Teachers' perceptions of teacher-pupil interaction
in high schools in Johannesburg

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Dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree *Magister Artium* in Psychology at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University

Supervisor: Dr. S Hoosain

Co-supervisor: Prof A C Bouwer and Dr. I van Schalkwyk

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Michelle Christine Motara

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at the

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of the

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STUDY LEADER: Dr Shanaaz Hoosain

CO-STUDY LEADERS: Prof. Cecilia Bouwer and Dr. Izanette van Schalkwyk

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DECLARATION BY THE RESEARCHER

This dissertation is presented in article format in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Manual for Postgraduate Studies, 2008, of North-West University. The technical editing was done according to the guidelines and requirements set out in Chapter 2 of the Manual.

The article will be submitted to the *South African Journal of Education*. The guidelines for the submission to the journal are attached in Appendix 9, *Technical guidelines for journal*.

I, Michelle Christine Motara, declare herewith that the dissertation entitled *Teachers' perceptions of teacher-learner interaction in high schools in Johannesburg*, which I herewith submit to North-West University: Potchefstroom Campus, is my own work and that all references used or quoted were indicated and acknowledged.

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SECTION D: APPENDICES

LETTER OF PERMISSION

Hereby, we declare that this dissertation in article format was prepared under our supervision and we grant permission that she may submit the dissertation for examination purposes in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree *Magister Artium in Psychology.*

Dr. Shanaaz Hoosain

Dr. Izanette van Schalkwyk

PREFACE

The candidate, Michelle Motara had opted to write an article with the support of her study leaders.

- The dissertation is presented in article format as indicated in Rule A.5.4.2.7 of the North –West University Potchefstroom Campus Yearbook

The dissertation consists of:

Section A:

- Part 1: Orientation to the Study (Harvard referencing method).
- Part 2: Literature Study (Harvard referencing method).

Section B:

- The article (Harvard referencing method).

Section C:

- Summary, Recommendations and Reflection (Harvard referencing method) as well as the guidelines of the article format as prescribed by the South African Journal of Education.

Section D:

- Appendices

The *South African Journal of Education* has been identified as possible journal for submission.

SUMMARY

South African schools are learning environments that are defined by heterogenity, which means the relating and interaction of teachers and learners from different cultural, language and religious backgrounds.

Viewed in terms of a social constructivist theoretical framework, teachers' perceptions of their interaction with their learners are defined by their personal experiences, as well as their observations of concrete learner behaviour in class which are mostly shaped by the learners' perceptions. ,. Broad cultural influences, including the unique school culture and climate where the teachers are operating, also contribute to teachers' perception of the teacher-learner-interaction. The nature and quality of teacher-learner interactions must be viewed as a contextual feature of school culture and climate as these relations shape the classroom experience. This study sought to generate broad themes on how teachers perceive teacher-learner interactions within diverse school cultures and climates. The research was conducted within a social constructivist, interpretive paradigm and it utilised Kenny's PERSON Model of Interpersonal Perception. The PERSON Model of Interpersonal Perception is a model used to explore the formation of perceptions during interpersonal interaction and it is in line with the social constructivist position as it takes into account the dynamic and socially embedded nature of the interaction process.

A research study of this nature was needed because teachers' perceptions of their regular contact and connecting with learners influence teacher-learner relations. This in turn serves to shape learners' perceptions of the learning environment as well as mediate the learners' behaviour and relationship with scholastic learning (Luckner & Pianta, 2011:257).

Qualitative research was used as this method lends itself to revealing the authenticity of human experience (Silverman, 2013:6) and it is particularly useful in the study of social relations (Flick, 2009:12). The participants consisted of twenty teachers from four high schools in Johannesburg,

Gauteng. Three teachers from each of the four schools participated in semi-structured interviews, while two other teachers from each of the four schools participated in a single focus group activity that included a collage-making exercise. Thematic analysis was used to identify themes that articulate the teachers' perceptions of the teacher-learner interaction.

Key themes that were identified through the research study included teaching to be a vocation; teachers' interactions with their learners as character building that serve to shape the personalities of their learners; the influence of the length of time that teachers are active in the teaching profession and teacher-learner interactions; how classroom management strategies influences teachers perceptions of teacher-learner interactions.

It was found that several factors influence the teachers' perceptions of their interactions with their learners. Teachers who considered teaching to be a "vocation" tended to report that they experience enjoyable teacher-learner interactions. The teachers whose narratives did not include references to teaching as a vocation were inclined to report more conflictual and less enjoyable interaction experiences with their learners. The findings further reveal that the teachers perceive a decrease in negative teacher-learner interactions the longer they teach. Both groups of teachers viewed the interactions with their learners as character-building exercises that served to shape the personalities of their learners.

Classroom climate factors and management strategies were found to influence teachers' perceptions of their interactions with their learners. The teachers' narratives did not emphasise race or culture as factors (qualitative research) that moderated their interactions with the learners in a significant manner. Overall, the findings indicated that the participants showed an awareness that firstly, personal factors, secondly, the external social factors or environmental events, and, lastly that individual behaviour contributed much to the quality of the interactions.

An in-depth study investigating rural teachers' perceptions of their interactions with their learners is recommended. A wider study that compares and contrasts the perceptions of teachers from the various provinces of South Africa would provide valuable insight into whether or not teachers' perceptions of teacher-learner interaction vary from province to province.

KEY TERMS: communication, culture, interaction, interpersonal perception, learner, school climate, school culture, social constructivism, South African education, teacher

OPSOMMING

Suid-Afrikaanse skole is kultureelheterogene leeromgewings waar onderwysers daagliks verkeer met leerders uit verskillende kulturele, taal- en godsdiensagtergronde.

Wanneer daar uit 'n sosiaal-konstruktivistiese teoretiese raamwerk gekyk word na onderwysers se persepsies van hul interaksies met leerders, word hierdie interaksies bepaal deur die onderwysers se persoonlike ervarings, hul waarnemings van konkrete leerdergedrag in die klas en leerders se self-persepsies. Oorkoepelende kulturele invloede, wat die unieke skoolkultuur en skoolklimaat insluit waar die onderwysers werksaam is, dra ook by tot die vorming van persepsies. Die aard en gehalte van onderwyser-leerder-interaksies moet as 'n kontekstuele eienskap van skoolkultuur en skoolklimaat gesien word, omdat dit bydra tot die vorning van die belewings in die klaskamer.. Hierdie studie het gepoog om oorkoepelende temas te genereer hoe onderwysers hierdie onderwyser-leerder-interaksies in diverse skoolkulture en -klimate verstaan. Die navorsing is in 'n sosiaal konstruktivistiese, interpretatiewe paradigma gedoen en Kenny se PERSON-model van interpersoonlike persepsie is gebruik. Hierdie model word gebruik om die vorming van persepsies tydens interpersoonlike interaksie te verken, en dit strook met die sosiaal konstruktivistiese posisie omdat dit die dinamiese en sosiaal geankerde aard van die interaksieproses in ag neem.

'n Navorsingstudie van hierdie aard was nodig omdat opvoeders se persepsies van hul gereelde kontak en verbintenisse met leerders opvoeder-leerder verhoudings beïnvloed. Dit vorm weer leerders se persepsies van die leer-omgewing sowel as leerders se gedrag en ingesteldheid tot skolasitese studie (Luckner & Pianta, 2011:257).

Kwalitatiewe navorsing is gebruik, aangesien hierdie metode gepas is om the egttheid van menslike belewing bloot te lê (Silverman, 2013:6), en dit is veral waardevol wanneer sosiale verhoudings bestudeer word (Flick, 2009:12). Die deelnemers het uit twintig onderwysers van vier hoërskole in Johannesburg,

Gauteng, bestaan. Drie onderwysers uit elk van die vier skole het deelgeneem aan semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude terwyl twee ander onderwysers uit elkeen van die vier skole deelgeneem het aan 'n enkele fokusgroep wat 'n collage-oefening ingesluit het. Tematiese ontleding is gebruik om die temas te identifiseer wat die persepsies van die onderwysers oor hul onderwyser-leerder-interaksies weergegee het.

Belangrike tema's wat geïdentifiseer is deur hierdie navorsing, het die volgende ingesluit, onderrig as 'n roeping, onderwysers se interaksies met hul leerders as karakterbou-oefeninge wat bydra om die persoonlikhede van hul leerders te vorm; die invloed van tyd (aantal jare) wat onderwysers aktief betrokke was in die onderrigprofessie en onderwyser-leerder interaksies; en, hoe klaskamerbestuur-strategieë onderwysers se persepsies van die onderwyser-leerder interaksies beïnvloed.

Daar is gevind dat verskeie faktore die onderwysers se persepsies van hul interaksies met hul leerders beïnvloed. Onderwysers wat onderrig as 'n roeping beskou het, was geneig om te noem dat hulle aangename onderwyser-leerder interaksies ervaar het. Die onderwysers wie se narratiewe nie na onderwys as 'n roeping verwys het nie, was geneig om meer konflik en minder aangename interaksie-ervarings met hul leerders te rapporteer. Die bevindings het verder getoon dat die onderwysers 'n afname in negatiewe onderwyser-leerder interaksies waargeneem het met die aantal jare onderrig. Beide groepe van onderwysers het interaksies met hul leerders as karakterbou-oefeninge gesien wat bydra om die persoonlikhede van hul leerders te vorm.

Daar is gevind dat klaskamerklimaatfaktore en bestuurstrategieë onderwysers se persepsies van hul interaksies met hul leerders beïnvloed het. Die onderwysers se narratiewe het nie ras of kultuur as belangrike faktore uitgesonder rakende hul interaksies met leerders nie. Oorhoofs het die bevindings aangedui dat die deelnemers 'n bewustheid toon dat, eerstens, persoonlike faktore, tweedens, sosiale faktore of omgewingsgebeure, en, laastens dat individuele gedrag grootliks bedra tot die kwaliteit van die

interaksies.

 'n In-diepte studie word aanbeveel om landelike onderwysers se persepsies van hul interaksies met hul leerders te ondersoek. 'n Meer omvattende studie oor die ooreenkomste en konstraste van onderwysers se persepsies soos gevind in die verskeie provinsies van Suid-Afrika, sal waardevolle insig verleen indien onderwysers se persepsies van die onderwyser-leerder interaksies van provinsie tot provinsie, verskil of nie.

SLEUTELTERME: Interaksie, interpersoonlike persepsie, kommunikasie, kultuur, leerder, onderwyser, skoolklimaat, skoolkultuur, sosiale konstruktivisme, Suid-Afrikaanse onderwys.

SECTION A

PART I: ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH

1.1   INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Prior to 1994, the South African schooling system was characterised by division along racial and ethnic-linguistic lines (Muthivhi & Broom, 2008:2). The end of the apartheid era ushered in unprecedented change and transformation in the South African education system (November, Alexander & Van Wyk, 2010:787). Desegregation resulted in the subsequent increase in learner heterogeneity and cultural diversity in schools (Meier & Hartell, 2009:1). The increase in cultural diversity has resulted in teachers interacting with learners coming from cultures, languages and backgrounds foreign to them (Meier & Hartell, 2009:1). Culture can be defined as inherited values derived from past human activity where these values have an influence on behaviour (Ramthun & Matkin, 2012:304). Aneas and Sandín (2009:5) note that culture is conceived of as a conceptual model that people utilise in order to interpret and relate to the world. Culture is therefore an inherent part of an individual's identity, and becomes an adaptive mechanism for understanding and interpreting reality (Aneas & Sandín, 2009:5).

