

**An investigation of the coping mechanisms of novice teachers:  
a study of selected high schools in the Oshikoto Region of  
Namibia**

by

**TULONGA TULIMEUTHO UUGWANGA**



A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Education (M.Ed.), Faculty of Education, University of the Western Cape, Bellville, RSA.

**November 2010**

**Supervisor: Dr Clarence Williams**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Pages

Declaration	iv
Acknowledgement	v
Dedication	vi
List of Acronyms	vii
Key words	viii
Abstract	ix

### CHAPTER ONE

#### INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	Motivation for the investigation	4
1.3	Significance of the study	7
1.4	Research aim and objectives	7
1.5	Summary of the literature review	8
1.6	The developmental framework	11
1.7	Research methodology, research method and design	12
1.8	Data analysis	14
1.9	Ethics	14
1.10	Chapter outline	15

### CHAPTER TWO

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1	Introduction	16
2.2	The reality shock	17
2.3	Novice teachers' problems	19
2.3.1	<i>Problems experienced by novice teachers in other countries</i>	19
2.3.2	<i>Problems experienced by novice teachers in Namibia</i>	24
2.3.3	<i>Possible roots of novice teachers' problems</i>	25
2.4	Induction	27
2.4.1	<i>The importance of induction programmes</i>	30
2.4.2	<i>The development of induction programmes in developed countries</i>	31
2.4.3	<i>Novice teachers' induction programmes in Africa</i>	33
2.5	Coping mechanisms	37
2.5.1	<i>Definition of coping mechanism</i>	38

2.5.2	<i>Factors that may influence the use of active coping mechanisms</i>	46
2.6	Developmental framework	48
2.7	Teacher socialization framework	48
2.8	Understanding the development of novice teachers and their coping mechanisms	49
2.9	Developmental framework and induction	52
2.10	Conclusion	53

### **CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY**

3.1	Introduction	55
3.2	Qualitative research	55
3.3	Research method	59
3.4	Research design	63
3.4.1	<i>Sampling</i>	64
3.4.2	<i>Conducting the interview</i>	66
3.5	Data analysis	67
3.6	Ethical considerations	69
3.6.1	<i>Negotiating Access</i>	69
3.6.2	<i>Anonymity and confidentiality</i>	69
3.7	Limitations	70



### **CHAPTER FOUR RESEARCH FINDINGS**

4.1	Introduction	71
4.2	Context and background information of participants	71
4.3	Challenges faced by novice teachers	75
4.3.1	<i>Feelings of unpreparedness</i>	76
4.3.2	<i>Lack of orientation for novice teachers</i>	79
4.3.3	<i>Classroom management</i>	82
4.3.4	<i>Subject content</i>	83
4.3.5	<i>Teaching methodology</i>	84
4.3.6	<i>Lesson preparation and syllabi interpretation</i>	85
4.3.7	<i>Assessment problems</i>	86
4.3.8	<i>Communication problems</i>	87
4.3.9	<i>Problems resulting from political decision and education policy making</i>	87
4.3.9.1	<i>Workload</i>	88
4.3.9.2	<i>Lack of resources</i>	89

4.3.9.3	<i>Overcrowded classrooms</i>	91
4.3.10	<i>Isolation</i>	92
4.4	Coping mechanisms	93
4.4.1	<i>Accessing support</i>	93
4.4.2	<i>Emulation</i>	94
4.4.3	<i>Improvisation</i>	95
4.4.4	<i>Teacher-centered method</i>	96
4.4.5	<i>Becoming soft or rude with learners</i>	96
4.4.6	<i>Reflecting</i>	97
4.4.7	<i>Withdrawal and distancing</i>	98
4.5	Recommendations to ease the transformation from pre-service to full time teaching	99
4.6	Summary	102

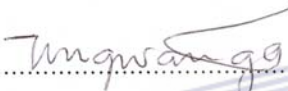
## CHAPTER FIVE

### A SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1	Introduction	104
5.2	A summary of the findings	104
5.2.1	<i>Challenges facing novice teachers</i>	104
5.2.2	<i>Orientation of and support for novice teachers</i>	108
5.2.3	<i>Coping mechanisms used by novice teachers</i>	109
5.3	Recommendations	113
5.3.1	<i>Pre-service teacher training institutions</i>	113
5.3.2	<i>Ministry of Education</i>	116
5.3.3	<i>Schools</i>	119
5.4	Possible areas for further research	121
5.5	Concluding remarks	122
	References	124
	Appendices	133

## DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis, **An investigation of the coping mechanisms of novice teachers: a study of selected high schools in the Oshikoto Region of Namibia**, is my own work and has not been submitted before for any degree or assessment in any other university than that of which I am currently a candidate. The sources used in this study have been acknowledged and indicated by means of complete references.

Signature:  .....

Date: 01 March 2011 .....



UNIVERSITY *of the*  
WESTERN CAPE

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I thank my Almighty God whose mercy and grace has sustained and kept me well and healthy throughout my study period. May His name be praised!

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude and appreciation to my supervisor, Dr Williams, for providing guidance, encouragement and for shaping my thinking. Your continued support, advice and effort were extremely helpful in writing this thesis. I will always cherish your commitment you put into this study.

Very special thanks to my loving parents for sponsoring my studies, for their patience, support and understanding during my studies. You were always there for me. I appreciate all the sacrifices you made for me and the unconditional love you gave me. God bless you!

I also extend my acknowledgement to all novice teachers and their HODs in the Oshikoto Region who participated in this study. I am grateful for your willingness to participate in this study and share your experience, knowledge and time with me.

I specifically express my appreciation to “Tate Ngoto” for his support during the collection of the research data. Special thanks to my brothers, sisters and cousins for their love and continuous support. Lastly to my friends, Diet, Iita, Sam, Loide, Mike, Emma, Geoff and Costa, I appreciate your assistance and support throughout the production of this work.

## **DEDICATION**

This research work is dedicated to my dad, Nicky Natangwe Uugwanga.



## LIST OF ACRONYMS

BETD	Basic Education Teacher Diploma
CA	Continuous Assessment
HOD	Head of Department
LRC	Learner Representative Councillor
MOE	Ministry of Education
NAMCOL	Namibia College of Open Learning
NIED	National Institute for Educational Development
NSSC	Namibian Senior Secondary Certificate
NSSCH	Namibian Senior Secondary Certificate for Higher Level
SGB	School Governing Body
SIDA	Swedish International Development Authority
TERP	Teacher Educational Reform Project
UNAM	University of Namibia





## **KEY WORDS**

Novice teachers

Teaching and learning

Coping mechanisms

Avoidance

Denial

Induction problems

Induction programmes

Professional development

Socialization

Self-actualization



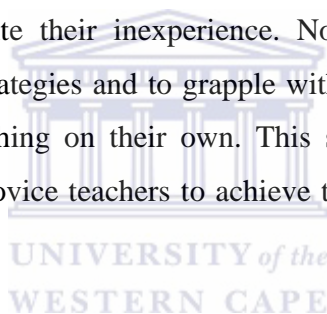
## **ABSTRACT**

**Title:** An investigation of the coping mechanisms of novice teachers: a study of selected high schools in the Oshikoto Region of Namibia

**Name:** T.T. Uugwanga

Masters in Education, Faculty of Education, University of the Western Cape

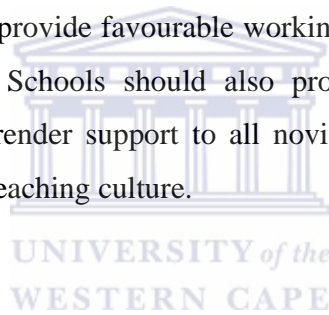
Although there are several achievements made by the Namibian government after independence, there are still many constraints and challenges facing the education system, particularly with regard to novice teachers' support and professional development. Most novice teachers are coming into the teaching profession and receive little or no assistance. Nevertheless, novice teachers are expected to perform the full teaching responsibilities despite their inexperience. Novice teachers are expected to formulate their own coping strategies and to grapple with the challenges they encounter during their first year of teaching on their own. This study aims at investigating the coping mechanisms used by novice teachers to achieve their teaching goals during their first year of teaching.



Data for this study was collected by means of individual interviews. Novice teachers at high schools were interviewed to obtain their impressions and experience of their first year of teaching. The heads of the departments at schools were also interviewed in order to get an alternative perspective about the experiences of novice teachers. Responses confirmed that novice teachers in the Oshikoto Region were faced with several challenges during their first year of teaching. Findings revealed that challenges experienced by novice teachers in the Oshikoto Region did not to a large extent differ from those experienced by novice teachers in other studies. Novice teachers found themselves swamped by various new events and challenges: from classroom management problems, lack of subject knowledge, workloads, isolation and lack of resources. However, despite these seemingly insurmountable problems they received very little and sometimes no support from their schools. As a result novice teachers formulated their own coping mechanisms in an attempt to overcome these problems and achieve their

teaching goals. Most of the coping mechanisms they developed were merely as a result of trial and error, and mostly meant for survival. Respondents acknowledged that mechanisms employed were not always effective. However, there were pockets of successful coping mechanisms from some novice teachers. The lack of socialization to a large extent has affected the coping mechanisms utilized by novice teachers. By and large, the coping mechanisms formulated by novice teachers were those at a lower stage of development.

The study recommends that the teacher training institutions, the Ministry of Education and schools have an important role to play in facilitating the use of effective coping mechanisms and in assisting novice teachers in alleviating these challenges. Teacher training should ensure that a balance is maintained between theory and practice. In addition the Ministry needs to provide favourable working conditions and put up support systems for novice teachers. Schools should also provide orientation to all novice teachers and most especially render support to all novice teachers until they are fully integrated into the school and teaching culture.



November, 2010

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

### 1.1 Introduction

Namibia got its political independence from South Africa on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March 1990. The education offered by the South African apartheid government was meant to disadvantage the black Africans. The impact of colonial education, especially at the higher institution level, was noticeable in policies and practices that consciously underfinanced, understaffed, and underdeveloped African education (Shakwa, 2001). Only just six teacher training institutions were available in the country and offered courses of two to three years without enough teaching practice for student teachers (Cohen, 1994). Syllabi and time-tables for black Namibian education at colleges were overcrowded and there were many under-qualified and unqualified teachers at colleges. Consequently “badly trained teachers were produced who in turn would be ineffective in schools” (Salia-Bao, 1991:79). In addition, the pre-service training that was given to secondary school teachers was insufficient resulting in a country experiencing a shortage of trained and qualified teachers (Cohen, 1994).

Since independence, education reform has been a major agenda for the Namibia education system and by the year 1999 the major part of education reform was completed (Government of the Republic of Namibia, 2001; Shakwa, 2001). After 9 years of independence, the Namibian Government has made great steps in the education system. These are some of the achievements made by the Namibian Government after independence:

- By the end of 1991 there was a unified education system under one ministry (Ministry of Education and Culture).

- A constitutional provision, Article 20 of Namibia's Constitution adopted in 1990, provides compulsory primary education for all children extending up to the junior secondary phase.
- In 1993 a policy document "Toward Education for All" was published. It focused attention on five main goals for the education sector: access, equity, quality, democracy and efficiency.
- Though the administration of education is centralized, seven regional education offices were created to provide room for balanced national interest and regional variations.
- In the early 1990s a learner-centred approach was implemented under the guidance of the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED).
- A new programme for the reform of teacher education and preparation was initiated in 1992 assisted by the Teacher Educational Reform Project (TERP) and funded by the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA). As a result a new unified teacher education system for basic education (Basic Education Teacher Diploma, BETD) encompassing grade one to grade ten was introduced in all four Namibian colleges of education in 1994. Under the new arrangement, the Namibian colleges of education are responsible for preparing teachers for basic education through a learner-centred, constructivist approach in the new BETD, and the University of Namibia (UNAM) is to prepare upper secondary school teachers (Shakwa, 2001). The new teacher education program (BETD) was introduced 'as a unifying factor from which all teacher education in the country would operate and contribute largely towards national unity' (Mutwa, 2001).
- In addition, in 2009 a merger between Colleges of Education and the University of Namibia was approved by the Cabinet as a mean to improve the quality of teacher education at the four colleges. This was due to the criticisms that the

teacher training in colleges produced teachers with inadequate subject content knowledge and low teaching proficiency.

Teacher training was considered one of the most important areas of reform at independence because of teachers' strategic roles in the educational reform (Tjivikua, 2002). In-service training after independence was offered to all teachers since there was a need for a shift from a teacher-centered to a learner-centered approach and for the development of democratic practices in the classrooms. In addition, in-service training was also presented in order to develop the professional competence of teachers who were trained during apartheid to enable them to understand their new roles and tasks in a changing society and to acquire relevant knowledge about the new policies (Mutwa, 2001).

Although there were several achievements made by the Namibian government, there are still many constraints and challenges facing the education system, particularly in the field of teacher support and professional development (Shakwa, 2001). These challenges include the need for in-service training and support for teachers to acquire relevant competencies for effective teaching. Most important is the under-development of formal novice teachers' induction programmes in Namibia to assist novice teachers with difficulties they face in their first years of teaching and particularly with the changes that are currently taking place in the education system. Such changes include the secondary school curriculum and National Professional Standards for teachers in Namibia. The national teacher standards contain 14 areas of competence and 30 key competences that describe what teachers need to know and demonstrate in their teaching and classrooms (Ministry of Education, 2007). Novice teachers are expected to demonstrate these competences like veteran teachers despite their lack of experience. It is hard for a novice teacher to demonstrate the competences like designing and developing long term plans for teaching, administration of learning, guidance, counselling and support, professional development and mentoring without the required induction.

Induction for novice teachers in Namibia has not yet become valued. The induction and mentoring programme for new teachers which is currently being developed in Namibia will be the first programme to render systematic support to new teachers. Currently, novice teachers are being assisted by the senior teachers or otherwise have to formulate their own strategies to adapt to their new environment. Both novice and senior teachers receive the same support either centrally through NIED or regionally through teachers' resource centres, circuits and cluster centres. Assistance is offered in the form of workshops to enrich them with either pedagogic knowledge, or subject matter knowledge, or both. Currently, the principal, the heads of department (HODs) and the subject heads are held accountable to support the professional development of both the old and new teachers as suggested by the Ministry of Education (MOE). In addition, they are required to help newly qualified teachers to adapt to their new situations by means of informal support.

Yet, some schools do not seem to acknowledge the significance of rendering assistance to novice teachers at their schools. Novices are expected to formulate coping strategies and to grapple with the challenges they encounter on their own in spite of their lack of experience and knowledge. School-based assistance is especially lacking in schools located in the rural areas of Namibia. These schools also lack sufficient resources to help novices carry out their teaching effectively. Hence, novice teachers in these schools need more support compared to those teaching in other areas, where more resources are available, but this is not acknowledged.

## **1.2 Motivation for the investigation**

According to Bransford, Darling-Hammond and LePage (2005), teachers need to serve adequately the very first students they teach. These students like any others are entitled to sound instruction and cannot afford to lose a year of schooling to a teacher who is ineffective or learning by trial and error. However, these students are taught by novice teachers and by teachers who are unprepared. They further state that standards of learning are now higher than ever before, as citizens and workers need greater knowledge and

skills to survive and succeed. Novice teachers, therefore, have to find means and best ways to enable learners to acquire these skills, and for novice teachers themselves to become effective and competent teachers in the process. Ubusi (1999) argues that sufficient support services should be provided to beginner teachers rather than placing them in institutions to either adapt to the situation or fail hopelessly. This will not only affect their professional development but also the learners' performance. Some of these novice teachers may be fortunate enough to enter schools that offer support programmes either formally or informally. In these schools novice teachers are assigned a mentor or have a helpful expert teacher to help them cope with these problems. These schools recognize the need to help novice teachers to overcome any sense of anxiety, numbness or isolation they might experience and for them to become competent and skilled professional teachers.

Unfortunately many think that it is not their duty to provide help to their new teachers. They assume that novices know what to do or otherwise have to find out a lot of things by themselves. Novices at these schools are not assigned a mentor or given any orientation about the school setting or environment, they have no one to correct their mistakes (Flores, 2006), yet they are expected to perform like the expert or senior teacher. The study hence presents the following question: How do these novices work to achieve the teaching learning objectives, handle all the tasks given to them and help their learners to achieve despite the lack of induction or professional development at their schools?

This research investigation is further motivated by my experience as a novice teacher at one of the secondary school in northern Namibia. My first year of teaching was a confused period because of the responsibilities that I had to take up as a full time teacher. Being used to be under my supervisor's guidance during teaching practice, it was hard to suddenly be let loose on my own. I had to figure out how things work on my own and how to do things. The expectations that I had about teaching gained from the training institution were at variance with what I experienced when I started full time teaching.



My experience as a novice teacher at that school demonstrated clearly the lack of assistance that novice teachers receive from expert and experienced teachers at the school. In the first place, I did not have a mentor, as it was assumed that I knew what I was expected to do in terms of teaching delivery and the handling of learners in the classroom. Although the school had HODs who were supposed to act as mentor or provide a mentor to novice teachers (Ministry of Education, 2008) they never attended to me.

Due to the lack of support I found teaching some subjects quite challenging and it resulted in poor discipline among learners when they discovered that I did not have the required experience in the subject and teaching method. Learners showed little interest in the subject and at times they even reported me to the HOD. The HOD observed my class once after a complaint but his recommendations afterwards were not helpful. I had to discover means to work through my problems which in most cases were by trial and error, and not all proved successful.

However, I was not the only novice teacher experiencing difficulties. My house is located in the Oshikoto Region of northern Namibia. During weekends and holidays I got a chance to talk to other novice teachers who were teaching in the region. Their stories replicated mine. These teachers too complained of the lack of support given to them by the school, especially the expert teachers. They talked of experiencing problems with classroom management, learners' indiscipline, lack of subject knowledge and there was no one to help them through these problems. Teachers' socialization was lacking in schools and novices had to work in a solitary environment. Despite the lack of support, some of these novice teachers were able to work through their problems and move on to the next year of teaching. However, some of these teachers were forced to resign, while others could not afford to do so for financial reasons. The focus of my study is on the latter group who in the face of seemingly insurmountable problems are forced to develop coping mechanisms.

### **1.3 Significance of the study**

The first year of teaching is regarded as the most devastating yet crucial year in a teaching career. The study hopes to identify the problems faced by novice teachers during their first year of teaching. Many studies previously done have investigated and affirmed problems experienced by novice teachers during their first year of teaching. However, few looked at how these teachers contended with those problems to survive despite the lack of or minimal support they received, especially in the Namibian context. The study hopes to investigate the coping mechanisms novices used during the transition from pre-service teachers to becoming competent, self-confidence and professional teachers which is considered to be the most ambitious phase of the teaching career.

The research findings are also expected to aid novice teachers by providing an evaluation of the coping mechanisms which they have formulated. In addition, it is important to document the coping mechanisms that these teachers used in order that it may be shared with other novice teachers who may be experiencing similar challenges. Furthermore, the finding of the studies wish to add to the importance of the induction programme that is currently being developed by the National Institution for Educational Development (NIED) which is responsible for the professional development of both new and veteran teachers. Teachers who are satisfied with their teaching conditions and well inducted into the profession are less likely to encounter insurmountable challenges or leave the profession.

### **1.4 Research aim and objectives**

The aim of this research is to explore the coping mechanisms used by novice teachers to cope with challenges they face in their first year of teaching.

Derived from this aim are the following **objectives**:

- To identify the challenges novice teachers in the Oshikoto Region of Namibia face in schools while trying to achieve their teaching and learning goals;

- To determine what induction novices receive to overcome the many and varied challenges facing them in the profession;
- To identify and assess the various coping mechanisms which novice teachers develop in order to survive;
- To make recommendations that will help novice teachers specifically with respect to the identified challenges.

### **1.5 Summary of the literature review**

This study focus on how novice teachers survived their first year of teaching, which is considered to be the most important year in their professional development. Much has been written about novice teachers, with the main focus being on the problems encountered by novice teachers and the lack of induction provided to them at their schools (Kerry, 1982; Koeberg, 1999; Veenman, 1984). There have been few studies such as that of Tjivikua (2002) and Shakwa (2001) about novice teachers in the Namibian context but we still do not know much about novice teachers, what problems they encounter and how they deal with their problems.

The first year of teaching is for many a fight for survival as the transition from student teacher training to full time teaching can be a dramatic and traumatic experience. Flores (2006) and Veenman (1984) refer to this as a 'sink or swim' and 'baptism of fire' experience as novice teachers try to cope with the many tasks assigned to them. The process of transition involves conflict and shock (Beijaard, Meijer, Morine-Dersheimer & Tillema, 2005; Flores, 2006; Veenman, 1984). Veenman (1984) refers to this process as a reality or transition shock, when novices discover the harsh reality of everyday classroom life as different from what they had experienced during the teaching practice. This leads to stress and problems on their part.

Many studies have reported on the problems faced by novice teachers during their first years of teaching (Koeberg, 1999; Shakwa, 2001; Veenman, 1984). Veenman (1984) reviewed eighty three studies conducted in different countries and studied fifteen

problems experienced most often by novice teachers. He identified the following eight problems as being most serious: classroom discipline, motivating students, dealing with individual differences, assessing student's work, relations with parents, organization of class work, insufficient material supplies and dealing with individual students. Koeberg (1999) groups various problems experienced by novice teachers into four categories to demonstrate areas in which novice teachers experience problems: problems that arise from lack of orientation, classroom management problems, professional problems and political problems. According to a study done by the National Evaluation of the Basic Education Teacher Diploma in Namibia, novice teachers appeared to experience problems directly related to the Namibian educational context. They, however, also experience some problems the same as other novices in other countries. The study reveals that novice teachers experience problems, such as language, time management, lack of resources, poor participation on the part of the learners, overcrowded classrooms, lack of motivation, absenteeism, discipline problems and problems associated with relationships (Ministry of Education, 1997).

According to Ulvik, Smith and Helleve (2009), novice teachers need support. Even the motivated novice teachers require support to enable them to cope well with the problems they face. It is reported that 15% of novice teachers leave the profession during the first year of teaching while 30% leave the teaching profession during their first two years of teaching (Eldar, Nabel, Schechter, Talmor & Mazin, 2003; Glatthorn, 1999). The reason for leaving the profession is due to the lack of or insufficient support. Good teachers become depressed and leave the profession. Induction programmes are therefore essential in increasing the positive attitudes of novice teachers and hence reduce burnout (Shakwa, 2001; Johnson, Birkeland, Kardos, Kauffman, Lui & Peske, 2001). It is therefore important that professional development through induction programmes is provided to them (Bahta, 2003; Wong, 2004). Although much of the existing literature has emphasized the importance of induction in helping novice teachers to survive their first year of teaching (Cherubini, 2007; Koeberg, 1999), formal programmes of induction have not been implemented on a large scale (Veenman, 1984) especially in developing countries (Bahta, 2003). Nevertheless, apart from the United States of America (USA),

countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia, Israel and New Zealand have also established formal induction programmes (Eldar *et al.*, 2003; Veenman, 1984).

With the lack of support, including a lack of induction for novice teachers, novices are forced to develop their own coping mechanisms, comfortable practices and attitudes to help them survive and to attain their teaching goals (Beijaard *et al.*, 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 1983; Flores, 2006). Coping mechanisms are used as a means for adaptation into a new settlement (Cramer, 1998). In this study coping mechanisms are defined as means designed by novice teachers to alleviate problems they experience during their first year of teaching so as to achieve their teaching goals. Cramer (1998) indicates that coping mechanisms can either be successful or unsuccessful. If it is successful people experience less concern and their performance may be observed to be more effective than those people who do not cope well.

In literature on coping (Bolger, 1990; Dennis, 1997; Taylor, 1998), there seems to emerge eight coping strategies that people utilize to cope with difficult situations: confrontative coping, seeking support, playful problem-solving, self-control, distancing/avoidance, focusing on the positive, accepting responsibility, and denial. According to Taylor (1998) these strategies fall into one of these categories: active or avoidant coping strategies.

A number of studies on coping mechanisms show that some novice teachers are able to employ active coping mechanisms and cope well despite their level of teaching, while others develop active coping mechanisms as they mature professionally (Beach & Pearson, 1998; Cramer, 1998). Other research studies show that the use of successful coping mechanisms depends on different factors, such as personality traits, commitment, organisational attributes and teacher education (Cramer, 1998; Dennis, 1997). Beach and Pearson (1998) did a study on pre-service and novice teachers. Using a qualitative interviewing process they identified three levels of strategies for coping with conflicts and tensions experienced by pre-service teachers which they said are also used by novice teachers. At the first level novices usually **just deny, avoid and mask over the conflicts or tensions** although they are aware of them. Veenman (1984) also observes that when

novices have difficulty managing the class they allow much chaos to go unseen, as if it would go away by itself if not acknowledged. At level two, Beach and Pearson state that there is a use of short term expedient strategies or survival techniques. **They formulate solutions only suitable for achieving a particular end in a given circumstance.** At level three, is the development of **self-interrogation:** at this level novices begin to question their ways of teaching, their perceptions and theories that they use in teaching.

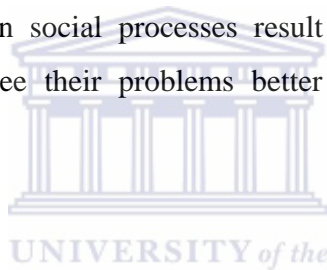
A different study on coping strategies was done by Dennis (1997). Dennis collected data via interviews with novices in their third and fifth year of teaching and discovered four coping strategies utilized by novices to survive their first year. These are personal perception, making supportive network, taking initiative in regard to accessing resources and setting personal and professional goals, and celebrating success.

## **1.6 The developmental framework**

The developmental framework seems to be used more in many studies that deal with novice teachers' problems. The framework emerges from the theories of Vygotsky, Kohlberg and Hunt. The theories postulate that "a person judged at higher stages of development function more complexly, possess a wider repertoire of behavioural skills, perceive problems more broadly, and can respond more accurately and empathetically to the needs of others" (Koeberg, 1999:24). According to Veenman (1984) better performance in the classroom, flexibility, different use of teaching approaches and appropriate coping behaviour exist in teachers at higher cognitive developmental levels than those at the lower cognitive developmental levels. This was no different with beginner teachers at different developmental levels, as they have different views of problems they encounter in the classroom. Veenman (1984) further states that novice teachers at a higher level of development were found to have empathy, flexibility, understanding individual difference and responding to the needs of learners. Novices at lower stages viewed themselves as lacking the power to motivate learners, lacking the management skills and being defensive.

Teacher socialization framework is also considered, as this plays an important role in the development and growth of novice teachers (McKenzie, 2005) and thus in formulating effective coping mechanisms.

The teacher socialization framework has not been well developed and used in most studies on novice teachers. This framework has to do with the social interaction that teachers undergo in becoming effective teachers, the influence that other persons and structures that they interact with have in improving and developing their teaching theories and beliefs (Koeberg, 1999; Jordell, 1987). According to Bahta (2003), socialization proceeds on the basis of interaction and learning. As novice teachers interact with people around them, they learn and develop better ways of coping with their challenges. Thus, socialization allows novice teachers to learn the culture of teaching and to become accepted members. In addition social processes result in changes within the novice teachers to enable them to see their problems better and develop effective coping mechanisms.



## **1.7 Research methodology, research method and design**

The appropriateness of the selected research method depends on the nature of the research problem under investigation. This study focuses on gaining understanding and meaning of novice teachers' coping mechanisms from novice teachers themselves. In addition, the study seeks to interrogate novice teachers' individual experiences, insights and understanding of their first year of teaching. This study is situated in the interpretive, qualitative paradigm.

