is, to inform parents of their children's development. The results show that a partnership between teachers and parents is essential for fostering relationships between the school and parents and seeing parents as equal partners in their children's education.

Teachers in South African schools experience high-stress levels due to the heavy workload they encounter every day. According to the findings of this study, teacher participants reported feeling overworked and being required to perform duties that were not necessary. According to the results, one of the strategies that the teacher participants and HODs highlighted was an administration day to overcome the challenge of work overload. The administration day allowed all colleagues to interact, exchange ideas and learn from one another. The findings show that beginner teachers in this study confirmed that collaboration and dialogue are strategies that HODs and beginner teachers can use to provide additional support. The results showed that despite challenging work environments, continuous dialogue and sharing of ideas were seen as ongoing mentoring experiences for both HODs and beginner teachers.

The results showed that HODs and beginner teachers could use collaboration and dialogue to support one another more. The formation of a learning community through interactions with peers, HODS, and other beginner teachers can also aid in the completion of challenging tasks by supplying answers to potential problems, which is another mentoring strategy, according to the findings of this study. Being a part of a learning community implies that beginner teachers, peers, more experienced teachers and their HODs may all benefit from one another's knowledge and skills. As a result, dialogue, group discussion and a shared understanding among beginner teachers, peers and HODs are crucial elements of a co-constructive mentoring programme.

According to the results of this study, teacher participants must have an effective professional development approach to keep developing and learning throughout their careers, which will raise their confidence. The results show that teacher participants identified a particular day of the week (once per week) as a strategy when HODs provide training on classroom-specific tasks. The results also demonstrate that HODs and beginner teachers can connect and share valuable suggestions and ideas, which take the form of a teaching partnership or groups to equip both HODs and beginner teachers with specific skills. As this study's results show, one advantage of a partnership (HODs and beginner teachers) in ongoing mentoring is that they can work through their problems to facilitate professional development. In addition, building relationships and working together as a team is essential for obtaining professional development for both HODs and beginner teachers.

6.4 Realisation of the aims and objectives

6.4.1 To acquire an understanding of the learning experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R beginner teachers

As seen in Sections 2.2 and 2.3, the literature review successfully achieved this goal. The early years of teaching are the most crucial time for beginner teachers, where they face many challenges, which shows that this goal has been attained. In addition, this period can be described as a transition period, from pre-service to in-service, highlighted in Sections 2.2 and 2.3. Also, the data analysis gathered from the responses of the beginner teachers (see Section 4.3 - 4.3.1.5) offers a way to understand and assess both personal and social well-being. It was discovered that beginner teachers encountered various difficulties and, in some cases, coping methods as they were learning how to teach. The responses indicated that teacher participants experienced challenges with curriculum delivery, language barriers in class, limited parental involvement, classroom management and collaboration, dialogue and collegiality.

6.4.2 To obtain an understanding of mentor teachers' mentoring experiences in the Foundation Phase

This objective was achieved by reviewing the literature for more information (see Sections 2.4–2.6), where knowledge of mentoring experiences is presented. As was mentioned in Section 2.4.1–2.4.1.1, the HODs are essential for supporting change in their departments, building structural leadership and improving school-wide management of teaching and learning. To better comprehend their mentoring experiences, HODs are referred to as instructional mentors who run the instructional programmes, which include supervising teaching and learning. Another strategy to show that the aforementioned goal was achieved is to highlight how HODs support beginner teachers in their day-to-day tasks, such as by providing ongoing assistance where they act as learning leaders.

6.4.3 To determine how beginner and mentor teachers participate in the professional development programme facilitated through dialogue and co-construction

This section stressed the idea that professional development could be viewed as a long-term process involving ongoing opportunities and experiences designed deliberately and methodically to foster the growth and development of teachers, particularly beginner teachers. Moreover, a schematic illustration of a pathway that influences a teacher's professional development is presented in Section 2.7.1. This example shows how a beginner teacher's career might evolve through professional development and how this might happen in the classroom. In addition, data analysis based on the responses of the beginner teachers and their HODs shows how professional development is facilitated through dialogue and co-construction (see Section 5.3.6). As an illustration of how this objective is accomplished, the

data analysis reveals interactions between HODs and beginner teachers that allow the sharing of ideas and guidance. This interaction also demonstrates dialogue and co-construction.

6.4.4 To establish how the learning experiences of beginner teachers and the mentoring experiences influence a support programme that is co-constructed through dialogue

The aforementioned objective was successfully attained by the literature review on beginner teachers' learning experiences and mentors' mentoring experiences (see Sections 2.6, 2.7 - 2.7.1). Additionally, the data analysis highlights the bond that dialoguing creates between teachers and learners (see Sections 4.3.1 to 4.3.2, 5.3.1 to 5.3.5). The data further reveal that a support programme co-constructed through dialogue can also be influenced by group discussions, feedback, idea sharing, team planning and blending technological skills. These are all examples of co-construction and dialogue, demonstrating the accomplishment of the objective described above. As a result, scheduled and unscheduled group dialogues and a shared understanding between beginner teachers and HODs are crucial elements that influence a mentoring support programme, as highlighted in the data analysis (see Section 5.3.5), demonstrating that the aforementioned objective was accomplished. Another critical strategy for how the learning experiences of beginner teachers and the mentoring experiences can influence a support programme through co-construction and dialogue is through observations and feedback, as revealed by the collected data. The opportunity to become open to other people's points of view is provided by feedback or conversation, which relates to the aforementioned objective.

6.5 Recommendations

This study aims to implement a structured support programme (already created through this study) to aid Foundation Phase Grade R teachers' professional growth. The knowledge gained from the previous five chapters demonstrates the effort put into creating the mentoring support programme for beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers. As a result, many recommendations for future practice in the field of education are generated by the findings of this study and their implications. Mentorship is still in its infancy in the South African educational system, but there are many academic levels and areas where it may have a significant impact. According to the literature review, mentoring may be a good option for a successful professional development approach. Recommendations are given in light of the findings (see Sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2).