Each school has its own school culture and school climate (Barnes, Brynard & De Wet 2012:70). Saufler (cited by Barnes *et al.,* 2012:70) states that school culture and school climate are two separate but intimately connected influences in the functioning of a school. Gruenert (cited by Barnes *et al.*, 2012:70) defines school culture as shared expectations that develop when the members of the school interact for a lengthy period, and then progress into unspoken norms to which members adapt. School climate is seen as the quality and the character of the school (Hinduja, & Patchin, 2012: 10). School culture and school climate are concepts that can be linked to the atmosphere at a school, and both have an indirect and direct impact on teacher-learner

interaction (Varlack, 2008: 42). Some schools are characterised by a culture of violence, with a climate that consequently reflects unease, while others have a culture of learning, which in turn supports a climate that allows learners and teachers to interact in a positive and non-threatening manner (Barnes *et al.,* 2012:72, citing Bucher & Manning). Therefore, the school culture and climate could influence the quality and nature of teacher-and-learner's interactions.

Each teacher has his/her own personal life story and unique vision of the world, which in turn mediates his/her perception of the teacher-learner interactions. Lee and Dallman (cited by Meier, 2010:159) maintain that teachers' individual perceptions do not develop separately from the socio-cultural context in which they function, but are rather informed by a lifelong, multifaceted socialisation process. Kitching, Roos and Ferreira (2011) support this social constructivist view by noting that all interactions within schools are informed by the communities in which they are located. Social constructivism centres on the idea that social and individual processes are interdependent in the construction of knowledge. This also supports the notion that knowledge construction is culturally mediated (Meier, 2010: 158). Hence, according to this framework, there is no objective reality or knowledge. Instead, multiple versions of the world exist, with various realities being constructed, sustained and normalised by society (Meier, 2010:158).

Furthermore, this framework entails that the daily social processes or dialogue are the primary medium to evaluate and to find final agreement. The role of language is of key importance in this process to provide structure to a person's experience of the reality, for example teachers' experience of relating to learners, as well as the experiences of those, namely the learners, with whom the teachers interact (Combrinck, 2004). According to this viewpoint, knowledge is the result of an unavoidable reciprocity between language and reality (Derrida, 1976). The social constructivist perspective accepts generally that reality is being filtered by the human language. This does not mean that for example teachers' emotional pain or pleasure as to their relations with learners does not exist, but, the emphasis is on the way

phenomena are experienced, and storied (Combrinck, 2004). The socially embedded nature of the interaction process is an essential aspect of the PERSON Model.

The PERSON Model of Interpersonal Perception (Negovan, Raciu & Vlad, 2010:1733) is a model used to explore the formation of perceptions during interpersonal interaction. This model is in line with the social constructivist position as it takes into account the dynamic and socially rooted nature of the interaction process. According this model, interpersonal perceptions are based upon the personal beliefs held by interaction partners (Negovan *et al.,* 2010:1733). Applying this model in the context of this research, teachers' perceptions can be viewed as a combination of the teachers' personal assumptions about learner characteristics (which would be informed by their own personal experiences [Meier, 2010:159] and culture (Negovan *et al.*, 2010:1733). Even though perceptions are not imitations of reality, but are rather subjective mental constructions of it, their influence cannot be minimised as they direct our actions and inform our identities (Morais & Azevedo, 2011:331, citing Romo & Alfonso).

Understanding how teachers perceive their interaction with learners is important, because teachers' perceptions of their regular contact and connecting with learners influence teacher-learner relations. This in turn serves to shape learners' perceptions of the learning environment as well as mediate the learners' behaviour and relationship with scholastic learning (Luckner & Pianta, 2011:257

1.2. RESEARCH AIM

The research aim was to explore teachers' perceptions of teacher-learner interaction. This study sought to generate broad themes about how teachers perceive teacher-learner interactions.

1.3. CENTRAL THEORETICAL STATEMENT

South African schools are culturally heterogeneous learning environments, where learners and teachers who come from different cultural, language and religious backgrounds interact (Meier & Hartell, 2009:1). Viewed in terms of a social constructivist theoretical framework, teachers' perceptions of their interaction with their learners are defined by their own personal experiences (Meier, 2010:159), their observations of concrete learner behaviour in class and learner self-perceptions as well as broad cultural influences, including the unique school culture and climate in which the teachers operate (Negovan *et al.*, 2010:1733). The nature and quality of teacher-learner interaction must be viewed as a contextual feature of school culture and climate as these facets shape the classroom experience. Exploring the meanings and perceptions that high school teachers attribute to the interactions that they have with their learners may serve to generate overall themes about how teachers perceive teacher-learner interactions. This study is important as it may facilitate an understanding of teachers' perceptions of teacher-learner interactions.

1.4. CONCEPT DEFINITIONS

To facilitate clarity in this research, the following concepts have been defined:

1.4.1 Interpersonal communication

The word *interpersonal* is derived from the prefix *inter-*, meaning *between*, and the word *person* (Wood, 2013:34). Interpersonal communication can be considered to be a two-way message exchange between individuals which is shaped by the individual's instrumental and relational goals as well as by an awareness of each other's individual preferences (Walther, Carr, Choi, DeAndrea, Kim, Tong & Van Der Heide, 2011:19). Wood (2013:34) builds on this definition by defining interpersonal communication as "a discriminating, systematic and idiosyncratic process of interaction between individuals who reflect and build personal knowledge and create meanings." This process is seen as being ongoing and evolving over time. When viewed that each interaction is transactional,it means that the communication partners share

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responsibility for its effectiveness (Wood, 2013:22).

1.4.2 Interpersonal perception

According to Kenny (http://:davidakenny.net/ip/interp.htm), interpersonal perception refers to the judgements that an individual, the *perceiver*, makes about another individual, the *target*. Interpersonal perception is always grounded within the context in which the interaction partners are interacting (Kenny, 1994:14). Interpersonal perception is a reciprocal, two-sided process (Kenny, 1994:1). During the course of an interaction both interaction partners engage in a meta-analysis of how the other partner perceives him or her (Kenny, 1994:2). In this sense, interpersonal perception is directly linked to self-perception. Categorical (demographics and appearance) as well as behavioural information, is used by the perceiver to form perceptions (Kenny, 2004:266-267). Behavioural information refers to the meanings that the perceiver attaches to the actions of the perceived (Kenny, 2004:268). However, categorical information is given decreasing weight as the perceiver gains more behavioural information (Kenny, 2004:267).

1.4.3 Social constructivism

Human beings are inherently social beings who are shaped by their inherent immersion within a shared experiential world with other people (Lock & Strong, 2010:5). Simply put, we construct our world through social relationships (Gergen, 2009:3). The meaning-making in which individuals (and by extension societies) engage, is embedded within socio-cultural processes which are particular to specific times and places (Lock & Strong, 2010:7). Social constructivists therefore believe that if everything human beings consider "real" is socially constructed, then nothing is real, unless people agree that it is. Social constructivists do not deny physical reality; instead, they propose that when interrupting information an individual must rely on some meaning making tradition (Gergen, 2009:4). Social, cultural and historical contexts override the notion of an isolated mind (New & Cochran, 2007: 745). Social constructivism proposes the Vygotskian belief that the individual mind is first social and then individual (New & Cochran, 2007: 745).

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Social constructivists take a holistic view of knowledge making and learning. These theorists believe that the construction of knowledge is not only dependent on social interaction but also on all other aspects of an individual such as an individual's attitudes, values, emotions and actions (Beck & Kosnik, 2006: 13), as new ideas cannot be generated without linking them to existing concepts (Beck & Kosnik, 2008: 9). The process of constructing knowledge is a continuous process. Through environmental interaction an individual is always constructing new ways of thinking about and solving problems. Learning and knowledge formation is thus viewed as a reciprocal and collaborative process among all interaction partners (New & Cochran, 2007: 746).

1.4.4 Reciprocal determinism

The theory of reciprocal determinism means that cognitions, behaviours and environmental factors mutually influence each other (Nevid, 2009:497). An individual's cognitions, attributions, goals, values and perceptions all serve to guide the environments that they choose, as well as the behaviours that they exhibit within these environments. In turn, these behaviours may change the environment; which in turn will change the individual (Pastorino & Doyle-Portillo, 2011:479).

1.4.5 School culture

Deal and Peterson (2010:5) define school culture as the unwritten norms, rules, expectations and traditions of a school. It is noted that these unofficial elements are highly pervasive, and permeate the very fabric of the school life (Deal & Peterson, 2010:5). School culture can be viewed as the result of combined school climate factors (see 4.6) that have been in place and reinforced for a prolonged period (Eller, 2009:6-7). School culture is believed to influence how teachers and learners perceive the school and how teachers and learners interact with one another (Deal & Peterson, 2010:5). School culture also has an impact on how teachers feel about their work and one another (Deal & Peterson, 2010:5). School culture is seen as being stable and consistent over time (Eller, 2009:3).

1.4.6 School climate

School climate refers to the immediate tone or feeling of the school on a day-to-day basis (Eller, 2009:3). It is a subset of school culture and it informs school culture. Unlike school culture, school climate is malleable and as such can be immediately impacted and it is subject to change (Eller, 2009:3). Fiore (2009:81) likens school climate to the self-image of a school. Climate can be viewed as the shared perceptions about the whole or facets of a school (Song & Marth, 2013:156).

1.4.7 Classroom climate

Classroom climate refers to the "affective" side of the classroom, or the feelings that teachers and learners have towards a lesson, and each other. Simply put, it is the expectations, shared by both teacher and learners, about what type of learning is supposed to take place, as well as how the learning will take place (Popham, 2011:144). This serves to create the atmosphere within a classroom (Richards & Farrell, 2011:107). Classroom climate does not cause learning, but rather creates the conditions known to affect it positively (Weimer, 2010:93). Climates are established by the teacher and are largely predictable from one day to the next (Shermis & DiVesta, 2011:375). An awareness of classroom climate is important for this study as classroom climate has been found to have a direct impact on teacher-learner interactions. Wentzel (cited by O'Connor, 2010:2010) indicates that a positive emotional climate supports learners' interest in the classroom, which in turn fosters high-quality teacher-learner relationships. Teachers in classrooms with positive emotional climates display a greater appreciation of learners' individual needs, which is associated with high-quality teacher-child relationships. Positive classroom climates further support learners' interest in what is being taught (La Paro, Pianta & Stuhlman, cited by O'Connor, 2010:210).

Key concepts namely, interpersonal communication; interpersonal perception; social constructivism; reciprocal determinism; school culture; school climate; and, classroom climate were briefly defined and described as important constructs for the current research.

In the light of the above-mentioned the research question emerged as: *"What are teachers' perceptions of teacher-learner interaction in high schools in Johannesburg?"* The next part offers information as to how the research process took place.

1.5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.5.1 Literature study

The following themes were investigated in the literature study: teacher traits or characteristics that influence teachers' perceptions of teacher-learner interaction; learner traits or characteristics that influence teachers' perceptions of teacher-learner interaction; the role that learners' home and socio-economic backgrounds play in influencing teacher-learner interaction; the quality of teacher-learner interactions across a learner's schooling career; and how school resources, classroom climate and management influence teacher-learner interaction.

The body of literature that was reviewed included journals, newspaper articles, dissertations and books. Working papers, reports, social surveys, statistics and education reviews by the Department of Education were also reviewed. Search engines included Google, Google Scholar as well as the North-West University databases.

1.5.2 Empirical investigation

1.5.2.1 Research approach and design

A qualitative approach was followed (Silverman, 2010:3). Qualitative research lends itself to revealing the authenticity of human experience (Silverman, 2013:6) and it is particularly useful in the study of social relations (Flick, 2009:12), as was the case in this study which focused on high school

teachers in the specific geographical location of Johannesburg, Gauteng. The value of the qualitative approach for this research was in revealing situationally delimited narratives (Flick, 2009:12) surrounding teachers' subjective perceptions of the interactions with their learners.