Qualitative research is an umbrella term in the sense that qualitative research uses a multiple of methods and research practices that are complex and changing (Punch, 2000). Merriam (1998:5) defines qualitative research as "an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with little disruption of the natural setting as possible". It is concerned about understanding the



uniqueness of that setting, how individuals feel to be part of that setting, and how they view the world in their setting. Guest, Mack, Macqueen, Namey and Woodsong (2005) additionally see qualitative methodology as seeking to understand a research question from the perspective of those being studied and not from the researcher's perspective.

The selection of the research methods used by most researchers focusing on novice teachers are mainly determined by the size of the population needed for the survey (Ubusi, 1999). Studies that are conducted amongst a large number of novice teachers mostly use quantitative methods like questionnaires. Data for this study was gathered through individual interviews with novice teachers and their HODs to which they were assigned.

This study was conducted in the Oshikoto Region situated in the northern part of Namibia. The region consists of both rural and urban areas. The main reason for conducting research in this region is because I live in the region and have socialized with most novice teachers teaching in the region. The region consists of six educational circuits, but only five circuits have high schools. However, one of the five circuits only has a private school and this was not included in the study since only government/public schools were considered. The region has seven public secondary schools of which three are located in urban areas and four in rural areas. Since it will be time consuming to conduct research at all seven schools and since qualitative research in general uses small, information-rich samples in order for the researchers to focus in depth on issues important to the study, the study was conducted in four public secondary schools of the region. One school was randomly selected from each circuit.

All novice teachers with two to three years of experience were included in the study. Thus it is important that all novice teachers with their different years of teaching experience were included in the study. Therefore, there were no sampling made on novice teachers. In addition each HOD to which a selected novice teacher was assigned was included in the study. I chose to work with novice teachers from secondary schools because this is the structure I am most familiar with and is the area where I know most



people, this helped me to be most contented as a neophyte researcher without feeling uneasy around the participants.

## **1.8 Data analysis**

Data for this study was analysed by means of interpretive analysis. The purpose of interpretive analysis, according to Blanche, Durrheim and Kelly (2006:321), is to provide a “thick description, which means a thorough description of the characteristics, processes, transactions, and contexts that constitute the phenomenon being studied”. Before interpreting and bringing meaning to information a detailed analysis of data was made. The main themes developed from the data especially with regard to the problems and coping mechanisms of novice teachers were coded and then categorized according to recurring patterns. A list was made of any data segment that seemed to directly relate a strategy used by the first participant as a coping method and another list of problems.

## **1.9 Ethics**

Since social research involves collecting data from people, access to people for research purpose cannot be demanded; permission therefore needs to be requested from those involved for ethical issues. Permission to carry out the research was requested from the gate-keepers (those with power to allow access in schools) in this case the Oshikoto Regional Director and the school principals. Participants in this study were informed how and why they had been chosen to participate in the study. Both novice teachers and the HODs were asked to give their consent to participate. An informed consent form was handed over to each participant to sign in order to gain their permission before the interview. Information was provided about the research and the intended use of data was explained to those involved. I regard this as necessary in order for the participants to decide whether or not to participate in the study. Participation was made voluntary.

Furthermore, confidentiality and anonymity was guaranteed. Participants were assured that personal information would be guarded and would not be made available to any

person who is not directly involved in the study. To protect the identity of the participants and institutions, information would only be made public by a shield of anonymity. The researcher maintained anonymity throughout the study. The novice teachers, the HODs and the schools were coded to protect their identity. During the interviews permission to tape record the interview was asked from the participants.

## **1.10 Chapter outline**

Chapter 1 provides the background of the study and the motivation for the study. This Chapter also contains the main aims of the thesis and the questions that the research wishes to answer. A summary of the literature review is provided. In addition, the methodology used during the field work is outlined.

Chapter 2 provides a detailed review of literature on novice teachers. Since the study is looking at the coping mechanisms used by novice teachers to achieve their teaching goals, it was important to first identify the problems that novice teachers experience. The chapter also looks at the process of induction that helps address the problems of novice teachers. The development of induction programme in different countries including Namibia was discussed. Lastly the chapter examines the coping mechanisms of novice teachers which was the main focus of the study.

Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology used in collecting data for this study. Different aspects of the research method are explained and the motivation for the selected method is provided. The aspects include the research instrument used, the selection of the research site and the sample size. In addition, the chapter presents the shortcomings of the research.

Chapter 4 presents the findings and analysis from the interview transcript.

Chapter 5 provides a summary of the research findings and recommendations. The chapter also identifies possible areas for further research.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Shakwa (2001:6) defines a novice teacher as “a teacher in the entry stage of his/her teaching career, who has little or no teaching experience, except perhaps for some student teaching practice”. For this study the main focus is on how these teachers survived their first year of teaching, which is considered to be the most important year in their professional development.

Much has been written about novice teachers, with the main focus being on the problems encountered by novice teachers and the lack of induction provided to them at their schools (Kerry, 1982; Koeberg, 1999; Veenman, 1984). However, much has not been written about what strategies or coping mechanisms these novices without induction use to deal with the problems they face during their first year of teaching. There have been a few studies such as that of Tjivikua (2002) and Shakwa (2001) about novice teachers in the Namibian context but we still do not know much about novice teachers, what problems they encounter, how they deal with their problems and how they experience their first years as full time teachers. The aim of this study is to explore the coping mechanisms used by novice teachers to cope with challenges they face in their first years of teaching.

This chapter will begin by looking at the literature dealing with the process of transition that novice teachers go through when they enter the teaching profession. The chapter explores the signs of the reality shock in the teaching profession. The chapter goes on to review the literature on the problems that novice teachers encounter during their first year of teaching and examine the roots of the problems. It further reviews literature on coping mechanisms or strategies that novice teachers use to overcome the problems and achieve

their professional goals. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of the findings of the literature review.

## **2.2 The reality shock**

The first year of teaching is for many a fight for survival as the transition from student teacher training to full time teaching can be a dramatic and traumatic experience. Flores (2006), Veenman (1984) and Green (2006) refer to this as a 'sink or swim' and 'baptism of fire' experience as novice teachers try to cope with the many tasks assigned to them. Novice teachers also have to deal with problems of adapting to the new environment (Ulvik *et al.*, 2009) and they feel overwhelmed by the tasks and responsibilities given to them.

According to Shakwa (2001) novices come to the teaching profession with many views of teaching. They imagine themselves being in classes promoting the learning of their learners. When novice teachers enter their first year of teaching the reality of teaching quickly destroys the false impressions that they acquired during pre-service teaching. Novices also come to discover that some things that they expect not to be hard are in fact the most difficult and that there is wide range of activities and tasks involved in teaching (Beijaard *et al.*, 2005). Beijaard *et al.* (2005) further indicate that novice teachers find themselves at variance with the prescribed curricula, instructional programmes, textbooks and other teaching materials.

The process of transition involves conflict and shock (Beijaard *et al.*, 2005; Flores, 2006; Veenman, 1984). Veenman (1984) refers to this process as a reality shock or transition shock, when novices discover the harsh and rude reality of everyday classroom life as different from what they had experienced during the teaching practice.

Veenman (1984:144) identifies five indications of reality shock.

- a) *Perceptions of problems*. These include the problems encountered by novices, complaints about work load, stress and psychological and physical complaints that they bring forward.
- b) The second indication is the *changes of behaviours*. These Veenman says are the changes in teaching behaviours contrary to one's own beliefs because of external pressure.
- c) The third indication is *changes in personality* which involve changes in the emotional domain and self-concept. The change is usually from student-centeredness to a more authoritarian approach.
- d) The *changes of attitudes* relate to changes in belief systems.
- e) An increase in problems leads to novice teachers *leaving the teaching position* due to a great sense of disillusionment.

The education courses offered at universities do not prepare novices for the reality of what to expect in schools (Green, 2006; Sabar, 2004; Ulvik *et al.*, 2009; Veenman, 1984). Veenman (1984) states that the reality shock is mainly caused by inadequate professional training or teaching of subjects for which the novice teachers had not received training. In addition the inadequacy of support or assistance given to novices can also contribute to the reality shock. Ulvik *et al.* (2009) argue that teacher education is not relevant for the realities which await novice teachers at their schools. Hence, novice teachers become more vulnerable to what they experience at schools, where they are supposed to develop their personal and professional identities as teachers. This is supported by Sabar (2004) who states that the knowledge that novice teachers come with from their education institutions is often irrelevant to the knowledge that novices need to cope with when difficult problems occur in their schools. Sabar (2004) further argues that the irrelevance of the academic knowledge that they receive at the institutions increases the feeling of alienation and it is the main cause of novice teachers' sense of depression and confusion. Green (2006) indicates that the teacher education programme is overly theoretical and does not consider the practical problems that may occur in the classroom.

According to Ulvik *et al.* (2009) the transition from teacher education to the teaching profession is too demanding and likely to cause novice teachers to leave the profession, to revert to traditional modes of teaching or to continue in the job with less motivation. Their professional identity is thus influenced by the negative experiences and problems they encounter in their first year of teaching.

## **2.3 Novice teachers' problems**

### **2.3.1 Problems experienced by novice teachers in other countries**

Teaching is one of the few careers where the least experienced members encounter the greatest challenges and duties. Novice teachers with their limited knowledge of subject matters and little practice in teaching, experience frustration, uncertainty, confusion and isolation during their first year of teaching. As Zepeda and Mayers (2001:2) state “being a novice teacher is like being in water over your head, you are floating on a tiny piece of foam that crumbles away every day just a bit”.

Many studies have reported on the problems faced by novice teachers during their first years of teaching (Koeberg, 1999; Veenman, 1984). Veenman (1984) reviewed eighty three studies conducted in different countries and studied fifteen problems experienced most often by novice teachers. He identified the following eight problems as being most serious: classroom discipline, motivating students, dealing with individual differences, assessing student's work, relations with parents, organization of class work, insufficient material supplies and dealing with individual students.

Koeberg (1999) grouped different problems experienced by novice teachers into four categories to demonstrate the generic areas in which novice teachers experience problems.

**Orientation:** this includes all the problems relating to the environment of the school. These include knowing where the classrooms are situated, administrative processes, position of resources, etc. These problems, he states, are short-term and can be overcome

in the short term. Ubisi (1999) also finds that it was hard for novice teachers to know the goals and values of the school and to figure out what is expected of them by the school in terms of everyday practice and behaviour. It is during orientation that novice teachers are opened up to reality. According to Schulze and Steyn (2005) orientation provides novices with essential information such as an explanation of novice teachers' duties, mission and vision of the school, the school rules, procedures and disciplinary policy, resources and school activities. It is during orientation that novice teachers are introduced to colleagues, time table, administrative matters, attendance at school, assemblies and the utilisation of free periods.

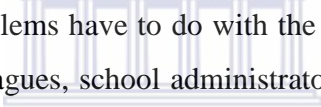
**Classroom management:** these are problems experienced by novices relating to practice from a pedagogical point of view. These include issues that have to do with the curriculum, organizational and teaching skills, e.g. motivating learners, disciplining learners, assessment of learners and using appropriate teaching methods. Most of the problems that novice teachers experience fall in this category since most stressful events tend to happen in the classroom. These problems were also stated by other researchers such as Green (2006), Johnson *et al.* (2001), Kerry (1982), Molly (2008), Schulze and Steyn (2005), Ubisi (1999), Ulvik *et al.* (2009) and Veenman (1984).

Schulze and Steyn (2005) did an investigation into the problems experienced by novice teachers in South Africa. Schulze and Steyn (2005) used questionnaires to test whether the problems novice teachers experience were linked to gender, age, years of experience and the specific education system in which the novice teacher was employed. They found that novice complained about lack of subject knowledge and skills, difficulty with the use of teaching methods as well as time and class management.

Kerry (1982) and Ubisi (1999) argue that some novices may be good at teaching their own subjects, but may feel insecure handling socially disadvantaged learners, e.g. poor readers, slow learners or teaching subsidiary subjects. On the other hand, record keeping techniques were lacking in novice teachers and it was challenging to follow the progress

of many students. A study done by Ulvik *et al.* (2009) on novice teachers in Norway revealed that novice teachers found it difficult to plan for the whole year.

According to Shakwa (2001), novice teachers are more likely to suffer than the veteran teachers. This is because novices are assigned more difficult assignments than the veterans. Veteran teachers choose the easiest jobs, the smart and less problematic students, and give the problematic students to novice teachers. Similarly Sabar (2004) and Schulze and Steyn (2005) show that novice teachers are mostly assigned the most difficult classes, unwanted subjects, larger classes, more difficult students, and more duties than experienced teachers. Shakwa (2001) further states that novice teachers are often given assignments that involve lunch duty, bus duty, monitoring after school detentions, and coordinating the less popular extracurricular activities in which most of them have little or no experience.



**Professional issues:** these problems have to do with the relationships that exist between novice teachers and their colleagues, school administrators, students and the community and the norms and values that guide their communication. Koeberg (1999) refers to these as professional issues, while I would term them professional and social issues. The problems mostly crop up within the existing school culture. Most veterans distance themselves from the novices as they mostly view the innovations that novices bring with them as threatening (Sabar, 2004). Thus in schools two distinct groups exist, that of novice teachers and that of veteran teachers. Because of the lack of interaction between teachers, novices miss out on the experience that experienced teachers can offer them.

Most schools are reluctant to help new teachers as they assume that novices know what they are doing because they did not ask for assistance. As Flores states:

*By and large the nature of communication within the school and its structures (departments and formal meetings) was guided by the assumption that new teachers already had the basic knowledge to handle all the duties required of them (Flores, 2006:20).*



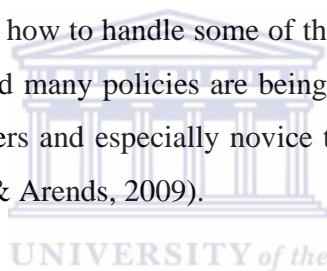
According to Schulze and Steyn (2005), novice teachers reported experiencing problems with isolation as many teachers in the schools have already made their relationships. This is supported by Zepeda and Mayers (2001) who report that many schools are characterized by working conditions of isolation, where teachers do not even hear each other teaching. Such a situation prevents teachers from being collaborative with their peers and drastically reduces the possibilities for them to learn from each other, and to the novice teachers this isolation can be most disadvantageous (Shakwa, 2001).

According to Schulze and Steyn (2005) although novices were excited about becoming teachers their schools did not give them much encouragement and direction which they sorely needed. They reported that they worked alone without much success. Shakwa (2001) however argues that novice teachers' isolation was a result of veterans who believe that novices have to go through what they had also experienced and that it is not their responsibility to render assistance to novice teachers. He further states that novices also contribute to their isolation since they are mostly unwilling to request assistance.

Schulze and Steyn (2005) indicate that novices develop a need for communication with other colleagues and school managers. However, as most of the novice teachers' time is spent with learners in their classrooms or in staff rooms working and planning for their lessons they hardly get time to communicate with others. In addition, novices were also unclear on how to communicate with parents. Their main concerns were how they would be viewed by the parents, pupils, the other staff members and also their principals (Sabar, 2004). They complained about the lack of support from parents and their poor concern for their children's learning (Feiman-Nemser, 1983; Veenman, 1984).

Many new teachers further complained of receiving inappropriate treatment from the educational department officials although novices rarely know what is expected of them, what is permitted and what is not (Sabar, 2004; Schulze & Steyn, 2005). They mostly find themselves being involved in almost all activities at school and take on much of the work of the disengaged teachers (Fataar & Paterson, 2002).

**Political issues:** are particular conditions which mostly originate from political decision making and education policy making. These, Koeberg (1999) states, include insufficient funding that leads to insufficient teaching and learning materials, overcrowded classrooms, rationalization or retrenchment of teachers. Some schools, especially those located in economically depressed communities, are understaffed since many teachers refuse to work under poor conditions. The government pays little attention to these schools. Hence, novices have to teach more classes and are given extra subjects for which they have not received any training (Veenman, 1984). Furthermore, teachers are paid low salaries and given increased workloads. According to Phurutse and Arends (2009) educational changes have given teachers a multiplicity of tasks that they need to fulfil, such as completing administrative work, counselling, pastoral work and mediating. Many of these tasks are not well explained and this has led to confusion about teachers' roles. Novice teachers are not trained how to handle some of these tasks. In addition, education is undergoing major reform and many policies are being created and implemented. This causes confusion among teachers and especially novice teachers as new policies are not well communicated (Phurutse & Arends, 2009).



Schulze and Steyn (2005) found that various novices protest about the poor working conditions they encounter at their schools, such as the lack of teaching materials and textbooks and negligence from the school. In addition, novices feel overwhelmed by the complexity of teaching and an increase in administrative duties instead of them increasing the instructional periods (Phurutse & Arends, 2009).

According to Shakwa (2001), in many schools due to the lack of materials allocated to schools, when a teacher resigns the teachers left behind descend upon the classroom, confiscate any materials, equipment, or furniture of value from the classroom and replace them with their old and broken materials. Hence the new teacher takes up a classroom equipped with leftovers. Novice teachers in rural areas suffer more than those in urban area because there are a lack of facilities and infrastructure in rural areas, unmotivated children and children from poor families who mostly come to schools on empty stomachs and are expected to learn like the rest of the learners. The issue of equity and equality in

the education system is still lacking and need to be given priority. Novice teachers in rural areas also lack assistance from the school and the government (Ibid.).

### **2.3.2 Problems experienced by novice teachers in Namibia**

According to a study done of the National Evaluation of the Basic Education Teacher Diploma in Namibia, novice teachers appeared to experience problems directly related to the Namibian educational context. They, however, also experience the same problems as novices in other countries. The study revealed that novice teachers experience problems, such as language problems, time management, lack of resources, poor participation on the part of the learners, overcrowded classrooms, lack of motivation, absenteeism, discipline problems and problems associated with relationships with colleagues such as the lack of support from colleagues (Ministry of Education, 1997).

According to Shakwa (2001) novice teachers in Namibia, like most novices in other countries, are said to experience isolation and a lack of cooperation from veteran teachers. Isolation among novice and veteran teachers is reported in literature as the main problem for novice teachers (Shakwa, 2001; Veenman, 1984). The veteran teachers were uncomfortable with the new teachers especially because they were using the new system and method of teaching (learner-centred method) which many veterans were not comfortable with (Ministry of Education, 1997). There was then conflict between the two groups of teachers, the novices and veterans, for the following reasons:

*Many novice teachers with a BETD qualification find themselves in schools which neither practise nor fully understand the new style of the curriculum and teaching and were criticized by the senior staff members for wishing to put into practice what they have learned (Shakwa, 2001:56).*

### 2.3.3 Possible roots of novice teachers' problems

Problems experienced by novice teachers can be a result of many factors. Such problems can be a result of personal characteristics, environment or situation factors, lack of proper or adequate teacher preparation and the uncertainty in the job of teaching (Feiman-Nemser 1983; Shakwa 2001; Veenman 1984). Veenman (1984) further states that novices encounter difficulties because they are undertrained for the demands of their job, the selection criteria in the teacher training are not clear or novice teachers had a general teacher training and are not trained for specific jobs in specific schools.

According to Feiman-Nemser (1983:21) there are four roots of novice teachers' problems.

The first root of their problems is the **lack of adequate preparation in the fundamentals of instruction**. Although Feiman-Nemser (1983) argues that the extent to which pre-service programmes can help novices with their problems is unclear, Mandel (2006) argues that novice teachers can be supported by being taught survival skills in their teaching preparation programmes. The courses offered can also deal with novice teachers' problems. This could be an area where teacher pre-service education could improve to help novice teachers survive their first year.

According to Shakwa (2001), teacher preparation is too general and theoretical and it is not teaching students about the specific tasks in schools that concern teaching. He further argues that there exists a gap between theory and practice. More stress is put on the subject matter knowledge and less emphasis on the instructional skills or teaching methodology. Teaching practice for student teachers is given less time and pre-service teachers do not spend enough time in the classrooms teaching. Therefore, it is important that there should be a balance between practical teaching skills and theory or subject knowledge (Phurutse & Arends, 2009).

The second is **the lack of proper organization**. Feiman-Nemser (1983) argues that schools can help novices by providing textbooks and other teaching materials before the first day of the school. Most schools wait until the school commences and the new teacher does not know what to teach since there was no time to prepare for the lesson, the class and to organise teaching and learning materials. In addition, schools mostly fail to assign novices subjects that they are trained to teach and also give new teachers difficult learners to teach.

Various problems that novice teachers encounter are also deep-rooted in the culture of the teaching profession and the conditions of the school as a workplace. Therefore, the problems of novice teachers are also caused by the lack of proper working conditions in the teaching profession itself, to the degree that it adds to an increase of teachers' dissatisfaction (Shakwa, 2001).

**The lack of adequate support at the time of their teaching and lack of prescriptive advice about how to cope with certain kinds of problems** is the third root cause of novice teachers' problems. Novice teachers receive little or no help to assist them with the problems they encounter. Induction programmes are lacking in some countries especially the developing countries; hence novices have to deal with their problems on their own (Craig, Kraft & Du Plessis, 1998). Although the education authorities are aware of the importance of assisting all teachers to help with the professional growth there is no special dispensation for novice teachers (Koeberg, 1999). Schools too are not supportive in promoting the professional growth of their new teachers.

Feiman-Nemser (1983) admits that to know what kind of support novices need is more complicated, since beginners have diverse needs and tend to be selective about whom to turn to. They mostly rely on teachers teaching the same subjects, other novice teachers, those having a similar ideology or just those who are teaching the way they prefer.

Lastly, novice teacher's problems can be caused by their own **personalities and the life situations of the workplace**. Shakwa (2001) agrees that personal causes such as wrong

choice of profession, improper attitudes and unsuitable personality characteristics can result in novice teachers experiencing problems. Veenman (1984) states that during the first year novice teachers are also faced with other challenges such as new responsibilities of making new friends, adjusting to the new environment and culture, staying away from their family and becoming an adult. According to Aitken and Mildon (1992) new teachers are afraid of entering the world of adulthood with so many responsibilities and difficulties. In addition, the emotional and psychological transition phase that a novice teacher experiences can also be a cause of some of the novice teachers' problems (Shakwa, 2001). Feiman-Nemser (1983), however, admits that it is difficult to resolve some of the problems that arise from novice teachers' personalities by formal intervention and it is therefore the responsibilities of pre-service programmes to ensure that appropriate selection criteria are used.

## 2.4 Induction

According to Ulvik *et al.* (2009), novice teachers need support. Even the motivated novice teachers require support to enable them to cope well with the problems they face. The achievement of the novice teachers has an impact on the success of their learners. It is therefore important that professional development through induction programmes is provided to them (Wong, 2004). The first year of teaching is essentially the most important year in the development of a teacher's profession and assistance is required during this year, as Craig *et al.* (1998) argue:

*Teacher development means comprehensive growth and support. From the time teachers begin initial preparation or teaching, provision needs to be made for ongoing development of knowledge of subject matter, concrete skills to teach, observe, assess, and reflect, incentive, and career growth (Craig et al., 1998:55).*

From the very first day novice teachers are expected to perform as veteran teachers although many are not given the necessary assistance. Schulze and Steyn (2005) argue

that novice teachers cannot produce best results and achieve the school's goals without first being adjusted to the school culture and the environment.

Wiebke and Bardin (2009) further state that as from the first day of teaching novice teachers are on their own and they are accountable for many duties, for example managing a class, ensuring student learning and fulfilling administrative duties. Therefore throwing novice teachers into classrooms without support and mentoring will result in the sinking of novice teachers' morale.

The term 'induction' has been differently defined by different authors. Koeberg (1999:27) defines induction as: "The influence exerted on recruits by a profession's admission, preparation, and initiation systems, usually involving special status passages that mark the path to full acceptance and membership." Wong (2004:2), on the other hand, defines induction as: "A comprehensive, coherent, and sustained professional development process that is organized by a school district to train, support, and retain new teachers and seamlessly progresses them into a lifelong learning program." Cherubini (2007:2) defines teacher induction as: "The support and guidance provided to novice teachers in the early years of their teaching careers." There are however commonalities in all three definitions. They all talk about the preparation of the 'recruits', in this case the novice teachers, to become not only members of the profession but acceptable members. According to Eldar *et al.* (2003), it is during induction that novice teachers are prepared, supported and guided to learn features of the teaching profession to help them cope with problems they experience as first year teachers, in order to perform their expected responsibilities successfully and to become effectual teachers.

Induction is seen as a continuous process that begins in the early years of teaching and continues all the way through the teaching profession. All the problems facing novice teachers need to be addressed during induction and experienced teachers help them develop professionally. Induction can either be formal or informal. During informal induction there is no official process, no compensation, training, or time release for those involved. However, with formal induction there are well trained mentors who are given



compensation for their work and time release (Craig *et al.*, 1998; Wiebke & Bardin, 2009).

Induction consists of many activities of which mentoring is one. Although mentoring is mostly misused and confused with induction they have different meanings. According to Wong (2004) induction is a process that is meant for the professional development of novice teachers, while mentoring is an action actually what mentors do. A mentor is someone whose responsibility it is to help new teachers survive their first years. The common activities of induction include printing materials about employment conditions and school regulations, orientation visits to the school before the first year of teaching, release time for both the mentor and the new teacher, group meetings between beginning teachers for emotional support, consultations with experienced teachers, the assignment of an experienced teacher as a helping teacher, workshops on certain topics, reduction in work loads, observation and team work (Veenman, 1984).

In countries that do not have formal induction, assistance for novices can be rendered by the school's staff members, a teacher teaching the same subject, head of subject, school counsellor, supervisor or a school principal, parents and also friends (Eldar *et al.*, 2003). Other countries such as Israel, induction programmes are run by teacher colleges, the academic schools of education and by the education department (Craig *et al.*, 1998).

Principals have the most influential role in the induction of novice teachers. Novices generally expect their school principals to be more involved in their work (Eldar *et al.*, 2003; Wong, 2004) but the principals seem to lack interest in them and what they are doing. Because of the power and the position of principals, novices rarely approach the principal for help or support. They are ashamed to share their problems (Bahta, 2003). According to Wong (2004) the reason why most mentoring programmes do not succeed is because of the lack of principals' involvement since the principals' support is important in sustaining the credibility of mentors with novice teachers.



Most novice teachers have, however, complained of the lack of assistance given to them (Wong, 2004). Most first year teachers were eager to become teachers but stated that they required much more encouragement and direction than they were receiving from their schools (Johnson *et al.*, 2001; Wong, 2004). Johnson *et al.* (2001) acknowledge that there was a lack of guidance for novice teachers on how to teach or what to teach; hence most first year teachers have to fight on their own, cobble together content and materials which in most cases have no connection and use only short-term goals to achieve the learning goals. The meetings that were arranged were only meant to disseminate information rather than to share problems and strategies with novice teachers. This is supported by Her Majesty's Inspectors (1982) who state that novice teachers are not being provided with conditions that can promote their professional growth.

#### **2.4.1 The importance of induction programmes**

It is reported that 15% of new teachers leave the profession during the first year of teaching while 30% of novices leave the teaching profession during their first two years of teaching (Eldar *et al.*, 2003; Glatthorn, 1999), and those who are likely to leave are the most talented and experienced. In addition, attrition is more among high school teachers than primary school teachers (Eldar *et al.*, 2003; Sabar, 2004).

The reason why many novices leave the teaching profession is due to insufficient support and training. As argued by Johnson *et al.* (2001), often novice teachers because of the minimal support, struggle on their own leading to depression and lack of commitment to teaching. This results in novice teachers leaving the profession. Thus, according to Shakwa (2001), induction programmes are essential since they increase the positive attitudes of novice teachers about the teaching profession and prevent burnout of new teachers. This is supported by Bahta (2003) who states that if novice teachers are not given proper assistance they might develop negative behaviours toward the teaching profession such as becoming authoritarian, dominating and custodial toward learners.