Recommendation 1: To ensure beginner teachers can handle most challenges in practice, teacher preparation programmes should employ a comprehensive method. Beginner teachers might benefit significantly from mentoring and induction when they first start working in a professional setting. The purpose of induction is to support beginner teachers in adjusting to

their new working environment through active mentorship. The purpose of induction and mentoring is to boost the efficacy of beginner teachers while continuing to support them until they have positioned themselves professionally. The ongoing mentoring will give beginner teachers more preparation and familiarise them with the school setting, where they will be afforded the opportunity to become part of the school community.

Moreover, mentoring is also a strategy used to lessen challenges, enhance training and offer support. Beginner teacher training is something that HODs must be involved in since it affects their professional development and functions as a form of moderation. Mentoring will help beginner teachers teach more effectively to improve learners' outcomes.

Recommendation 2: Even though South Africa has been a multilingual rather than bilingual country since 1994, many parents still prefer English as the primary language of instruction. The South African language policy recognises the right of parents to decide how their children will be taught in school. According to my research, enrolling learners in classes where teaching occurs in a language other than their mother tongue may have a negative impact on them.

The DoE can also set up a language awareness programme, such as a workshop or a course, to give student teachers access to knowledge of multilingual teaching methods in classrooms. Using multilingualism as a strength, teachers should develop innovative strategies to utilise a school's various languages and cultures. Language and cultural variations should not be viewed as outliers but rather as a resource for learning. If teachers want to give all learners an equal chance at education, they must be prepared to address the language demands placed on their learners. The curriculum must be created to accommodate the diverse backgrounds of learners so that everyone has an equal opportunity to engage in discussions, regardless of language proficiency. For beginner teachers to develop and be successful in a multilingual classroom, HODs must also mentor them to meet the needs of their learners, specifically those who are not proficient in English. By doing this, mentors can also reflect on their teaching. The school may appoint bilingual assistants or language teachers to aid and promote the learner's first language learning. This can be accomplished in classes where English is the medium of instruction.

Additionally, schools continue to advance the teaching that started at home. As a result, parents play a crucial role in their children's official education. Many parents have a tendency to defer to teachers and anticipate positive results at the end of the school year. Consequently, they blame the teachers when their children's grades are unsatisfactory. Teachers and parents could collaborate to allow learners to maintain their mother tongue and culture while learning a second language. Teachers should share information with parents about the teaching methods used in the classroom, which will assist parents in understanding the outcomes. According to the results of my research, beginner teachers value parental support since it should motivate them (parents) to get active in their children's education.

Recommendation 3: According to Section 29 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), the government is required to offer primary education to all South African children. Thus, I recommend that public schools develop and sustain a culture of learning and teaching. With this in mind, ensuring that children receive a successful education is a shared responsibility that involves a variety of partners who all have an interest in the educational welfare of children. Trust and respect, for instance, are prerequisites for increasing and governing how learners develop educationally when there is a positive interaction between parents and beginner teachers and the school. Better parent-teacher relations increase learner motivation and achievement and improved attendance results from a partnership between parents and the school. Furthermore, parental participation also involves parental empowerment and schools can help parents prepare for this supportive role by offering in-service training that addresses the supporting role of the parent.

Recommendation 4: A systematic approach to teacher training and continued professional development is necessary to improve teachers' capacity to manage their classes. Therefore, it is recommended that the development of teachers' management skills should receive more attention in teacher preparation programmes. Additionally, it is crucial to give preservice teachers a good understanding of the pertinent issues and opportunities for guided practice and feedback to employ preventative and corrective behaviour control strategies. Hence, improving teacher training and participating in professional development for classroom management is crucial in overcoming classroom management challenges.

To ensure that beginner teachers can manage their classrooms effectively, it is recommended that HODs acclimate them (beginner teachers) to the school environment upon starting their teaching careers. Beginner teachers would consequently reflect on and enhance their teaching practices due to the collaboration and dialogue between HODs and them.

Recommendation 5: It is important to implement a co-constructive mentorship framework that will help beginner teachers reflect on their teaching to advance their professional development. WCED should consider and enact this co-constructed mentorship framework. The co-constructed mentoring framework through dialogue and collaboration will ensure that beginner teachers and HODs are integrated into a professional learning community. The mentoring programme should be strategic, structured and ongoing. Furthermore, the mentoring programme should also be able to guide beginner teachers about autonomy and reflection.

However, both HODs and beginner teachers should benefit from the mentoring programme, where they will learn from each other. Regarding professional development, which is a part of joint activities, mentorship will benefit both HODs and beginner teachers. HODs can mentor beginner teachers by providing constructive feedback and information-sharing opportunities,

which may lead to the co-construction of new knowledge and ultimate change for both HODs and beginner teachers.

Recommendation 6: This study has revealed that the change process is challenging, even though it is often assumed that ongoing professional development is required to implement change in classrooms and schools. It is, therefore, recommended that beginner teachers participate in a support programme that enables them to examine their values, beliefs and professional behaviour. Guskey (1986) says that continuing professional development promotes change in teachers to advance their careers. Furthermore, improvements in teaching practice and increased student achievement are the fundamental goals of professional development efforts. It is further recommended that to make a significant shift in teaching and learning, attention given to the teachers' professional learning interactions with their colleagues, that is, HODs and peers.

6.6   Limitations of the study

Since this is a case study, the scope of the study is relatively small. Six participants and three schools were part of this investigative study. The findings are solely based on evidence and information gathered from three selected schools and as a result, they may not accurately reflect all of the public schools in the Western Cape. The focus of the investigation was therefore limited to the responses given by the teacher participants and their HODs; the observations made and their attitudes and state of ease when stating their ideas, beliefs and perspectives.

I must highlight that these restrictions mentioned seemingly had no adverse effects on achieving the intended research objectives. Although the conclusions cannot necessarily be extrapolated to the larger population based solely on this study, much can still be learned from it. However, to obtain insight into the ramifications of the research findings, it is crucial to appreciate the study's advantages and disadvantages. The results provide detailed information and an insightful understanding of how teacher participants and their HODs co-constructed a mentorship framework through collaboration and dialogue.