Qualitative research is fundamentally interpretative (Marshall & Rossman, 2011:2). As such, it complemented the social constructivist framework adopted in the research. The questions posed to teachers focused on gaining an understanding about how the teachers subjectively perceive their interactions with their learners and what this means to them. In order to gain a sense of which schools have markedly different cultures and climates, the researcher spent time talking to various teachers in different schools. The study followed an interpretivist design, which, according to Scott and Morrison (2006:131), is based upon the philosophical premise that there are multiple realities, and that truth is relative depending upon the situation. The researcher's objective was to understand and interpret the meanings that the teachers attributed to their interactions with their learners. According to Hoffmann, Bennett and Del Mar (2010:234), the aim of interpretive descriptive design is to describe the experience of the participant, while at the same time gathering the meaning that the participant attaches to the experience.

1.5.2.2 Participants

The specific population (Gerrish & Lacey, 2010:143) for this study comprised of teachers from high schools in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg, Gauteng. The sample (Gerrish & Lacey, 2010:143) consisted of twenty teachers selected from four high schools in Johannesburg. The following criteria were set to make sure that participants fit the purpose of the study:

- The teachers must be able to understand and express themselves in English as the researcher is only fully proficient in English and as the trustworthiness of the results may be negatively impacted through the use of translators.

- The teachers must have been actively teaching in high school environments for at least three years.
- The teachers must be willing to participate voluntarily in the study.

Three teachers from each of the four schools were asked to participate in semi-structured interviews (Lambert & Loiselle, 2008:229), while two other teachers from each of the four schools were asked to participate in a single focus group activity. Twelve teachers participated in semi-structured interviews and eight teachers participated in the focus group activity. The four schools were chosen in order to account for diversity in terms of access to resources, the socio-economic, religious and cultural backgrounds of teachers and learners, as well as school culture and climate. The first school included was a Muslim school, where male and female learners attended classes in separate buildings on the school grounds. The second school was a co-educational Afrikaans school with a reputation for excellence. The third school was a co-educational school located in the inner city that was reputed to have a high drop-out rate. The fourth school was an arts-based high school which had a very diverse mix of learners who come from all areas of Johannesburg. Three teachers from each school were asked to participate in semi-structured interviews, while two other teachers from each school were asked to participate in a focus group activity. The researcher aimed to include schools. Fourteen of the participants were female & six of the participants were male. The participants' ages ranged from twenty-five years old to fifty years old. The participants differed in the number of years that they had spent teaching, with most of the participants having spent between ten to fifteen years teaching. The teachers who participated in the study taught a wide range of subjects, ranging from Mathematics, English, Art and Life Orientation.

1.5.2.3 Research Procedures

The researcher followed a variety of qualitative research methods including semi-structured interviews, consisting of open-ended questions and a focus

group activity, which included a collage-making exercise to gather the data to address the research problem and fulfill the aim of the research.

During the open-ended interviews members were constantly asked to clarify their descriptions. The interpretations made by the researcher linked to these discussions were checked and clarified with the members of the group who participated in the research.

The collage making technique was used to encourage and assist the teachers to share their perceptions of their interactions with their learners. The focus group activity ended with a debriefing session that enabled the participants to talk about their responses to the discussion (Liamputtong, 2011:12).

Thematic analysis was used to transform data into meaningful information. Thematic analysis was used to identify themes within the data that articulate the perceptions that the teachers hold about their interactions with their learners. The thematic analysis was inductive in nature as the researcher approached the data without a theoretically informed coding frame (Willig, 2013:61). Processing the data in this way enabled the researcher to capture significant, generalised units of meaning surrounding teachers' perceptions of their interactions with their learners as opposed to predetermining particular aspects of the narratives on which to focus (Willig, 2013:61).

1.5.2.4 Data collection

The study made use of semi-structured interviews (Lambert & Loiselle, 2008:229), and a focus group activity followed by a discussion. Using semi-structured interviews proved to be an efficient data collection method for this research as it facilitated the gathering of rich accounts of participants' thoughts, attitudes, beliefs and experiences (Lambert & Loiselle, 2008:229). An interview guide (see Appendix 2) was utilised in a loose manner in order to ensure that the participants could lead the interview in unexpected directions (King & Horrocks, 2010:35). In order to fully explore the teachers' perceptions about the interaction with their learners the line of questioning was multifaceted, incorporating background or demographic questions,

experiences or behavioural questions, opinion or value questions, feeling questions, knowledge questions, and sensory questions (King & Horrocks, 2010:35).

Twelve participants, namely three teachers from each of the four schools were required to meet at pre-arranged private locations at their respective schools for the semi-structured interviews. Each participant was interviewed on a different day. Before the commencement of each interview, the researcher provided the participant with clear and comprehensive information about the aim of the study and how the collected data would be used (King & Horrocks, 2010:48). The participants were provided with a list of social workers and counsellors within the area in case the interviews caused any emotional distress (Liamputtong, 2011:12). The participants were given the opportunity to ask questions in order to gain further clarity on any aspect of the research. Open-ended questions (Roulston, 2010:15) were used, and the researcher used follow-up probes in response to the interviewees' descriptions and accounts (Roulston, 2010:14). The interviews were audio-recorded with the permission of the participants.

The second method of data collection was conducted by means of a focus group activity followed by a discussion. The participants for the focus group, namely eight teachers (two teachers from each of the four schools) were required to meet at a pre-arranged private location at the most central school in relation to the other schools in order to participate in a focus group activity. Focus groups enable the participants to interact together in order to augment the depth of the inquiry and to reveal facets of the phenomenon assumed to be otherwise less accessible (Lambert & Loiselle, 2008:229). Also, it is noted that group interactions may highlight participants' similarities and differences, and give rich information about the range of perspectives and experiences (Lambert & Loiselle, 2008:229).

Before the focus group activity commenced the researcher explained the nature and purpose of the procedure to be followed. The participants were also provided with a list of social workers and counsellors within the area in

case the group discussion caused any emotional distress (Liamputtong, 2011:12). The focus group activity was audio-taped after the teachers were asked for permission. A collage-making exercise was introduced to the focus group. The participants were asked to cut out words and images from magazines that reflect their perception of teacher-learner interaction within their school. They were further invited to present and explain their choices to the other group members. Next, the images and words that had been selected were mixed together in a pile. Through a group discussion and collaboration, a joint collage utilising images selected from the pile was negotiated based on group consensus about which images/words most accurately reflected the members' perceptions of teacher-learner interaction. The collage-making activity was not used as a projective or interpretative technique but rather as a method to encourage and assist the teachers to share their perceptions of their interactions with their learners. The focus group activity ended with a debriefing session that enabled the participants to talk about their responses to the discussion (Liamputtong, 2011:12).

Trustworthiness of data gathering was enhanced by making use of member checking reference (Harper & Cole, 2012510). During the interviews and the focus group activity the researcher reflected back to the participants the content of what had been said. The recordings of the semi-structured interviews and focus group activity were transcribed in full and returned to the participants for validation. The researcher made observation notes about all aspects of the contact with the schools' administration staff, principals, teachers and learners. This enabled the researcher to gain a subjective sense of the climate of each school. The researcher recorded not only what was observed but also any thoughts and feelings that arose in relation to her contact with the various schools and participants (Pitney & Parker, 2009:51). Reflexivity (Potvin, Bisset & Walz, 2010:447) was practised by the researcher by keeping detailed notes about any perceptions, feelings and preconceived beliefs of the researcher that arose during the research process. The process of self-observation and note taking enabled the researcher to be consciously aware of the fact that the researcher's social position, race, class and gender have an influence on knowledge production (Roschelle, Toro-Morn & Facio,

2010:367). Crystallisation was achieved through the use of both the semi-structured interviews, the focus group activity and the researchers' observational notes to obtain a more multifaceted view.

1.5.2.5 Data analysis

The collected data was transcribed, andanalysed. Srivastava and Hopwood (2009: 77) states that the role of qualitative data analysis is to uncover themes that, viewed together holistically, will provide the best possible description of the phenomenon under investigation. The researcher initially conducted a preliminary data analysis of the interview and focus group activity transcripts in order to identify themes and to promote the researcher's active engagement with the data (Grbich, 2013:21). The preliminary analysis involved checking and rechecking the transcripts with the aim of identifying data relevant to the research question, noting ideas, creating names for chunks of data, listing topics, grouping them together and noting exceptions.

The preliminary analysis was a relatively rapid process as opposed to a more in-depth process of thematic analysis as described by Willig (2013:60). A fact sheet (Grbich, 2013:22) that identified the time and place of the interview or focus group activity and that summarised the main findings of the preliminary data analysis was attached to each transcript. The thematic analysis was inductive in nature as the researcher approached the data without a theoretically informed coding frame (Willig, 2013:61). Processing the data in this way enabled the researcher to capture significant, generalised units of meaning surrounding teachers' perceptions of their interactions with their learners as opposed to predetermining particular aspects of the narratives on which to focus (Willig, 2013:61). Meaningful units of text, which appeared significant in revealing teachers' perceptions of their learners, were identified by going through the transcripts one line at a time. Themes were arrived at by looking at the patterns that emerged through the act of grouping similar units of texts into clusters (Willig, 2013:62).

The themes served to highlight the most important constellations of meaning existing in the data (Joffe, cited by Willig, 2013:62). The researcher made a

decision about which themes were salient based on the themes' relevance in terms of the research topic. The connections between the themes and codes were written up in the form of a thematic map (Willig, 2013:62). Next, an exploratory framework was drawn up from an analysis of the most important themes. The exploratory framework took the form of pillar questions (Shields & Rangarajan, 2013: 148), whereby questions were posed in order to provide support and structure for the research problem.

The data analysis resulted in a thick description of the findings (Dawson, 2010:942) through the inclusion of the observational notes that the researcher had made during the interviews and focus group activity. This served to provide additional contextual information about school climate and culture.

1.5.2.6 Ethical considerations

The researcher tried to uphold all the ethical values during the research process with the participants and gatekeepers at the relevant schools. The Helsinki Declaration (King, 2012:99) is thought to be the foundation upon which professional research ethics is built. This declaration states that it is imperative that the following criteria are met: protection from harm (both physical and psychological), respect for individual dignity, the right to self-determination, and the right to privacy and confidentiality (King, 2012:99). The researcher followed the steps outlined below in order to ensure best ethical research practices:

- The researcher obtained official permission from the University to undertake this research (Yin, 2011:44) under ethical permission number NWU-00060-12-A1.The researcher obtained permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct research at four schools within its jurisdiction.
- The researcher liaised with the principals of the relevant schools in order to gain their verbal and written consent to interview the teachers and to gain the principals' permission to conduct the interviews and/or

focus group activity on the school property (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2012:67).

- Private locations at the relevant schools were secured to interview the participants in order to maintain confidentiality.

- A secure and private location at one of the schools was obtained to conduct the focus group activity (Speziale, Streubert & Carpenter, 2011:401).

- The researcher explained the nature of the research to the participants and outlined any foreseeable risk that the participants could encounter as a result of participating in the research.

- Voluntary participation is an ethical requirement, and the participants were made aware of this in the initial recruitment phase (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010:59). The participants were informed that participation is not mandatory (Yin, 2011:46).

- Participants were made aware of their right to withdraw freely at any stage during the research process without any negative consequences.

- The participants were informed that they will not suffer in preference or ill effects due to participation or lack of participation (Thompson & Chambers, 2011:30).

- The participants were made aware of their right to be free of any harm during the research process (Flick, 2009:41). This includes physical and emotional harm. The researcher took every reasonable measure to ensure the participants' safety by ensuring that the interviews were conducted in a safe location and that the participants were provided with a debriefing session (Liamputtong, 2011:26).

- A list of counselling centres in the areas surrounding the schools where the interviews or focus group activity took place was compiled and given to the participants in case the need for counselling arose.