Craig *et al.* (1998) accentuate that induction programmes that guide and support beginning teachers in their first year of teaching are crucial in developing sound teaching practice and also to retain more teachers in the profession. Shakwa (2001) states that induction helps with the development of the knowledge and skills that novices need to be successful in their first year of teaching. Cherubini (2007) argues that expecting novice teachers to perform like veterans from the first day is unfair especially without any assistance. Induction contributes to novice teachers' effectiveness and pedagogical practice and it should be seen as crucial for novice teachers' professional development.

#### **2.4.2 The development of induction programmes in developed countries**

Although much of the existing literature has emphasized the importance of induction in helping novice teachers to survive their first year of teaching (Cherubini, 2007; Flores, 2006; Koeberg, 1999; Mandel, 2006), formal programmes of induction have not been implemented on a large scale (Veenman, 1984) especially in developing countries (Bahta, 2003). Nevertheless, apart from the United States of America (USA), countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia, Israel and New Zealand have also established formal induction programmes (Eldar *et al.*, 2003; Veenman, 1984).

There have also been seemingly rising interest and support for induction programmes among countries such as the Republic of China, the Republic of Korea, Canada and Japan, as they become aware of the fact that the first year of teaching is crucial for the development of effective skills and positive attitudes of new teachers (Craig *et al.*, 1998). In China, immediately after the new teachers graduate, responsibility for training them occurs through a minimum three year apprenticeship which some schools extend to five years.

According to Craig *et al.* (1998) there are a few countries with highly developed induction and internship programmes, for example in New Zealand and Japan. Novice teachers in New Zealand are given the first year as a continuation of the initial training they received in colleges. They are only allowed to become qualified registered teachers

after the completion of at least two years of classroom experience. Novice teachers are provided with advice and guidance programmes during the initial two years. In addition to the above, novices are provided with teaching resources and are being observed by experienced teachers. They are offered personal support, appraisals for their improvement, and a written record of the induction programme.

In Japan, novice teachers are given reduced workloads, attend in-school service training two times a week and receive out-of-school training once a week. Activities covered during the out-of-school training include visiting other schools, social education facilities, child welfare facilities and private cooperation. Schools that employ one novice teacher are assigned a part time lecturer while those employing two novice teachers are given a full time teacher in order to support the induction programme (Craig *et al.*, 1998).

Most schools in Australia offer induction and support programmes to their own novice teachers. According to Craig *et al.* (1998) the Australian Education Union has created policy guidelines for launching induction programmes. The policies recommended that there should be an induction period of one year, placement in a supportive environment with senior teachers (at least 80%) time release, a period of reflection, review and informal appraisal and professional development and formal appraisal for permanency or full registration.

In the Czech Republic novice teachers are given ten weeks of practice at a certain school or another educational institution. During the first year of teaching the novice teachers are assigned experienced mentors to help them overcome their initial difficulties. Assistance offered by the mentor encompasses varieties of activities, such as mutual observations of classes, analysis of the teaching process, discussion about the teaching methods and subject contents, introduction to the social and professional life of the staff and consultations with students and parents (Tedesco, 1997).

According to Tedesco (1997) young graduates in Germany undergo a practical introduction in the form of the preparatory service which lasts up to two years. The prime

task of the preparatory service is to give novice teachers the expertise they will require in their complex role as teachers, counsellors and educators. The expertise helps them to perform their duties in line with their individual abilities. Novices are required to sit in the classrooms and observe lessons of other teachers and also teach lessons in schools under the supervision of a tutor. Tedesco (1997) further states that novice teachers are also expected to attend further courses in teaching methods at training centres where they work on and analyse the experience that they have obtained in the classrooms in greater depth.

In Britain most of the induction programmes have certain characteristics in common although there are some differences among them. Novice teachers are given a reduced teaching-load of up to 25%. In addition, a veteran teacher is appointed to help a group of novices consisting of fewer than 10 novice teachers. Novices are also offered special college courses during the school year and these courses differ in length and novices are not required to pay for them (Feiman-Nemser, 1983). Feiman-Nemser (1983) states that novice teachers in Britain are not assessed.

However, the induction in the State of Georgia entails evaluation and permanent certification of novice teachers. During the first year of teaching novices are evaluated on the basis of 14 competencies that were formulated by a programme of research and development sponsored by the state. Another evaluation is also carried out by the school administrators where the novice is placed and by a master teacher certified in the same area. All three evaluations help in determining what remediation is essential and when competence is achieved.

### **2.4.3 Novice teachers' induction programmes in Africa**

There are few countries in the Africa with formal induction. However, during the 1990s some countries adopted school-based in-service programmes. These include countries such as Lesotho, Ghana and Swaziland. Novices are given some means of orientation and introduction to the profession, for example personnel from teacher training institutions

follow up the progress of novices in their schools or inspectors and supervisors are expected to visit schools and provide help to novice teachers (Bahta, 2003; Craig *et al.*, 1998). In addition, experts from the working and business world support new teachers by providing in-service training in businesses. Some teachers are given a reduced teaching load in exchange for providing assistance to new teachers.

In Swaziland, novice teachers in secondary schools are given continuous assessment on their teaching so that decision is made on the kind of assistance to be offered. Head teachers are held responsible for assisting novice teachers with the problems they experience. In some schools though formal system of supervision and mentoring is lacking and in other schools assistance is voluntary depending on whether the novices made friends with the veteran teachers (Mazibuko, 1999).

In South Africa, however, although there is no formal induction currently, there have been an ongoing number of research studies emphasising the need for the induction of novice teachers (Koeberg, 1999; Phurutse & Arends, 2009; Ubisi, 1999). Phurutse and Arends (2009) emphasise that in cases where support for novice teachers is rendered, it usually comes from the school district office or from the school governing bodies (SGBs). They further accentuate that some schools that provide induction and mentoring through their SGBs raise funds for the induction and mentoring programmes of their new teachers. However, the SGBs occasionally do not know the needs for novice teachers since they are not professionally trained to carry out this task. As a consequence, the support may become less advantageous (Phurutse & Arends, 2009). Other schools, particularly those from poor communities do not provide assistance for their novice teachers as they are still struggling to acquire basic necessities.

According to Koeberg (1999), education policies in South Africa since the 1990s have proposed a professional development initiative for all teachers but have omitted specific developmental assistance for beginning teachers. He further states that education policies in South Africa need to be reviewed to accommodate novice teachers in order to promote their professional growth and to create competent teachers who are able to reflect on their

teaching practices. This, Koeberg says, will enable teachers to improve the schooling outcomes of their learners.

After independence, the Government of Namibia decided to re-organise the in-service and the pre-service training for teachers to meet the new demands that the Government was facing. The demands included the requirement of the use of learner-centered teaching in every classroom (Mutwa, 2001). According to Mutwa (2001) in-service training was given first priority as there was a need to improve their competence and change their teaching style from teacher-centered to learner-centered practice. This in-service training was meant to support all teachers irrespective of their teaching experience and it is still the same in-service training that is taking place in Namibia currently. There is no special treatment meant for new teachers.

Induction in Namibia has not yet received sufficient consideration. Currently there is no formal induction in Namibia but informal school-based assistance is given to novice teachers in some schools. This informal induction is either offered by the principal, heads of departments or by senior teachers under whom the novices are placed. According to Shakwa (2001), novice teachers in Namibia undergo probation from the date of appointment for a 12 month period, but it is still unclear as to how long one remains a novice teacher in Namibia. During their first year, novice teachers are supposed to be observed and assessed on their progress within the school by the head of department, the principal or an assigned teacher who is usually a senior teacher. Shakwa further states that during their first year of teaching assistance given to novice teachers is also monitored.

The MOE holds the school principal accountable to support the professional development of his or her staff, both novice and veteran teachers. For the principals to succeed with the professional development of teachers, they need new expertise and clear guidance on how to provide the systematic support required for beginning teachers. However, this kind of support is not available to the principals (Shakwa, 2001).

Currently in Namibia, the responsibilities of inducting novice teachers are shifted to the subject heads in schools. Their responsibilities are:

- assisting new and beginner teachers in all aspects;
- allocating mentor teachers to novice teachers and conducting an effective induction programme for novice teachers;
- providing school-based staff development programmes;
- allocating teachers according to their specialization; and
- providing for specialist assistance to subject teachers, e.g. by advisory teachers, cluster subject groups, etc.

The subject head is not an officially designated post, and the role of the subject head can be performed by the principal, vice-principal, head of department or senior teacher (Ministry of Education, 2008).

It is, however, hard for the principals, heads of department and veteran teachers to give sufficient assistance needed by novice teachers since they also have to attend to their own classes and other responsibilities. Principals have many duties and they can only delegate the responsibilities of inducting novice teachers to senior teachers who also have to teach full time without a reduced teaching load. In addition, schools in rural areas possess fewer resources and technologies that would encourage and attract newly qualified teachers to come to these schools which also lack assistance for novice teachers (Shakwa, 2001). It would be expected that the introduction of the systematic induction of novice teachers in these areas would result in qualitative benefits for these schools.

In conclusion, the national institution for educational development has, however, recognised the challenges that novice teachers face during the transition process and has started working on a formal yet flexible induction and mentoring programme for novice teachers which it is hoped will be implemented by 2015. The programme will help ease the transition of novice teachers and also address the individual problems they encounter. Novices are expected to go through induction for their first two years (Shakwa, 2009). The aims of the programme will be to:



- provide novice teachers with the information they need, as well as helping them to understand as quickly as possible how the school works;
- ensure that new teachers make an easy transition from student to practitioner and that they are productive as quickly as possible;
- ensure high morale and a positive attitude towards teaching by novice teachers; and
- ensure good quality and high standards of teaching.

## 2.5 Coping mechanisms

Many researchers around the world have tried to understand how novice teachers develop mechanisms to help them cope with the many and varied challenges facing them (Dennis, 1997; Flores, 2006; Beach & Pearson, 1998). Renard (2003) argues that there are problems that novices can only learn to deal with through experience, by trial and error, or by reflecting on their successes and failures. This is supported by Feiman-Nemser (1983) who states that new teachers have two jobs, that of teaching and of learning to teach, since there are things that they can only learn on the job. Although studies have stated that novices develop coping mechanisms to deal with the problems they encounter, many have not stated what coping mechanisms novices use.

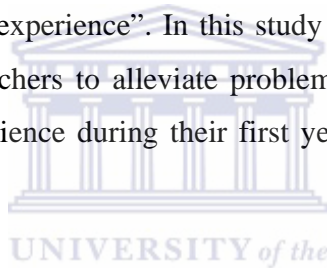
Although all novices strive to survive their first year, how they survive determines the kind of teachers they become in future and the strategies that they employ to cope with their problems usually last throughout their entire teaching career (Feiman-Nemser, 1983). Whether these mechanisms benefit the learners or not, what matters to novice teachers is that they have worked through the problem. In some cases these coping mechanisms can be successful or unsuccessful (Cramer, 1998). Feiman-Nemser (1983) further states that the use of unsuccessful coping mechanisms can lead to professional reduction, especially when the novices refuse to let go those practices that helped them through the first year. That is why it is so important that novice teachers are given assistance during their first year to prevent the problems they experience, and thus



minimize the use of unsuccessful coping mechanisms. An understanding of coping mechanisms which involves attempts to control or reduce internal and external demands is essential when considering assisting novice teachers.

### **2.5.1 Definition of coping mechanism**

The study of coping mechanism has been used in different disciplines such as psychology, anthropology, sociology and education. The coping mechanism is used as a means for adaptation into a new settlement (Cramer, 1998). Cramer (1998: 921) states that “coping mechanisms involves a conscious, purposeful effort” with the intention of resolving a problem or managing a situation. Pearlin and Schooler (1978), on the other hand, define “Coping as behaviour that protects people from being psychologically harmed by problematic social experience”. In this study I define coping mechanisms as means designed by novice teachers to alleviate problems or resolve the situations that cause the problems they experience during their first year of teaching so as to achieve their teaching goals.



In life people experience problems and stressful events with which they cope. Coping can be successful or unsuccessful. If it is successful people experience less concern and their performance may be observed to be more effective than those people who do not cope.

In literature on coping (Bolger, 1990; Dennis, 1997; Taylor, 1998), there seems to emerge eight coping strategies that people utilize to cope with difficult situations: confrontative coping (taking action to remove the problem), seeking support (looking for help, information or advice on what to do, finding sympathy or emotional support from someone), planful problem-solving (planning on how to deal with the problem or planning active coping efforts), self-control, distancing/avoidance (reducing threat by becoming psychologically isolated from the situation that causes stress), focusing on the positive (appraising the situation in a positive way), accepting responsibility (accepting the fact that there is a problem and it is real), and denial (rejecting the reality of the problem) (Bolger, 1990; Taylor, 1998).

According to Taylor (1998) these strategies can fall into one of these categories: active or avoidant coping strategies. Active coping strategies are “either behavioural or psychological reaction in order to modify the nature of the problem or how one thinks about it, while avoidant coping strategies lead people into activities (such as alcohol use) or mental states (such as withdrawal) that keep them from directly addressing stressful events” (Taylor, 1998:1). Taylor further states that active coping strategies are considered to be more effective with stressful events while avoidant coping strategies appear to be a psychological risk factor to stressful life events.

Nonetheless, the above mentioned coping strategies apply to the way people cope in life in their marriage, career, etc. The question is, are these coping strategies employed by novice teachers to confront and deal with the problems they stumble upon? It is surprising to find that so little attention has been given to the exact ways in which novice teachers cope with the many challenges and problems they encounter during their first year of teaching.

Beach and Pearson (1998) did a study on pre-service and novice teachers. Using a qualitative interviewing process they identified three levels of strategies for coping with conflicts and tensions experienced by pre-service teachers which they said are also used by novice teachers.

At the first level novices usually **just deny, avoid and mask over the conflicts or tensions** although they are aware of them. They avoid dealing with the problems thinking that they will go away with time. According to Pearlin and Schooler (1978) most people use the denial strategy as an effort to lessen the consequences the problems can bring about and do not necessarily direct their efforts to solving problems. Veenman, (1984) also observed that when novices have difficulty managing the class they allow much chaos to go unseen, as if it would go away by itself if not acknowledged. During the lessons when learners are making noise, the novices will either just look at them or they continue teaching without taking any action to manage the class (Kerry, 1982; Beach &

Pearson, 1998). It can also be seen when learners do not do their home work novice teachers tend to ignore them and fail to attend to the problematic learners.

Kerry (1982) further states that novice teachers do many things to avoid their learners and the problems they will cause them. He listed what he calls survival techniques for novice teachers, which included gaining maximum free periods, avoiding the loss of free periods, stealing extra minutes before and after breaks, sending difficult pupils to other staff members, absenteeism, not volunteering for extra work, finding secret hiding places in stock cupboards, escaping the public for lunch, giving more quizzes, and copying pupils' style of dress or speech. He states that all these survival techniques are designed to deflect tension or stress.

Beach and Pearson (1998) discover that when the novice teachers are unable to cope, they distance themselves from dealing directly with the experience by treating it as a slight incident. Distancing has been observed as a coping strategy in a few studies (Bolger, 1990; Taylor, 1998). This is also supported by Karen Horney, quoted by Wikipedia (2009), who states that individuals can move toward those perceived as a threat to avoid retribution and getting hurt physically or mentally. In the case of novice teachers this can be mental. Thus novices would try to make friendship with their learners and staff members in order to avoid problems. In addition, other individuals can distance themselves from those perceived as a threat to avoid getting hurt. Most novices will find support in the classrooms by talking to and learning from their learners and from positive feedback they offer (Ulvik *et al.*, 2009).

According to Beach and Pearson (1998) novices tend to learn to predict how long their lesson will take and this will have an unfortunate result. When they realize that they are likely to have time left at the end of the class, they are sometimes tempted to create meaningless work with the sole purpose of making sure that students are constantly occupied.

At level two, Beach and Pearson state that there is a use of short term expedient strategies or survival techniques. **They formulate solutions only suitable for achieving a particular end in a given circumstance.** These are short-term strategies that led to little if any interrogation of their own personal theories of teaching or belief system. As Feiman-Nemser (1983) states “what helps in a short-run may not be educative in the long-run; nor will it necessarily build and sustain the teacher’s capacity to learn from teaching and to keep asking questions”. Beach and Pearson (1998) give an example of making revisions in a problematic lesson as one of the short term expedient strategies. Thus the novice will re-teach the lesson when for example there was ill discipline during the previous lesson but does not identify the causes of the problem.

Novices also have a propensity to imitate their colleagues when teaching the same subject and lesson without really questioning why that teacher is using the method or why she or he is teaching that way. Most researchers have found out that most novice teachers usually use the strategies they experienced while pupils in the classrooms and cling to them throughout their entire careers in order to survive the experience and this in most cases leads to little or no professional growth (Bahta, 2003; Beijaard *et al.*, 2005; Veenman, 1984).

According to Claynes (2008) novice teachers adopt strategies regardless of the students’ different learning styles or the suitability of such a strategy for subjects being taught. Claynes further states that because of the novice teachers’ need to cover the subject content and their focus on teaching instead of learning, novice teachers tend to use more of the teacher-centred method. This is supported by Woods (1980) who states that chalk and talk or lecture method was not really something that novices choose because it is the best teaching method but because it is a coping mechanism. Woods further states that because of the difficulties that teachers experience and the lack of support and resources to help novices deal with the problems they experience, novice teachers do not have much opportunity for planning and thus use the lecture method.

The use of lecture method permits novices to control the lesson and also prevents 'difficult' questions to be asked by learners during the lesson to which they may not know the answers. As one novice stated in the study done by Aitken and Mildon (1992):

*“Most of my class is teacher-centered. I do not understand how to implement discovery/activity-centered learning. Transition seems to be my ‘safety’ mechanism. I fall back into it when I feel that things are out of control. It is not how I want to teach, I just do not know how else to do it. (Aitken & Mildon, 1992:19)*

These short term strategies, Beach and Pearson (1998) claim, only provide temporary relief of the problems and do not address the beliefs and attitudes underlying conflicts and tensions of novice teachers.

At level three is the development of **self-interrogation**. At this level novice teachers become more aware of the complexities involved in the teaching profession. They begin to question their ways of teaching, their perceptions and theories that they used in teaching. This self-interrogation is mainly caused by the desire of novice teachers to change and the need to address the problem (Beach & Pearson, 1998).

Beach and Pearson (1998) argue that novices start to reflect on the need to define their own curriculum choices based on their own beliefs in ways that go beyond the school curriculum to generate more solutions. They realize that they cannot keep away from inventing long-term solutions to the problems they are experiencing. Beach and Pearson (1998) further add that in order for novice teachers to reconcile their problems, there was a call for them to scrutinize the disparities in their beliefs and the attitudes underlying these problems.

According to Beijaard (2005) and Ulvik *et al.* (2009) most novice teachers believe that their teacher education programmes are of much help in their classrooms. Teacher educators feel that teacher training teaches them how to interrogate their teaching practice

systematically. They hence develop their own instructional skills and beliefs about how students learn. Sabar (2004) studied the process of novice teacher's adjustment to the teaching profession and to school culture in Israel and found that novice teachers after a few months of teaching were able to reflect on their success and failure and gained some confidence in their teaching. They were able to make changes in their actions and establish channels of communication with other colleagues in school. As one novice from Sabar's study states:

*'At the beginning, I gave the children reinforcement but that led to dependency, so, together with them I created a behavioural contract through which I hope that they will function with internal motivation'*  
(Sabar, 2004:155).

Reflection is an important process in teaching. According to Parsons and Brown (2002) teaching contains so much ambiguity and complications which teachers cannot learn during pre-service training. It is important for teachers to reflect in and on their action (Brooks, 2004) and make adaptations based on their own unique situation. Active teachers who are inspired to reflect on their teaching and their attitudes toward teaching develop high quality of learning. When they question their own practice, they explore new ideas, cooperate with other teachers and can create their own vision of classroom practice and hence act as important change agents (Parsons & Brown, 2002).

Parsons and Brown (2002) further state that this is important if the teacher is to become effective. They must be able to observe the learning process, be active participants in the classroom able to analyze and interpret ideas offered in the classroom in turn using the ideas to plan and make appropriate decisions. According to Brooks (2004) reflection is crucial in professional development. Brooks further states that reflective practitioners carry on developing as they build on previous experiences which act as indication point, guiding their thoughts and practices.

A different study on coping strategies of novice teachers was done by Dennis (1997). Dennis found that teachers, who perceive teaching as important and valuable, will find means to cope with and work around obstacles. According to Dennis (1997) novice teachers are able to thrive and survive their problems on their own. Although there is no support provided for them, they discover ways to generate support through their own personal choices.

Dennis (1997) discovered **four key coping strategies** utilized by novice teachers to survive their first year and survive in the teaching profession. These strategies are personal perception, making supportive connections with people, taking initiative with regard to accessing resources and setting personal and professional goals, and celebrating the success.

Dennis (1997) states that novice teachers involved in his study perceive themselves to be able, capable and responsible of their students' learning, believing that they have the ability to deal with the requirements placed upon them in the profession. Although they experience lots of negative challenges, novices make efforts not to engage in talks that will demoralise and make them feel powerless but focus on the positive aspects. This is what Taylor (1998) calls positive appraisal. Novices also ensure that they are up to date with current affairs in order to boost their knowledge and confidence as teachers.

Apart from using their personal perceptions, Dennis (1997) discovered that novices were able to make supportive connections with people. Novice teachers made relationships either with their colleagues in school or go beyond traditional relationships and establishing personal relationships with people outside of school. Novice teachers usually find someone who they can relate to and who understands them. They also establish communication networks through the internet. Novices trust that doing things alone is tough as you will not know what is good or what is bad. Colleagues also get to challenge and support them. Novices were also found to establish relationships with their students emphasising that they need to have fun with their students otherwise learning will not



take place. Relationships, both socially and professional, are therefore viewed as key components in how to survive teaching (Dennis, 1997).

Flores (2006) observes that socialization of novice teachers was common in schools without induction. Novices sit together and talk about issues relating to their classrooms. Support of peers undergoing similar socialization reassures novice teachers that their experience have been and continue to be experienced by others and that there are ways to support each other. Novice teachers also seek help from veterans who are teaching the same subject in the same or different school who they think are able to provide them with mentoring (Beach & Pearson, 1998). Beach and Pearson further add that some novice are reluctant to ask for help as they are scared that others would think that they are not capable of handling their problems or that they are experiencing too many problems. They hence share their problems with other novices and those teachers they feel would maintain some degrees of confidentiality.

Moreover, many novice teachers admitted that it is hard to access support and teaching materials. The system provided them with less or no support. However, to survive novices needed to take initiatives in regard to accessing resources and setting personal and professional goals (Dennis, 1997). Novice teachers make all efforts to attend available workshops and collect all the handouts and ideas generated. Furthermore, borrowing materials from other teachers and searching the stockrooms for materials long-forgotten help them in accessing resources. As one novice in the study states:

*Resources are a problem but there are ways to get them. Get to know the secretary and the principal. Whoever is in charge of budget. Make sure you make friends quickly. There's usually lots of stuff that teachers have ordered and that they don't use. I grab that stuff (Dennis, 1997:67).*

Furthermore, novice teachers who found themselves in schools without clear organisational goals take charge of their own professional growth and learning. Novices set their own teaching goals and reflect on them at the end of the year. For others



regardless of the goals that are already in place in schools, they still set their own personal and professional goals by reflecting on their necessities as teachers and those of their learners. These also enable them to challenge the status quo.

Lastly, Dennis (1997) identifies the celebrating of success as another strategy that novices employ to cope with their problems. They see that it was important to make a big deal of every effort they use to achieve a goal. Dennis acknowledges that most teachers feel that since they lack the ability to help a difficult student they are failures. Hence, they forget to celebrate the success of having assisted the other 26 learners in class.

The study of Beach and Pearson (1998) seems to order the coping strategies of novice teachers along a developmental and maturity dimension. Meaning that as novice teachers develop through the year they tend to use active coping mechanisms and become better at handling their problems. The study of Dennis (1997), on the other hand, views coping mechanisms of novice teachers as being situationally and personality dependent. Thus, the coping strategy is determined by the effect of the situation or how individuals tend to behave in various situations (Cramer, 1998).

### **2.5.2 Factors that may influence the use of active coping mechanisms**

Many novice teachers are able to employ active coping mechanisms and cope well despite their level of teaching, while others develop active coping mechanisms as they mature professionally. However, studies have shown that the use of successful coping mechanisms depend on different factors, such as personality traits in teaching, commitment, organisational attributes and teacher education (Cramer, 1998; Dennis, 1997).

The ability to cope with problems may depend on the personality characteristics of people that enable them to overcome the external pressures facing them. Pearlin and Schooler (1978) argue that the possession of the correct personality traits offers one the ability to deal with life problems successfully. Dennis (1997) also indicates that the use of

successful coping mechanisms depends on novice teachers' personal attributes that they bring along to teaching. Most new teachers are attracted to teaching because they enjoy working with people, inform, assist, train or are expert in words. Others are attracted to teaching because it offers them an atmosphere of support because of the existence of people who share the same personality type as they. Dennis (1997) further explains that novices who tend to engage in negative discussion about teaching are likely to feel helpless and powerless to effect change. Although people would choose how to behave and interact with the world, there are often forces that require them to use their less strong characteristics and in most cases use them effectively (Dennis, 1997).

The organisational situation that most people find themselves in determines what coping mechanisms to draw on. Since different situations will give rise to diverse types of stress or problems, it would bring forth different coping mechanisms (Cramer, 1998). Novice teachers in functional schools (i.e. schools with organisational resources, the managerial and leadership capacity, motivated teacher corps with positive self-concepts as teachers, staff support, respected sets of rules and obligations and the learning environment shaped by systematic order) may find themselves coping well, employing active coping mechanisms with the help of other staff members (Fataar & Paterson, 2002). However, novices who are employed in dysfunctional schools (i.e. schools located in rural areas, with the lack of a culture of learning and teaching, learners from disrupted and poor family structures, unmotivated teachers, learners with disruptive behaviour, disorderly environment, lack of support of staff support) are more likely to experience difficulty in coping and especially using active coping mechanisms, and resort to avoidant coping strategies.

Teacher education is crucial in providing teachers with opportunities to practise mastering of new behaviours that lead to positive thinking and opportunities to develop collaboration skills among teachers to support each other both personally and professionally (Dennis, 1998). Dennis states that such opportunities have an impact on the survival of teachers, helping them to become more "personally hardy" as well as to support teachers to engage in strategies that will enable them to grow as individuals and

professionals. It is reported that teacher education fails to prepare new teachers to carry out their teaching tasks. According to Phurutse and Arends (2009) teachers are not taught to deal with the practicality of everyday classroom life and to manage diverse classrooms. New teachers therefore find it hard to cope with the reality of teaching and their expanded roles they face in schools.

## **2.6 Developmental framework**

The developmental framework seems to be used more in many studies that deal with novice teachers' problems. The framework emerges from the theories of Vygotsky, Piaget, Kohlberg and Hunt. The theories postulate that 'persons judged at higher stages of development function more complexly, possess a wider repertoire of behavioural skills, perceive problems more broadly, and can respond more accurately and empathetically to the needs of others' (Koeberg, 1999:24). According to Veenman (1984) better performance in the classroom, flexibility, different use of teaching approaches and appropriate coping behaviour exist in teachers at higher cognitive developmental levels than those at the lower cognitive developmental levels.

This was no different with beginner teachers at different developmental levels, as they have different views of problems they encounter in the classroom. Veenman (1984) further states that novice teachers at a higher level of development were found to have empathy, flexibility, understanding individual difference and responding to the needs of learners. Novices at lower stages view themselves as lacking the power to motivate learners, lacking the management skills and being defensive.