6.7   Recommended additional research

This study aims to develop a formal support programme to facilitate the professional development of Foundation Phase Grade R teachers. Hence, this study lays the groundwork for subsequent research to examine the effects of the support programme on beginner teachers' later teaching years. Although this study has emphasised the value of formal support

and the promotion of professional growth, it has also raised concerns, particularly regarding the DoE's role in the mentorship of beginner teachers, which could be explored in future research. To make the transition for beginner teachers from pre-service to in-service as smooth as possible, schools, universities, HODs and the DoE might collaborate and work on a strategic plan.

6.8   Conclusion

This study aims to develop a formal sustainable support programme to facilitate the professional development of Foundation Phase Grade R teachers. According to the findings, beginner teachers struggle to move from pre-service to in-service. The results of the study also revealed the perspectives and ideas of beginner Foundation Phase teachers and their HODs regarding mentorship support throughout the first years of teaching. Teachers desire better consultation with and involvement from the school management and the greater teaching community regarding matters affecting their careers and means of support.

Beginner teachers and HODs had the opportunity to co-construct the mentoring programme in this study, which allowed them to do so through dialogue and collaboration. HODs and beginner teachers jointly determined the strategies for the co-construction of the mentoring programme. For instance, they identified the support strategies best to assist beginner teachers in their initial teaching years. The findings show that beginner teachers and HODs agreed during this process that continued induction and mentorship are crucial for beginner teachers as they adjust to the workplace. Beginner teachers should ease into the school culture and rules through induction and mentoring. Also, by receiving mentoring from HODs and more experienced teachers, beginner teachers can more readily adjust to the school setting and fit in. As a result, implementing a co-constructed mentorship programme for beginner teachers has the potential to alter their perspectives and further their education, improving both teaching and learning.

The current ANC-led government still encounters problems with the education system even after being in power for nearly thirty years. The LiEP, for instance, states that learners should be educated in their mother tongue, although South Africa is not yet able to implement this. The legitimisation of language policy is still something we are waiting for. Moreover, formal mentoring programmes for beginner teachers are only offered on paper and not in classrooms and schools.

My concerns and interest in the professional development of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers started twelve years ago when I was teaching the BEd at a TVET college. After the student teachers finished their practical teaching training, I observed that many

reported feeling underprepared and unequipped for the workplace. In addition, I found that student teachers experienced many classroom challenges during their practical teaching sessions at schools and could not manage the workload. These reasons compelled me to pursue doctoral research on the professional development of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers who had completed their BEd degrees at a TVET college. I hope to have an effect in my field through this PhD path, which has allowed me to reflect deeply on who I am as an academic (educationist) and educator. I am confident that my research has the potential to improve the lives of beginner teachers and that the co-constructed mentorship model, which was constructed by HODs and beginner teachers, will have the capacity to influence the growth and development of learners, teachers and policymakers. I think South Africa's future rests not just on the level of education that our learners receive in the classrooms but also on the quality of instruction that our teachers can deliver. It is thus crucial to mentor teachers, especially those just starting.

Moreover, I strongly believe that the future of our country depends on the quality of education our children receive in public schools. To compete in a global economy, we must provide the best tools to our children our nation's future leaders. We cannot settle for less than the best for them. What we do today to reform education will be reflected in future generations.

The then Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, said: *Children are the country's future citizens. The future of the country depends upon the present children. The country's future will be ruined if the children do not develop properly.* He advised the people to stop observing his birthday on the 14 November and to observe this day as Children's Day. Since 1956, the 14 November has been observed in India as Children's Day.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: RESEARCH ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

***For office use only	
Date submitted	9 May 2018
Meeting date	29 May 2018
Approval	P/Y√/N
Ethical Clearance number	EFEC 7-7/2018

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

RESEARCH ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

This certificate is issued by the Education Faculty Ethics Committee (EFEC) at Cape Peninsula University of Technology to the applicant/s whose details appear below.

1. **Applicant and project details (Applicant to complete this section of the certificate and submit with application as a <u>Word</u> document)**

Name(s) of applicant(s):	Mastura Jamodien		
Project/study Title:	Learning experiences of beginner Foundation Phase teachers in the Western Cape that may influence their professional development		
Is this a staff research project, i.e. not for degree purposes?	No		
If for degree purposes the degree is indicated:	Doctorate in Education		
If for degree purposes, the proposal has been approved by the FRC	Yes		
Funding sources:	Private		

2. **Remarks by Education Faculty Ethics Committee:**

This doctoral research project is granted ethical clearance valid until 28 July 2022.		
Approved: Yes	**Referred back:**	**Approved subject to adaptations:**
Chairperson Name: Chiwimbiso Kwenda **Chairperson Signature:**		**Date:** 29 July 2018
Approval Certificate/Reference: EFEC 7-7/2018		

EFEC Form V3_updated 2016

APPENDIX B: LETTER TO THE RESEARCH UNIT OF THE WESTERN CAPE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

59 Horak Street
Peerless Park East
KRAAIFONTEIN
7570

22 August 2018

Dr Audrey Wyngaard
Research Unit
Western Cape Education Department
Private Bag X9114
CAPE TOWN
8000

Dear Sir

DATA COLLECTION–DOCTORAL RESEARCH

Title of the Study

A CO-CONSTRUCTED SUPPORT PROGRAMME TO FACILITATE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR BEGINNER FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS IN THE WESTERN CAPE

I am a Doctoral student at Cape Peninsula University of Technology and would like to conduct research on the support given to beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers by their Heads of Departments.

I hereby wish to apply for permission to use three public primary schools in the Athlone and Mitchell's Plain areas. The research will entail the following:

- To collect information via a literature search on the experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers and the support given to them by their Heads of Departments.
- To collect data via interviews, journal entries and classroom observations.

The following people will be included in the research:

- Six Beginner Foundation Phase Grade R Teachers
- Three Heads of Departments

It is my intention to conduct the research during the second semester of 2019, should permission be granted.

I hope that this application will be considered in a very favourable manner.