- Each participant in the focus group activity was asked to sign a confidentiality agreement in which he/she declared that all information discussed within the group remains private and will not be discussed outside of the group (see Appendix 7).

- The anonymity of the participants was assured by using codes to refer to specific participants during the data-gathering process, analysis and writing up of the research report (Hennink *et al.,* 2012:63).

- The anonymity of the participants will be ensured in the publication of the research report. No identifying details of the individuals or the schools will be made available in the final report, and the participants will be referred to by only using codes (Hennink *et al.,* 2012:71).

- Feedback was provided to the participants who were involved in the research.

- The researcher has an ethical obligation to ensure that the lives of the participants are not altered negatively by the interaction. The researcher therefore, considered the footprint that she is leaving behind. The researcher was cognisant of the risk-reward ratio that her research introduced into the lives of the participants (Emanuel, Abdoler, Stunkel, 2010:5).

- The researcher ensured the integrity of the data obtained by keeping it in a secure location to which only the researcher and the research supervisors had access (Gravetter & Forzano, 2012:124).

- Electronic copies of the data are additionally stored on the researcher's computer in a password-protected folder (Gravetter & Forzano, 2012:124).

- The data will be locked and stored at the Centre for Child, Youth and Family Studies for a period prescribed by the North-West University.

1.6 SUMMARY

Understanding how teachers perceive their interaction with learners is important, because these perceptions influence teacher-learner relations. This in turn serves to shape learners' perceptions of the learning environment as well as mediate the learners' behaviour and relationship with scholastic learning (Luckner & Pianta, 2011:257). It is the hope of the researcher that the exploration of this problem may reveal valuable data to address this issue.

Such information can be utilised to form an understanding of the extent to which school climate and culture moderates teachers' perceptions of their interactions with their learners.

In this section (Section A, Part I), an overview of the research problem and method of the study was described. The problem formulation and research aim were discussed. Key concepts were briefly defined and described. The problem statement of the research was presented as *"What are teachers' perceptions of teacher-learner interaction in high schools in Johannesburg?"* The study aimed to generate broad themes about how teachers perceive teacher-learner interactions within diverse school cultures and climates. Viewed in terms of a social constructivist theoretical framework, the nature and quality of teacher-learner interactions must be viewed as a contextual feature of school culture and climate as these relations shape the classroom experience. The study made use of semi-structured interviews (Lambert & Loiselle, 2008:229), and a focus group activity followed by a discussion. The data then underwent thematic analysis as described by Willig (2013:60).

Section A, Part II covers the literature study followed by Section B, an article, which provides a detailed description and discussion of the findings of the study and provides recommendations for future studies. Section C provides a summary and evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the research as well as further recommendations based upon the evaluation.

PART II: LITERATURE STUDY

2.1. INTRODUCTION

The literature study explores teachers' perceptions of their interactions with their learners. This topic is delimited using the following parameters: interpersonal theory of communication, interpersonal theory of perception, social constructivism, reciprocal determinism, school culture, school climate and classroom climate. The study only provides a conceptual definition of interpersonal communication and interpersonal perception as it excludes an

examination of the many theories that are available on the processes of interpersonal communication and interpersonal perception. An examination of international and South African literature focusing on teachers' perceptions of their interactions with their learners serves to ground and highlight local research against international findings.

2.2. DEFINITIONS AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.2.1 Interpersonal theory of communication

Teachers' perceptions of their interactions with their learners is an area of pedagogy that lends itself to exploration through the lens of interpersonal theory (Mainhard, Pennings, Wubbels & Brekelmans, 2012; Pantić & Wubbels, 2012; Roorda, Koomen, Thijs & Oort, 2013; Thijs, Koomen, Roorda & Hagen, 2011; Yu & Chen, 2012). Interpersonal theory is based upon the assumption that interpersonal behaviours tend to elicit particular kinds of behaviours while inhibiting others. This is articulated in the principle of interpersonal complementarity (Kiesler, cited by Thijs *et al.,* 2011:34). The principle of interpersonal complementarity states that a person's interpersonal behaviour invites certain responses from the other partner during communication (Acton, 1999). The behaviour and the response it invites are said to be complementary. The correspondence tends to occur on the affiliation axis, whereby friendliness invites friendliness and hostility invites hostility. Though, reciprocity tends to occur on the power axis, whereby dominance invites submission and submission invites dominance (Acton, 1999).

Many scholars perceive interpersonal communication as a vehicle for identity formation and self-expression. Coover and Murphy (cited by Hargie, 2011:2) state that the self is not ever-present and unchangeable, but rather "the self emerges through social interaction". Much of interpersonal communication theory is focused on conceptualising the processes that occur during the sending and receiving of messages (Hargie, 2011:15). Any communication

requires two or more contributors. All the partners engaged in an exchange are affected by the other partners within the system of reciprocal determination. When applying the construct of reciprocal determination in the context of this study it becomes clear that learner characteristics may contribute to teacher behaviour and perceptions, and that teacher behaviour contributes to learner behaviour (Rudasill, 2011:148). The communication between individuals is always grounded within a context (Hargie, 2011:18). It is proposed that if the context is not ideal, for example, in an under-resourced school, this will negatively impact on the nature and quality of interpersonal communication. The process of subjective sense making that occurs during interpersonal communication and that determines how each partner responds is termed *interpersonal perception* (Kenny, 1994:4).

2.2.2 Interpersonal perception

Interpersonal perception refers to the judgements that an individual, or the *perceiver,* makes about another individual, or the *target* (Kenny, 2011). Perceptions are not imitations of reality. Instead, they are subjective mental constructions of reality (Morais & Azevedo, 2011:331). Even though these perceptions are subjective realities, they are psychologically real to the perceiver and as such they influence the behaviours of each relationship partner (Thijs & Koomen, 2009:187). Interpersonal perceptions are a reciprocal, two-sided process (Kenny, 1994:1). Categorical (demographics and appearance) as well as behavioural information is used by the perceiver to form perceptions (Kenny, 2004:266-267).

The researcher proposes that a component of interpersonal perception is attribution formation. Attribution theory examines how individuals make sense of others' behaviour and of the world around them (Kauppi & Pörhöla, 2012:1061). Attribution theory suggests that individual actions are based on these explanations. Internal or dispositional attributions are made when a person's behaviour is the result of inherent characteristics or personality while external or situational attributions occur when behaviour is instigated by external circumstances (Kauppi & Pörhöla, 2012:1061).

Kenny's PERSON Model of Interpersonal Perception (Negovan *et al.*, 2010:1733) is a model used to explore the formation of perceptions during interpersonal interaction. This model is in line with the social constructivist position as it takes into account the dynamic and socially embedded nature of the interaction process. According to Kenny's model (1994), interpersonal perceptions are formed from personal beliefs held by the partners involved in the interaction (Negovan *et al.,* 2010:1733). Applying this model in the context of the research, teacher perceptions can thus be viewed as a combination of the teachers' personal assumptions about learner characteristics which would be informed by their personal experiences (Meier, 2010:159) as well as broad cultural influences and their observations of concrete learner behaviour in class as well as learner self-perceptions (Negovan *et al.*, 2010:1733). This understanding of perceptions and the interaction process is in agreement with social constructivism.

2.2.3 Social constructivism

Social constructivism centres on the idea that social and individual processes are interdependent in the construction of knowledge (Meier, 2010:158). The process of constructing knowledge is culturally mediated (Meier, 2010: 158). Therefore, this framework holds that no objective reality or knowledge exists. Instead, multiple visions of the world exist, with various realities being constructed, sustained and normalised by society and societal groups such as teachers (Meier, 2010:158).

Research that is centred on teacher-learner interaction and teachers' perceptions of these interactions, and that utilises a social constructivism lens, focuses on how teachers' beliefs and cultural backgrounds influence their interactions with their learners. Richardson (cited by Valcke, Sang, Rots & Hermans, 2010:622) defines beliefs as psychological propositions that are perceived to be true. As such, beliefs can be represented as estimates of the likelihood that the knowledge that an individual holds about an idea or a subjective experience is correct or "true" for that individual.

Richardson and Zhao (cited by Valcke *et al.*, 2010:624) state that teachers' beliefs include beliefs about learners, teaching, discipline, teaching efficiency, and teachers themselves. Teachers' beliefs are considered to be relatively stable and to act as a filter through which new knowledge and practical experiences are sifted for meaning (Valcke *et al.*, 2010:623). These beliefs underlie or motivate teachers' planning, decision-making and behaviour in the classroom (Valcke *et al.*, 2010:623). Valcke *et al.* (2010:624) note that many teachers already enter the teacher profession with clearly established beliefs about teaching, learning and their role as teachers. These beliefs develop over years of exposure to a wide variety of teaching situations and contexts, and they have a strong influence on teachers' understanding of and experiences in the classroom (Valcke *et al.,* 2010:624). Clandinin and Huber (cited by Uitto, 2012:243) note that teachers' knowledge and how they view teaching, and themselves as teachers, develop not only through their teaching experiences but also in other life contexts. This notion is eloquently encapsulated within the quote by Clandinin and Huber (cited by Uitto, 2012:293): "Teachers teach who they are."

Related to social constructivism as the inter-dependence of the social and individual components in the constructing of knowledge, is the theory of reciprocal determinism.

2.2.4 Reciprocal determinism

Reciprocal determinism can be defined as the dynamic interaction of an individual or individuals, a given behaviour and the environment in which the behaviour is performed (Day & Ward, 2013:27). Social constructivism centres on the idea that social and individual processes are interdependent in the construction of knowledge and this implies the following: Both internal personal factors (beliefs, expectations, knowledge, attitudes) and external social factors or environmental events (resources, other people, physical settings, the consequences of actions), and behaviour (individual actions, choices) are seen as influencing and being influenced by each other (Woolfolk, 2007:330). For example, an overcrowded classroom (environmental factor) can affect a teacher's sense of self-efficacy to teach so

many learners (personal factor), which in turn results in the teacher believing that his or her learners are uncontrollable (attribution), which in turn could lead to the teacher removing him or herself from the classroom (process of self-regulation). This activates the learners' behaviour.

It is clear that reciprocal determinism is about a given behaviour and the environment in which the behaviour is performed. The school environment presents a particular milieu and setting for school culture.

2.2.5 School culture

School culture is a historically transmitted pattern of norms, beliefs, attitudes, behaviours, ceremonies, myths and traditions that are deeply ingrained into the very core of a school (Barth, 2007:160). School cultures are highly resistant to change, which often means that any attempts to improve the school often do not succeed (Barth, 2007:160). The culture of a school greatly influences the way that both learners and teachers think and act (Barth, 2007:160). For example, a school with a bureaucratic school culture will encourage individual teachers to solve a problem with a learner in their own classrooms. Any problems that a learner experiences are considered to be stemming from the learner. The principal and parents are only called in when the teacher cannot resolve the problem in his or her own in the classroom. On the other hand a school with a collegial culture will engender a sense of cohesiveness and collaboration. Schools with such a culture, tend to value the involvement of parents, teachers, and even learners in solving problems, which are seen as social, not individual, challenges. In the light of the above-mentioned, a consideration of school climate is an essential element of this study, which focuses on teachers' perceptions of teacher-learner interactions.

2.2.6 School climate

School climate is likened to a school's personality and self-image (Fiore, 2009:89). Hoy and Hunmann (cited by Kirby & DiPaola, 2009:84) state that school climate can be described as the set of internal characteristics that distinguishes one school from another. School climate includes the following aspects: The school's facilities; the school's curriculum and resources;

instructional management practices; school leadership styles; parent and teacher support; and the relationships between the individuals affiliated to the school and the community (Caldarella, Richardson & Young, 2012:29). These characteristics are relatively stable and are based on the perceptions of the members of a school. School climate perceptions in turn influence behaviour within a school (Kirby & DiPaola, 2009:84). Mitchell and Bradshaw (2013:2) note that poor perceptions of school climate are associated with low learner engagement, truancy, school drop-out, delinquency and bullying behaviours. Positive perceptions of school climate are linked to learners with fewer emotional and behavioural problems and have been linked with learners' academic achievement (PSEA, n.d.). Therefore, any perceptions that teachers hold about their interactions with their learners need to be viewed within the context of their unique school climates. It is proposed that individual classrooms display their own unique climates but that these climates mostly tend to be reflections of the larger school climate.