## **2.7 Teacher socialization framework**

According to Vonk (1989) teacher's professional development results from the interactions between the teacher's individual characteristics and the institutional constraints of the professional environment. "The central issue here is the beginner teachers' adaptation to the attitudes, opinions, values, norms and skills which exist among

a particular group of teachers, students, and school management of which he is seeking to become an active and effective member of the group” (Vonk, 1989:7). This is usually referred to as teacher socialization or professional socialization. Lacey (1977:13) defines socialization as the development of sets of behaviours and perspectives by an individual as he/she confronts social situations”. The teacher socialization framework has not been well developed and used in most studies on novice teachers. This framework has to do with the social processes that teachers undergo in becoming effective teachers, the influence that other persons and structures that they interact with have in improving and developing their teaching theories and beliefs (Jordell, 1987; Koeberg, 1999).

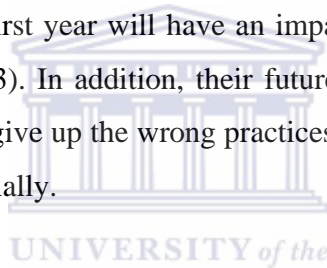
According to Bahta (2003), socialization proceeds on the basis of interaction and learning. As novices interact with people around them, they learn and develop better ways of coping with their challenges and become effectual teachers. Thus, socialization allows novice teachers to learn the culture of teaching and to become accepted members. In addition, social processes result in changes within the novice teachers to enable them to see and understand their problems better and develop effective coping mechanisms. McKenzie (2005) argues that most of the classroom styles and strategies that are adopted by novice teachers are powerfully affected by the outlooks and orientations of their colleagues with whom they socialize. Novice teachers thus gain some insight as to how the teachers in the school operate and these actions are transferred to novice teachers. These help novice teachers in developing effective coping strategies particularly if the teachers they are working with are exceptional teachers (McKenzie, 2005).

## **2.8 Understanding the development of novice teachers and their coping mechanisms**

The coping mechanisms of novice teachers can be understood well when viewing their development as that of child development, especially using the theories of Piaget, Vygotsky and Erickson. The coping mechanisms used by novice teachers during their first year of teaching vary depending on their level of teaching since they also begin to

experience different problems as they move on (Veenman, 1984). Novice teachers seem to resemble the development of children who are growing and developing into adults, going through different stages. In the process of development they encounter conflict which they need to resolve in order to develop successfully into the next stage of life. According to Dennis (1997) just as children move through fluid and flexible stages of development, teachers too move through developmental stages of teaching.

According to Winters (2005) if children fail to deal with the current stage, their abilities to deal with the consecutive stages are impaired and failure will return to them at a certain point later in life. In this respect, novices undergo professional development through different stages. Strategies that novice teachers apply to cope with the problems they encounter may become a routine that goes on throughout their career. Hence how novice teachers survive their first year will have an impact on the kind of teachers they become (Feiman-Nemser, 1983). In addition, their future professional development can be limited if novices refuse to give up the wrong practices that helped them cope with the problems they encountered initially.



A novice teacher is a stranger in a school environment and is not familiar with the accepted norms and the culture of the school (Sabar, 2004). One can look at the novice teachers as going through three developmental stages. In the **first stage** the novices are like infants who are developing and at the same time trying to adapt to their unfamiliar, new environment. At this stage the children depend mostly on their mothers or the care taker. They are so attached to their mother since they make them feel safe and they avoid other people they do not know. At this stage children are eager just to please their mothers and fathers accepting almost anything that comes their way. They are worried if their parents will like them (Winters, 2005).

Novice teachers mostly sit in the staff room or find hiding place in their store rooms and stay there alone, where they are isolated from other staff members (Kerry, 1982) to avoid problems that others may give them. This leads to loneliness of novices. According to Sabar (2004) they are reluctant to share their problems with veteran teachers although

they may be in desperate need. They therefore cling for help to other novices with whom they are comfortable and are able to share their problems and sometimes to the principal. At this stage novices mostly accept whatever is given to them as they are not aware of what is required of them; they do not know the accepted norms and internal codes which exist among teachers and learners. Their thinking is egocentric, based on survival as teachers, how they will control the class, whether learners and other staff members will like them and how they will be evaluated (Veenman, 1984).

At the **second stage** we see children discovering the need to survive. As they develop they begin to think but in an unsystematic and illogical way. They are not yet able to conceptualize abstractly. At this stage lots of mistakes are made: “The child creates his or her own subjective relationships between objects and then mistakes his or her egocentric perspective for reality which is part of their development” (Geonnotti, Schilk, Wetzel & Zulkowsky, 2008). They begin to develop their own idea and opinion of things around them gaining independent thought and act for themselves (Alan, 2006). The children start copying what others are doing without really questioning why they do so, imitating them whether they are wrong or right.



Novices too, as they develop further, realize that they need to survive in their new environment. At this stage they start imitating their colleagues, using the same method used by those teaching the same subjects and lessons (Beach & Pearson, 1998). They do not really think much about their action or methods as long as these will get them through the problems they are experiencing. They also make a lot of mistakes and resolve some by short term strategies.

In the **third stage** the children start to develop into adults and start to think systematically on an abstract and hypothetical level. At this stage problems can be solved at higher levels. In addition they start to develop purposeful and meaningful activities, develop competence and skills and a confidence to use a method (Alan, 2006). Children begin to engage with others more often and grow a desire to know what it is that they want and believe, separated from what they have adopted from their parents as important for their

self-confidence. Children also begin to accommodate others in their lives. According to Geonnotti *et al.* (2008) during this stage the child's organization schemas become less egocentric and begin to incorporate knowledge gained from experience into his or her thought processes. In this way, mistakes can be corrected and new knowledge gained. Children begin to ask questions and interrogate their previous actions (Geonnotti *et al.*, 2008). They also develop a desire to be responsible for and caring for other young adults.

As novice teachers move to the end of their first year they start to reflect on their teaching, shifting out their egocentric notions of teaching and learning to focus more on their students' reaction to their teaching (Beach & Pearson, 1998). They develop relationships with veteran teachers and peers who are able to give them support for reflection and model coping mechanisms (Ibid.). Novices begin to know what they want to be, they begin to choose to work and get help from teachers who have the same ideologies as them and who are teaching the way they prefer (Feiman-Nemser, 1983). Furthermore, they begin to formulate long term solutions to the problems they experience, "question their own perceptions and personal theories of teaching, a self-interrogation that stemmed from the heightened sense of the need to change" (Beach & Pearson, 1998:17). Thus, as novice teachers develop, their ways of coping develop and improve too.

## **2.9 Developmental framework and induction**

The problems novice teachers encounter and the coping strategies they use, call for the need of a special form of in-service training during their first year of teaching (Koeberg, 1999). The states in which novices carry out their first year of teaching have an impact on the level of effectiveness which that novice is able to accomplish and sustain over the years and also on the decision whether to stay or leave the career (Feiman-Nemser,1983). According to Koeberg (1999) the development approach is essential for the setting of induction programme goals. Induction helps with the development of professional development. Koeberg (1999:33) suggests four goals that are important for the induction programmes:



- the development of a psychological support system for the teacher;
- the development of acceptable methods to address problems related to classroom management and discipline;
- assist with the development of skills that will promote the transfer of pre-service theory into effective teaching practice; and
- exposures of beginners to experiences that will help develop professional attitudes, analytic and evaluative skills to promote a high level of proficiency in an ever-changing profession.

## **2.10 Conclusion**

This chapter started by reviewing literature on problems experienced by novice teachers worldwide and what coping mechanisms they use to survive the challenges of being a novice teacher. From the literature it was gleaned that novice teachers around the globe tend to experience similar problems during their first year of teaching although some unique problems may be experienced depending on the country's educational context. Research studies on induction programmes of novice teachers reveal that there is insufficient support and training offered to novice teachers. The lack of support is mostly found to exist in developing countries especially in rural areas. The issues of equity and equality have not yet been addressed in these countries, including Namibia.

In most of the studies that deal with novice teachers the developmental framework has been used, and few studies used the teacher socialization framework. These two frameworks also act as the backbone for this study. Based on the developmental framework, it can be argued that novice teachers' coping mechanisms build up or improve as they develop and mature professionally through the first year of teaching. The literature shows that appropriate coping mechanisms occur at the higher level of development. Nonetheless, contrary to this is that the development of novice teachers may not always determine the use of appropriate coping mechanisms but can also be a result of the personality of novices, situational factors, how novices are socialized into the teaching and school culture, etc. Teacher socialization framework has to do with the



social processes that novice teachers undergo, the influence that other persons and structures that they interact with have in improving and developing their teaching theories and beliefs.

The next chapter outlines what research methods were used to collect and to analyse data and provides the motivations for the choice of methodology.



## **CHAPTER 3**

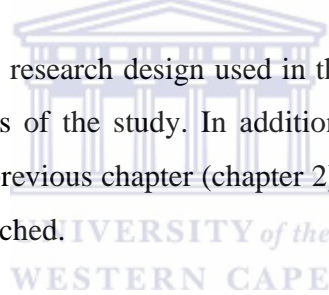
### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this study is to explore the mechanisms used by novice teachers to cope with the challenges they face in their first year of teaching. The following questions were used to guide the study:

- What challenges do novice teachers in the Oshikoto Region face?
- What assistance do they receive to overcome the challenges facing them?
- What coping mechanisms do novice teachers develop in order to survive?
- How helpful are the coping mechanisms they developed in achieving their goals?
- What assistance do novice teachers need to survive the identified challenges?

The research methodology and research design used in this study were informed by the aim and the research questions of the study. In addition, the literature review and the theoretical frameworks in the previous chapter (chapter 2) informed the way in which the research questions were approached.



This chapter outlines the research methodology used in collecting data for this study. The chapter starts by making a distinction between qualitative and quantitative approaches, and the reason for employing a qualitative approach. Different aspects of the research methods as well as the motivation for the selection of methods for this specific study are explained. Next, attention shifts to the various aspects of the research design. The chapter further addresses how data were organized and analysed. Finally, the limitations of the study are discussed.

#### **3.2 Qualitative research**

Research studies in education utilize qualitative and/or quantitative research methods. Qualitative and quantitative methodologies are based on different assumptions about the world, the research purpose, the research methods, prototypical studies, the researcher's

role, and the importance of the context in the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). The difference between qualitative and quantitative is also located in the search for understanding and in-depth inquiry. Quantitative research follows a positivist paradigm which assumes that social facts are stable within a single reality and must be separated from the feelings, and beliefs of individuals. Thus, according to Henning, Van Rensburg, and Smit (2004), the main goal knowledge in quantitative research is to describe and in some designs explain and predict phenomena that one experiences. The qualitative methodology, on the other hand, follows an interpretivist paradigm which assumes that there are multiple realities which are socially constructed by individuals as they interact with their world. Qualitative research is basically seeking to establish the truth centred on observation or experience rather than theory or logic. Qualitative methodology is concerned with in-depth understanding rather than ‘quantity understanding’ of the social phenomena from the participants’ perspective; thus it is subjective rather than objective.

Quantitative and qualitative methodologies, according to McMillan and Schumacher (2006), also differ in relation to the research methods and process of data collection. In quantitative studies there are sets of procedures and steps that researchers must follow while the qualitative researchers use flexible, changing strategies and their designs emerge during data collection. The researchers in quantitative research are separated from the study to avoid bias whilst in qualitative research the researchers are immersed in the situation.

The appropriateness of the selected research method depends on the nature of the research problem under investigation. This study focuses on gaining understanding and meaning of novice teachers’ coping mechanisms from novice teachers themselves. In addition, the study seeks to interrogate novice teachers’ individual experiences, insights and understanding of their first year. This study is situated in the interpretive, qualitative paradigm. Hence it is worth discussing qualitative research in a more comprehensive manner.

Qualitative research is an umbrella term in the sense that qualitative research uses a multiple of methods and research practices that are complex and changing (Punch, 2000). Merriam (1998:5) defines qualitative research as “an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible”. It is concerned about understanding the uniqueness of that setting, how individuals feel to be part of that setting, and how they view the world in their setting. Guest *et al.* (2005) additionally see qualitative methodology as seeking to understand a research question from the perspective of those being studied and not from the researcher’s perspective.

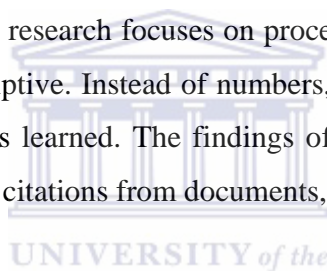
Creswell (2009) emphasises that qualitative research is a means of exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups assign to a social or human problem. The process of qualitative research entails collecting data from the participants’ location without having to modify it. Individuals’ views and meaning about their social issues are observed as important and having a great contribution to their social world.

Qualitative research is concerned with processes rather than independent variables as is the case with quantitative research and qualitative research relies on meanings rather than behavioural statistics (Osuala, 2007). Qualitative research thus deals with values, behaviour, feelings, thoughts, ideas, and actions and these cannot be measured mathematically. These elements are crucial in the definition of truth and knowledge, and human actions and thoughts cannot be excluded from research. Osuala (2007:169) contents that the “supposed objectivity of science is in fact a delusion”.

Merriam (1998:6) identifies five characteristics of qualitative research. The first one is that qualitative research is based on the view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds. The second characteristic is that the researcher is the primary or key instrument for data collection through interviews, examining documents and observing behaviour and is also responsible for data analysis. Although qualitative researchers may use an instrument to collect data they are responsible for processing data,

clarifying and summarising data rather than some computers or inanimate inventory as is the case with quantitative research.

The third characteristic is that qualitative research usually involves field work in a natural setting. Qualitative researchers do not bring their participants into a lab nor send instruments to the participants. It requires a researcher to visit people and sites to study their behaviour and actions with little or no disruption of the natural setting. Qualitative research employs an inductive research strategy. Thus it focuses on building up hypotheses, theories, abstractions, concepts rather than testing existing theories; and it focuses on observation and understanding obtained in the field. According to Creswell (2009), as an inductive process it involves working back and forth between various themes and the database until the researcher has come up with a set of themes. The last characteristic is that qualitative research focuses on process, meaning, and understanding and the product is richly descriptive. Instead of numbers, words and pictures are used to convey what the researcher has learned. The findings of the study are supported in the participant's own words, direct citations from documents, and excerpts of videotapes.



In addition to the above mentioned characteristics Creswell (2009:175) identifies the following four characteristics:

- The qualitative researchers focus on the meaning that the participants have about the problem or issue and not the meaning that the researchers got from the literature.
- The process of qualitative research is emergent so that the design cannot be tightly prescribed. The phases of the process may change as the researchers begin with data collection.
- Qualitative research is a form of interpretive inquiry whereby researchers interpret what they see, hear and understand; making connection with their backgrounds, history, context and prior understanding of the issues.

- Qualitative researchers develop a complex picture of the problem under study. It involves reporting multiple perspectives and identifying many factors involved in a situation.

According to Merriam (1998) research that focuses on the insight, discovery and understanding from the viewpoints of the participants offers the greatest assurance of contributing to the knowledge and practice of education. This is one of the strengths of qualitative research. One more strength is that the closeness of qualitative researchers to the field allows the researchers to “see and document the qualities of social and educational interaction too often missed by scientific, more positivistic inquiries” (Osuala, 2007:174). According to Lichtman (2006:22) qualitative research is “a way of knowing that requires the researchers to gather, organize, and interpret information with their eyes and ears as filters. It is a way of knowing that involves in-depth interview and observations of humans in natural and social settings”. Information or data for qualitative research are usually gathered via interviews, observations, questionnaires, and document analysis.

During qualitative research the researcher collects data in face to face situations through the interactions with those under investigation in their settings. The participants assign meaning to specific events, persons, processes and objects they interact with (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Therefore, qualitative research is based on the view that reality about the world is constructed by individuals interacting with their social world and researchers are concerned about understanding the meaning people have constructed in making sense of their world (Merriam, 1998:6). The next section discusses the research methods which were used to collect data.

### **3.3 Research method**

Research methods can be defined as practices used in research to study a phenomenon. In other words methods are ways of collecting data. The selection of the research methods

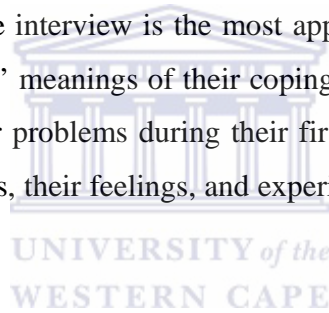
used by most researchers focusing on novice teachers are mainly determined by the size of the population needed for the survey (Ubusi, 1999). Studies that are conducted amongst a large number of novice teachers mostly use quantitative methods like questionnaires. Research methods commonly employed by qualitative studies include focus groups interviews, direct observation which embraces non-participatory observation and participatory observation. Data for this study were gathered through individual interviews with novice teachers and heads of departments (Appendices F and G).

The interview is perhaps the most common instrument for collecting data in qualitative research. It is the common way for qualitative researchers to understand the participants' construction of reality and how they understand the world in which they live. An interview, as numerous definitions stress, is mainly a conversation but with a purpose (Bahta, 2003; Merriam, 1998). Lichtman (2006:116) further describes the interview as a general term used to describe a group of methods that permit a researcher to engage in a conversation with the participants. The researcher purposefully directs the interview to gather a special kind of information. It is therefore considered a conversation with a purpose.

According to Punch (2000), in order to understand the reality that other people construct we need to interview them, to ask them so they can tell us in their own terms and in depth about certain issues. The interview is therefore a way of accessing people's perceptions, meanings, definitions of situations and multiple realities. In other words it is a way of gaining in-depth understanding of the participants. The purpose of an interview, according to Merriam (1998), is to obtain information, including information that the researcher cannot observe directly; for example, things that happened a long time ago, the way the participants have organized the world and the meanings they attach to things happening in the world. The interview, as Lichtman (2006) and Merriam (1998) emphasise, serves when the researcher cannot observe participants' behaviours, feelings, past events and future expectations, and the participants' view of the world, thoughts on a topic, situation or group. The interview process then seems to be ideal for collecting

information from novice teachers about their mechanisms for survival. It allowed me to verbally confirm my understanding of the participant's response at that very moment. In addition it allowed me to direct the participants when they were giving information that is irrelevant.

The interview can be used in various types of studies. It can be used when conducting a case study, or studying a large number of people. The choice for using an interview as a tool for collecting data should be based on the type of information the researcher intends to collect. The researchers need to consider whether the interview is the best data collecting tool to get that information (Merriam, 1998). Merriam therefore advocates that for one to decide on employing the interview as a data gathering instrument, it should be able to get quality data, more data, data at less cost, or possibly just the only way to get that data. As for this study, the interview is the most appropriate way to get the data, in order to obtain novice teachers' meanings of their coping mechanisms and to understand how they have dealt with their problems during their first year of teaching. In addition, the problems of novice teachers, their feelings, and experience needed to be explored and understood.



Qualitative interviews take three forms: the structured interview, guided or semi-structured interview and unstructured interview. In the unstructured interview "the questions emerge from the immediate context" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:351). There are no preconceived questions. This form of interview is used when the researcher has less knowledge about the phenomenon and the participant is more knowledgeable about the issue; hence, the researcher tries to gain more insight and understanding about the phenomenon from the interviewee. However, a disadvantage of unstructured interview is that the interviewer may get confused with the various viewpoints and unconnected pieces of information that will emerge from the interview (Merriam, 1998). Merriam (1998) states that the structured interview is an oral form of the written survey and is most suitable in gathering socio-demographic data regarding the participants' age, income, marital status, etc. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006) the structured interview permits participants to be asked the same open-ended questions, in the same



order. Using this form of interview, however, reduces the researcher's flexibility, and may limit the naturalness and relevancy of the response reducing access to participants' preconceived notions of the world (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006; Merriam, 1998).

Lichtman (2006:118) defines the guided or semi-structured interview as a type of interview that "involves developing a general set of questions and format that you follow and use on all participants". Although the same general structure is used for all participants, the questions can be varied depending on the nature of the situation. The questions are there to guide the researcher but the researcher can probe for more information, and adjust questions at any time. Semi-structured interviews contain questions which are highly structured and questions that only emerge during the interview. This kind of format, according to Merriam (1998), allows the researcher to react to the present situation, to the emerging worldview of the participant and to new ideas on the subject under discussion. Semi-structured interviews, therefore, allow the researcher to get an in-depth understanding of issues by providing an opportunity to probe and expand the participant's current responses to the issue.

According to Punch (2000:176) the form of interview selected for the research study should be determined by the strategy, purpose of the study and research questions since different forms of interview are suited to various situations. The study therefore uses a semi-structured interview to collect data (see Appendices F and G). It allowed me to probe the participant's answers, to seek more explanation and clarification of issues that were not clear. The semi-structured interview allows for flexibility that other types of interviews cannot provide since it contains both structured and unstructured questions.

Individual interviews were used for the study. This was decided because individual interviews help give individuals an opportunity to air their concerns. Respondents are able to speak freely about the subject in question since it is a one on one setting. Fine points and nuances can emerge from an individual interview which might well remain masked in a wider group setting. While there may be occurrence of domination during a

focus group interview from some participants this is not the case with individual interviews.

### **3.4 Research design**

The decision to adopt a particular research design is determined by the philosophical foundations underlying the research, taking into account the correlation of equivalence between the type of research and the researcher's personality, attributes, skills, and the type of design that is available to the researcher within the paradigm (Merriam, 1998). Most importantly, however, is the fact that the research design should be determined by the research questions. There must thus be consonance between the research design and the research questions. Due consideration should also be taken of the limited resources available for research. All these determine the appropriateness of the selected research design for the study. In addition, according to Creswell (2009), the choice of one research design over another is determined by the following factors: the personal experiences and preferences of the researcher, the problem, methods of data collection, analysis and the audiences for whom the report will be written. The audience can either be journal editors, graduate committees or journal readers, etc.

A research design, according to Uugwanga (2007), shows how all major parts of the research study function together in order to deal with the main research question/s. Creswell (2009:5) defines research designs as "plans and procedures for research that span the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed research methods of data collection and analysis". Punch (2000:66) further explains a design to mean "all issues involved in planning and executing a research project from identifying the problem through to reporting and publishing the result". This therefore promotes the idea that the research design entails all that the researcher is planning to do to complete the study in an appropriate, safe way. Punch (2000:66) further states that the research design deals with the following four main ideas: the set of ideas by which the study proposes to answer the research question; within what framework; who or what will be studied; and the tools and procedures to be used in collecting and analysing data. The research design should

therefore be able to connect the research questions to the data showing what tools and procedures are to be used in answering the questions (Punch, 2000).

### **3.4.1 Sampling**

According to Osuala (2007) sampling is a process of taking a portion from the whole population to represent that population. The idea is to generalise the results back to the selected population without having to conduct research on the whole population which can be time consuming and costly. For this study purposeful sampling, more specifically maximum variation sampling was used and also random sampling. Purposeful sampling, according to Merriam (1998:61), is based on “the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” and to obtain participants with certain characteristics. The main reason behind purposeful sampling is to select information-rich participants or cases, information that enables the researcher to learn more about the important issues for the purpose of the research. Using information-rich participants or cases allow the study to have useful and relevant results (Ugwanga, 2007). I therefore used purposeful sampling to select the research site to be able to gain relevant information that I was seeking to answer my research questions. In addition I also used random sampling to narrow down my research site.

Namibia is divided into thirteen regions. This study was conducted in the Oshikoto region. Oshikoto region is situated in the northern part of Namibia. The region consists of both rural and urban areas. The main reason for conducting research in this region is because I live in the region and have socialized with most novice teachers teaching in the region. I have discussed with many of them the problems they face as novice teachers and the lack of induction programmes in their schools to help them cope with these problems. In addition, since the region consists of both rural and urban areas, it allowed for diversity of the data collected. Based on my familiarity with the region, the teachers and heads of departments, it gave me greater access to potential participants. Furthermore, this choice

of the region was also based on financial considerations as it obviated the need to travel far distances to get to the respondents.

The Region consists of six educational circuits, but only five circuits have high schools. However, one of the five circuits has a private school and this was not included in the study since only government/public schools were considered. The Region has seven public secondary schools of which three are located in urban areas and four in rural areas. Since it would be time consuming to conduct research at all seven schools and since qualitative research in general uses small, information-rich samples in order for the researchers to focus in depth on issues important to the study, the study was conducted in four public secondary schools of the Region. One school was selected from each circuit. However, since there were two circuits with more than one secondary school, random sampling was used to select just one school so that each circuit is represented by one secondary school. Some schools were therefore randomly selected from the circuit while others were included because they were the only secondary school available in the circuit.

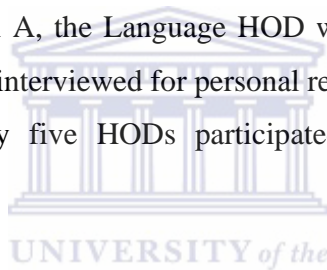
From the selected high schools, I looked for participants who had teaching experience of two to three years. These are novice teachers who had recently completed their first year of teaching which is considered to be the most challenging year in the teaching career; thus they still have fresh memories of their experience. In addition the head of department to which each selected novice teacher is assigned to in each of the four schools, was interviewed, in order to get an alternative perspective about the experiences of each novice teacher at their schools. However, not all HODs were present during the interview and some schools have only one HOD.

All novice teachers with two to three years of experience were included in the study. Therefore, there was no sampling made of novice teachers. In addition, there was no sampling made of HODs; each HOD to which a selected novice teacher was assigned was included in the study. I chose to work with novice teachers from secondary schools because this is the structure I am most familiar with and is the area where I know most

people. This helped me to be most contented as a neophyte researcher without feeling uneasy around the participants.

## **4.2 Conducting the interview**

After I have made up a list of potential participants I made an effort to meet each participant personally. All novice teachers who were approached consented to participate. All together there were fifteen. However, at some schools there were no HODs in certain subjects. At school B for example, there were two novice teacher participants, one was a Science teacher the other a History teacher. Since there was no Social Science HOD, I only interviewed the Science HOD and the subject head for History. All novice teachers at School D were Science teachers, therefore only one HOD was approached. School C had only one HOD. At School A, the Language HOD was away for the workshop, the Commerce HOD refused to be interviewed for personal reasons; therefore, only one HOD was interviewed. Hence, only five HODs participated instead of fifteen that was originally envisaged.



I introduced myself to the participants and gave them the reasons for approaching them. Further, I asked them if they were interested in participating in the study. Once permission was granted, the date, time and place for the interview was agreed upon which was convenient to each participant. An overview of the study was given to the participants to familiarize themselves with the aim and objectives of the study. Participants were given consent forms (Appendices D and E) to fill in and sign, stating that the purpose of the study was explained to them and that they had the right to withdraw from the interview at any time they felt like doing so. The forms were given back to me at the beginning of each interview.

Interviews were conducted during the months of February and March 2010 in the four public secondary schools of the Oshikoto Region. Each interview was carried out at a time when the participant was free to prevent unnecessary interruptions of lessons and at places that allowed minimal interruption and noise. The interview questions for novice

teachers consisted of three sections: the first section dealt with the background information about the participants such as qualifications, teaching grades, etc; the second focused more on the specific questions of the study such as the induction programme, novice teachers' problems and their coping mechanisms; the last section asked participants to provide recommendations for future action especially with regard to novice teachers' induction programmes in Namibia. Most of the interview questions for the heads of departments were developed on the basis of novice teachers' responses. Therefore the heads of departments were only interviewed after the novice teachers had been interviewed. Each interview lasted about 30 to 60 minutes. Dennis (1997), quoting Seidman (1991), postulates that interviews should not exceed 90 minutes since any discussion longer than that may develop into a boring conversation. Besides, transcribing a 90 minutes interview can be difficult and time-consuming.

Interviews were tape-recorded and a few notes were taken as a supplement to tape-recording. Tape recording during interview "ensures completeness of the verbal interaction and provides material for reliability checks" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:355). It also ensures that everything is preserved for analysis and the researcher can listen to it to improve the questioning techniques for the next interview (Merriam, 1998).