Yours sincerely

MASTURA JAMODIEN

APPENDIX C: APPROVAL LETTER FROM WCED TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Education	Audrey.wyngaard@westerncape.gov.za
	tel: +27 021 467 9272
	Fax: 0865902282
	Private Bag x9114, Cape Town, 8000
	wced.wcape.gov.za

REFERENCE: 20180912–6305
ENQUIRIES: Dr A T Wyngaard

Ms Mastura Jamodien
59 Horak Street
Peerless Park East
Kraaifontein
7570

Dear Ms Mastura Jamodien

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: A SUPPORT PROGRAMME TO FACILITATE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR BEGINNER FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS IN THE WESTERN CAPE

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **01 February 2019 till 30 June 2019**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number?
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

> **The Director: Research Services**
> **Western Cape Education Department**
> **Private Bag X9114**
> **CAPE TOWN**
> **8000**

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.
Signed: Dr Audrey T Wyngaard
Directorate: Research
DATE: 13 September 2018

APPENDIX D: LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL REQUESTING APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THEIR SCHOOL

Cape Peninsula
University of Technology

59 Horak Street
Peerless Park East
KRAAIFONTEIN
7570
Date:

The Principal

Dear Sir/Madam,

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A DOCTORAL RESEARCH STUDY AT YOUR SCHOOL

I respectfully request your permission to conduct my research study at your school. I am pursuing a doctorate in educational studies at Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT). The study is titled **A CO-CONSTRUCTED SUPPORT PROGRAMME TO FACILITATE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR BEGINNER FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS IN THE WESTERN CAPE**

The research aims to develop a formal support programme to facilitate the professional development of Foundation Phase Grade R teachers.

In order to accomplish this broad purpose, the research has several specific objectives in mind:

- To acquire an understanding of the learning experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R beginner teachers.

- To obtain an understanding of mentor teachers' mentoring experiences (HODs) in the Foundation Phase.
- To determine how beginner and mentor teachers participate in the professional development programme facilitated through dialogue and co-construction.
- To establish how the learning experiences of beginner teachers and the mentoring experiences influence a support programme that is co-constructed through dialogue.

The findings of this study will help in the provision of knowledge that will facilitate supporting beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers in public schools. I would like to conduct interviews with two beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers at your school.

The focus will be on the experience of beginner teachers during their first years of teaching and the support they receive from their HODs. I would also like to interview the HOD on the experiences of supporting beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers. Following approval of my request, I will ask those selected teachers for their permission to participate in the interviews that will be held after school at a time that is convenient for them.

For ethical purposes, I will be recording all interviews on audio, writing them down and combining them with additional data gathered. Additionally, I would like to request permission to view official records, such as portfolios and records of attendance, timetables and work schedules for teachers, which would help me better comprehend their views, needs and aspirations.

Teacher participants may withdraw from the study at any moment without having any adverse or undesirable effects because participation in the study is non-obligatory and voluntary. Anonymity regarding participant identification will be maintained at all times. The only usage of the information discussed during the session will be for the research itself, and it will all be kept confidential. On request, we will provide you with a summary of the research's conclusions.

Please feel free to get in touch with me at mjardine@gmail.com or my supervisors at the following addresses: Dr Adendorff at adendorffsa@cput.ac.za, Dr Shaik at shaikn@cput.ac.za for more information. I hope that my request will be granted.

Kind regards

MASTURA JAMODIEN

APPENDIX E: REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH STUDY - INFORMED CONSENT FORM – LETTER TO TEACHER PARTICIPANTS AND HODs

Dear Teacher Participant

I hereby request your participation in completing an interview consisting for my research study.

Title of the Study

A CO-CONSTRUCTED SUPPORT PROGRAMME TO FACILITATE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR BEGINNER FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS IN THE WESTERN CAPE

You are approached to participate in a doctoral research study by Mastura Jamodien of the Faculty of Education and Social Sciences, Cape Peninsula University of Technology. You were selected for this project because you fit the criteria as a beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teacher and your Head of Department.

About the study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the professional learning experiences of beginner Foundation Phase teachers (first and second year) as they move from the academic (pre-service) into the school (in-service) context. Based on the focus of this study, it was necessary only to include Foundation Phase Grade R teachers who completed their BEd degree at a TVET college. The rationale for this component is to mitigate the insufficient pre-service experience as a factor giving rise to the challenges faced by beginner Foundation Phase teachers.

This study is towards a Doctorate qualification and will result in a complete dissertation after analysis and interpretation of the data.

Procedure

You were selected to participate in the study to explore your professional learning experiences as a beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teacher. The heads of departments were chosen to participate in exploring their learning experiences mentoring beginner teachers.

It involves the following data-gathering instruments:

- Keeping reflective journals

- Participating in semi-structured interviews

- Classroom observations

These data collections will take place from March–September 2019. The observations will take approximately one week, and the semi-structured interviews will take approximately 45 to 60 minutes. Participants will be requested to forward reflective journals once per month via e-mail.

Potential benefits of the study

The information emanating from the study will contribute to understanding how beginner teachers learn from their experiences in schools. It will enable beginner Foundation Phase teachers to develop professionally, improving learners' achievements. It will also inform the further development of policy and a support programme for beginner Foundation Phase teachers.

Potential risks and discomforts

No harm, discomfort or risks are expected from participating in this study. However, should you feel uncomfortable answering any of the questions, you may withdraw from participating at any time without giving any reason. Participation is entirely voluntary.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

This study will meet the requirements of the Research Ethics Committee of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. All the information from the investigation will be completely confidential. Ms Jamodien is the only person who will view your responses. All the information will be kept securely, under lock and key. Confidential and strict anonymity will apply throughout the data collection process. A pseudonym (alias) will be allocated to the participants to keep personal data confidential. The pseudonyms will be used during data collection and in the final research report.

Contact information

If you have any questions regarding the study or want additional information, please do not hesitate to contact Ms Mastura Jamodien at masturajardine@gmail.com or 082 495 1878.

By signing this form, you acknowledge that you have read all the information and give permission to participate in this research study, knowing that participation is voluntary and that you may withdraw your participation at any time without providing any reason.

Name of participant: (Print name)

....…

Signature: .... **Date:** ....

APPENDIX F: REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH STUDY: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

Dear Teacher Participant/HOD

REQUEST FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN A GROUP INTERVIEW FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES

I am in the process of researching a co-constructed support programme of beginner Foundation Phase teachers and their Heads of Department. The title of my study is:

A Co-constructed support programme to facilitate professional development for beginner Foundation Phase teachers in the Western Cape.