2.2.7 Classroom climate

Classroom climate can be defined as the psychological environment of a classroom that is a direct result of the interactions within the classroom (Chen, Kinshuk, Chen & Wang, 2008:241). Classroom climate is determined by the following aspects: The general pattern of social interactions among classmates and with teachers; the general configuration of teaching and instruction; the rules that the teacher sets; and, the layout of the classroom (Peter & Dalbert, 2010:297). Wentzel (cited by O'Connor, 2010:2010) indicates that a positive emotional climate supports learners' interest in the classroom, which in turn fosters high-quality teacher-learner relationships. Teachers in classrooms with positive emotional climates display a greater appreciation of learners' individual needs, which is associated with high-quality teacher-child relationships. Positive classroom climates further support learners' interest in what is being taught (La Paro, Pianta & Stuhlman, cited by O'Connor, 2010:210).

3. THEMES PRESENT IN THE LITERATURE

3.1 The reciprocal, cyclical nature of teacher-learner interactions

Literature (Rudasill, 2011; Rudasill & Rimm-Kaufman, 2009) highlights the reciprocal nature of teacher-learner interactions. It is suggested that learner characteristics contribute to teachers' behaviour and perceptions, and that teachers' behaviour contributes to learner's behaviour (Rudasill, 2011:148). Nurmi (2012:180) quoted the example of the "Pygmalion in the classroom" study. Teachers were told that a number of their learners had high IQ scores whereas in fact the learners had been randomly selected. The experiment revealed that teachers' expectations about their learners' intellectual capacities apparently changed teachers' behaviour because, after a while, this group of learners did indeed perform better. Nurmi (2011:148), citing Rubie-Davies, discovered that teachers who had high expectations of their learners' learning abilities (compared to low-expectation teachers) provided their learners more frequently with regular feedback, asked more open questions and provided more feedback. This reciprocal cycle is mirrored in the findings of various other researchers (Freeman, Anderman & Jensen, 2007:+p.; Woolfolk, Hoy & Weinstein, cited by Mainhard, Brekelmans & Wubbels, 2011:345), who have found that the more warm and supportive a teacher is, the more learners report being engaged (Mainhard, Brekelmans & Wubbels, 2011:345). Learner traits or characteristics such as personality, gender and behavioural orientation in turn mediate how teachers interact with and perceive their learners.

3.2 Learner traits or characteristics that influence teachers' perceptions of teacher-learner interactions

A significant number of literature sources point to the idea that early teacher-learner relationships are important determinants of learners' socio-emotional and academic functioning (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Silver, Measelle, Armstrong & Essex, 2005). How interpersonal aspects of learner characteristics, such as levels of shyness/extraversion, behavioural orientation, motivation levels and self-regulation – influence teachers' perceptions of their interactions with their learners is a key trend in the

literature that was reviewed. A key finding related to this line of inquiry indicates that interpersonal personality aspects of learner personality contribute more than cognitive aspects (i.e. conscientiousness and autonomy) to explaining perceived learner-teacher relationship quality (Zee, Koomen & Van der Veen, 2013:528). Thijs and Koomen (2009:186-187) extend this finding by indicating that it is not only learner behaviour and characteristics but also teachers' appraisals and attributions that affect teachers' perceptions of the teacher-learner relationship. Interpersonal aspects of learner personality, when combined with learner gender, have important implications for how teachers perceive their interactions with their learners.

Learner gender is also seen as a major determinant of the quality and nature of teacher-learner interactions (Rudasill, 2011:1). It was found that male learners were more likely to initiate interactions with their teachers as well as to dominate classroom processes (Rudasill, 2011:154). However, teachers tend to perceive their relationships with male learners as generally higher in conflict than their relationships with female learners. Teachers tend to report higher levels of closeness in their interactions with female learners (Rudasill, 2011:154). This is supported by O'Connor (2010:187) who found that female learners tend to be more positively engaged in the classroom than male learners, which may be responsible for better quality relationships with their teachers. Learner gender also has an impact on the frequency of teacher-learner interactions. Male learners received more teacher-initiated interactions than female learners, possibly because of problematic classroom behaviours (Rudasill, 2011:148). The schooling system in South Africa has a percentage ratio of more male (99.5%) than female (96.2%) learners (http://www.tradingeconomics.com/south-africa/primary-education-pupils-percent-female-wb-data.html). Applied to the context of this study, it is highly probable that South African teachers have more interactions with male learners than with female learners. Also, it can be proposed that these interactions are higher in conflict than with female learners. In turn, it can be hypothesised that teacher traits or characteristics such as preferred teaching or interaction style, self-efficacy beliefs, ethnicity, cultural filters and racial assumptions mediate how teachers interact with and perceive their learners.

3.3 Teacher traits or characteristics that influence teachers' perceptions of teacher-learner interactions

Numerous studies have been conducted that have uncovered the role that teachers' characteristics play in influencing their perceptions of their interactions with their learners (Nurmi, 2012; Rudasill, 2011; Rudasill & Rimm-Kaufman, 2009). However, Thijs and Koomen (2009:186) indicate that teacher-learner relationships are more often examined as the product of attributes of learners rather than as characteristics of teachers. From a survey of the available literature, the researcher proposes that, generally, teachers and learners have different expectations and needs, and that this can negatively affect teachers' perceptions of their interaction with their learners.

The way that teachers view themselves has been found to have a direct correlation with how teachers view their learners. Van Uden, Ritzen and Pieters (2013:43) found that teachers who placed significant importance on didactic and pedagogical competence, and who rated themselves highly on self-efficacy perceived their learners as more engaged. The link between teacher self-efficacy beliefs and the effect of such beliefs on teachers' perceptions of teacher-learner interaction is supported by the findings of Hamre, Pianta, Downer and Mashburn (2008). Teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy may increase with the degree of education and training that they have received (Lewandowski, 2005: 3). This notion ties in with the findings of Howes, Whitebrook and Phillips (1992) (cited by O'Connor, 2010:192) who found that teachers with higher levels of education tend to report better teacher-learner interactions. Interestingly, teachers with more experience reported lower quality interactions with their learners (O'Connor, 2010:192). The province of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa has 8 000 unskilled and under-qualified teachers with many teachers holding only an undergraduate degree and no professional qualification (Bertram, Mthiyane & Mukeredzi: 2013:448). Additionally, a number of studies report on South African teachers' poor content knowledge, particularly in Mathematics and Science (Bertram *et al.*, 2013:451). Research has revealed that teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy report closer and less conflictual relationships with their learners

(Hamre *et al.*, 2008).

Furthermore, studies reveal that many South African teachers feel that they lack confidence and capability in English (Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu & Van Rooyen, 2010:164). To compound this issue, the majority (70% to 80%) of primary school children in South Africa, largely from disadvantaged schools, are unable to read fluently in their school's instructional language (Bush *et al.*, 2010:165). International research has shown that learners who present with higher level language skills tend to have higher quality interactions with teachers (Qi & Kaiser, cited by O'Connor, 2010:192).

Teachers were found to report better interaction experiences when the learners in question matched their ethnicity (O'Connor, 2010:211). According to Cartrite (cited by Zagefka, 2009:229), common components of ethnicity are:
  • A common culture;
  • Actual common descent or the myth thereof;
  • Attachment to or claims of ownership of a certain territory;
  • A shared language;
  • A common history;
  • The "will" to be a group;
  • The existence of group symbols;
  • Mutual recognition of group membership;
  • A threat to cultural existence;
  • Common religion; and
  • Economic ties.

Interactions between teachers and learners from different ethnic groups can involve a mutual lack of understanding. Ember and Ember (cited by Barret, 2009:12) define culture as "a set of learned values, behaviour and beliefs that are characteristic of a particular society or population". Culture provides guidelines for behaviours and expectations, and individuals engaged in interactions with members of different ethnic groups may have limited understanding of the interaction partners' cultural background, which could

result in interpersonal communication difficulties and negative interpretations of behaviour (Thijs, Westhof & Koomen, 2012:259). Research has also shown that individuals tend to favour individuals who share the same ethnicity and culture. As a consequence, individuals engaged in interactions with members from a different ethnic group may have less positive views of their interaction partners (Thijs *et al.*, 2012:259).

The constructs of ethnicity and culture are often synonymous with race. It has been found that schools and teachers spread and replicate social and racial groupings within classrooms and schools (Bates & Glick, 2013:1180). Therefore, if teacher assessments of learners are based on socially predominant stereotypes, then learners from historically disadvantaged backgrounds have a higher probability of being assessed as displaying externalising behaviours as compared to their peers from dominant racial and ethnic groups (Bates & Glick, 2013:1180). Bates and Glick (2013:1180) found that systematically different teacher perceptions of learners with specific racial or ethnic backgrounds might lead to the exacerbation of academic performance gaps. In the South African context, this would suggest that historically disadvantaged black, Indian and Coloured learners will be perceived as more problematic than their white counterparts. Oates (cited by Bates & Glick, 2013:1181) found that, in general, teachers hold lower perceptions of black learners' performance compared to white learners' performance.

South African schools post-apartheid display more diversity in learner profiles as the desegregation of schools resulted in a migration of black learners from township schools to so-called Coloured and former white schools (Van Wyk, 2010:247). Van Wyk (2010:247-248) notes that despite the growth in learner diversity, there is a continuing lack of diversity in teaching staff (Van Wyk, 2010:247-248). The national Department of Education does not make statistics available according to race, which makes it difficult to verify this assertion. However, Vandeyar (2010:348-349) found that, in general, the South African teachers that she included in her study saw every learner as "the same", regardless of race. Many teachers stated that they do not "see

colour". If this theory of "colour blindness" is true it means that teachers detach their teaching practice from culture (Vandeyar, 2010:349). In her research, Vandeyar (2010:349) presented the example of a former Indian school, where irrespective of the fact that the learner population of the classroom had changed drastically and that the majority of learners were now black, the teacher still taught as if she were teaching a group of Indian learners. Vandeyar found that the teachers did not relate what they were teaching to the cultural background of their learners (Vandeyar, 2010:384).

3.4 The role that learners' home background and socio-economic status play in influencing teacher-learner interactions

A key trend in the literature on teachers' perceptions of learners is the notion that learners' home background and socio-economic status tend to have a direct influence on how teachers perceive and interact with learners. Auwarter and Aruguete (cited by Hachfeld, Schroeder, Stanat & Kuntera, 2010:79) found that teachers are likely to negatively judge learners who herald from a low socio-economic status. This finding is supported by research conducted by the NICHD Early Child Care Research Network (2003) and Pianta (2005) (cited by O'Connor, 2010:190), which indicates that in schools with a high percentage of learners living below the poverty line, teachers reported less frequent positive interactions with their learners.

South Africa is characterised by overwhelming poverty. The proportion of the South African population in 2005 living below $1.25 a day was estimated to be 10,7%, while the proportion of the population living below $2.50 a day was estimated at 36,4% (Poverty Profile of South Africa, 2012). Each school that was included in this study is composed of learners who hail from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, which means that the teachers who participated in the study interact with learners with markedly different socio-economic status on a daily basis.