### **3.5 Data analysis**

According to Blanche *et al.* (2006) qualitative studies do not in actuality follow a sequential form in which data analysis only commences when data collection ends. Data analysis also takes place during the process of data collection. Data analysis is a process of making sense and meaning out of data. It involves consolidating, reducing and interpreting what participants have said and what the researcher has observed and read (Merriam, 1998). McMillan and Schumacher (2006) define data analysis as a process of organizing, analysing and interpreting data. They further add that data analysis entails coding, categorizing and discerning patterns for possible explanation. During data analysis, data are first organised so the researcher may become familiar with them, coded and categorised according to emerging themes and then interpreted. Blanche *et al.* (2006)

define coding as breaking up of data into meaningful pieces for further analysis. Data for this study were analysed by means of interpretive analysis. The purpose of interpretive analysis, according to Blanche *et al.* (2006:321), is to provide a “thick description, which means a thorough description of the characteristics, processes, transactions, and contexts that constitute the phenomenon being studied”.

Before interpreting the collected data, researchers need to familiarise themselves with the data and immerse themselves in it, revisiting their data to become more acquainted with them (Blanche *et al.*, 2006). All tape-recorded interviews for this study were transcribed “verbatim” onto a computer. I spent most of the time reading and rereading through all data (interview transcripts and notes) to obtain a general sense of the information and participants’ ideas and to familiarize myself with the themes that emerged from the interviews and notes. I immersed myself in the data, in order to get an overall meaning of the whole interview, different types of meaning in the text and to know where particular quotations occur (Blanche *et al.*, 2006). This helped me to identify patterns and organize my data into categories. Important features (themes) from data were informed by my research questions, the interview guide, and also by using themes from the literature (Chapter Two).

Before interpreting and bringing meaning to information a detailed analysis of data was made. The main themes developed from the data especially with regard to the problems and coping mechanisms of novice teachers were coded and then categorized according to recurring patterns. I made a list of any data segment that seemed to directly relate a strategy used by the first participant as a coping method and another list of problems.

Topics drawn from all the interview transcripts and personal notes were then used as themes for structuring the data presentation chapter (Chapter Four). Direct quotations of respondents’ views were used to help retain the ‘voice’ of the participants. The themes that were identified also helped me with the discussion of the findings in Chapter Five.



## **3.6 Ethical considerations**

### **3.6.1 Negotiating access**

A submission to the University of the Western Cape Ethics Committee regarding the use of human participants in my study was made. The submission included the purpose of the study, how the data would be collected, permission letters for the gate-keepers to carry out research, permission letter from the Oshikoto Regional Director of Education and consent forms that were given to the participants. Since social research involves collecting data from people, access to people for research purpose cannot be demanded; therefore, permission needs to be requested from those involved for ethical issues. Permission to carry out the research was requested from the gate-keepers (those with power to allow access to schools) to this case the Oshikoto Regional Director and the school principals (Appendices A, B and C).

Participants in this study were informed how and why they had been chosen to participate in the study. Both novice teachers and the HODs were asked to give their consent to participate. An informed consent form was handed over to each participant to sign in order to gain their permission before the interview (Appendices D and E). Informed consent implies that the subjects have a choice about whether or not to participate. Information was provided about the research and the intended use of data was explained to those involved. I found this necessary in order for the participants to decide whether or not to participate in the study. Participation was voluntary and research participants were allowed to withdraw from the study if they wanted to do so. During the interviews permission to tape record the interview was asked from the participants to ensure that they had no problem with the recording of interviews. All consented to being recorded.

### **3.6.2 Anonymity and confidentiality**

Furthermore, confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed. Participants were assured that personal information would be guarded and would not be made available to any person who is not directly involved in the study. To protect the identity of the participants



and institutions, information would only be made public by a shield of anonymity. The researcher maintained anonymity throughout the study. Novice teachers, the HODs and the schools were coded to protect their identity.

### **3.7 Limitations**

There is a dearth of literature about novice teachers in Namibia. Little research is done on what problems novice teachers in Namibia face and how they have dealt with their problems. It was therefore difficult to get adequate information about problems and coping mechanisms of novice teachers in Namibia.

Since this study was conducted in one region among 13 regions of Namibia it cannot really be generalised since different schools give different kinds of support to their novice teachers. There was a lack of HODs in most selected schools. In all five schools there were at least one HOD vacancy. Hence some departments did not have HODs and no language HODs participated because they were away to attend a workshop. Therefore only five HODs participated in the study which is not a good size on which to base generalization.

The use of interview as the only method of data collection could bring about errors and bias. It could have also limited the scope and breadth of the study. In addition since I interviewed most novice teachers whom I went to the same teacher training with and those in the same structural organisation with me, I might have failed to probe for further explanation and relate their situation to my own personal experience and knowledge.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the information that was elicited from the interviews. The chapter aims at addressing the main research questions of the study, namely what were the problems experienced by novice teachers and what coping mechanisms did they use to overcome these challenges. It begins by giving an outline of the context and background information of the novice teachers and their Heads of Department who participated in this study. The second section outlines the challenges that these novice teachers faced upon entering the profession and how these challenges affected the actualisation of their teaching and learning goals. The section also discusses the novice teachers' feelings of unpreparedness upon entering the profession. The chapter further outlines the kind of assistance novices received at the outset of the job. The last section of the chapter outlines the coping strategies that these novices used to deal with these problems. A brief summary of the chapter is given at the end of the main ideas that emerge from the chapter.

#### **4.2 Context and background information of participants**

This study was conducted in four secondary schools in the Oshikoto Region in northern Namibia. The region has both rural and urban areas. Three schools in the study are situated in rural areas while one school is located in an urban area. Participants who participated in this study were fifteen novice teachers and five Heads of Departments (HODs). Six of the novice teachers were males while nine were females. Two of the HODs were males and three females. To protect the identity of the school and of the participants pseudonyms are used. Schools are indicated by the letters A to D. Novice teachers are identified individually by numbers 1 to 5 and these are linked to the schools where they are teaching. For example, teachers who are teaching at School A are referred

to as A<sub>1</sub>, A<sub>2</sub>, A<sub>3</sub> and A<sub>4</sub> while novice teachers in School B are referred to as B<sub>1</sub>, B<sub>2</sub>, etc. The five HODs are identified as H<sub>1</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>, H<sub>3</sub>, H<sub>4</sub> and H<sub>5</sub>.

Table 1: Profiles of Novice teachers

Novice teachers	Profiles of novice teachers
Teacher A <sub>1</sub>	He graduated from Ongwendiva College of Education and holds a Diploma in Education. He teaches Mathematics and Biology to grades 8 to 12. Although he only qualified to teach junior grades he also teaches grades 11 and 12. The numbers of learners in his class range from 35 to 44 learners. He has been teaching for three years. He is a NAMCOL (Namibia College of Open Learning) co-ordinator at his school.
Teacher A <sub>2</sub>	She is a graduate from the University of Namibia where she obtained her degree in Education. She teaches English to grade 8 to 12 learners and Development Studies to grade 11 and 12 learners. The numbers of learners in her class average 40 per class. She has been teaching for three years during the time of the interview. She is the coach of the netball school team. She is not planning to stay in the teaching profession.
Teacher A <sub>3</sub>	He is a graduate from the University of Namibia and obtained a bachelor's degree in Education. He teaches Business Studies to grades 8 and 12, Economics to grades 11 and 12 and Entrepreneurship to grade 8. Each of his classes has approximately 40 pupils. He has been in the teaching profession for three years.
Teacher A <sub>4</sub>	She graduated from the University of Namibia. She obtained a bachelor's degree in Education. She is currently teaching English as a second language and Oshindonga as a first language to grade 11 and 12 learners. She is designated to teach 40 to 45 learners per class. She is presently in her second year of teaching.
Teacher B <sub>1</sub>	She holds a bachelor's degree in Education from the University of Namibia. She is qualified to teach at the secondary level. She is

	currently teaching English and Geography to grades 11 and 12. She is further instructing the junior grades 8 to 10 in the same subjects. She teaches a maximum of 41 learners per class. This is her second year of teaching as a full time teacher.
Teacher B <sub>2</sub>	He has been in the teaching profession for two years. He graduated from the University of Namibia obtaining a bachelor's degree in Education. He is qualified to teach English as a second language which he teaches to grades 11 and 12. The number of learners in his class ranges from 41 to 43 learners. He also runs the library after school, which he delights in.
Teacher C <sub>1</sub>	He graduated from the University of Namibia where he obtained his bachelor's degree in Education. He teaches Biology and Mathematics. He is presently in his second year of teaching. He teaches grades 10 to 12. There are approximately 40 learners in each class.
Teacher C <sub>2</sub>	She is a graduate from the University of Namibia. She holds a bachelor's degree in Education. She is qualified to teach Biology and Geography to grades 11 and 12. In addition to these subjects that she was trained to teach, she also teaches Life Skills to grade 8. There are approximately 40 to 42 learners per class. She has been teaching for two years.
Teacher C <sub>3</sub>	She teaches Geography to grade 9, 10 and 11 learners. There are approximately 41 to 43 learners in each class that she instructs. She graduated from the University of Namibia with a bachelor's degree in Education. Presently, she is in her second year of teaching.
Teacher C <sub>4</sub>	She graduated from the Ongwendiva College of Education where she obtained a Diploma in Education. She is qualified to teach the junior grades 8 to 10. She is currently offering Mathematics to grades 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 although she is not qualified to teach grades 11 and 12. Each of the classes that she teaches has approximately 43 learners. She is in her second year of teaching.

Teacher C <sub>5</sub>	She holds a Diploma in Education from Mutare College of education in Zimbabwe. Though she is only qualified to teach Physical Science to grades 8, 9 and 10 she also teaches Biology to grades 11 and 12 which she states is overwhelming. Each class consists of about 40 learners. She is presently doing her second years of teaching.
Teacher D <sub>1</sub>	She is a graduate from the University of Namibia where she obtained a bachelor's degree in Education. She teaches Physical Science and Life Skills to grade 8, 9, 10 and 12 learners. There are about 42 learners in each of her classes. She has been teaching for two years. She states she loves teaching and does not intend to leave the teaching profession any time soon.
Teacher D <sub>2</sub>	He is a graduate from Ongwendiva College of Education. He obtained a Diploma in Education. He is teaching Life Science and Physical Science to grade 8 and 9 learners. However, he is also teaching Art to the same grades although he was not trained to teach Art. He has about 38 to 39 learners per class. He is currently in his third year of teaching.
Teacher D <sub>3</sub>	She graduated from the University of Namibia obtaining a bachelor's degree in Education majoring in Mathematics and Biology. She is currently teaching grades 8, 9 and 10 Life Science and Mathematics. She is teaching 39 to 40 learners per class. She is in her third year of teaching.
Teacher D <sub>4</sub>	He is a graduate from the University of Namibia. He obtained his bachelor's degree in Education. He teaches Mathematics to grades 10 and 11. Each class has roughly about 35 to 39 learners. He has been teaching for three years.

Table 2: Profiles of Heads of Departments

<b>HODs</b>	<b>Profiles of HODs</b>
H <sub>1</sub>	She is an HOD of School D. She has a bachelor's degree in Education from the University of Namibia. She is a Head of Department for Natural Science and she teaches Mathematics.
H <sub>2</sub>	He has a Diploma in Education from a college of education and a B Ed (Honours). He is the HOD for Natural Science at School B. He teaches Biology and Mathematics.
H <sub>3</sub>	He is a graduate from the University of Namibia and has a bachelor's degree in Education. He is the Social Science HOD for School B. He teaches History.
H <sub>4</sub>	She is a Social Science HOD of School C. She has a Diploma in Education and a bachelor's degree in Education. She teaches History and Oshindonga.
H <sub>5</sub>	She is a Natural Science HOD for School A and she teaches Physical Science. She has a bachelor's degree in Education from the University of Namibia.

All participants are qualified teachers and most of them teach the subjects and grade levels they have studied at university and college. However, there are exceptions. For example, teachers **A<sub>1</sub>**, **B<sub>1</sub>**, **C<sub>2</sub>** and **C<sub>4</sub>** were assigned to teach grade levels they were not trained to teach. While **C<sub>5</sub>** and **D<sub>2</sub>** had to teach subjects they were not qualified to teach and had no training.

The next sections present the main themes that emerged from the interview transcripts. The organisation of themes is informed by the research questions of the study.

### **4.3 Challenges faced by novice teachers**

Novice teachers admitted that they encountered many problems during their first year of teaching. This section presents challenges these novice teachers in the Oshikoto Region faced while trying to achieve their teaching goals.

### 4.3.1 Feelings of unpreparedness

This section deals with the degree to which novice teachers in this study felt that they had been prepared for the requirements of the job upon entering the profession. They talked about their teacher training, the knowledge they gained and what they felt was lacking in the pre-service training. They further spoke of the effect the inadequacy of the training had on their teaching during their first year.

Two teachers (**A<sub>4</sub>** and **C<sub>2</sub>**) both from the university felt that the teacher training institution prepared them well and they were ready for the job. However, **C<sub>2</sub>** stated that there are some things that a teacher can learn only during the teaching career as he/she gains more experience and not during pre-service training.

A significant proportion of novice teachers (**A<sub>1</sub>**, **B<sub>1</sub>**, **B<sub>2</sub>**, **C<sub>4</sub>**, **C<sub>5</sub>**, **D<sub>1</sub>** and **D<sub>2</sub>**) acknowledged that they were prepared since they had done teaching practice but not for all the requirements of the job. Significantly, all four novice participants (**A<sub>1</sub>**, **B<sub>2</sub>**, **C<sub>4</sub>** and **D<sub>2</sub>**) from colleges were included among the seven referred to above. This shows that they were satisfied with the teaching practice they did during pre-service training. Although novices felt they were prepared in certain areas of the job, there were still some aspects that they reported finding difficulties in. As teacher **D<sub>2</sub>** expressed:

*Ya, I was prepared because I was doing teaching practice when I was at college ..... they should include psychology so we can identify the learners with learning problems. If you do not have these skills then you are not going to be a good teacher.*

Six novice teachers (**A<sub>1</sub>**, **B<sub>1</sub>**, **B<sub>2</sub>**, **C<sub>4</sub>**, **C<sub>5</sub>** and **D<sub>1</sub>**) stated that the teacher training did not give adequate attention to the variety of teaching methods, subject content and syllabus interpretation. They stated that they were not well trained to employ various methods depending on the learners' different learning abilities or how to adapt these methods to the context within which they were teaching. Their lessons used mostly a teacher-centred method that had been used by their lecturers and secondary school teachers. Although

they knew that most learners do not learn much when they use that specific method, they admitted they could not resort to any other method due to the lack of knowledge. **B<sub>2</sub>** argued that the training institution could not help them in developing their own teaching styles.

**C<sub>5</sub>** stated that she was well prepared in other aspects of teaching since she had done a lot of teaching practice. However, she received training outside the country and felt not everything she learnt was applicable to the Namibian context. She made specific mention of the syllabi, scheme of work and lesson plans. Thus, she felt a bit unprepared.

The rest of the novice teachers (**A<sub>2</sub>, A<sub>3</sub>, B<sub>1</sub>, C<sub>1</sub>, C<sub>3</sub>, D<sub>3</sub> and D<sub>4</sub>**), all from the university, reported that they were not well prepared when they entered the job. They claimed there were many things that the university had neglected. The courses offered in the training were inadequate, the teaching practice was too short and it took place at a wrong time on the schools' calendar. The teaching practice was done at the beginning of the year when schools were busy with admission of learners, registration and other administrative work. They argued that these activities did not familiarize them with the classroom activities since teaching only began after two weeks or so when they are about to leave for the university. The opportunities of being socialized and exposed to the classroom environment were limited. Teacher **D<sub>3</sub>** commented that they spent most of their time seated in the university classrooms rather than being exposed to the learners' environment. **A<sub>3</sub>** argued that he found it difficult linking theory to practice when he entered the teaching profession and this affected his teaching. He argued people at the university were focusing more on theory than on practice and some of the things they were taught could not be implemented in schools. The university did not know the school calendar and was not aware of what was happening in schools during the time they send pre-service teachers for teaching practice.

**C<sub>1</sub>** contended that instead of being in the real classroom environment teaching learners, they were made to teach other students, what he called 'micro-teaching'. This involves teaching colleagues who are acquainted with the subject knowledge. He further stated that



the micro-teaching that they did at the university did not add any value to their teaching experience.

Some participants (**C<sub>4</sub>**, **D<sub>1</sub>** and **D<sub>3</sub>**) complained about the subject content they received from the university and colleges. They explained that the content they were taught at the training institutions was irrelevant to what they were required to teach at school. According to **C<sub>4</sub>**, the basic subject content that they were required to teach in school was not what the colleges taught them. **D<sub>1</sub>** emphasised that she had to go back to study the secondary school subject content. She admitted that it was good to have more knowledge than the learners but the teacher should also know the basics.

By and large, novice teachers were shocked about how much administration work they had to do for which they felt they were ill prepared. Some of them complained about a lot of filing that they had to do and the class register which took up much of their teaching time. As teacher **D<sub>4</sub>** stated, “I feel we were only taught about teaching but administration work was the one I felt we were not well prepared for”. In contrast, **D<sub>1</sub>** stated that one does not need to be trained to do administration work; one just have to follow instructions given, in fact it is a matter of using one’s common sense.

WESTERN CAPE

**A<sub>2</sub>** and **D<sub>3</sub>** also explained that they felt they were not well prepared due to the fact that they did not know exactly what was expected of them as full time teachers. According to them there were just so many unexpected challenges. **D<sub>3</sub>**, for example, asserted that for the whole of her first year she was working to gain confidence in her teaching. She found it hard to face the pupils.

Regarding whether novices were well prepared or not for the job of teaching, HODs raised different concerns and views about novices at their schools. According to **H<sub>5</sub>**, novice teachers were prepared. **H<sub>1</sub>** stated that novice teachers may be well prepared in some aspects but they were not prepared in dealing with administration work. She explained that most novice teachers felt overwhelmed by the amount of administration work they had to manage.

In addition, **H<sub>4</sub>** stated that most novice teachers from the university were well equipped with subject knowledge but did not have the ability to deliver it to the learners. Unlike novices graduating from the university, novices from colleges were more exposed to the classroom environment and utilised different teaching methods. However, they lacked content knowledge.

It is clear from the participants' responses that the pre-service training had not prepared novices well for the requirements of teaching. Although Feiman-Nemser (1983) argued that pre-service training cannot train teachers in all aspects, there are some knowledge and skills that have to be inculcated into pre-service teachers. The responses showed that most novices felt that the teacher education did not prepare them for the real world of teaching. In addition, novices from university complained more about their unpreparedness than those from colleges.

#### **4.3.2 Lack of orientation for novice teachers**

Participants were asked to reflect on their first day of the job, especially on the extent they were oriented as an attempt to ease their entry into the job. Participants were further asked what effect the support or its absence had on them achieving their teaching goals.

Although there is no formal induction programme in Namibia, almost all novice teachers in School D reported to have gone through a well planned orientation programme with the principal on their first day at school. Whilst most of them came in at different times and in different years, they were given the same orientation which they found to be very helpful. They were shown around the school, introduced to their HODs and to the LRC (Learners Representative Councillor) of the school. In addition, the orientation involved a meeting to inform novices of what they were expected to do. The first day of orientation at School D was appended by various workshops. **D<sub>2</sub>** acknowledged that novice teachers were given an opportunity to attend workshops outside school and other educational courses so they could gain information and experience. He stated that these workshops were extremely useful except that the time frame in which they were organised was very short. Teacher **D<sub>1</sub>** also stated that they had an opportunity to attend workshops and staff meetings where they discussed different topics about their subjects, the problems they

were facing and assessing learners. In addition, the departments came together and discussed the problems they were facing, the previous examinations and the mistakes that learners made during examinations and how to deal with them.

Novice teachers at School D were assigned a mentor who in most cases was their HOD or subject head. The teachers admitted that their mentors were highly involved in rendering assistance and checking whether they were on the right track. Teacher **D<sub>3</sub>** stated that her mentor was very close to her and very helpful. The mentor helped her with almost everything; she explained things that she did not understand and gave her a sample of her preparation.

According to **H<sub>1</sub>**, she gave novice teachers her scheme of work and also lent them her files so they could organise their files based on her example. **H<sub>1</sub>** further stated that she organised internal subject meetings to inform them about the exam rules and discussed topics that novice teachers were experiencing difficulties in.

The rest of the participants from Schools A, B and C began their first year with little or no orientation from their schools. Many of them had to find out things on their own. For instance, novice teachers from School A stated that their orientation comprised nothing more than being shown around the school and given few materials. **A<sub>2</sub>** stressed that she did not receive any other assistance. Teacher **A<sub>4</sub>** added that she had to ask for assistance from the senior teachers and most of them were willing to help but there were few who could not. **A<sub>3</sub>**, a former student at the school, claimed he did not receive any orientation either from the school since the management assumed he was familiar with the school. He lamented it was difficult because as a learner he could not enter into some buildings and did not know where the teaching resources were located. There were also new teachers at the school that he had never met.

Although teachers **B<sub>1</sub>** and **B<sub>2</sub>** were teaching at the same school their first year experiences were quite different. **B<sub>2</sub>** explained that he was shown around the school by the HOD. The HOD spent almost half an hour explaining the lesson plan. They also went through her

files and she asked him to emulate her example. Lastly, the HOD invited him to attend one of the lessons to see how she follows up the lesson plan. As for **B<sub>1</sub>** her experience was quite different. She received no orientation; nobody showed her around the school except to her classroom. She had to find out things on her own, for example to locate the library and the laboratory.

Although the teachers above started the job at different times, I had to question why they were treated differently when they were both newly qualified and teaching at the same school. From the responses, I discovered that **B<sub>2</sub>**'s orientation was not organised by the school per se but by his HOD. When **B<sub>1</sub>** came to school there was no HOD for her department and since the school did not render assistance to their novice teachers, she was faced with more problems than her colleague. **B<sub>1</sub>** stated that there were still some novice teachers appointed to the school, but there was no guidance, there was no HOD and no resources for novice teachers. She stated that it was a very stressful situation. Most teachers in School C (**C<sub>2</sub>**, **C<sub>3</sub>**, **C<sub>4</sub>** and **C<sub>5</sub>**) also reported to have started teaching without any orientation or assistance unless they asked for it. Teacher **C<sub>4</sub>** lamented that she even had to teach for almost the whole year without the school rules. She did not know what was permitted by the school and what was not, what to do with learners who misbehaved and what was expected of her. Teacher **C<sub>1</sub>** who took over from another teacher stated that he found most of things in place already such as the teaching resources, schemes of work and lesson plans.

However, responses from **H<sub>2</sub>** and **H<sub>5</sub>** indicated that novices were given orientation and assistance. **H<sub>3</sub>** admitted that as an HOD, she was overloaded with administration work and she had more lessons than any other teacher at the school. Hence, she was unable to render the required assistance to novices or to observe novices' lessons. **H<sub>4</sub>**, on the other hand, stated that their school did not place much emphasis on orientation. **H<sub>4</sub>** explained that he could not observe novices' lessons; instead he tried to talk to them. He reasoned that going to their lessons may create an uneasy atmosphere for novice teachers and increase stress during their presentation. Therefore, he preferred not to interfere with their lessons but rather to discuss problems they might be encountering.

### 4.3.3 Classroom management

Being able to manage the classroom is crucial for teaching and learning to happen. On the other hand, behaviour in the classroom is bound to other aspects of teaching and classroom practice. If the teacher and learners are not on good terms and are not working in harmony, or if the teacher is unable to control and manage discipline in the classroom, it is difficult for teaching and learning to happen. Classroom discipline was reported to be the biggest challenge that participants encountered during their first year of teaching.

Some participants (**A<sub>1</sub>**, **A<sub>4</sub>**, **B<sub>1</sub>**, **B<sub>2</sub>**, **C<sub>3</sub>** and **D<sub>3</sub>**) indicated that they experienced difficulties in managing learners' behaviour. Participants stated that learners took advantage of the fact that the teachers were new and they were eager to discover their teacher's weaknesses and strengths. Learners would mostly transgress the school rules when they entered a novice teacher's classroom. **B<sub>1</sub>**, on the other hand, had a problem with learners who would not participate in class and she had to talk throughout the day. Others would not attend the class simply because they disregarded her teaching because she was new and did not have experience. She felt so discouraged by their attitudes and it somehow affected her teaching.

Some novices were assigned to teach high grades where learners were almost the same age as them. They found it difficult to discipline or punish students of their age. Novices from School D, on the other hand, reported that discipline at their school was not a challenge since most learners were well disciplined and there were structured rules in place.

**H<sub>5</sub>** reported that novice teachers would come crying to her office because learners were teasing them and novices refused to teach the class. In such a case the management talked to the learners and encouraged the teacher to stand her ground. **H<sub>3</sub>** commented that novice teachers could not cope with the behaviour of learners without the assistance of senior teachers. Learners would not listen to them.

Novice teachers in this study felt incapable of handling unmotivated and undisciplined learners on their own. This discouraged them and affected the way they carried out their teaching in the classroom. It should be stressed that the novice teachers in three schools (A, B and C) experienced more disciplinary problems compared to those in School D.

#### **4.3.4 Subject content**

Another challenge that novice teachers (**C<sub>1</sub>**, **C<sub>3</sub>**, **C<sub>5</sub>** and **D<sub>3</sub>**) faced was the lack of subject knowledge. It is difficult, if not impossible, to teach a subject that you have little or no knowledge about, especially for a teacher who does not have teaching experience. Such a situation resulted in novice teachers losing their confidence in facing the learners. It also led to the misbehaviour of learners in the class.

Teacher **C<sub>3</sub>** received complaints from her students regarding her knowledge of the subject. She stated that learners were very clever and were able to spot when the teacher was floundering. This resulted in challenges from learners and disciplinary problems arose because most learners tended to know more than her. Some novices admitted that they had to prepare for hours to become sufficiently acquainted with the content. On some topics they had little knowledge and there was no one to explain it to them. **C<sub>5</sub>** experienced problems of teaching a minor subject. The problem was that **C<sub>5</sub>** received minimal training in her minor subject. Some of the topics she last encountered when she was in grade 12 and that was five years previously.

From the responses, the problem of the subject content was brought about by various factors. Some novices were given to teach grade levels they were not qualified to teach, others taught subjects they were not trained for. This seems to be much of a school problem and a pre-service training related problem.

#### 4.3.5 Teaching methodology

Novice teachers were also experiencing problems with delivering the lessons. Novice teachers had classes of learners with different learning abilities and from different backgrounds and they did not know how to identify and deal with learners with different needs. In addition to that their classrooms were so overcrowded that they were unable to give individual attention to learners.

**B<sub>1</sub>**, **B<sub>2</sub>** and **D<sub>2</sub>** confirmed that their teachings were mostly dominated by the teacher-centred methodology. Since they were eager to cover the syllabi there was less participation of learners in class and inadequate assessment to determine if learners understood or not. Thus, they found the ‘chalk and talk’ method to be the most effective means for covering the syllabi within the expected time. There was not much attempt made to involve the learners in the learning process. **B<sub>1</sub>** explained that although she made an attempt to involve learners in the classroom practices, learners would not participate.

**D<sub>2</sub>** admitted that he did not know which teaching method or style to use due to the difference in learners’ ability in his class. He needed to define the learners’ abilities and then adapt his teaching style to their learning style, but he did not know how to do so.