Your participation in this study would be extremely valuable. Please be aware that any information collected will be handled with the utmost confidentiality.

Your assistance is much appreciated.

Yours sincerely

MASTURA JAMODIEN

I,.. (complete name and surname in print), hereby consent to the collection of data about me through group interviews for the research study.

Although there has been a request to record the interviews, I am aware that I can object to recording all or a portion of our conversations.

I am aware that the study is voluntary, that I can choose not to answer any or all questions that make me uncomfortable, and that I have the option to leave the study at any time. Pseudonyms will be used to safeguard respondents' identity and all data from the study will be treated in

confidence. I am given the assurance that the data will only be used for research, and I am informed that there are no dangers associated with taking part in the study. My understanding is that this study will include my contribution.

By submitting this form, I willingly consent to participate in this study.

Signed ………………..….on……… this day of ………………. at …………………

APPENDIX G: SAMPLE OF UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE: BEGINNER FOUNDATION PHASE GRADE R TEACHERS

Cape Peninsula
University of Technology

Title of the Study

A CO-CONSTRUCTED SUPPORT PROGRAMME TO FACILITATE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR BEGINNER FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS IN THE WESTERN CAPE

Research questions:

- What are the learning experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers in the Western Cape, South Africa?
- What are the mentoring experiences of mentor teachers in the Foundation Phase?
- How do beginner and mentor teachers participate in the professional development programme facilitated through dialogue and co-construction?
- How do these experiences influence a support programme that is co-constructed through dialogue?

Purpose of the interview:

This semi-structured individual interview with beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers aims to gather information to help develop a framework for successful formal support.

Interview questions:

1. Please tell me about your experiences as a beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teacher.
2. Did you experience any challenges during your first few months as a teacher? If so, what were the challenges?
3. Do you think the university adequately prepared you for the challenges you encountered at your school? Please motivate your answer.
4. Does the school have a support programme for beginner teachers? If so, how does this support programme include collaboration and collegiality?

5.   What role did the support and mentorship of your HOD play in your experience as a beginner Foundation Phase teacher?

6.   How is your voice valued in the support programme?

7.   Do you and your HOD construct what needs to go into the support programme as you engage in dialogue? If so, please explain how this is done.

8.   Is there a formal programme in place at your school which aims to support and guide beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers? Please motivate your answer.

9.   What challenges, if any, does your school encounter in supporting you as a beginning Foundation Phase Grade R teacher? Please motivate your answer.

10.   Would you like to share anything regarding the support you received during your first few months as a new teacher?

APPENDIX H: SAMPLE OF UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE: HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS

Title of the Study

A CO-CONSTRUCTED SUPPORT PROGRAMME TO FACILITATE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR BEGINNER FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS IN THE WESTERN CAPE

Research questions:

- What are the learning experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers in the Western Cape, South Africa?
- What are the mentoring experiences of mentor teachers in the Foundation Phase?
- How do beginner teachers and mentor teachers participate in the professional development programme facilitated through dialogue and co-construction?
- How do these experiences influence a support programme that is co-constructed through dialogue?

Purpose of the interview:

The purpose of this semi-structured individual interview with department heads is to obtain information that will aid in developing a framework for successful formal support of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers.

Interview questions:

1. What are your experiences mentoring Foundation Phase Grade R beginner teachers?
2. What challenges do you face as a HOD regarding beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers?
3. Do you think the university has prepared beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers for the challenges they encounter at school? Please motivate your answer.
4. What kind of support might assist these teachers in dealing with the challenges they confront as beginner teachers?

5. How conducive is the school's atmosphere to enable beginner teachers to feel a sense of collegiality and collaboration? Do you think that students have their own experiences when beginning to teach and that you may also learn from their experience? Please explain.

6. Do you feel it is important to develop a support programme based on what beginner teachers are experiencing? Please explain why?

7. Are there opportunities for beginner teachers and mentors to share ideas and learn with and from each other?

8. Is there a formal programme at your school to support beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers? Please motivate your answer.

9. What challenges does your school encounter in supporting beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers?

10. Would you like to share anything else regarding the support given to beginner Foundation Phase teachers during their first few months?

APPENDIX I: SAMPLE OF OBSERVATION GUIDE 1: LEARNING EXPERIENCES OF BEGINNER TEACHERS

Title of the Study

A CO-CONSTRUCTED SUPPORT PROGRAMME TO FACILITATE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR BEGINNER FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS IN THE WESTERN CAPE

Research questions:

- What are the learning experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers in the Western Cape, South Africa?
- What are the mentoring experiences of mentor teachers in the Foundation Phase?
- How do beginner teachers and mentor teachers participate in the professional development programme facilitated through dialogue and co-construction?
- How do these experiences influence a support programme that is co-constructed through dialogue?

Criteria   ## Frequency

	1	2	3
Beginner teachers showed signs that they are they experiencing challenges	☐	☐	☐
Beginner teachers used various teaching strategies .	☐	☐	☐

Beginner teachers are adequately prepared for the classroom.	☐	☐	☐
Mentors are guiding beginner teachers.	☐	☐	☐
Mentors and beginner beginner teachers collaborate with one another	☐	☐	☐
Scaffolding methods are used by HODs to assist beginner teachers	☐	☐	☐
The school provide adequate resources to beginner teachers.	☐	☐	☐
Opportunities for frequent communication between HODs and beginner teachers	☐	☐	☐

Code:

1	Not at all
2	Some of the time
3	All the time

Elaboration on the observation (include other relevant criteria)

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APPENDIX J: SAMPLE OF OBSERVATION GUIDE 2: LEARNING EXPERIENCES OF BEGINNER TEACHERS

Title of the Study

A CO-CONSTRUCTED SUPPORT PROGRAMME TO FACILITATE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR BEGINNER FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS IN THE WESTERN CAPE

Questions that guided the observation process:

1.   Did beginner teachers experience any challenges during their first few months as a teacher?
2.   Did the university adequately prepare beginner teachers for the challenges they encountered at their school?
3.   Does the school have a support programme for beginner teachers?
4.   Does the HOD construct what needs to go into the support programme as you engage in dialogue and provide guidance?
5.   Is there a support programme at the school to support beginner teachers?