Parental involvement at home and at school are mediating factors in the quality and nature of teacher-learner interactions (O'Connor, 2010:190). South African schools, particularly those in rural areas, evidence a low level of

parental involvement (Msila, 2012:303). This is mainly due to the realities of poverty and unemployment. Ball, Bowe and Gerwitz (cited by Msila, 2012:304-305) indicate that schooling in working class families is often not related to long-term planning and is instead anchored in the present. The lack of parental involvement in South African schools is mirrored in the fact that less than half of the public schools in the country had effective school governing bodies in 2011 (Mola, 2012). The 1996 Schools Act makes it mandatory that parent's makeup 50% of school governing bodies. However, achieving this degree of parental involvement is challenging when a large percentage of parents are socio-economically deprived (Mola, 2012).

Research findings indicate that learners who receive more support and stimulation at home have a better quality of interaction with their teachers than learners who do not experience such caring and encouragement at home (O'Connor, 2010:190). Children from less privileged socio-economic backgrounds receive less exposure to potentially stimulating objects and events (Bradley, 2002:287) while parents from challenging socio-economic environments display fewer direct efforts to teach school-relevant competencies to their children (Bradley, 2002:286).

An understanding of how learners home backgrounds and socio-economic status influences teachers' perceptions of teacher-learner interactions is especially relevant due to the high levels of poverty in South Africa. Many teachers in South Africa also teach and interact with learners in learning environments that are far from ideal. These adverse learning conditions in turn influence the perceptions that teachers have towards their interactions with their learners.

3.5 How school resources, classroom climate and management influence teacher-learner interaction

Many schools in South Africa are under-resourced. Bush *et al.* (2010:164) studied South African schools that serve poor communities and noted that these schools are facing the following problems: Inaccessibility, inadequate infrastructure, over-crowding, unfilled educator posts, and acute social and

economic problems in the local communities. It is proposed that all of these factors would have a marked influence on school climate and culture as well as classroom climate, which will in turn influence the interactions of learners and teachers. Classes in South African schools are often overcrowded because of the limited number of classrooms and/or not enough teachers (Bush *et al.*, 2010:167). In 2011, the national average learner-teacher ratio in ordinary schools in the country was 29.2:1, ranging from 27.4:1 in the Free State to 30.9:1 in the Northern Cape (Department of Education, 2011: 6). O'Connor (2010:191) found that higher quality teacher-learner relationships are observed in classes with lower learner-teacher ratios. This finding, extended to this research, would therefore indicate that schools that feature overcrowded classrooms would reflect low-quality interactions between teachers and learners. It is also proposed that poor classroom management is a by-product of overcrowded and resource-poor classrooms.

International research has proved that well-managed classrooms with positive climates promote positive interactions between learners and teachers (Donohue *et al.*, 2003). Bush *et al.* (2010:164) note that the classroom management practices in the South African schools that they studied were of variable or poor quality. However, Mukeredzi and Mandrona (2013:142) indicate that teacher motivation is essential as it stimulates learners to acquire, transform and apply knowledge. The South African study using student teachers in rural communities also indicated that they were aware of the value of a relaxed, interesting and stimulating atmosphere towards learning (Mukeredzi & Mandrona, 2013:142). In other words, the student teachers acknowledged the necessity of providing a positive classroom climate. Buthelezi (cited by Mukeredzi & Mandrona, 2013:142) makes the point that South African teacher education does not address the classroom or school contexts sufficiently in which teachers operate. Furthermore, it is proposed that the way in which school principals provide leadership and management has an impact on teachers' classroom management practices.

It is the core responsibility of principals to provide leadership and management in all areas of the school. This is necessary in order to foster

and maintain optimal conditions for quality teaching and learning (Bush *et al.*, 2010:162). It is proposed that principals influence not only school culture and climate but also classroom climate. Bush and Heystek (cited by Bush *et al.*, 2010:162-163) show that South African principals are mainly concerned with matters such as the management of school finances, human resources and policy management, while the responsibility of managing teaching and learning was not ranked as highly (Bush *et al.*, 2010:164). This finding does not bode well for the interaction between South African teachers and learners, as Pianta (cited by O'Connor, 2010:191) notes that teachers report higher quality interactions and relationships with learners in schools with supportive and involved principals.

This section underlined the importance of school resources, classroom climate and the influence of management, such as the role of principals as to the teacher-learner interaction.

4.   CONCLUSION

The literature studied has shown that a range of factors impact teacher-learner interactions and the manner in which teachers perceive these relations. Teacher and learner characteristics, school climate and culture, as well as socio-economic forces within the communities in which schools are situated have an influence on teacher-learner interpersonal interactions as well as the processes operant in the formation of interpersonal perceptions. Interpersonal communication does not occur within a vacuum. Teacher-learner interactions tend to be reciprocal. It seems that because school culture is slow to change these cyclical interactions, it tends to be repeated for decades, reflecting community and societal mores.

This study hopes to build upon the knowledge base on teacher perceptions of their interactions with their learners by situating the research in schools in Johannesburg, South Africa, which are diverse in climate and culture.

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Section B
Article

Title:

**Teachers' perceptions of teacher-learner interaction
in high schools**

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Teachers' perceptions of teacher-learner interaction in high schools

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored how high school teachers perceive interactions with their learners. An interpretivist research design was used and it was underpinned by social constructivist theory as well as theories of interpersonal perception.

Twenty teachers from four diverse high schools participated in the study, either in semi-structured interviews or a focus group activity. Although the participants did reveal negative perceptions about their interactions with their learners, the salient findings are largely positive in nature. Key themes in the teachers' perceptions of their interactions with learners included teaching to be a vocation; teachers' interactions with their learners as character building that serve to shape the personalities of their learners; the influence of the length of time that teachers are active in the teaching profession on teacher-learner interactions; and how classroom management strategies influences teachers perceptions of teacher-learner interactions. As the study did not take into account rural teachers' perceptions, it is recommended that further studies should be undertaken in this regard. The study was limited as the population size was small and therefore generalisation is not possible. Since the assessments of school culture and climate were made on the basis of the researcher's subjective impressions, the use of a school climate scale would be beneficial in choosing participant schools in future studies.

Keywords: Communication, teacher-learner interaction, relations, perceptions, school climate, school culture, social constructivism, South African education,

INTRODUCTION

Teachers' perceptions of their relations with learners are of key importance for the learning environment (Luckner & Pianta, 2011:257). Interpersonal communication is an integral part of teacher-learner relations and this ongoing process evolves and gains more richness over time (Kitching & Roos, 2012). Interpersonal communication can be described as "a discriminating, systematic and idiosyncratic process of interaction between individuals who reflect and build personal knowledge and create meanings" (Wood, 2013:34). Wood (2013:22) states that if we accept that each interaction is transactional, then both teachers and learners share responsibility for effective communication and positive relations. Teacher-learner interaction is defined in this study as all forms of communication, both verbal and non-verbal, that occurs between teachers and learners. However, these interactions are not limited to only the classroom environment and can be extended to include teacher-learner interactions on the sports field and in the school corridors.

Since the teaching experience does not happen in a vacuum, the nature and quality of teacher-learner interaction must be viewed as a contextual feature of school culture and climate as these facets shape the classroom practices. Each school has its own school culture and school climate (Barnes, Brynard, & De Wet, 2012). Saufler (cited by Barnes *et al.,* 2012) state that school culture and school climate are two separate but intimately connected influences in the functioning of a school. Gruenert (cited by Barnes *et al.,* 2012) defines school culture as shared expectations that develop when the members of the school interact for a lengthy period of time. These expectations then progress into unspoken norms to which members adapt, as a result forming a collective school culture. It is noted that these unspoken elements are highly pervasive, and permeate the very fabric of the school life (Deal & Peterson, 2010:5). School culture is seen as influencing, among other things, how teachers and learners perceive the school, how they interact with one another and how teachers experience their work and interactions (Deal & Peterson, 2010:5).

In addition, school climate is seen as the quality and the character of the school. Both school culture and school climate are joined to the atmosphere of a school, and have an indirect and direct impact on teacher-learner interaction. Fiore (2009) likens school climate to the self-image of a school which implies that the way teachers perceive themselves and the learners of a particular school could impact their relating and interacting in a positive or negative manner. School climate is a subset of school culture and it informs school culture. Unlike school culture, school climate is malleable and as such can be immediately impacted and it is subject to change (Eller, 2009:3). Some schools are characterised by a culture of violence, with a climate that consequently reflects unease, while others have a culture of learning, which in turn supports a climate that allows learners and teachers to interact in a positive and non-threatening manner (Barnes *et al.,* 2012, citing Bucher & Manning). It is clear that the school culture and climate in which teachers and learners find them will influence the quality and nature of their interactions.

Lee and Dallman (cited by Meier, 2010, 159) maintain that teachers' individual perceptions do not develop separately from the socio-cultural context in which they function, but are rather informed by a lifelong, multifaceted socialisation process. Kitching, Roos and Ferreira (2011) support this social constructivist view of the association between interaction and perceptions by noting that the interaction that occurs within schools must not be viewed in isolation from the community in which it is situated. Social constructivism centers on the idea that social and individual processes are interdependent in the construction of knowledge (Meier, 2010: 158). This means that the process of constructing knowledge is culturally mediated, and within this framework that no objective reality or knowledge exists, but rather multiple visions of the world with various realities being constructed, sustained and normalised by society and societal groups such as teachers (Meier, 2010: 159). As the constructing of knowledge happens within the context of interpersonal interaction the PERSON Model of Interpersonal Perception is an apt model to explore the formation of perceptions during interpersonal interaction

The PERSON Model of Interpersonal Perception (Negovan, Raciu & Vlad,

2010) is a model that is used to explore the formation of perceptions during interpersonal interaction. This model is in line with the social constructivist position, as it takes into account the dynamic and socially embedded nature of the interaction process. According to the PERSON Model, interpersonal perceptions are formed by personal beliefs held by the partners involved in the interaction (Negovan *et al.*, 2010). Applying this model in the context of the research, teacher perceptions can be viewed as a combination of the teachers' personal assumptions about learner characteristics (which would be informed by their own personal experiences (Meier, 2010) as well as broad cultural influences and their observations of concrete learner behaviour in class) as well as learner self-perceptions (Negovan *et al.*, 2010). Even though perceptions are not imitations of reality but rather subjective mental constructions of it, their influence ought to be taken seriously as they direct our actions and inform our identities (Morais & Azevedo, 2011, citing Romo & Alfonso).

This research explored how twenty teachers from four high schools, with diversity as to school culture and school climate, perceive their interactions with their learners. Understanding how teachers perceive their interaction with learners is important, seeing that these perceptions influence teacher-learner connections. Exploring the meanings and perceptions that high school teachers attribute to the interactions that they have with their learners may serve to generate overall themes about how teachers perceive teacher-learner interactions. The research question in the study was, "how do teachers perceive their interactions with their learners." This inquiry directed the aim of the study, namely to explore teachers' perceptions of the teacher-learner interactions in high schools.

METHOD

Research design

The study fits into the framework of the qualitative approach as the research was grounded within the unique experiences of the participants. An interpretive descriptive design was implemented (McNabb, 2013), as interpretive descriptive studies lend themselves to an exploration of subjective

perceptions and meanings.

Participants

Purposive sampling (Gerrish & Lacey, 2010) was used, seeking teachers who had actively taught in a high school environment for more than three years. The researcher liaised with the principals of the relevant schools in order to get a list of teachers who met the inclusion criteria. The teachers were then approached individually to secure the participation in the research study. The participants consisted of twenty teachers, five teachers from each of the four participating high schools in Johannesburg, Gauteng. The four schools were chosen in order to account for diversity in terms of access to resources, the socio-economic, religious and cultural backgrounds of teachers and learners, as well as school culture and climate. The first school included was a Muslim school, where male and female learners attended classes in separate buildings on the school grounds. The second school was a co-educational Afrikaans school with a reputation for excellence. The third school was a co-educational school located in the inner city that was reputed to have a high drop-out rate. The fourth school was an arts-based high school which had a very diverse mix of learners who come from all areas of Johannesburg. Three teachers from each school were asked to participate in semi-structured interviews, while two other teachers from each school were asked to participate in a focus group activity. Fourteen of the participants were female & six of the participants were male. The participants' ages ranged from twenty-five years old to fifty years old. The participants differed in the number of years that they had spent teaching, with most of the participants having spent between ten to fifteen years teaching. The teachers who participated in the study taught a wide range of subjects, ranging from Mathematics, English, Art and Life Orientation.