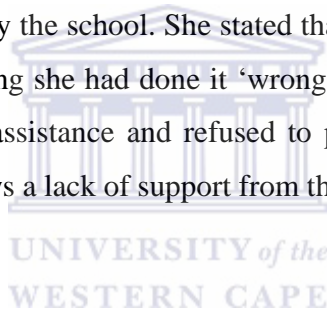
The lack of resources in schools was a big constraint to the employment of various teaching methodologies by novice teachers. There was a lack of textbooks in schools so they had to write summaries and notes on the chalkboards. This led to a ‘talk and chalk’ method with little involvement of learners.

**H<sub>3</sub>** and **H<sub>4</sub>** commented that according to what they had observed, novice teachers especially those from the university were poor in teaching methods. According to **H<sub>3</sub>** novices lack various approaches when teaching learners with different abilities. He added that novice teachers tended to use only one kind of methodology which was mostly teacher-centered despite the different situations of the class they found themselves in. **H<sub>4</sub>**,

on the other hand, stated that although some novices had mastered the content they failed to deliver it successfully to their learners.

#### **4.3.6 Lesson preparation and syllabi interpretation**

Lesson preparation was another challenge that novices reported to have experienced during their first year. Novices stated that the lesson plans that they did at the training institutions and those they found in schools were not similar; there were many discrepancies. When novices came to schools and applied what they had been taught at the institution the school rejected it and would tell them a different way of doing it. **C<sub>4</sub>** argued that the school and the universities or colleges should have one format of lesson plans, adding that the existing situation was confusing. **C<sub>3</sub>** had a problem preparing the lesson plan that was required by the school. She stated that most of her lesson plans were turned down by her HOD saying she had done it 'wrong'. However, the HOD could not help her when she asked for assistance and refused to provide her with a sample of a required lesson plan. This shows a lack of support from the HOD while expecting novices to perform the required duties.



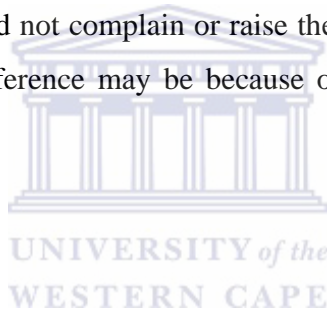
According to **D<sub>4</sub>**, they had to write lesson plans because they were ordered to do so but sometimes they did not teach what was written in those lesson plans. **C<sub>5</sub>** also agreed that at times they always knew what they were going to teach but mostly they could not follow their lesson plans. When asked why they could not follow what they wrote in their lesson plans, some explained that there was always something that would come up in class which led to teachers revising the lesson or doing something unplanned. **A<sub>1</sub>** and **A<sub>3</sub>** also explained that they had a problem sticking to their lesson plans and managing their time effectively during the lesson. Sometimes they found themselves finishing the lessons early or could not cover what they had planned for the day. **A<sub>1</sub>** further argued that he sometimes tried to be specific on what he was going to present the next day but it only resulted in him finishing the lesson earlier than scheduled. This resulted in him giving unplanned activities to the learners just to keep them occupied. Therefore, they just



routinely completed the lesson plans and submitted them to their HOD, since they were required to hand these in every morning.

Some of the participants raised the issue of syllabi interpretation during their first year of teaching. **A<sub>1</sub>**, **A<sub>3</sub>** and **C<sub>5</sub>** stated that interpreting the syllabi was a challenge. According to **C<sub>5</sub>** for the whole year she was teaching with no direction. Although she had the syllabi at hand she only discovered almost at the end of the year that the manner in which she was applying it was contrary to what was expected. **A<sub>1</sub>** admitted that he was faced with the challenge of sequencing the topics in the syllabi. **A<sub>3</sub>** argued that he lacked the knowledge of what he needed to cover during the course of the year to enable learners to meet the examination requirements.

Yet, novices from School D did not complain or raise the issue of lesson preparation and syllabi interpretation. This difference may be because of the assistance they got at the onset of the job.

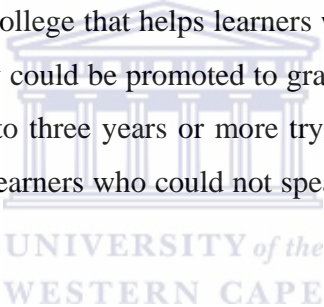


#### **4.3.7 Assessment problems**

Assessment of learners was one of the challenging activities that novice teachers had to undertake. Assessing learners is crucial in checking the progress of the learners, whether they understand or are encountering problems. It allows teachers to reflect on their practice and to consider any necessary changes. Assessing students requires knowledge and skills. Combining CA (continuous assessment) marks was one challenge **C<sub>1</sub>** and **C<sub>5</sub>** reported to have faced. **C<sub>1</sub>** argued that only after he became a full time teacher did he come to know about CA marks. Respondents also reported facing problems with assessing their learners. **C<sub>5</sub>** explained that she had a problem setting up a standard examination paper for her learners. She resorted to using old question papers without really considering if they were appropriate for the syllabi. She later discovered that there was no link between the question papers she set and the syllabi.

#### **4.3.8 Communication problems**

Another problem identified during the interviews was the communication breakdown between learners and the teacher. English, not being the first language to most learners in Namibia and not commonly spoken especially by those in the rural areas, is considered as a barrier to learning. The majority of students in rural areas were not proficient in English. This was causing most learners not to succeed or to meet their full potential in schools. Although it is a language of instruction from grade 4, teachers were faced with problems of explaining things over and over again since some learners did not understand the language well. Novice teachers in this study reported to have experienced such problems. They did not know how to adequately teach these learners and get them to understand. C<sub>4</sub> was given to teach learners from NAMCOL (Namibia College of Open Learning), a distance learning college that helps learners who failed grade 10 or grade 12 to improve their results, so they could be promoted to grade 11 or to training institutions. Sometimes learners spent two to three years or more trying to improve their results. C<sub>4</sub> argued that these were mostly learners who could not speak and understand English well. As she stated:



*Sometimes when you explain they seem to understand that specific example but if you give them another related example it is just difficult for them to do.*

This was difficult for novice teachers since learners seemed to understand well when the teacher was explaining but due to the language problem would fail to interpret a similar exercise.

#### **4.3.9 Problems resulting from political decisions and education policy making**

The actions taken by the Namibian Government have, to some extent, had negative effects on the teaching practice and on how teachers perform their job. Educational policies and

unresponsive educational bureaucracies were some of the sources of novice teachers' frustration and problems. As argued in Chapter Two, educational changes had given teachers a multiplicity of tasks that they needed to fulfil, such as completing administrative work, counselling and pastoral work. Many of these duties were not thoroughly explained and novice teachers had not received adequate training in these tasks. Accordingly, this led to confusion about teachers' roles. More so, the shortages of resources and burgeoning number of learners in schools have added to the workloads of teachers.

#### **4.3.9.1 Workload**

All participants (novices and HODs) complained about the workload at their schools. Novices stated that the workload was unbearable. It affected their teaching as it demanded much energy from them. Additionally, their professional development into becoming effective teachers was hindered as they had to attend to other tasks outside teaching. According to **C<sub>3</sub>** there was much more to do in teaching than she had anticipated. As a hostel supervisor, she had to wake up early at 4:30 am to wake the learners for breakfast and she had to leave the office at 16:00 or 18:00 pm since there was usually a lot of planning for the next day.

**C<sub>5</sub>** reported that they were working on a seven day cycle with seven periods per day, and had only three free periods throughout the cycle. That meant she could teach for three consecutive days without any free periods. She argued that the work was too much. Most schools had a shortage of teachers so teachers at school had to share the workload among themselves. At times novice teachers were given more work than they could handle. **C<sub>5</sub>** further added that they were allocated many classes and assigned different grades which meant lots of planning.

**A<sub>3</sub>**, **B<sub>1</sub>**, **C<sub>5</sub>** and **D<sub>3</sub>** reported that there were many extra-curricular activities that took up much of their time. Accordingly, they ended up with limited time to prepare for the next day. However, **D<sub>4</sub>** explained that extra-curricular activities were not a problem for him

since he was ready and prepared for them. **D<sub>4</sub>** asserted that there was much administration work to be carried out and most of which they were not trained for. He assumed that his responsibilities would entail just teaching. He was shocked that there was more to teaching than delivering a lesson. There were things like filing, many meetings and class registers. Novice teachers reported that they did not have time for learners especially after school when they needed assistance, because they were occupied with other activities.

Similarly, all HODs admitted that novices were overloaded and not given any special relief in terms of work allocation. **H<sub>5</sub>** acknowledged that when novice teachers came to school, senior teachers took advantage of them because they were new. She explained that novices were given many responsibilities and heavy teaching loads by veteran teachers and they had no say about it.

**H<sub>1</sub>**, **H<sub>2</sub>** and **H<sub>4</sub>** also agreed that novice teachers were regarded as qualified teachers and were expected to have the same responsibilities as senior teachers regardless of their experience. **H<sub>1</sub>** acknowledged that it was a problem but they were following the system otherwise some teachers would be more overloaded than others. According to **H<sub>4</sub>** since novice teachers had already done teaching practice they were not new in the profession, hence in his department he did not treat them differently from more experienced teachers.

#### **4.3.9.2 Lack of resources**

Lack of resources was a major problem encountered by novice teachers. Almost all participants reported that there were not enough resources in schools to allow for effective pedagogy. The exceptions were the novice teachers in School D who stated that the school was well equipped with resources. Textbooks were lacking in three schools. According to **A<sub>1</sub>**, in a class of 40 to 44 learners, there might only be 10 or 20 textbooks allocated to the class; so learners had to share those textbooks. Unfortunately, some learners kept the books to themselves, not willing to share them with other learners. In addition, much of the teaching time was taken up by the writing of summaries rather than on teaching and learning due to the scarcity of textbooks. All these affected the teaching

and learning in the classroom. **B<sub>1</sub>** argues that she found it stressful to give summaries every day since he was already overloaded and it was difficult to cover the whole syllabus within the allocated time.

The subjects that were negatively affected were the languages and Mathematics where learners were required to do many exercises. According to **A<sub>3</sub>** and **B<sub>2</sub>** they had to cut back some activities due to the lack of resources. This affected not only the learning of learners but also the teaching development of novice teachers. Science teachers also experienced problems of a similar nature. Experiment resources were absent from schools and most of them were taken by senior teachers. They had to spend their own money as they feared they would be held accountable for learners' failure.

**B<sub>1</sub>** reported that she was given a class without enough chairs and tables. Some furniture was in a bad shape. Some of the learners had to stand for the whole 45 minutes and this led to poor concentration and participation among the learners during the lesson. Other learners refused to take notes since there were not enough tables for each learner. Adding to this problem was the way of accessing resources. Novices reported to have difficulties in accessing resources since they were scared of approaching the management to request resources.

**D<sub>4</sub>** was the only teacher who complained about the lack of resources at School D. He however stated that this might be because he started the job mid-year when most of the resources were taken up by other teachers.

HODs, on the other hand, had various views about the resources at their schools. **H<sub>3</sub>** argued that resources were not enough especially for the novice teachers. Most resources were taken up by senior teachers before the arrival of novices. **H<sub>3</sub>** remarked: "We just told them how to use the available resources". According to **H<sub>2</sub>**, the school provided the materials where they could but the finances were very tight. However, she stated: "It is the responsibility of every teacher to get learning information for his or her subject".

**H<sub>4</sub>** acknowledged that there were not enough resources at the school but they bought some for teachers just to help them. As for the learners he believed that it was a national problem and they would never have enough. To the contrary, **H<sub>1</sub>** stated that if novices in her school needed extra resources, they would come in and ask for resources to be ordered, and the school would order them.

From the above responses of **H<sub>2</sub>**, **H<sub>3</sub>** and **H<sub>4</sub>**, although they have acknowledged the problem, little was done to help these teachers. It is clear that the lack of resources in schools is seen as a national problem and as that was the case little would be done in schools to address this problem. As a result novices would find the profession stressful and challenging.

#### **4.3.9.3 Overcrowded classrooms**

**A<sub>2</sub>**, **A<sub>3</sub>**, **B<sub>1</sub>**, **C<sub>2</sub>** and **C<sub>4</sub>** indicated that the teacher-learner ratio was very high. Many had 40 or more learners in their classrooms although the teacher-learner ratio was supposed to be 1:35. Classrooms were overcrowded; hence there was no room for individual attention. Novices reported to have a lack of knowledge in teaching big numbers of learners. They reported that it took away the possibility of providing the necessary care that each learner required.

Due to the shortage of teachers especially at School B some learners had no teachers and hence teachers were allocated more learners than was officially prescribed. Teachers were forced to have afternoon classes especially with those teaching subjects with both NSSC (Namibian Senior Secondary Certificate) and NSSCH (Namibian Senior Secondary Certificate for Higher Level) levels. Assessment of learners was reduced because of the large number of learners in the classrooms. Teachers found it difficult to set up effective activities to ensure that learners understood what they were taught. In addition it was difficult for them to finish marking the activities on time due to overcrowded classrooms.

According to **H<sub>2</sub>** there was a shortage of teachers at school and some novice teachers who were appointed had only one major. That means they could ideally only be allocated one subject. There was no HOD for some subjects at schools B and C. At School A there was no HOD for Commence, School B had no Social Science HOD and at School C no HOD for Natural Science.

#### **4.3.10 Isolation**

Some of the problems that novice teachers experienced resulted from their colleagues' unsupportive attitudes. Although one would assume that senior teachers would engage in assisting and sharing ideas with novice teachers, isolation of novice teachers by senior teachers was another challenge reported by **A<sub>4</sub>**, **B<sub>1</sub>** and **C<sub>3</sub>**. They expressed how stressful it was to be without the support of colleagues, how much they needed someone to talk to but no one was willing to listen. **B<sub>1</sub>** lamented that she had no friends at school as her colleagues isolated her. She did not have anyone to socialize with. Even after school she felt like a stranger at school. Senior teachers were not willing to share the resources with her. According to Koeberg (1999), socialisation enables novices to spot good characteristics of a good teacher in themselves as provided by a more experienced teacher, enabling them to develop into competent teachers.

Another factor that added to novice teachers' problems was the lack of accommodation at school and in the school environment. **D<sub>4</sub>** explained that he had to look for his own accommodation as the school could not provide for him. He spent half of his first year 'squatting' in the apartment of a colleague whom he had just met and he was not comfortable in the apartment. In addition he had to walk a long distance to get to school. He experienced this as tiresome and dangerous.

According to **H<sub>1</sub>** some teachers found themselves at schools far from their homes. She reasoned that some novices were moving into a strange environment without friends, family and other support systems.

To summarize; novice teachers are faced with seemingly insurmountable problems and barriers. During the next section the focus is on the strategies which these novice teachers were forced to formulate in an attempt to survive.

#### **4.4 Coping mechanisms**

Participants were asked to give details of how they dealt with the problems they mentioned in order to achieve their teaching and learning goals. HODs found it hard to comment on the novices' coping mechanisms due to a lack of interaction, socialization and communication between novices and HODs.

Novices dealt with problems differently; some employed active strategies others used avoidant strategies. Some novices could not really tell how they solved their problems, while some did not put up any effort to overcome their problems assuming that they would disappear with time. According to **H<sub>4</sub>** different people react differently to situations, depending on individual orientations. Their reaction may depend on the developmental level at which they are and how they are socialized into the profession. In order to achieve their teaching goals and survive their first year, novices have to find ways to alleviate their problems. These strategies are discussed below.

##### **4.4.1 Accessing support**

All novice participants pointed out that they could not survive on their own, they needed assistance both from other teachers and learners. Novices felt that there was not much support and assistance given to them by the management. Hence, they had to find ways to access such support.

**A<sub>3</sub>, B<sub>1</sub>, B<sub>2</sub>, C<sub>5</sub> and D<sub>2</sub>** overcame the difficulty by talking to experienced colleagues. **A<sub>3</sub>** argued that novice teachers needed to communicate their problems otherwise they would be lost. He stated that he talked to his colleagues about his problems and they helped him. He had a problem with syllabus interpretation. He was aided by his colleagues and he was



happy about it. **D<sub>2</sub>** contended that he learnt a lot from his colleagues. He used his free periods to observe other teachers delivering their lessons and this helped him to structure his lessons and present them accordingly.

**C<sub>3</sub>** and **D<sub>3</sub>** also explained that some learners were more problematic to handle on their own, and the only solution was to call in a senior teacher to control the class. According to **C<sub>3</sub>** seniors were mostly busy, they would tell her to go back and come back later after school. This worsened the problems because the learners would come back to class and cause more problems.

Teacher **B<sub>2</sub>** sought assistance from learners to run the library. Because he was mostly overloaded, he recruited learners to assist him with the library. He stated that learners enjoyed working in the library and this gave him an opportunity to attend to other responsibilities.

Another way how novices accessed support was by attending workshops. Most times workshops were presented away from school, this gave novices times off. They explained that meeting people in a different environment gave them a chance to reflect and discuss their problems with other teachers. **A<sub>1</sub>** and **B<sub>2</sub>** explained that they attended workshops at their own costs. It was only through workshops that they were informed about the changes in education. Participants who were afforded the opportunity to attend workshops reported that the workshops were very helpful and they received resources to supplement their lessons, for example posters.

#### **4.4.2 Emulation**

Novice teachers also decided to emulate what senior teachers were practising. **A<sub>1</sub>** stated that he adopted teaching strategies that were used by senior teachers without really questioning why they were teaching in that way. He also adopted the disciplinary methods used by others teachers which resulted in no achievement. Novice teachers reported that they needed to see how other teachers were presenting their lessons, especially those

teaching the same subjects. Novices explained that it was much easier for them to do what their colleagues were doing than choosing a teaching method. This was because they did not really have a clear direction on how to use other methods. **D<sub>2</sub>** had a problem with the teaching styles. He did not know which style to adopt for his teaching. Therefore, he chose to observe how other teachers were teaching and adopted it to his teaching and it helped him.

#### **4.4.3 Improvisation**

Another strategy that was used by novice teachers was that of improvising materials. Although most schools had insufficient teaching and learning resources, some novice teachers had come to accept it and learned to live with it. They accepted that it was the responsibility of all teachers to facilitate the learning process in their classrooms. The absence of resources could not be given as an excuse for ineffective teaching. Novice teachers stated that they needed to use anything at their disposal to offer effective teaching to their learners. A teacher needed to be creative; it was the only way to cope.

**C<sub>2</sub>** had to find a partner with whom she shared materials and they assisted each other with lesson preparation and setting up of tests and examination papers. **C<sub>2</sub>** further explained that since the school had few books for the subject, they decided to share the books with the colleague who was teaching the same subjects. In this way every learner would have a textbook during the lesson.

On the other hand, **A<sub>4</sub>** and **C<sub>4</sub>** explained that sometimes they used old books that were not in use. It was however helpful to them because there would always be two to three chapters in the old books similar to the content of the new books. Teachers gathered old books at the school and from other schools for their learners. In addition, an effort was made to encourage parents who could afford to buy textbooks for their children.

Spending their own money on resources to survive was another option for these novice teachers. Those who did so argued that they were doing it for the kids and not for the

school. C<sub>3</sub> explained that things that she bought remained her property and she could take it with her if she were to leave the school. C<sub>5</sub> also stated that one could claim back the money from the school but it took a long while to be reimbursed. C<sub>5</sub> further added that as a science teacher, there were many experiments that learners needed to carry out since they had to write examinations on it. Unless these experiments were carried out learners may not make it through their exams. A<sub>3</sub> argued that although the school may agree to buy materials there were quite a lot of procedures to follow before the school purchased the materials and it took a while before these materials were delivered. However, some novices felt that their salaries were very low and they could not afford to buy their own resources.

#### **4.4.4 Teacher-centered method**

Participants also reported that novice teachers used the 'chalk and talk' teaching method as a coping strategy. Since there were not enough textbooks at schools, learners relied more on summaries provided by the teachers. On the other hand, B<sub>1</sub> commented that she was worried about covering the syllabus on time; she reported that using chalk and talk ensured that more content was covered during the lessons. All other activities were given on Fridays.

#### **4.4.5 Becoming soft or rude with learners**

Discipline was a major problem for most novice teachers. They complained about ill-discipline among learners except for some of those at the school with stringently enforced rules. Novices needed to control learners' behaviour and manage their classroom; otherwise no effective teaching or learning could take place. Managing a class depended on how the teacher viewed and treated the learners. A mutual relationship between the teacher and the learners was important for effective teaching and learning. According to D<sub>2</sub> managing and controlling the class depended on individuals teachers. Learners also had their perceptions of teachers and learners tended to behave according to how the teacher presented themselves and how they treated learners.

To cope with the ill discipline of learners, **A<sub>3</sub>** and **D<sub>4</sub>** decided to develop ties with learners. They did so by becoming soft and friendly with learners. They stated that most learners would rather listen to a teacher who was kind to them or who made jokes with them rather than to a rude teacher. Learners liked to be treated kindly and to be liked by the teacher. **D<sub>4</sub>** stated that although the overall discipline of learners at school was bearable there were always cases where some learners showed attitudinal problems. However, the moment the teacher became friendly with them, they tended to be respectful and would not want to disappoint the teacher. According to **A<sub>3</sub>**, a teacher had to be friendly to the learners to be able to handle them and control the class. On the other hand, they argued that learners play a bigger role than colleagues in novice teachers' success and failure.

Developing friendships with learners also provided emotional support for novice teachers. Receiving positive feedback from learners developed feelings of belonging and encouraged them to improve their teaching.

**H<sub>2</sub>** agreed that novice teachers were friendly to the learners. However, she believed that being friendly with learners resulted in ill-discipline among learners. Learners took advantage of the situation and misbehaved.

In contrast, **B<sub>1</sub>** found it hard to develop ties with learners due to the decline in learners' motivation and an increase of ill discipline in learners. In order to control the behaviour problems of learners she needed to become rude with them. She stated this was the only way they could listen to her. Most learners would get scared when she was rude to them. **B<sub>1</sub>** however explained that she just needed to get learners to respect her but not to scare them as this impacted negatively on their learning.

#### **4.4.6 Reflecting**

The best teachers are invariably reflecting on their teaching practice to make sure that their teachings are as effective as possible. They need to examine their teaching

thoroughly to see what has worked and what has not and why. Reflection improves teaching which leads to effective learning. Significantly, only **A<sub>1</sub>** and **A<sub>3</sub>** indicated that reflection helped them to discover their weaknesses and improve their teaching practice. Both were able to reflect on their lessons. For example, **A<sub>1</sub>** discovered that he had a problem with time management and keeping up to his lesson plans. In this case **A<sub>1</sub>** realised that there was a need to adjust his teaching pace. This helped him to do his planned work within the allocated time.

**A<sub>3</sub>**, on the other hand, explained that he would find himself covering the lesson plan in time or failing to cover what he had planned within the allocated time. He decided to change it by having a goal set and to work with a SMART technique, thus S for specifics, M for measurable, A for accurate, R for realistic and T for time boundary. In this way he was able to manage his time effectively.

#### **4.4.7 Withdrawal and distancing**

Without substantial assistance novice teachers became anxious and uncertain. This also led to withdrawal among some novice teachers. According to **H<sub>4</sub>** novice teachers at his school had attitudinal problems in meeting their challenges. **H<sub>4</sub>** explained that most novice teachers preferred to keep their problems to themselves and it was quite difficult when communication was absent. He argued that novice teachers needed to be open when they were encountering problems. He added that some asked for advice but some assumed their problems would go away with time.

**A<sub>1</sub>**, **A<sub>2</sub>** and **B<sub>2</sub>** reported to have withdrawn from dealing with their problems directly. This coping strategy is usually employed by novice teachers at the lower level of development (Beach & Pearson, 1998). **A<sub>2</sub>** explained that she came from the tertiary institution very eager to teach but realised later that she just could not because there were many things happening in school. She added that things were just not happening the way she had anticipated and she felt it was too late to seek assistance. Although she hoped that her problems would go away with time, it never went away.

Linked to the above strategy is the strategy of distancing. Novices tended to hide and escape from their responsibilities rather than to face their problems. Although this was not put forward by novice teachers, **H<sub>1</sub>** argued that novice teachers did not accept responsibility for their duties. She said most of the time novices expected to be told what to do. They did not like participating and helping out. She stated further that novice teachers would not take part or contribute during a meeting, while some stayed away from meetings sitting in their classrooms. Others would not take part in sport or other activities after school. The moment the school was out they were out of sight and were nowhere to be found.

When asked if there were changes in the way novices coped during their first year, all novice teachers indicated that their ways of coping improved as the year went by. They argued that they discovered better strategies of dealing with their problems. They stated that although they experienced similar problems they developed better ways to deal with them. In addition, they became experienced teachers unlike in their first year when they had to deal with many challenges. Other stated that they did not experience some of these problems anymore. According to **A<sub>4</sub>** his coping began to improve as he became well acquainted with the learners' behaviour, the teaching norms and the school environment. **C<sub>3</sub>** argued that even learners were not a problem anymore. She was able to stand her ground and tell them what to do and they obeyed her. However, according to **H<sub>1</sub>**, novice teachers improved their coping strategies as the year went by. More effective strategies were developed in novice teachers' second to third year of teaching.

#### **4.5 Recommendations to ease the transformation from pre-service to full time teaching**

The last section of the interview required participants to suggest possible solutions that schools or the government could do to ease the transformation from pre-service training to full time teaching. Participants indicated that there was more to be done by schools, teaching institutions and the government if novices were to have a smooth transformation.

**H<sub>1</sub>** and **C<sub>3</sub>** stressed that novice teachers should get one year of probation before they began full time teaching. **H<sub>1</sub>** proposed that novice teachers needed a year of practice at school. They should also not be overloaded, as this would make things much easier for them while they are learning teaching skills and adapting to the teaching environment.

A vast majority of participants (**A<sub>2</sub>**, **A<sub>3</sub>**, **B<sub>1</sub>**, **C<sub>1</sub>**, **C<sub>2</sub>**, **C<sub>3</sub>**, **C<sub>5</sub>** and **H<sub>5</sub>**) felt that orientation was lacking in most schools. Novices were not receiving adequate and necessary assistance they required to survive their first year of teaching. They argued that the government should make arrangements to ensure that novice teachers are guided and provided with ideas on how to cope with problems they experience. **C<sub>5</sub>** strongly argued that there was a need for proper orientation. Novice teachers needed to be shown around the school, introduced to the staff members, to be told where to get materials and what was expected of them. According to **B<sub>1</sub>**, the government or the school should take novice teachers' problems seriously and provide them with mentors. This would enable them to have the direction of how things are done rather than waiting for six month or so to discover things on their own. **H<sub>5</sub>** suggested that schools needed to twin novices and experienced teachers in order to assist each other. He argued that both novices and experienced teachers could benefit from each other because there were also things that experienced teachers could learn from novices.

In addition to the above, **H<sub>5</sub>** and **B<sub>2</sub>** suggested that the government should put up mechanisms to help novices cope with their problems. The training institutions should also train pre-service teachers on how to survive their first year and how to manage their problem effectively. They argued that novices were coming into teaching for the first time without being fully exposed to all areas of teaching. Putting up coping mechanisms would ensure that novices were well prepared for the job.

**C<sub>2</sub>** and **C<sub>5</sub>** contended that the government should provide schools with enough resources and repair damaged furniture and other resources in schools as they were in bad shape. Novice teachers were coming into schools and faced challenges in trying to produce effective teaching without sufficient resources. **D<sub>4</sub>** added that resources should be

available and easily accessible for novice teachers since it was mostly difficult for novices to approach the principal or HOD to ask for assistance. If resources could be available and easily accessible, it would be helpful to novices.

Participants argued that HODs and principals needed to be given workshops. They needed to be trained on how to handle novice teachers and to know what difficulties they were most likely to experience since not all novices would come forward for assistance. They needed to know what assistance novice teachers needed to keep them in the profession. Participants further added that schools should see to it that senior teachers gave chances to novice teachers to attend workshop to obtain information and teaching skills. **B<sub>2</sub>** added that enough time should be allocated for workshops because not all teachers understood government policies.