APPENDIX K SAMPLE OF UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE – BEGINNER FOUNDATION PHASE GRADE R TEACHERS

Cape Peninsula University of Technology

Topic: A CO-CONSTRUCTED SUPPORT PROGRAMME TO FACILITATE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR BEGINNER FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS IN THE WESTERN CAPE

Research questions:

- What are the learning experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers in the Western Cape, South Africa?
- What are the mentoring experiences of mentor teachers in the Foundation Phase?
- How do beginner and mentor teachers participate in the professional development program facilitated through dialogue and co-construction?
- How do these experiences influence a support program that is co-constructed through dialogue?

Purpose of the interview:

This semi-structured individual interview with beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers aims to gather information that will help build a framework for successful formal support.

Interview questions:

11. Please tell me about your experiences as a beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teacher.
12. Did you experience any challenges during your first few months as a teacher? If so, what were the challenges?
13. Do you think the university adequately prepared you for the challenges you encountered at your school? Please motivate your answer.
14. Does the school have a support program for beginner teachers? If so, how does this support program include collaboration and collegiality?
15. What role did the support and mentorship of your HOD play in your experience as a beginner Foundation Phase teacher?
16. How is your voice valued in the support program?

17. Do you and your HOD construct what needs to go into the support program as you engage in dialogue? If so, please explain how this is done.

18. Is there a formal program at your school that aims to support and guide beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers? Please motivate your answer.

19. What challenges, if any, does your school encounter in supporting you as a beginning Foundation Phase Grade R teacher? Please motivate your answer.

20. Would you like to share anything regarding the support you received during your first few months as a new teacher?

Topic: A CO-CONSTRUCTED SUPPORT PROGRAMME TO FACILITATE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR BEGINNER FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS IN THE WESTERN CAPE

Research questions:

- What are the learning experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers in the Western Cape, South Africa?
- What are the mentoring experiences of mentor teachers in the Foundation Phase?
- How do beginner and mentor teachers participate in the professional development program facilitated through dialogue and co-construction?
- How do these experiences influence a support program that is co-constructed through dialogue?

Purpose of the interview:

The purpose of this semi-structured individual interview with department heads is to obtain information that will aid in building a framework for successful formal support of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers.

Interview questions:

1. What are your experiences of mentoring Foundation Phase Grade R beginner teachers?
2. What challenges do you face as a HOD regarding beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers?
3. Do you think the university has prepared beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers for the challenges they encounter at school? Please motivate your answer.
4. What kind of support might assist these teachers in dealing with the challenges they confront as beginner teachers?
5. How conducive is the atmosphere of the school to enable new teachers to feel a sense of collegiality and collaboration? Do you think that students have their own experience

when beginning to teach and that you may also learn from their experience? Please explain.

11.   Do you feel it is important to develop a support program based on what beginner teachers are experiencing? Please explain why.

12.   Are there opportunities for beginner teachers and mentors to share ideas and learn with and from each other?

13.   Is there a formal program at your school to support beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers? Please motivate your answer.

14.   What challenges, if any, does your school encounter in supporting beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers?

15.   Would you like to share anything else regarding the support given to beginner Foundation Phase teachers during their first few months?

APPENDIX M: A SAMPLE OF TEACHER PARTICIPANTS AND HODs RESPONSES MADE DURING INTERVIEWS AND JOURNAL ENTRIES

SCHOOL A: TEACHER A1

- *...in terms of daily planning, the CAPS document, uhm… the annual teaching plans and how they should all work together... I do not know how to put everything together while teaching and prioritising tasks. It isn't easy. I was expected to perform the same responsibilities as the experienced teachers. (Interview: SA-TA1)*

- *When learners need to interact, they look away, play with their fingers, or stare at each other. Learners' limited language skills and inabilities make them inhibited and unwilling to share their responses, if any. I have also found that they look bored when I am busy with storytelling activities. Particular learners purposefully reached out to other learners searching for knowledge using gestures. (Interview–SA-TA1)*

- *Too many administrative matters need my attention, the learners, lesson plans, parents, time management and my HODs' due dates. I had to figure out when to do what. I could not manage my time correctly. Everything is too overwhelming. I was feeling demotivated. My biggest frustration to date is getting things done. (Interview: SA-TA1)*

- *I'm hurrying through lesson preparations and administrative tasks, a complete nightmare. I'm attempting to figure out how to manage the physical environment so that learning and teaching processes are as comfortable as possible. The workload is too much and I need support to manage my classroom. (Reflective Journal: SA-TA1)*

- *I appreciate it when the HOD creates time for us to collaborate. It developed a partnership in which all perspective was welcomed. It doesn't happen as frequently as it should. (Interview: SA-TA1)*

- The school or HODs need to inform beginner teachers of the school policies during the first week of the induction. The school rules should be clarified so beginner teachers know what is expected of them. A tour of the school and explanations of the types of learners enrolled in our classes and the parents we would encounter should be explained. The HOD should set expectations, including what we should and shouldn't do. They should give you a lot of advice during the first week of school. (Interview: SA-TA1)

SCHOOL A: TEACHER A2

- *There is not enough communication between my learners' parents and me. It makes me gloomy to see the limited involvement of parents. I keep them informed via our booklet. I …uhm.. do need parents to become involved and assist learners at home, to read, write and support them. (Interview: SA-TA2)*

- *They tell their children they must work and do not have time. As a result, the teacher is responsible for the child's well-being in school, which places an extra burden on us. (Reflective Journal: SA-TA2)*

- *I wasn't confident speaking in front of a class when I first started... I know it's all small children, but that didn't matter. I had little faith in my ability to deliver a lesson without nervousness. As it turned out, my HOD helped me gain confidence by scaffolding my classroom experience and I had to repeatedly teach the same short lesson. (Interview: SA-TA2)*

- *My HOD allowed me to work with other teachers during a team-teaching session which was helpful, but she did not avail herself to provide guidance. (Interview: SA-TA2)*