Data collection

The researcher used semi-structured interviews, consisting of open-ended questions and a focus group activity, which included a collage-making exercise to gather the data. An interview guide (see Appendix 2) was utilised in a flexible manner in order to ensure that the participants could lead the

interview in unexpected directions (King & Horrocks, 2010:35). For example some of the questions were: "Can you tell me a little bit about yourself and why you chose to become a teacher?"; "How do you think your learners perceive their interactions with you?" and "Would you describe the interactions that you have with your learners as positive or negative in nature, and why?"

Twelve participants, namely three teachers from each of the four schools were required to meet at pre-arranged private locations at their respective schools for the semi-structured interviews. Each participant was interviewed on a different day. Open-ended questions (Roulston, 2010:15) were used, and the researcher used follow-up probes in response to the interviewees' descriptions and accounts (Roulston, 2010:14). The interviews were audio-recorded with the permission of the participants.

The second method of data collection was conducted by means of a focus group activity followed by a discussion. The participants for the focus group, namely eight teachers (two teachers from each of the four schools) were required to meet at a pre-arranged private location at the most central school in relation to the other schools in order to participate in a focus group activity.

The focus group activity started with a collage-making exercise. The participants were asked to cut out words and images from magazines that reflect their perception of teacher-learner interaction within their school. The participants were further invited to present and explain their choices to the other group members. Next, the images and words that had been selected were mixed together in a pile. Through a group discussion and collaboration, a joint collage utilising images selected from the pile was negotiated based on group consensus about which images/words most accurately reflected the members' perceptions of teacher-learner interaction.

The collage-making activity was not used as a projective or interpretative technique but rather as a method to encourage and assist the teachers to share their perceptions of their interactions with their learners. The focus

group activity ended with a debriefing session that enabled the participants to talk about their responses to the discussion (Liamputtong, 2011:12).

Procedure and ethical concerns

Approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the North-West University for this study (approval number: NWU-00060-12-A1). In order to commence with the research process, the researcher obtained permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct research at four schools within its jurisdiction. The researcher liaised with the principals of the relevant schools in order to gain their verbal consent to interview the teachers and to gain the principals' permission to conduct the interviews and/or focus group activity on the school property (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2012:67). Secure and private locations at the schools were obtained to conduct the semi-structured interviews and the focus group activity. Before the formal data collection procedures commenced the researcher explained the nature of the research to the participants and outlined any foreseeable risk that the participants could encounter as a result of participating in the research. At this stage the researcher also made the participants aware that their participation was voluntary. Before the commencement of each interview, the researcher provided the participant with clear and comprehensive information about the aim of the study and how the collected data would be used (King & Horrocks, 2010:48). The participants were provided with a list of social workers and counsellors within the area in case the interviews caused any emotional distress (Liamputtong, 2011:12). The participants were given the opportunity to ask questions in order to gain further clarity on any aspect of the research. The participants were asked to sign an informed consent form. The informed consent form conveys relevant research information, such as risks and benefits which allow the participant to make an informed decision regarding participation. The participants were informed that all information from the study that would be kept confidential and that their identities would be concealed through the use of coding when referring to particular findings.

The researcher made observation notes about all aspects of the contact with the schools' administration staff, principals, teachers and learners. This

enabled the researcher to gain a subjective sense of the climate of each school. Reflexivity (Potvin, Bisset & Walz, 2010:447) was practised by the researcher by keeping detailed notes about the perceptions, feelings, emotional responses and preconceived beliefs that the researcher became aware of and experienced during the research process. The process of self-observation and note taking enabled the researcher to be consciously aware of the fact that the researcher's social position, race, class and gender have an influence on knowledge production (Roschelle, Toro-Morn & Facio, 2010:367).

Crystallisation was achieved through the use of both the semi-structured interviews, the focus group activity and the researchers' observational notes to obtain a more multifaceted view. Trustworthiness of data gathering was enhanced by making use of member checking. During the interviews and the focus group activity the researcher reflected back to the participants the content of what had been said. The recordings of the semi-structured interviews and focus group activity were transcribed in full and returned to the participants for validation.

Data analysis

Thematic analysis was used to identify themes within the data that articulate the perceptions that the teachers hold about their interactions with their learners. The researcher initially conducted a preliminary data analysis of the interview and focus group activity transcripts in order to identify themes and to promote the researcher's active engagement with the data (Grbich, 2013:21). The preliminary analysis involved checking and rechecking the transcripts with the aim of identifying data relevant to the research question.

The thematic analysis was inductive in nature as the researcher approached the data without a theoretically informed coding frame (Willig, 2013:61). Processing the data in this way enabled the researcher to capture significant, generalised units of meaning surrounding teachers' perceptions of their interactions with their learners as opposed to predetermining particular aspects of the narratives on which to focus (Willig, 2013:61). Themes were

arrived at by looking at the patterns that emerged through the act of grouping similar units of texts into clusters (Willig, 2013:62).

An exploratory framework was drawn up from an analysis of the most important themes. The exploratory framework took the form of pillar questions (Shields & Rangarajan, 2013: 148), whereby questions were posed in order to provide support and structure for the research problem.

The findings of the data analysis will be discussed in the next section.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The research revealed that when teaching is considered to be a "calling" or a vocation, the experiences are viewed as fulfilling and enjoyable teacher-learner interactions. The second theme indicated that the teachers who viewed teaching as a vocation often made reference to their interactions with their learners as learner character-building exercises that serve to shape the personalities of their learners. The third theme involved the issue of teaching experience and the quality of interacting. The participants who have been active in the teaching profession for a period of five years or more tended to report higher quality interactions with their learners than their colleagues who have been active in the teaching profession for a shorter amount of time. The fourth theme indicated the link between teachers' self-perceptions and classroom management styles as to teacher-learner interactions. Some of the teachers who participated in the research noted that their classroom management strategies relating to maintaining order and discipline have become more efficient the longer they teach and that this acquisition of improved classroom management strategies serves to facilitate positive teacher-learner interactions. Clear evidence of this was found in this research study. The fifth theme highlighted the matter of classroom climate and management. Participants who came from schools that are characterised by a culture of achievement often made reference to the importance of creating a

"warm", caring classroom atmosphere or climate in order to facilitate positive learner-teacher interactions. The final theme pointed out that participants enjoyed interacting with learners who remind them of themselves when they were younger. The themes that were generated will be explored and illustrated through the use of participant quotes below.

Teaching as a vocation

The findings revealed that when teaching is considered to be a "calling" or a vocation, the experiences are viewed as fulfilling and enjoyable teacher-learner interactions.

> *"I wake up excited to be going to school. I am excited because I know that I am lucky to be a teacher, to have the opportunity to work with the youth."[i](S2 P12, I).[ii]*

> *"Teaching is what I am meant to do. Interacting with learners makes me feel alive"* (S1 P2 I).

The term *vocation* derives from the Latin root, *vocare*, to call or to be called (Collay, 2013). The Merriam-Webster dictionary (2004) defines the term *vocation* as "a summons or strong inclination to a particular state or course of action". The very concept of vocation fits into a social constructivist paradigm, as vocation is formed through a unique combination of the spiritual and cultural contributions from an individual's past and current environments, which through the influence of life events lead to value creation (Monica & Cristian, 2012). It is proposed that the belief that teaching is a vocation result in teachers approaching teaching with positive energy and engagement, which in turn results in the learners responding in a reciprocal manner.

The research indicated that there is a link between the participants' love of, or passion for the subject matter that they are teaching and the teachers' perceptions of their interactions with their learners. Participants who display a deep love for the subject that they are teaching tended to report that they see their learners as mirroring this passion.

Work engagement is defined as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind

that is characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma & Bakker, cited by Hakanen, Bakker & Schaufeli, 2006). Vigour is portrayed by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one's work, and persistence also in the face of difficulties (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma & Bakker, cited by Hakanen, Bakker & Schaufeli, 2006). Dedication is defined by a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenge. Absorption is characterised as being fully concentrated and engrossed in one's work (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma & Bakker, cited by Hakanen, Bakker & Schaufeli, 2006).

> *"Teaching English to young people is amazing. I love transmitting my knowledge to them. I notice that when I am teaching my favourite set works, the learners reflect my passion for the text. I'm sure that it is because the learners can sense my love of a particular book"* (S1 P4, I)

> *"Teaching Math's to a class of restless teenagers is challenging but I don't think that any other subject offers as many rewards to both the teacher and the learners as Math's does. My learners seem hungry for knowledge and eager to overcome the challenges of the subject. I think that this is because they can see that I love working with numbers as well"* (S3 P2, I)

The research of Day (cited by Hobbs, 2012) can be used to extrapolate this finding. Day notes that when learners can value their teacher as an individual who is strongly committed to a field of inquiry and to upholding high standards within it, this facilitates learner engagement with the subject in question and promotes the subsequent acquisition of knowledge (Day, cited by Hobbs, 2012). Day (cited by Hobbs, 2012) proposes that this is because learning then becomes a matter of inspiration by example rather than by enforcement.

Another factor that may contribute to the participants seeing their passion for a subject mirrored in their interactions with their learners is the interpersonal construct of salience (Lane, 2009). Interpersonal perception formation involves a selection of which stimuli to notice and attend to. The selection of stimuli is based on their meaning for the perceiver. This is called salience (Lane, 2009). It is proposed that teachers may especially attend to and notice

learner interactions in the classroom in which learners reflect their passion for the subject.

> *"When my kids are fired up about the content of the lessons – why that's when they really get my attention"* (S1 P13, FG-D).

An English Literature teacher's words support this view of saliency during teacher-learner interaction when she said:

> *"Some learners in my class are just so eager to please and learn. I can see that these learners share the same yearning for knowledge and love of literature that I do. I am afraid that the learners who do not show this desire sometimes slip through the cracks"* (S4 P10, FG-D)

Reciprocal determinism occurs through the dynamic interaction of the participants' personal beliefs (teaching as a vocation), the physical environment (the classroom and the learners), the social environment (the climate within the classroom) and the participants' behaviour (they teach with vigour) (Woolfolk, 2007). This reciprocal determinism results in participants believing that their learners are engaged in the lesson (an attribution), which in turn causes the participants to maintain their behaviour (process of self-regulation), which further reinforces the learners' behaviour.

The participants who tended to describe teaching as a vocation came from schools that have a reputation of having a culture of "excellence" and "learning". The participants who came from schools that are not known for their academic or sporting achievements referred less often to teaching as a vocation. The participants who came from the schools that were not known for a culture of excellence also tended to have more negative perceptions of their interactions with their learners. Understanding how the underlying culture of a school attracts teachers who believe that teaching is a vocation helps to facilitate an understanding of how differing school climates can maintain and sustain various types of interactions with their learners.

Teachers' interactions with their learners as learner character-building

The second theme indicated that the teachers who view teaching as a vocation often made reference to their interactions with their learners as learner character-building exercises that serve to shape the personalities of

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their learners. Character building can be defined as that which fortify certain good or useful strengths in a person's character – including self-reliance, endurance and courage. The participants considered these character-building interactions as equipping learners with the tools to contribute to South African society and even to bring about social transformation.