**H<sub>4</sub>** recommended that teacher training institutions should upgrade their curriculum since there was a need for change and improvement. This was supported by **A<sub>1</sub>**, **A<sub>2</sub>**, **B<sub>1</sub>**, **C<sub>1</sub>** and **D<sub>2</sub>** who felt that teaching practice was inadequate and needed to be extended. **D<sub>2</sub>** and **A<sub>1</sub>** stressed that teaching practice was limited and pre-service teachers were not allowed to teach much but only observed teaching. In addition to the above, **B<sub>2</sub>** proposed that the university should maintain a balance between theory and practical activities since they were all crucial in learning to teach.

Other points of recommendations that emerged from the interviews that could ease the transformation from pre-service to full time teaching were the following:

- Pre-service teaching should train teachers to employ different kinds of methodologies.
- School subject content taught in secondary schools should be incorporated into the university curriculum, and
- Secondary schools and teacher training institutions needed to have one format of lesson plan to prevent confusion.



## 4.5 Summary

This chapter presented the views of participants that were elicited during the interviews. There were some disagreements and agreements on various points between participants, especially between HODs and novice teachers.

Responses confirmed that novice teachers in the Oshikoto Region were faced with several problems during their first year of teaching. Novice teachers found themselves swamped by various new events and challenges like the lack of orientation and support in classrooms activities, classroom management problems, lack of subject knowledge, workloads, isolation, lack of resources, etc. Most novice teachers emerged from the pre-service training hoping that the worst was over. The pre-service teacher training did not seem to have trained novices adequately for the teaching tasks. The lack of interaction in schools caused novices to work on their own, in an isolated environment and to deal with their problems on their own.

Various coping strategies employed by novice teachers to cope with their problems were reported by both HODs and novice teachers. However, HODs could not comment much on the coping strategies used by novice teachers due to a lack of interaction between them. Coping strategies included accessing support, the use of a teacher-centered methodology, distancing, reflection, building relationships with learners, etc. There were reports of success and failure in fighting the challenges by novice teachers and also accounts of improvements in the way novices coped through the year. However, there is still a need for improvement in the coping mechanisms utilized by novice teachers since most of them seemed to be using unsuccessful coping strategies. Most of these coping mechanisms were developed by trial and error, and not well thought out.

Generally novice teachers and HODs reported that the following should be addressed during the pre-service training to ensure that novice teachers were well prepared and are able to handle their problems effectively:

- Teaching practice was not adequate and hence needed to be extended.

- The teacher training was focused more on theory than on practice.
- The training should be based more on the subject content that the novice teachers would be expected to teach.
- The teacher training should expose the novice teachers to different teaching strategies.
- The teacher training should also integrate administration work into the curriculum.

The next chapter attempts to draw conclusions and make further recommendations.



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **A SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter discussed the findings that emanated from the empirical study. It explored the main research questions of the study relating to the problems faced by novice teachers and the coping strategies they used to overcome these challenges. This chapter provides a summary of the main findings of the study. The chapter further proposes recommendations that the government and schools could implement to improve the entry of novice teachers into the profession. Lastly possible areas for further research in this field are identified.

#### **5.2 A summary of the findings**

##### **5.2.1 Challenges facing novice teachers**

This study has shown that novice teachers experience difficulties at the beginning of their careers. The main challenges experienced by novice teachers in the Oshikoto Region of Namibia did not to a large extent differ from those experienced by novice teachers in other studies as indicated in Section 2.3 of this study. Most of the challenges seemed to stem from the inadequacy of pre-service training and unorganised school systems.

The teacher training seemed to provide inadequate courses for aspiring teachers. Novice teachers were coming into the profession with limited knowledge of teaching methods, subject content, syllabi interpretation, assessment and administration work. In agreement with other studies (Mandel, 2006; Phurutse & Arends, 2009; Ulvik *et al.*, 2009) the pre-service training was too theoretical rather than practical. According to Phurutse and Arends (2009) there should be a balance between theory and practical teaching skills. While theory is important in helping teachers to understand teaching, practice enables teachers to teach well (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997). Much of the knowledge that

novice teachers come with from the training institution is irrelevant to their needs to cope with the many and varied challenges that they face in their schools.

Challenges experienced by novice teachers during their first year of teaching ranged from classroom management problems, problems resulting from political decisions and education policy making and problems arising from professional and social issues. It is however notable that most of these problems experienced by novice teachers arose from the classroom. This is no surprise since this is where novice teachers are left alone with no guidance and supervision from management or colleagues.

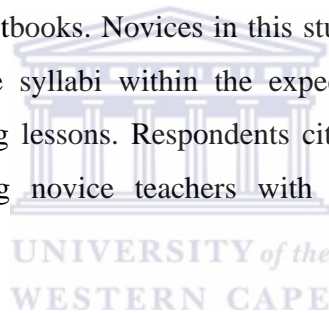
The 'Children's Rights' concept which seemed to be misunderstood by learners and the abolishment of corporal punishment in schools after independence, has caused ill-discipline amongst learners. Learners did not have respect for teachers any longer. This seemed to be a frequent threat to novice teachers during their first year of teaching. It is clear from the findings that four factors emerged as grounds for ill-discipline. Firstly, it occurred as a result of poor management by the teachers; secondly, due to a lack of well established rules in schools; thirdly, learners did not value the teaching of novice teachers as they were inexperienced and lacked subject content; lastly, this was also due to the lack of motivation to learn on the part of learners.

Syllabi interpretation and lesson preparation were also some of the challenges experienced by novice teachers. Novice teachers were unable to use the syllabi correctly. There was variance between what novice teachers learnt at training institutions regarding lesson preparations, and how schools expected them to plan their lessons. The lack of clear guidance in schools and a lot of pressure placed on novice teachers by their HODs resulted in increased stress on novice teachers.

The lack of subject knowledge of novice teachers can be ascribed to a number of factors. Firstly, in 2007 a new curriculum was launched and, changes were made to the syllabus in order to improve their relevance. Syllabi were upgraded to include more topics which are Southern Africa based (Van der Merwe, Dec 07/Jan 08). However, there was no in-

service training done to help novice teachers teach the new curriculum especially those who did their teaching practice based on the old curriculum. The content they were taught at the training institution was quite different from that taught at the secondary schools. Secondly, due to lack of qualified teachers, novice teachers were required to teach grade levels and subjects they were not trained to teach. All this resulted in them experiencing problems with lesson delivery and resulted in the lack of learners' discipline.

Results showed that delivering lessons to suit learners with different abilities was a challenge to most novice teachers. Their lessons were mainly teacher-centered with less focus on learners' understanding. There was little interaction in the classrooms. Bahta (2003) indicated that novice teachers tended to pay no attention to the intellectual development of learners and did not pursue their lesson objectives, but rather aimed at covering the content of the textbooks. Novices in this study reported similar challenges; they were eager to cover the syllabi within the expected time and this led to less participation of learners during lessons. Respondents cited that the pre-service training was inadequate for preparing novice teachers with relevant teaching methods to accommodate all learners.



A challenge that seemed to be found only with novice teachers in the Oshikoto Region was the communication problems between learners and teachers. In Namibia learners from grade 1 to 4 are taught in their mother tongue. The problem arises when the children reach higher grades and still cannot communicate in English. Novice teachers find it hard to explain concepts to learners. Most learners in the Oshikoto Region do not speak English at home and find it hard to communicate in English. Learners feel depressed in class because they cannot participate and ask questions even when they are eager to. The lack of participation from the learners became a problem as novice teachers were never sure whether to repeat the topic or simply to continue with the next topic.

Respondents indicated that they had little knowledge about assessment due to inadequate training in the area. Assessment and evaluation have been reported in literature as one of

the serious problems experienced by novice teachers. Veenman (1984), for example, ranked it as the fourth most serious problem experienced by novice teachers.

Findings further revealed that the workload was unbearable to novice teachers. The work included teaching, administration and extramural activities. In addition, the classrooms were overcrowded due to the shortage of teachers in schools. Senior teachers took advantage of the situation by giving more and difficult work to novice teachers since novice teachers did not have much knowledge about the system. This had a negative effect on the performance of novice teachers. Ulvik *et al.* (2009) argue that giving novice teachers more responsibilities resulted in novice teachers having little time for analysing and reflecting. It also gave them a negative perception about the job of teaching. At some schools the workload was divided evenly among all teachers. HODs stated that there was no policy that stated that novice teachers should be given a reduced workload.

Novice teachers had inadequate resources which affected their teaching and students' learning. Senior teachers took most of the resources for their classes and left the old and broken ones for novice teachers. As a result of inadequate resources, novice teachers had to decrease activities and experiments for the learners and resorted to teacher-centered methods.

Findings also revealed that novice teachers experienced isolation from their colleagues. Senior teachers hardly had time to socialize with novices. Such a situation prevents teachers from being collaborative and decreases the possibilities of learning from each other, and to novice teachers this isolation can be most disadvantageous (Schulze & Steyn, 2005; Zepeda & Mayers, 2001). Novices have to work on their own. According to Feiman-Nemser (1983) this allows for self expression but decreases the effectiveness of novice teachers.

From the above, it can be deduced that novice teachers in the Oshikoto Region were faced with numerous problems in various aspects of teaching. Nevertheless, they received

very little and sometimes no support from their schools, as will be seen in the next section.

### **5.2.2 Orientation of and support for novice teachers**

Despite many problems novice teachers faced, orientation and support were lacking in most schools, except for novice teachers in School D who reported to have undergone some orientation. In addition, these novice teachers were assigned a mentor to render assistance with day to day problems. It is therefore not surprising that these teachers experienced less trauma and developed better ways of dealing with their challenges than novice teachers from schools with less or no support.

A question that came to mind here was why was School D able to give well planned and organised orientation and assistance to their novice teachers compared to other schools? What was so different at these schools? Orientation at School D was facilitated by the school principal, while at the other schools the principals were not involved in assisting novice teachers. School D had a well organisational structure in place where teachers believed in helping each other. This allowed for the professional development of novice teachers.

The rest of the novice teachers indicated that they received little or no orientation at all although they acknowledged facing numerous challenges. Findings indicated that the only orientation novice teachers got was to be shown around the school environment and their classrooms. Those who were fortunate to have a helpful HOD were invited to observe their classes. Literature emphasises the need for induction and orientation during the first few years of teaching as a form of in-service training. Craig *et al.* (1998) argue that the first year is the most important year in teacher professional development and this should include comprehensive growth and support. In return, they will perform their expected responsibilities successfully and become effective teachers. Induction is crucial for developing sound teaching practices and in the development of knowledge and skills

that novice teachers need to be successful in their first year of teaching. Schools that do not recognise the need for such support are doing their novice teachers a disservice.

Some of the novice teachers with HODs did not receive the required assistance; however, novices who suffered most were those without HODs. Some HOD respondents argued that they were overloaded with administration work and had more classes than anyone else in school; therefore, there was insufficient time to offer the necessary support to novice teachers.

As a result of little or lack of support for novice teachers, novice teachers had to find ways to overcome the problems they encountered. Evidence from the findings revealed that this was mostly done by trial and error and in some cases these efforts were not successful.



### **5.2.3 Coping mechanisms used by novice teachers**

Novice teachers in this study stated that they had to find ways to work through their problems and the frustration experienced in the job in order to attain their teaching and learning goals. Most of the coping mechanisms they developed were merely as a result of trial and error. The coping mechanisms utilized by these novice teachers varied from what Cramer (1998) called active coping mechanisms to avoidant mechanisms as explained in Chapter Two. Some novice teachers themselves indicated that some of the strategies they employed only helped in the short run. Findings revealed that most novice teachers had little concern about the students' learning and focused more on how they would survive these problems.

Accessing support emerged as the most common strategy employed by many novice teachers. Novice teachers admitted that although there was not much support offered to them, they were determined and opted to seek support from colleagues and learners. However, this was not an easy task. As mentioned in the previous chapter, they talked to senior teachers regarding their challenges and other activities. They sometimes received



assistance. Finding a partner proved to be helpful to some novice teachers. In this case, a partner was someone with whom novice teachers shared information, prepared lessons together, shared resources and also set tests and examinations with. Most importantly, the partner was a teacher who taught the same subject as the novice teacher.

Due to novice teachers' inability to handle learners' ill-discipline, novice teachers stated that they had to seek assistance from the veterans. There was however evidence that some veterans were not always helpful and they often sided with the learners. Novice teachers believed they were powerless in handling learners and therefore ignored them thinking the problem would disappear (Beach & Pearson, 1998; Veenman, 1984).

Novice teachers had to make ways to access the educational workshops even at their own costs since schools were not always willing to pay for their travelling or other expenses. In this way they stayed updated with current information and knowledge.

Although the lack of resources in schools was at some point demoralizing and stressful to novice teachers, this did not prevent novice teachers from carrying out their teaching. With effort novice teachers managed to obtain resources using what they call 'improvisation'. Novice teachers had to spend their own money on resources to provide effective teaching for their learners. Similarly, respondents reported that novice teachers had used some of the old books in school to supply to their learners and requested parents who could afford to buy resources for their learners.

Participants reported that due to a lack of teaching and learning resources in schools novice teachers resorted to a chalk and talk method. Although most novice teachers were aware of the shortcomings inherent in this method, such as less involvement of learners, they argued that they could not resort to any other method due to ignorance. The use of this method seems to be a generally adopted coping strategy, as reported by Aitken and Mildon (1992) and Woods (1980).

Although people would choose how to behave and interact with the world, there are often forces that require them to use their less strong characteristics (Dennis, 1997). Pearlin and Schooler (1978) argue that the possession of the correct personality traits offers one with the ability to deal with life's problems successfully. Novice teachers revealed that they had to change their characters in order to cope with learners' ill-discipline. Some novice teachers perceived that becoming rude with the learners enabled them to take control of the class. In contrast, others believed that becoming soft and friendly with learners reduced the ill-discipline of learners. They saw the need for teachers to respect their learners, to maintain honesty with learners and mostly to be soft with learners, as learners who were treated respectfully by their teacher would respond in a similar way toward the teacher. Novice teachers also understood this as crucial in providing a learning environment that is conducive to learning and teaching.

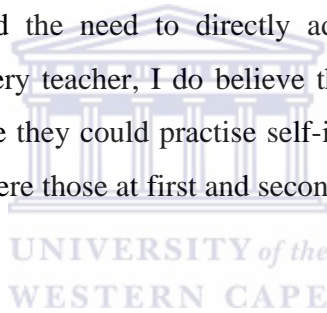
In the absence of clear direction, novice teachers emulated their colleagues' way of doing things. Feiman-Nemser (1983) reported that this may only help in the short run. The strategy may not allow novice teachers to develop and sustain their capacity to learn from their teaching and to keep asking questions about their teaching but rather to simply keep on applying what other teachers are doing whether appropriate or not for the topics they are teaching.

Some novice teachers assumed their problems would go away with time even without being acknowledged, but they never did. They hoped that by the end of the year their problems would be over as they could have acquired experience and skills in dealing with such problems. It is this hope that had moved these novice teachers through their first year. However, hope without struggle cannot attain anything, "the hoped-for is not attained by dint of raw hoping" (Freire, 1998:9). Therefore, this could hamper novice teachers' development since there are no new theories and practices tried out.

Another coping strategy used by novice teachers was one of distancing. Bolger (1990) defines this strategy of distancing as reducing of threat by becoming psychologically or physically isolated from the situations that caused stress. This was the case for some

novice teachers in this study, who decided not to attend or participate in meetings, not participating in extra-mural activities, etc. Although all these techniques are designed to avoid problems or stress, they could also be disadvantageous to novice teachers because they could benefit and learn from such activities.

Only few participants stated that they had reflected and assessed their practices with the intention of improving the quality of their teaching. This did not only help them to identify the problems and question their method of teaching, but also helped in formulating solutions to the identified problems. The solutions they formulated helped them in the long run. Beach and Pearson (1998) called this developmental stage when novice teachers begin to question their ways of teaching, their perceptions and theories that they used in teaching as self-interrogation. This self-interrogation is mainly caused by their desire to change and the need to directly address the problems. Although reflection is a requisite for every teacher, I do believe that most of the novice teachers were not yet at the stage where they could practise self-interrogation. However, most of the coping mechanisms used were those at first and second levels for coping identified by Beach and Pearson (1998).



There is no question that most novice teachers improved their coping strategies as they advanced through their first year, although some may have taken longer to employ effective coping strategy than others. It all depended on the assistance given and how novice teachers were willing to overcome the problems. HODs observed that more effective strategies developed in novice teachers' second to third year of teaching. Novice teachers themselves indicated that their ways of coping improved as the year went by.

I believe that the institutional structures and novice teachers' personality disposition determined the kind of coping strategies novice teachers employed. In schools that lacked interactions among the staff members, novice teachers found themselves being alone, doing things on their own and unable to observe how other teachers dealt with their problems. Unable to socialize with senior teachers and discussing their problems with colleagues affected much of novice teachers' professional development. This caused

novice teachers to employ survival coping strategies. Social interactions gave novice teachers a better idea of understanding their problems and hence enabled them to formulate effective coping mechanisms.

Some HODs argued that the employment of effective coping strategies depended on the disposition of novice teachers and their ability to adapt to their new environment. Although studies such as that of Cramer (1998) argue that personality dispositions are unimportant in determining coping reactions, this study found that some novices saw themselves as unable to deal with their problems as they did not believe in themselves and gave up the fight. Others however maintained a positive attitude despite the many challenges and demands they faced. This enabled them to stay focused and to develop effective coping mechanisms in dealing with the challenges.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Having discussed the challenges and coping mechanisms of novice teachers, what then needs to be done to ensure an easy transformation of novice teachers from pre-service training to becoming full time teachers and to ensure that novice teachers employ effective coping mechanisms? Who are the people responsible to ensure this smooth transformation? Recommendations from participants are presented in the previous chapter. The teacher training institutions, the Ministry of Education and schools have an important role to play in facilitating the use of effective coping mechanisms and in assisting novice teachers in alleviating these challenges. This part of the chapter makes recommendations as to what these three institutions can do to improve the entry of novice teachers and to help develop their coping mechanisms. These three institutions are discussed separately below.

#### **5.3.1 Pre-service teacher training institutions**

Novice teachers in this study complained that the teacher training did not adequately train them for all the requirements of the job. Other studies (Feiman-Nemser, 1983;

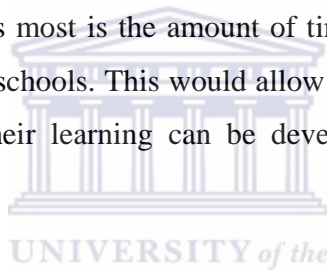
Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997) also indicated that some of the problems experienced by novice teachers were due to the lack of adequate preparation in the basic principles of instruction. Therefore, something needs to be done about pre-service training curricula in order to prevent most of the challenges and to improve the coping mechanisms of novice teachers. However, there are many dilemmas associated with pre-service teacher training. These dilemmas include theory, teaching practice, subject content and methods of teaching.

According to Calderhead and Shorrock (1997), teachers need not only to be competent actors in the classroom, but also practitioners capable of understanding what they are doing, why they are doing it and how they could change their practice to suit changing curricula, contexts or current circumstances. Thus both practice and theory are equally important for novice teachers. Phurutse and Arends (2009) argue that a balance between theory and practical skills should be maintained. The teacher training programme at the University of Namibia especially has a limited practical component and focuses more on theory. Pre-service teachers need to be exposed to the real school environment where they can experience challenges and learn to develop mechanisms while still students. However, I hope the merger between the University of Namibia and the Colleges of Education that is currently implemented will address this problem.

Teaching is best learnt in the classroom since it is more of a practical activity. It is best learnt through trial and error under the supervision of an experienced practitioner (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997). Thus, teaching practice needs to be extended. Novice teachers need to be in schools teaching and observing what is happening in schools in the morning. After school hours they can come back to the institutions for lectures.

Teacher educators need to know what is happening in schools during the times they are sending their students to schools. Students are mostly sent to schools at the beginning of the schools' first term when schools are busy with administration work and admission of learners. This is the only experience they are likely to gain. Teacher educators must determine what time is most appropriate for students to go out on teaching practice. In

addition, teacher training institutions also need to know when the student teachers are ready to be based in schools. There have been debates as to when pre-service students are to be sent to schools as well as the nature of the tasks that they should carry out at school at different stages of the course. Some studies argue that teaching practice should wait until students have a clear, articulated and critical understanding of the classroom process before they are placed in schools (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997). This will help them avoid repeating existing ineffective practices. On the other hand, there have been arguments that only after students had gained experience of the classroom will they be able to appreciate what teachers do and able to relate their ideas and theories to the real practice (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997:195). Ulvik *et al.* (2009) argue that some aspects of teaching come in the wrong order, more practice needs to come before theory so that students are able to make the link between the two. Whichever policy the teacher training institutions adopt, what matters most is the amount of time spent by students at schools and the tasks they carry out at schools. This would allow them to explore everything that is happening in schools so their learning can be developed in a coherent and well-coordinated manner.



Different types of teaching methods should be integrated in the teacher training in which pre-service teachers are able to engage in problem solving skills and to develop their coping mechanisms. According to Feiman-Nemser (1983) courses offered during pre-service training should allow student teachers to see the relevance of theory to classroom problems and make connections they might not otherwise make. However, participants in this study had indicated that the courses offered during the training were inadequate. The training did not prepare them for various aspects of teaching such as basic subject content, various teaching methodologies, syllabi interpretation, administration work and coping mechanisms. Teachers are required to have this knowledge to enable them to cope well in the job. It is unreasonable to expect these teachers to have this knowledge and know how it relates to their practice without the requisite training being given to them during pre-service training. Pre-service teacher training therefore needs to incorporate all these into their existing curricula. Pre-service teachers need to be taught how to employ various teaching methods since learners have different abilities.

There is a need for higher education mentors to encourage student teachers and to equip them with the teaching techniques and successful coping mechanisms. Having a mentor enables student teachers to share their problems and thus develop their communicating skill which is one of the strategies of dealing with challenges. Student teachers need emotional support to help them face the challenges of the training and of the job. Mentors should be the main source of information regarding teaching and to provide advice to student teachers and feedback about their teaching. In addition, the mentor should provide students with ideas and examples which they can adopt for their teaching or use it for comparison. Students could experiment these ideas or strategies to see which suit their practice (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997).

Lastly, a course on coping mechanisms needs to be implemented in pre-service training institutions. Student teachers should be taught how to successfully deal with the challenges they experience during their teaching practice. Student teachers should discuss the problems they experience in schools and how they can better deal with such problems if they are to reoccur subsequently in their career. Giving students opportunities to discuss their problems not only provide them with opportunities to work through the possible steps but may also give them opportunities to learn to share with others when they are having problems (Dennis, 1997). Feiman-Nemser (1983) has found that many novice teachers are cautious about revealing their problems or to observe another teacher's classroom. This limits their chances to receive advice or get feedback on their problems. Since students are given to do their teaching practice in different schools or different classroom environments they should be allowed to share their different experiences, discuss the challenges they faced and how they solved them or can be better solved in the future. It is important that social interaction among students be maintained to allow for support from each other.

### **5.3.2 Ministry of Education (MOE)**

The Ministry of Education plays a major role in retaining teachers in the teaching profession, more especially novice teachers. There is a lack of teachers in the country;



teachers quit the profession in search of greener pastures, some because they could not endure the difficulties they encountered with no or little assistance. Most novice teachers in this study assumed that the government did not care much about them and they were left to suffer on their own. The working situations were very poor. Without adequate assistance, many schools may lose good and talented novice teachers as they may become discouraged which may lead to them leaving the profession.

According to Dennis (1998) the life of teachers are to a large extent influenced by the board for which they work. The study confirms findings from other studies (e.g. Feiman-Nemser, 1983), that most novice teachers felt unsupported by the Ministry. Phurutse and Arends (2009) argue that the most appropriate way of supporting, developing and cultivating an attitude of lifelong learning in novice teachers, is through 'induction programmes' concentrating on teacher training, support and retention. The Ministry should be aware that the lack of induction for novice teachers in the country could cause novice teachers to develop unsuitable coping mechanisms which may lead to meaningless teaching and may affect the learners' learning. The Ministry therefore needs to introduce induction programmes for novice teachers to help them discuss their problems, share their personal experiences and help them formulate coping strategies to deal with such problems. The induction programmes could also lessen the workloads of HODs or subject heads who are responsible for assisting novice teachers with most problems. Every novice teacher should be provided with a mentor to provide ongoing support, observations with follow up discussions about their teaching practice. The Ministry should ensure that novices' workloads are reduced and are not assigned difficult job assignments until they become well acquainted with the job.

Participants in this study also suggested a year or two for probation, whereby novice teachers are being placed in schools with less work. Novice teachers can spend these years observing lessons and studying the school environment while teaching few lessons. During these years professional development should be encouraged. Induction should go beyond practical advice and socialization of teachers to include self-questioning and reflection of the teacher's practice and the values and norms underlying the educational



settings in which they work (Flores, 2006). Few novice teachers in this study reported to have reflected on their teaching although it is crucial that every teacher practices to reflect. In addition, due to schools' cultural differences, induction also needs to be conducted at schools and be context specific, in order to enable new teachers to adjust to that specific school culture (Schulze & Steyn 2005). Thus, the quality and support given to novice teachers need to be contextualized depending on the school culture (Ulvik *et al.*, 2009).

The Ministry should also organize workshops for all novice teachers to discuss issues pertaining to their subjects or their school environment, where they are experiencing problems and the strategies are using to overcome them. Thus, the content of workshops should be derived from the expressed needs of novice teachers themselves. Workshops should also be used to introduce novice teachers to new government policies. Workshops should also be provided to mentors and school principals in order to be much better trained to take up this responsibility of mentoring novice teachers.

The Ministry further needs to bridge the gap between teacher training institutions and schools, in order to improve the pre-service teachers training. A collaborative dialogue should be developed between the two institutions (Ulvik *et al.*, 2009). These partnerships between schools and pre-service teacher training institutions would ensure that teacher educators are familiar with what is happening in schools. This would also help universities to develop their curricula in line with what is happening in schools. In the same vein, schools could be better acquainted with the institutions' curriculum and know where there is a need for change. The partnerships would further bring together educators, mentors and student teachers to overcome the divide that exists between theory and practice (Flores, 2006).

In addition to the above, it is the responsibility of the Ministry to oversee the working environment of teachers. The working conditions can act as a pull and a push factor when deciding whether to stay or leave the profession (Feiman-Nemser, 1983; Phurutse & Arends, 2009). Feiman-Nemser (1983) argues that the working conditions in which

novice teachers found themselves during their first year of teaching influence their level of effectiveness and commitment to work, and the attitudes which govern their teaching behaviour. The Ministry needs to provide resources to teachers more especially to those in rural schools as they seemed to be most disadvantaged in this aspect. Furthermore, the Ministry should ensure that more teachers are trained since most schools are short of teachers and this has led to teachers being overloaded and assigned to teach subject they are not trained for. Teachers also need to be provided with good salary to motivate them and create a favourable working atmosphere.

The Ministry needs to develop supportive and social networks for novice teachers to limit burnout. Although teachers in this study indicated that they were able to create relationships with their colleagues, these relationships were voluntary and did not benefit all novices. Novice teachers who lacked communication skills were unable to create these relationships with their colleagues. However, the Ministry can create better supportive networks from which all novice teachers can benefit. Teachers can feel valued and supported through these networks created by the Ministry (Dennis, 1998). The support and guidance are crucial for novice teachers to become competent, productive members of the profession and reduces teachers' stress (Bahta, 2003).