- *Every grade needs a planning day to discuss their preparation. Beginner teachers need a specific day to sit down and create weekly plans as a support strategy. The HOD should use these weekly plans during observations to gauge whether the curriculum is followed. Beginner teachers should also form peer groups where they discuss lesson planning and discussion viewpoints with other, more experienced staff members. (Interview: SA-TA2)*

- *I would conduct a parent orientation at the beginning of the year and explain the requirements. I would invite them over one afternoon or early evening and discuss the material with them. For instance, English is taught in this manner and this is the approach we take in class because it does occasionally happen that some parents want to assist their children with their homework but don't know how to go about it. I would teach the parents how reading must be done with their children and how they must carry on at home. So yes, orientate parents would be my strategy. (Interview: SA-TA2)*

- *There is internal and external training for beginner teachers. HODs can arrange internal workshops for beginner teachers, for instance, disability workshops. The Department of Education also provides external training… support with mathematics, for example. (Interview: SA-TA2)*

SCHOOL B: TEACHER TB1

- *I find the paperwork requirements to be overwhelming. In addition to working with the learners, you ought to write more. You are more engaged in paperwork than simply teaching learners (laughing). (Interview: SB-TB1)*

- *It is a struggle and I …uh… struggle to teach math to learners who cannot speak or understand English. Uhm… explaining numbers, forms and other mathematical terms is challenging if they do not grasp English well and I cannot explain the terms in their language. (Interview: SB-TB1).*

- *It is a struggle and I …uh… struggle to teach math to learners who cannot speak or understand English. Uhm… explaining numbers, forms and other mathematical terms is challenging if they do not grasp English well and I cannot explain the terms in their language. (Interview: SB-TB1).*

- *They never come to PTA meetings, but they quickly judge the teachers. Our parents here are in no way involved. I do not know what to do for them to become involved. I invite them to meetings all the time. (Interview: SB-TB1)*

- *Collaboration with the HOD helped me become more aware of and improve in several teaching-related aspects, such as emphasising diversity in the classroom. I received some excellent ideas from my HOD and we exchanged fantastic viewpoints. (Interview: SB-TB1)*

- *An administration day where HODs could meet with beginner teachers and discuss the information we need to know, such as learner profiles. (Interview: SB-TB1)*

SCHOOL B: TEACHER TB2

- *Sometimes I noticed that my learners speak softly in their mother tongue, isiXhosa. Some learners clearly do not understand the concepts or instructions I give them. They battle with instructions because many of them lack an understanding of English. I struggle to provide these learners with the necessary support. They also do not get help from parents who works to speak English. (Reflective Journal: SB-TB2)*

- *Right now, I'd rather have the support, brainstorming and assistance that a new teacher is meant to have. My HOD is always busy with meetings and other things… Uhm…. I need to get direction on how to manage everything. I do not want to subject my learners to a low-performing classroom environment. (Interview: SB-TB2)*

- *Beginner teachers should receive an introduction to school management and at least two days should be devoted to the administrative aspect of their duties. For instance, how to complete a learner portfolio, register learners and make a Central Education Management Information System (CEMIS) list. HODs must communicate these things to us - communication plays a key role. (Interview: SB-TB2)*

- *Regular meetings to talk about planning are necessary. Connect with other beginner teachers to form a learning community where peers can help with challenging work by exchanging information or providing solutions to potential challenges. New teaching methods might be encouraged by collaborating and supporting one another. (Interview: SB-TB2)*

SCHOOL C: TEACHER TC1

- *I find it difficult to link and prioritise specific tasks. I suppose it will improve if I do it more often… with experience. (Interview: SC-TC1)*

- *As beginner teachers, we need support and orientation to effectively plan and deliver the curriculum. As I said before, I am practical; therefore, you give me instructions. I'm struggling to provide the curriculum. The amount of work that must be covered for each term is too much. The workload is too much. (Reflective Journal: SC-TC1)*

- *Parents believe that English is the only language to help their children progress academically later in life and for better work. When learners start in Grade R, their parents expect them to speak English fluently. Uhm…this cannot happen overnight; it is a process. It is that pressure that I feel most of the time. We, myself and some of the learners, do not share the same language. It is not easy to help learners who have language barriers. (Interview: SC-TC1)*

- *To allow parents to understand what is occurring in class and what they can do to support their child, I will photograph my work on the board and message it via WhatsApp. Then, parents can see how it is taught in the classroom and how they can assist their children with their homework while staying on the right path. (Interview: SC-TC1)*

- *Before beginner teachers start teaching, their schools should require them to shadow experienced teachers so that they can be aware of what the school is about. Thus, more experienced teachers will support beginner teachers with the many uncertainties they experience during the initial stages. (Interview: SC-TC1)*

- *Asking questions about the weekly planning, activities and expectations, especially during meetings, is essential. Exchange ideas, but the HOD should provide guidance and inform beginner teachers where to improve after observations. Feedback will help beginner teachers to see where the gaps are and to improve. (Interview: SC-TC1)*

- *It bothers us when you phone a parent and they do not respond. You want to convey to the parent how the school and home can work together to improve the child's education, but they never show up. (Interview: SC-TC1)*

SCHOOL C: TEACHER TC2

- *My initial months of teaching are completely different from your practice. So, it would help to practise what you learned from the theory. So, when I was studying, we didn't go to school that often or be in the classroom environment. I think that is why I am struggling with lesson plans. I was not exposed enough to planning lessons. Being a teacher is different from being a student. (Reflective Journal: SC-TC2)*

- *Uhm… some learners are unable to communicate in English. Others respond to the questions in English and their Home Language. (Interview: SC-TC2)*

- *Some parents send their children to school, where their parental contribution starts and ends. They say they cannot assist their children because they do not understand what to do. The sad reality is that it seems as if these parents do not have enough time to spend with their children regarding schoolwork. It might be that they are working too much. (Reflective Journal: SC-TC2)*

- *I struggled with multiculturalism in my classroom. I recall feeling overpowered initially. I did not expect these many learners with various cultural backgrounds. I am still learning to figure out the best approach to get along with myself and my learners and find the best way to function well with myself and my learners. I am in the process of getting to know them. (Interview: SC-TC2)*