### **5.3.3 Schools**

The school principal and HODs seem to have a major impact on the life of novice teachers at their schools. According to Phurutse and Arends (2009) attrition rate among novice teachers is high at schools that lack supportive and caring management. Most novice teachers would have a positive feeling at the schools if they had a warm welcome especially from the principal or HOD. Schools need to give proper orientation and support to novice teachers during their first year of teaching irrespective of whether they were previous learners at the school or did their teaching practice at the school. They need to be shown around the school, shown the location of resources and also to know the staff members and the school community they will be working with.

Apart from the first day orientation, novice teachers need to be given continuous assistance regarding their teaching and other areas where they are experiencing problems. The school can organise internal professional development workshops pertaining the problems of novice teachers and their survival mechanisms. School can also organize meetings where novice teachers are given time to socialize with veteran teachers, parents or with children rather than focusing only on school work. In addition, novice teachers should be given responsibilities to contribute, to extramural activities to help make them feel part of the school community.

According to Feiman-Nemser (1983) the interaction norms in schools are able to promote or limit the opportunities for novice teachers' professional development. Ulvik *et al.* (2009) state that schools should be represented by cultures of sharing, joint development activities and teamwork. Schools should then encourage teamwork between senior teachers and novice teachers to help them overcome the practical challenges and isolation novice teachers might encounter in classrooms or school environments. Senior teachers could also learn from novice teachers especially in the world of changing technology and make use of the novice teachers' current knowledge and competency.

Mentors should be assigned to each novice teacher to smoothen their induction. Schulze and Steyn (2005) argue that appropriate mentor selection and training should be considered when assigning a mentor to novice teachers. They contend that mentors with supportive and empathetic personalities who provide structured programmes can be useful to novice teachers. Novice teachers can choose mentors from veteran teachers who are outstanding in specific aspects such as lesson preparation, filing, discipline, etc. Mentors need to know that mentoring is not just about criticism and commenting on things that need improvement but also on supporting and providing acknowledgement to novice teachers to boost their confidence. Schulze and Steyn (2005) add that due to the need for mentors to share their professional expertise with novice teachers, it is relevant that there is a match in learning areas and grade levels with those of novice teachers. All novice teachers should be assigned a mentor; even novice teachers who seem to be coping need support. The reason being some novice teachers may lack the

communication skills to communicate their problems, while others would not want to be seen as not managing or coping and hence would do everything to look as if they are coping (Phurutse & Arends, 2009).

Novice teachers should also be given to teach less difficult classes, classes that are easy to maintain and with few responsibilities. Difficult classes more especially those with unmotivated and ill-disciplined learners tend to demotivate novice teachers who may become less interested in the profession. According to Ulvik *et al.* (2009) allocating difficult classes and full teaching responsibilities to novice teachers give them little time for analysing, reflecting and engaging in development dialogues in communities of practice. Schools should see to it that novice teachers are not given full teaching responsibilities and are given release time for professional development activities such as analysis, reflection, etc.

Feiman-Nemser (1983) argues that proper organisation which involves allocating novice teachers teaching resources before the school starts and assigning them to teach subjects they are trained for, would be invaluable. Schools should ensure that novice teachers are assigned to teach subjects and grades they are trained for, to ease their entry. Furthermore, resources should be readily available for novice teachers to access. Most novice teachers stated that they were scared to approach their school leaders to inquire about resources.

#### **5.4 Possible areas for further research**

This study was not intended to address all the problems pertaining to novice teachers but to contribute to the understanding of novice teachers' problems and their coping mechanisms in the Oshikoto Region of Namibia. During the research there were themes that emerged strongly and call for special investigation. Some of these are:

- The changes in the perceptions of novice teachers toward the teaching profession during their pre-service training and their first year of teaching;

- The attitude of senior teachers or HODs toward the novice teachers and how this affects novice teachers' performance and adaptation at schools may be crucial.

## 5.5 Concluding remarks

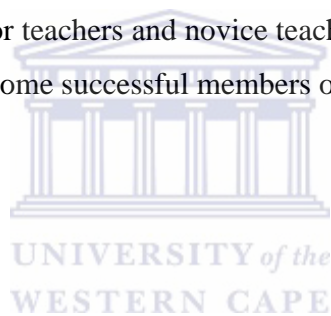
This research study was an attempt to investigate the problems experienced by novice teachers and the coping mechanisms they used to overcome these challenges. The study demonstrated that although there were many ineffective coping mechanisms formulated by novice teachers during their first year, novice teachers were also able to formulate effective mechanisms. This implies that if novice teachers are supported and assisted, more effective coping mechanisms can be formulated. Novice teachers can become functional teachers in schools and most importantly ineffective coping mechanisms can be avoided.

The consistent results across the investigation support the impression that induction programmes are fundamental in the initial years of the teacher's career and must be given attention by policy makers, school leaders, teacher educators and those responsible for the professional development of teachers in this case NIED. The Namibian Government should be aware of the relevance and usefulness of induction programme in addressing the needs of novice teachers. Induction policy needs to be tailored in accordance with the professional development needs of novice teachers if they are to become successful. In addition, induction needs to be organized to meet the individual needs and teaching context of every novice teacher. This may not be an easy task and may require more funding but if we are concerned about addressing quality education, induction programmes for novice teachers need to become a priority for the Namibian Government.

Novice teachers need to be empowered and be given opportunities to develop their professional competence. Thus, time is needed for these teachers to reflect on and analyse their practices in becoming competence teachers. To be a novice should be seen as a first stage of professional development and patience needs to be practised especially by school

members to allow these teachers to develop and to understand their role and to integrate fully in the teaching and school culture. The findings of this study affirm the relevance of senior colleagues in mentoring and integration of novice teachers. This necessitates collaborative relationships and the breaking down of isolation among staff members resulting in a supportive teaching and learning environment. School leaders are mostly important in overseeing the needs of novice teachers. School leaders should be aware of such influence to smooth novice teachers' transformation into schools.

Lastly, policy makers should not view school settings and teachers training institutions as individual entities but as integrated organisations in preparing competent teachers. In order that novice teachers cope effectively with the challenges they may encounter during their first years of teaching, policy makers need to develop a situation in which teacher educators, school leaders, senior teachers and novice teachers are able to work together in assisting novice teachers to become successful members of the teaching profession.



## References:

Alan, C. (2006). *Erikson's psychosocial development theory*. [Online]: Available url: [http://www.businessballs.com/erik\\_erikson\\_psychosocial\\_theory.htm](http://www.businessballs.com/erik_erikson_psychosocial_theory.htm). Accessed: May, 22, 2009.

Aitken, L.J. & Mildon, D.A. (1992). Teacher education and the developing teacher: The role of personal knowledge. In M. Fullan and A. Hargreaves (Eds.), *Teacher development and educational change* (pp.10-35). London: The Falmer Press.

Bahta, T.A. (2003). The challenges and experiences of beginner teachers in Eritrean Secondary School. Unpublished M.Ed. thesis. Cape Town: University of the Western Cape.

Beach, R. & Pearson, D. (1998). Changes in pre-service teachers' perceptions of conflicts and tensions: *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 14(3): 337-351.

Beijaard, D., Meijer, C.P., Morine-Dershimer, G., & Tillema, H. (2005). *Teachers' professional development in changing conditions*. Netherlands: Springer.

Blanche, M.T., Durrheim, K., & Kelly, K. (2006). First steps in qualitative data analysis. In T.M. Blanche, K. Durrheim and D. Painter (Eds.), *Research in practice: Applied methods in social sciences* (pp.321-343). Cape Town: UCT Press.

Bolger, N. (1990). Coping as a personality process: A prospective study: *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 59(3): 525-537.

Bransford, J., Darling-Hammond, L., & LePage, P. (2005). Introduction. In J. Bransford, and L. Darling-Hammond (Eds.), *Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should learn and be able to do* (pp.1-39). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Brooks, V. (2004). Learning to teach and learning about teaching. In V. Brooks, I. Abbott and L. Bills (Eds.), *Preparing to teach in secondary schools: A student guide to professional issues in secondary education* (pp. 7-17). Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Calderhead, J. & Shorrock, B.S. (1997). *Understanding teacher education: Case studies in the professional development of beginning teachers*. London: The Falmer Press.

Cherubini, L. (2007). Speaking up and speaking freely: Beginning teachers' critical perceptions of their professional induction: *The Professional Educator*, 29(1): 1-12.

Claynes, P.M. (2008). A novice teacher's reflections on lecturing as a teaching strategy: Covering the content or uncovering the meaning: *Nurse Education in Practice*, 9(1): 22-27.

Cohen, C. (1994). *Administering education in Namibia: The colonial period to the present*. Windhoek: Namibia Scientific Society.

Craig, H.M., Kraft, R.J., & Du Plessis, J. (1998). *Teacher development: Making an impact*. Washington: USAID

Cramer, P. (1998). Coping and defence mechanisms: What's the difference: *Journal of Personality*, 66(6): 919-946.

Creswell, J.W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed method approaches*. London: SAGE

Dennis, K.P. (1997). *Teacher survival: staying alive in the job of teaching*. Unpublished M.Ed. thesis. St. Catharines, Ontario: Brock University. Retrieved: 11 August, 2009, from <http://www.archive.org/stream/teachersurvivals.dennuoft-djvu.txt>.



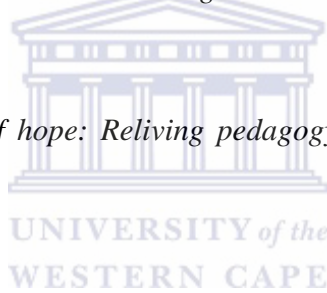
Eldar, E., Nabel, N., Schechter, C., Talmor, R., & Mazin, K. (2003). Anatomy of success and failure: The story of three novice teachers: *Educational Research*, 45(1): 29-50.

Fataar, A. & Paterson, A. (2002). The culture of learning and teaching: Teachers and morals agency in the reconstruction of schooling in South Africa. *Education and Society*, 20(2): 15-25.

Feiman-Nemser, S. (1983). Learning to teach. In L. Shulman and G. Sykes (Eds.). *Handbook of teaching and policy* (pp. 150-170). New York: Longman.

Flores, M.A. (2006). Being a novice teacher in two different settings: Struggles, continuities and discontinuities: *Teachers College Record*, 18(10): 2021-2052.

Freire, P. (1998). *Pedagogy of hope: Reliving pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.



Geonnotti, K.M., Schilk, P.J., Wetzel, A., & Zulkowsky, M. (2008). *The educational theory of Lev Vygotsky: an analysis*. Retrieved May 22, 2009, from <http://www.newfoundations.com/GALLERY/Vygotsky.html>.

Glatthorn, A. (1999). *Supervisory leadership*. USA: Scott Foreman and Co.

Government of the Republic of Namibia. (2001). *The Presidential Commission on Education, Culture and Training*. Windhoek, Namibia: Gamsberg Macmillan Publishers.

Green, K. (2006). No novice teachers left behind: Guiding novice teachers to improve decision- making through structured questioning. *Penn GSE on Urban Education*, 4(1): 1-9.

Guest, G., Mack, N., Macqueen, K.M., Namey, E., & Woodsong, C. (2005). *Qualitative research methods: A data collector's field guide*. North Carolina: Family Health International.

Her Majesty's Inspectors, (1982). *The new teacher in school*. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

Henning, E., Van Rensburg, W., & Smit, B. (2004). *Finding your way in qualitative research*. Pretoria: Van Schalk Publishers.

Johnson, S.M., Birkeland, S., Kardos, S.M., Kauffman, D. Lui, E., & Peske, H.G. (2001). *Retaining the next generation of teachers: The importance of school-based support*. [Online]: Available: <http://www.edletter.org/current/support.shtml>. Accessed: 11 May, 2009.

Jordell, K. (1987). Structural and personal influences in the socialisation of beginning teachers. *Teacher and Teacher Education*, 3(3): 165-177.

Kerry, T. (1982). *The new teacher: Examining in-school provision for student teachers and probationers. A handbook for heads, deputies, heads of departments and teacher tutors*. Britain: MacMillan education limited.

Koeberg, J.C. (1999). The induction and professional socialization of beginner teachers in Cape Town. Unpublished M.Ed. thesis. Cape Town: University of the Western Cape.

Lacey, C. (1977). *The socialization of teachers: Contemporary sociology of the school*. London: Richard Clay.

Lichtman, M. (2006). *Qualitative research in education: A user's guide*. London: SAGE.

Mandel, S. (2006). What new teachers need. *Educational Leadership*, 14(1): 66-69.

Mazibuko, E.Z. (1999). Understanding the experiences of beginning secondary school teachers. *International Review of Education*, 45(5/6): 589-602.

McKenzie, M.L. (2005). Stories of Buoyancy and despondency: Five beginning teachers' experiences in their first year in the teaching profession. Unpublished D.Ed. dissertation.

Australia Catholic University. Retrieved from <http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/digitaltheses/public/>.

McMillan, J.H. & Schumacher, S. (2006). *Research in education: Evidence-based inquiry*. USA: Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data.

Merriam, S.B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Ministry of Education and Culture. (1997). *National evaluation of the Basic Education Teacher Diploma: Professional issues*. Namibia, Okahandja: National Institution for Educational Development.

Ministry of Education. (2007). *National professional standards for teachers in Namibia*. Namibia Qualification Authority: Windhoek, Namibia.

Ministry of Education, (2008). *National subject policy guide for English first language grades 5-12*. Okahandja: National Institution for Educational Development.

Molly, R. (2008). Successes and struggles of the beginning teacher: Widening the sample: *The Educational Forum*, 72(1): 63.

Mutwa, R.S. (2001). In-service education and classroom practice: Geography teaching in Namibia. Unpublished M.Ed. thesis. Cape Town: University of the Western Cape.

Parsons, R.D. & Brown, S.K. (2002). *Teachers as reflective practitioner and action researcher*. United States of America: Wadsworth.

Pearlin, L.I. & Schooler, C. (1978). The structure of coping: *Journal of Health and Social Behaviour*, 19(1): 2-21.

Pearson, D. & Beach, R. (1999). Changes in pre-service teachers' perceptions of conflicts and tensions: *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 14(3): 337-351.

Phurutse, M. & Arends, F. (2009). *Beginner teachers in South Africa: School readiness, knowledge and skills*. South Africa: HSRC press.

Punch, K.F. (2000). *Developing effective research proposal*. London: SAGE.

Osuala, E.C. (2007). *Introduction to research methodology*. Onitsha: Africana Fep Publishers Ltd.

Renard, L. (2003). *Educational leadership: Setting new teachers up for failure or success*. Virginia: EBSCO publishing.

Sabar, N. (2004). From heaven to reality through crisis: Novice teachers as migrants: *Teacher and Teacher Education*, 20(2): 145-161.

Salia-Bao, K. (1991). *Namibian education system under the colonialists*. Randburg: Hodder and Stoughton Educational Southern Africa.

Schulze, S. & Steyn, T. (2005). Induction of inexperienced teacher: Problems and needs. *Acta Academica*, 37(3): 234-259.

Shakwa, G.N. (2001). Models of teacher induction and mentoring in the United States: Implications for developing first-year teacher induction and mentoring programmes for Namibia. Unpublished M.Ed. thesis. New York: University of New York.

Shakwa, G.N. (2009). *Novice teachers' Induction and Mentoring programme for Namibia*. Ministry of Education. NIED: Okahandja.

Taylor, S. (1998). *Coping strategies*. [On-line]: Available url: <http://www.macses.ucsf.edu/research/psychosocial/notebook/coping.html>. Accessed: 14 August, 2009.

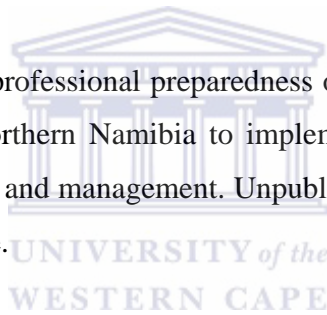
Tedesco, J.C. (1997). Innovations and new experiences in the field of teacher education. *International Bureau of education*, 93(1):1-8.

Tjivikua, K.M. (2002). Determining support for new teachers in Namibian schools. Unpublished D.Ed. dissertation. University of Massachusetts Amherst. Retrieved April 15, 2009. From: Electronic Doctoral Dissertations for UMass Amherst. Paper AAI3096318.

Ubisi, N.E. (1999). Identifying the problems and needs of beginning teachers in senior secondary schools in the Western Cape townships. Unpublished M.Ed. thesis. Cape Town: University of the Western Cape.

Ulvik, M., Smith, K., & Helleve, I. (2009). *The coin has two sides*. University of Bergen: Norway: Elsevier.

Uugwanga, N.N. (2007). The professional preparedness of the primary school principals in the Oshikoto Region of Northern Namibia to implement the policy on the national standards for school leadership and management. Unpublished M.Ed. thesis. Cape Town: University of the Western Cape.



Van der Merwe, C. (December 2007/January 2008). *Replacement of IGCSE/HIGSE system with the NSSC*. Government Information Bulletin, Republic of Namibia.

Veenman, S. (1984). Perceived problems of beginning teachers. *Review of Educational Research*, 54(2): 143-178.

Vonk, J.H.C. (1989). Beginning teachers' professional development and its implications for teacher education and training. *The Irish Journal of Education*, 23(1): 5-21.

Wiebke, K. & Bardin, J. (2009). New teacher support: A comprehensive induction program can increase teacher retention and improve performance. *Journal of Staff Development*, 30(1): 34-78.

Wikipedia Free Encyclopaedia, (2009). *Coping strategies*. [Online]: Available url: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coping\\_strategies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coping_strategies). Accessed: 20 May, 2009.

Winters, A. (2005, March 10). *Erickson's Theory of Human Development*. [Online]: Available url: <http://ezinearticles.com/?Ericksons-Theory-of-Human-Development&id=20117>. Accessed: 22 May, 2009.

Woods, P. (1980). *Teacher strategies: Explorations in the sociology of the school*. USA: Taylor and Francis.

Wong, H.K. (2004). Induction programs that keep new teachers teaching and improving: *NASSP Bulletin*, 88(638): 41-58.



Zepeda, S.J. & Mayers, S.R. (2001). The new kids on the block schedule: Beginning teachers face challenge. *The High School Journal*, 84(4): 1-11.

MS. T.T. UUGWANGA  
PO BOX 303  
ONDANGWA  
CELL: 081 4816 168  
[tuugwanga@gmail.com](mailto:tuugwanga@gmail.com)

THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION  
OSHIKOTO REGION  
P/BAG X2028  
ONDANGWA

Dear Sir/Madam

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT INTERVIEWS IN FOUR SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF  
THE OSHIKOTO REGION

I am writing this letter to request permission to conduct my research at four secondary schools in your region. I am currently a Master of Education student at the University of the Western Cape in South Africa. My research study topic is: **An investigation of the coping mechanisms of novice teachers: a study of selected high schools in the Oshikoto Region of Namibia.**

I intend to conduct these interviews during the months of February and March of 2010. The study will include novice teachers with two to three years of teaching experience. In addition, it will also include the HOD to which each novice teacher is assigned. Each interview will take approximately 30 to 60 minutes at a time when participants are free to prevent unnecessary interruptions of lessons. Participants will be assured that their personal information would be guarded and would not be made available to any person who is not directly involved in the study. Furthermore, participation will be voluntary and research participants will be allowed to withdraw from the study if they so choose.

Thank you in anticipation of a favourable response. I look forward to a response at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely

T.T. Uugwanga  
.....

**Appendix A**





## University of the Western Cape

---

Private Bag X17 Bellville 7535 South Africa  
Tel. 021-9592272  
Fax: 021-9593943  
E-mail: cwilliams@uwc.ac.za

### Faculty of Education

THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION  
OSHIKOTO REGION  
PRIVATE BAG X2028  
ONDANGWA  
NAMIBIA

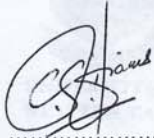
Dear Sir/Madam

#### RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT INTERVIEWS IN FOUR SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF THE OSHIKOTO REGION

I hereby declare that Ms Tulonga T Uugwanga (student number 282983) has been a registered student in the Faculty of Education of the University of the Western Cape since 2009 and I have been assigned as her thesis supervisor. The title of Ms Uugwanga's M.Ed. thesis is *Coping mechanisms used by novice teachers: a study of selected high schools in the Oshikoto Region*. Much research has been done internationally as well as in Africa regarding the lack of induction programmes for novice/beginner teachers. There is however a dearth of research into the coping mechanisms which beginner teachers develop to deal with the many daunting and varied challenges which they face during the first year of teaching. In this regard Ms Uugwanga will be making an invaluable contribution.

I unreservedly support her application to conduct her research study at four secondary schools in your region.

Sincerely



Dr Clarence G Williams

(D.Ed., M.Ed., M.A., PHTC.)

## University of the Western Cape

Private Bag 7, Bellville 7535 South Africa

Tel: 021 9592172

Fax: 021-9593643

E-mail: cw@uwc.ac.za

ORANGE

ORANGE

ORANGE

ORANGE

ORANGE



ORANGE

### UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE

I hereby declare that Ms. Tshona T. Mgwanga (student number 262260) has been registered student in the Faculty of Education of the University of the Western Cape since 2004 and I have been assigned as her thesis supervisor. The title of the Mgwanga's M.Ed. thesis is Coping mechanisms used by novice teachers in study of selected high schools in the Orange Free State. Much research has been done internationally as well as in Africa regarding the lack of industrial preparation for novice teacher trainees. There is however a dearth of research into the coping mechanisms which beginner teachers develop to deal with the many demanding and varied challenges which they face during the first year of teaching. In this regard Ms. Mgwanga will be making an invaluable contribution.

I unreservedly support her application to conduct her research study in four secondary schools in your region.



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION: OSHIKOTO REGION

Tel: (065) 281909  
Fax: (065) 240315

Private Bag 2028  
Ondangwa

2010-01-08

Enquiries: Mr A. Strüwig

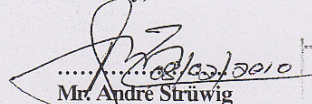
Ms. Tulonga Uugwanga  
P.O.Box 303  
Ondangwa

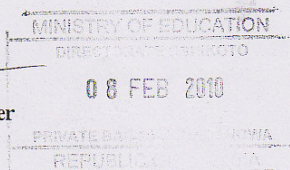
RE: INTERVIEW WITH TEACHERS

Be informed that permission is duly granted to above-mentioned student to do an interview at four selected school in the Oshikoto Educational Region under the following conditions:

1. You have to make an appointment in time with the principal of the proposed to be visited school to brief him on your intentions to do interviews.
2. The exercise must not interfere with the normal school programme.
3. Any interviews to be conducted will be on a voluntary base.

Sincerely,

  
.....  
Mr. Andre Strüwig  
Regional Education Officer



**UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE**

**Faculty of Education**

**Consent form for novice teachers**

**Research Title:** An investigation of the coping mechanisms of novice teachers: a study of selected high schools in the Oshikoto Region of Namibia.

---

I,..... agree to take part in the above-mentioned study. The process and steps of the research process have been explained to me by the researcher. I understand that during the interview I will be asked to answer several questions regarding my experience as a novice teacher at my school and the kind of assistance I have received. I have been informed that participation in this study is voluntary and I can withdraw from the study at any time. I also understand that my involvement will be kept completely private and confidential and will only be used for this study.

Name of Participant:.....

Signature of Participant: .....

Date: .....

This is to certify that I have explained the procedures of this study to the above participant.

Researcher:.....

Signature: .....

Date: .....

**Appendix D**



**UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE**

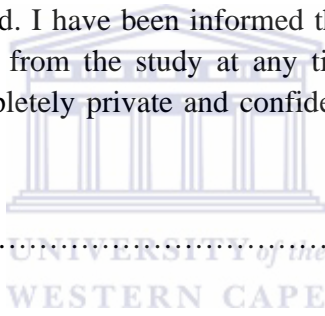
**Faculty of Education**

**Consent form for HODs**

**Research Title:** An investigation of the coping mechanisms of novice teachers: a study of selected high schools in the Oshikoto Region of Namibia.

---

I, ..... agree to take part in the above mentioned study. The process and steps of the research process have been explained to me by the researcher. I understand that during the interview I will be asked to answer several questions regarding my experience of novice teachers at my school and the kind of assistance they have received. I have been informed that participation in this study is voluntary and I can withdraw from the study at any time. I also understand that my involvement will be kept completely private and confidential and will only be used for this study.



Name of Participant: .....

Signature of Participant: .....

Date: .....

This is to certify that I have explained the procedures of this study to the above participant.

Researcher: .....

Signature: .....

Date: .....

**Appendix E**

## **Interviews questions for novice teachers**

### **A. Background information**

What teaching qualifications do you have?

What subjects do you teach?

What grade levels are you teaching?

How many learners in your class?

For how many years have you been teaching?

### **B. Teacher preparation**

Upon entering the profession did you feel you have been prepared for the requirements of the job?

(if no) How did that affect your first year of teaching?

Are there some specific things that the teacher training should have prepared you for? State them.

How helpful would it be for you?

### **C. Teaching responsibility**

What is your feeling about the teaching load?

Do you think there are enough resources available to you? Do you have all you need or can you get them to teach effectively? How do you cope with such a situation (lack of resources)?

Do you spend your own money on resources for your classroom?

How do you feel about it?

### **D. Induction programme**

What kind of assistance or orientation did you get when you first came to the school?

Did this help you with your first year of teaching?

Was there any assistance in preparation of lesson and scheme of work?

If no, how did you go about it?

How about handling the discipline of learners?

Was it helpful enough?

## **Appendix F**

Is your HOD involved in assisting you. How?

Why do you think he/she should be involved?

What professional support systems are available to you as a novice teacher? Have you ever accessed these supports? Were they helpful? Can you tell me about the conditions?

Do you feel that there are sufficient opportunities for development in the teaching profession? How do you find out what opportunities are available to you?

### **E. Coping mechanisms**

What challenges did you encounter during your first year of teaching?

How did you handle these challenges you have stated ?

Why did you handle it that way?

Have you succeeded having acted that way?

Do you think your coping mechanisms improved as the year went by? Explain!

What do you enjoy about teaching?

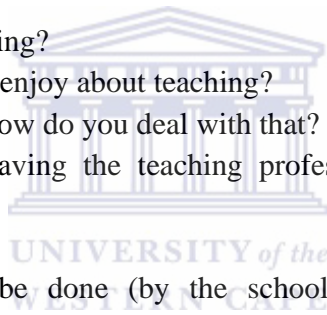
What is that you hate or do not enjoy about teaching?

Does it effect your teaching? How do you deal with that?

Have you ever thought of leaving the teaching profession for a different career or position? Why or why not?

What do you think should be done (by the school or government) to ease the transformation from pre-service training to full time teaching?

Do you have any comment about this topic “coping mechanisms of novice teachers” that you feel might help to improve schooling and teaching?



## **Interview questions for Heads of departments**

### **Induction of novice teachers**

Do you think novice teachers are well prepared for the job of teaching?

Are there specific things that the teacher training should have prepared them for?

Are novice teachers at your school treated any differently from veterans in terms of workload and given special attention?

How are novice teachers socialized into the school culture?

How often do you visit novice teacher's classrooms to observe their teaching?

Do you give feedback about their teaching after observation?

Are there enough resources available for novice teachers? How do they cope with such a situation?

### **Coping mechanisms of novice teachers**

What problems do novice teachers encounter at your school?

What do you think are the cause of novice teachers' problems?

How do they deal with these problems you have mentioned? What coping mechanisms have you observed them using?

Have you observed any changes in their coping mechanisms as the year went by? Explain!

In your opinion, are these mechanisms effective in the long run or just helped them at that moment?

How do you help novice teachers employ coping mechanisms?

What kind of professional development do novice teachers need to cope effectively?

What is your overall opinion about novice teachers at your school?

Do you have any comment about this topic "coping mechanisms of novice teachers" that you feel might help to improve schooling and teaching.



## Appendix G