SCHOOL A – HOD A

- *I don't think that beginner teachers have any idea of their responsibilities when they start teaching. I also believe that teachers have limited knowledge when it comes to planning. Also, the practice teaching does not prepare them enough for school. They need relevant practical exposure. How to present a lesson, how to conduct a writing lesson and how to conduct a reading lesson are all learned through practical experience. That is what beginner teachers need, practical experience! I expose them to the practice. I guide them on how to structure written lessons. (Interview: HOD A)*

- *There is no simple strategy to remedy the language barrier situation; however, working together, parents and teachers may bring meaningful change. Therefore, beginner teachers must involve parents so that they can support their children at home with their homework in preparation for the classroom. (Interview: HOD A)*

- *We must keep trying to engage parents, even though many reasons affecting parental involvement are too complex to understand, putting teachers in a difficult situation and making intervention programmes a long shot in the dark. I advise teachers to give parents information and suggestions on supporting their children at home, such as reading activities that benefit learners. (Interview: HOD A)*

- *I invite beginner teachers as a group to share their teaching experiences. We discuss the challenges and various strategies to overcome them, for instance, administrative matters, their planning and lesson preparations. We would discuss the curriculum, for example and how to incorporate classroom activities into the lessons. Adequate preparation would assist the teacher in managing the classroom better. (Reflective Journal: HOD A)*

- *We have a lot of dialogue on classroom management, policies and subject files so they can refer to the discussions. Additionally, I would show how to design a lesson and guide the beginner teacher through the lesson execution process by ensuring the task is constructed correctly. (Interview: HOD A)*

SCHOOL B – HOD B

- *Although beginner teachers have completed their studies, their initial training has proved to be limited and inadequate to meet the needs of their first years of entry into the profession. They are dealing with a tremendous workload and time constraints. I demonstrate to them how to create lesson plans. I attend their classrooms, sit next to them and guide them with their lesson preparation. (Interview: HOD B)*

- *Beginner teachers are overwhelmed because many learners speak isiXhosa and struggle with English as a medium of instruction. I encourage them to attend external programmes organised by WCED and other institutions since the school is not hosting enough workshops to assist teachers. I also do class visits and give teachers pointers on how to help the learners struggling with the medium of instruction. (Interview: HOD B)*

- *We arrange meetings where parents are given information on how to help their children learn more effectively at home. We try and collaborate with the community by incorporating services from the community to improve school programmes, such as health services, which include visiting nurses from clinics to our Grade R classrooms. (Interview with HOD B.)*

- *I provide a space so that beginner teachers and I can exchange ideas. The dialogue is good and creates openness. Schools should require beginner teachers to shadow experienced teachers before they begin teaching. It must be a departmental initiative to provide mentorship and collaboration to beginner teachers. (Reflective Journal: HOD B)*

- *I attend their classrooms, sit next to them and guide them with their lesson preparation. (Interview with HOD B.)*

- *It's essential to give beginner teachers direction. I imagine you would want a friendly person to talk to when you first start at your school. To help you efficiently manage your classroom. Managing the classroom is the responsibility of the teacher and my responsibility to guide them. (Interview: HOD B)*

SCHOOL C – HOD C

- *Learners are impacted when a teacher is struggling, but occasionally, uhm.. I'm also busy. I go to classes and observe what the teachers are doing. I would assist and advise them in a particular area, such as what activities to do to help the child with lateral midline problems. (Interview: HOD C)*

- *Beginner teachers require skills on how to include all learners in their lessons. According to the policy, all learners must be given the necessary help to participate in class with their peers. When teaching learners who cannot speak English, I strive to support my teachers as I can. (Interview: HOD C).*

- *Teachers become frustrated with parents not actively involved in their children's schoolwork. Most of the time, parents are too preoccupied with their jobs to help their children with schoolwork. I would support the teachers by communicating with the parents via text messages or phone calls. (Reflective Journal: HOD C)*

- *I let teachers plan and deliver their lessons, then review the planning after observations. I'll talk to the teacher about the lesson and request that it be improved until they can plan it independently. I provide feedback on issues that may influence their teaching strategies and would prioritise lessening the teachers' workload. (Interview: HOD C)*

- *I strive to be as present as possible, talking to beginner teachers and giving them insight into what is required to manage their classes. I also respect their opinions and allow them to develop independently. I do not enforce my ideas but guide them in a way that will enable them to exchange ideas when they have challenges. (Reflective Journal: HOD C)*

- *Discuss the CAPS document to ascertain what is required and conclude the preparation for each week's topic. Focus on the knowledge learners need and consider the competencies they need to develop–do it in a group - teamwork is a good option. Do not overburden the teachers with work but give them a general idea of what is required. I will also do classroom visits to see what is lacking and alert them if anything needs to be added, like an activity. (Interview: HOD C).*

- *I would support beginner teachers by encouraging them to give homework to learners and provide activities, such as reading and mathematics, for parents to help their children. Any work completed in class should be sent home and parents should consider ways to help their children retain what they have learned. The learners' preparation for school can be improved by keeping parents involved in*

their children's education. I believe parents should be viewed as partners to share educational responsibilities. Workshops are essential to equip parents with the necessary skills to know what is happening with their child's education. In addition, I would regularly do home visits to see where the learners are if they do not attend school for more than two days. (Interview: HOD C)

- *In my view, parents should be viewed as partners to share educational responsibilities.* (Interview: HOD C)

APPENDIX N: GRAMMARIAN LETTER

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22 Krag Street

Napier

7270

Overberg

Western Cape

20 May 2023

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LANGUAGE & TECHNICAL EDITING

Cheryl M. Thomson

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A CO-CONSTRUCTED SUPPORT PROGRAMME TO FACILITATE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR BEGINNER FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS IN THE WESTERN CAPE

Principal Supervisor: Dr N. Shaik

Co-supervisor: Dr S.A. Adendorff

This is to confirm that I, Cheryl Thomson, executed the language and technical editing of the above-titled Doctoral thesis of **Mastura Jamodien, student number 188019618,** at the CAPE PENINSULA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY in preparation for submission of this thesis for assessment.

Yours faithfully

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