> *"I am happy, overjoyed, at the thought of fostering knowledge within bright young minds and to have the satisfaction of conversing with the 'future' of our world. They are the ones who are going to transform South Africa. If we do not mould them, who will?"* (S1 P1, I).

> *"Teaching is not just facts, theories and calculations. It reaches far beyond the textbook. Our teaching interactions extend into character building, into shaping the personalities of our learners. The most meaningful interactions are when we see a learner change from the rowdy kid we first met into the mature young adult that we bid farewell to at the end of their schooling career"* (S1 P13, FG-C)

The findings of Brookhart and Freeman (cited by Watt & Richardson, 2009) corroborate with the above finding by showing that altruistic goals are the primary reasons why teachers report choosing teaching as a career. Altruistic goals may include a desire to help youth succeed, as well as a desire to help society to improve (Thomson, Turner & Nietfeld, 2012). A South African study (Rampa, 2012) that investigated teachers' passion for teaching within a South African context further corroborates this finding, since the majority of Rampa's participants responded that they chose teaching based on a love for South Africa. Also, they indicated that their objective is to improve the quality of education and the well being of the individuals in their communities (Rampa, 2012).

It can be concluded that, in general, the participants made the choice to be teachers based upon a desire to positively impact the present and future South African society. Also, they perceive their interactions with their learners as contributing to this end.

Teaching duration and teachers' perceptions of teacher-learner interaction

The third theme involved the issue of teaching experience and the quality of interacting. The participants who have been active in the teaching profession for a period of five years or more tended to report higher quality interactions with their learners than their colleagues who have been active in the teaching profession for a shorter amount of time. For example, Participant 19, who has been teaching for over 12 years, described her interactions with her learners as making her feel "invigorated" and "stimulated":

> *"Working with these kids makes my heart sing. Teaching them makes me feel invigorated and stimulated on a daily basis. The rapport that I have established between my kids and myself can only be described as being courteous"* (S4 P19, FG-C).

Participant 16, who has been teaching for only three years, described the interactions that she has with the learners at her school as "aggravating" and "draining":

> *"I feel tired. Tired and drained. I really think that dealing with my learners leaves me feeling exhausted. Teaching them can be aggravating at times. They (the learners) often don't want to listen"* (S2 P16, I)

These sentiments were echoed by other participants, who share similar profiles in terms of time-spent teaching. Participant 3, who has been teaching at a number of different schools for a period of eight years, described her interactions with her learners as follows:

> *"I thought that I would get bored of teaching adolescents, but I was wrong. I just fall more and more in love with teaching every year. Young people have so many unique perspectives and they are not afraid to share them"* (S3 P3 FG-D).

This finding may be attributed to the participants gaining more experience the longer that they teach, which in turn is related to increased perceptions of teacher efficacy. Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk and Hoy (cited by Savran-Gencer & Cakiroglu, 2007) define teacher efficacy as "a teacher's judgement of his or her capabilities to bring about desired outcomes of learner engagement and learning, even when dealing with difficult or unmotivated learners".

Teacher self-efficacy perceptions, classroom management styles and teacher perceptions of their interactions with their learners

The fourth theme indicated the link between teachers' self-perceptions and classroom management styles as to teacher-learner interactions. Some of the teachers who participated in the research noted that their classroom management strategies relating to maintaining order and discipline have become more efficient the longer they teach and that this acquisition of improved classroom management strategies serves to facilitate positive teacher-learner interactions. Clear evidence of this was found in this research study. Participant 10, who has been a teacher for over 20 years, explained as follows:

> *"The way that I discipline learners has changed since I first started out in teaching. I have gained experience in the way that I should discipline. A well managed classroom is key. I find that now there is less cause to discipline learners. Because of this I get along with my learners far better now"* (S4 P10, FG-D).

Literature reveals a negative correlation between teachers' self-efficacy perceptions and their use of effective behaviour management techniques (Giallo & Little, 2003). It has been found that teachers with lower self-efficacy perceptions are more likely to use inappropriate management techniques than confident teachers who tend to use proactive approaches to behaviour management (Giallo & Little, 2003). Inadequately managed classrooms result in teaching being challenging and discipline issues are rife (Martin & Sugarman; Rose & Gallup, cited by NYU Steinhardt, 2008), while a well-managed classroom provides an environment in which teaching and learning is optimal (Marzano, Marzano & Pickering, cited by NYU Steinhardt, 2008). Participant 7's words echoed a similar sentiment in terms of the relationship between teacher efficacy, classroom management approaches, duration of teaching and teachers' perceptions of their learners. This teacher made specific reference to the idea that teaching over a number of years gives teachers the opportunity to explore different classroom management strategies, which directly impacted on how she perceived her interactions with her learners:

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"I used to be really punitive if I felt like I was being disrespected by any learner. I attribute this to inexperience. Inexperience and possibly an outmoded vision of what a well-run classroom should look like. Over the last few years I have gained more confidence in my teaching abilities as I have had the opportunity to experiment with different strategies of managing my classes. The relationships that I have with my learners have improved drastically as a result" (S1 P7, I).

The findings indicate that as the participants gain more experience (and increased teaching efficacy perceptions), classroom management increasingly leans toward regulating classroom processes instead of enforcing direct discipline. Savran-Gencer and Cakiroglu (2007) support this finding by stating that teachers who display higher perceptions of teaching efficacy tend to give preference to less punitive approaches to classroom management and discipline. The research of Dârjan (n.d.) supports this view by indicating that the greater the teacher's sense of personal efficacy, the more humanistic the teacher's learner control orientation. Teachers that perceive themselves as having high self-efficacy allow learners a fair level of independence that is regulated by classroom norms. If the perceived self-efficacy is low, the teacher will strengthen the control of the learners Dârjan (n.d.). Therefore, high levels of self-efficacy correlate positively with a democratic classroom management style.

Classroom climate and management

The fifth theme highlighted the matter of classroom climate and management. Participants who came from schools that are characterised by a culture of achievement often made reference to the importance of creating a "warm", caring classroom atmosphere or climate in order to facilitate positive learner-teacher interactions. The schools that are known for having a culture of achievement are schools that reflect a high year-end pass rate and that excel in artistic, cultural and sporting achievement. Classroom climate can be defined as the psychological environment of a classroom that is a direct result of the interactions within the classroom (Chen, Kinshuk, Chen & Wang, 2008). Classroom climate is determined by the general pattern of social interactions among classmates and with teachers, the general configuration of teaching

and instruction, the rules that the teacher sets as well as the layout of the classroom (Peter & Dalbert, 2010). Participant 9, who is a teacher at a school which prides itself in being a feeder school to a top universities in Johannesburg, described the physical measures that she implements to create a positive classroom climate for her learners in order to promote an engaging teaching environment and enhance her interactions with her learners:

> *"I really put a great deal of effort into making my classroom feel comfortable and inviting for my learners. I have a library system in my class where learners can borrow books; I regularly change the posters on my wall to ensure that they continue to stimulate creative enquiry and interest. All of these small things result in my learners approaching the lesson and myself with excitement and energy"* (S4 P9, I).

Wentzel (cited by O'Connor, 2010) indicates that a positive classroom climate supports learners' interest in the classroom, which in turn fosters high-quality teacher-learner relationships. The teachers who did not come from schools that produced high achievers less often made reference to the necessity of environmental factors in order to facilitate positive teacher-learner interaction; instead, these teachers tended to make reference to the necessity of setting firm behavioural boundaries in order to maintain a fair and ordered classroom climate. These teachers indicated that if they did not manage their classrooms effectively their interactions with their learners would be rife with conflict. Participant 9 commented as follows:

> *"My classroom runs like a well-oiled machine. My learners know what I expect of them and what behaviours I will not tolerate. If I didn't do such a good job of managing classroom processes then I am afraid it would be chaos. I've seen this happen in less organised classrooms."*

Various participants' narratives show the need to model respectful behaviour in order to instill discipline and self-regulation in their learners as opposed to merely resorting to punitive measures to manage a classroom. For example, Participant 19 described her softer approach to discipline that is based on respect:

> *"I know that some of my colleagues will not hesitate to give learners detention or send them to the principal's office. I however tend to take*

a more egalitarian approach. I model respect and I get respect back. There are teachers who view their learners as somehow less than themselves. I can see it in the way that they relate to the learners. There is no respect in their interactions. The learners may pretend to be respectful in front of them because they are scared of the consequences of not doing so but behind their backs they mock them."

"Love and gentleness is the best way. Being overly harsh and authoritarian will get you nowhere with kids. I believe that I need to earn their respect, as they have to earn mine" (S4 P19, FG-C).

The type of learners with whom teachers favour interaction

The final theme pointed out that participants enjoyed interacting with learners who remind them of themselves when they were younger. All the participants agreed upon this point.

"I really love interacting with one learner in particular. This learner is bookish and shy. She is also bright and articulate. She actually reminds me of myself when I was in school" (S2 P11, FG-D).

"I have noticed that each teacher has one or two favourite students. I personally believe that teachers choose these students, as they perceive them to be representations of themselves as youths" (S2 P17, FG-D).

A premise of interpersonal theory and social constructivism is that individuals constantly try to reconfirm their self-concepts through social interactions. Through their interpersonal behaviours, people communicate to others how they perceive themselves and how they would like other individuals to respond to them (Kiesler cited by Roorda, Koomen, Thijs & Oort, 2013). Relationships with high levels of complementarity confirm these self-concepts and therefore are experienced as comfortable and anxiety-free (Roorda *et al.*, 2013).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The collected data from the individual interviews yielded notably different findings from those that emerged from the focus group activity. The interviewees tended to focus more on the role that classroom management

and climate play in moderating teacher-learner interactions whereas the participants from focus group activity tended to gravitate towards discussions surrounding the type of learner that teachers most favour interacting with. Overall, the participants who took part in the semi-structured interviews tended to describe their interactions with their learners in a less positive light than the teachers who participated in the focus group activity. The teachers in the semi-structured interviews used more negative adjectives in their descriptions of teacher-learner interactions.

The narratives of the teachers all contained some commonalities regarding what they perceive as "positive" and "negative" learner interactions. The participants tended to define positive teacher-learner interaction as communication between teachers and learners that result in the teachers feeling respected and that contributes positively to classroom processes. They further tended to define negative teacher-learner interaction as relations between teachers and learners that result in the teachers feeling disrespected and that disrupt classroom processes. The teachers did not perceive the normal day-to-day activities associated with disciplining learners as negative interactions. All references in the text to teachers' perceptions of "negative" and "positive" are based upon how the participants define "positive" and "negative" learner interactions. The findings outlined below are contextualised within a social constructivist and interpersonal theoretical framework.

As racial and cultural factors were not strong themes in the data it is proposed that the participants largely adopt a colour-blind approach, in which the teachers view their interactions with their learners as not significantly influenced by the race, culture, or ethnicity of their learners (Williams, 2011). The "colour-blindness" adopted by the teachers has strong implications for education is a culturally and ethnically diverse country such as South Africa. Seeing that teachers' interactions with their learners were not coloured by race, culture, or ethnicity, it can be inferred that the quality and nature of interactions as to education in South Africa, as a culturally and ethnically diverse country, present the key. Opponents of the colour-blind approach argue that not acknowledging difference leads to the denial of the social

realities that different ethnic, racial and cultural groups are exposed to. When racial, cultural or ethnic problems occur, color-blindness individualises conflicts and shortcomings, rather than examining how cultural differences, stereotypes, and values influence the context (Williams, 2011).

STRENGTHS

The use of the focus group activity and semi-structured interviews facilitated the generation of rich, contextualised meanings that were assembled into themes that revealed commonalities in the teachers' perceptions in schools with unique cultures and climates. The qualitative approach enabled the subtleties of the research topic to be fully explored. Thought was given to the local contexts in which the research is situated by seeking schools that presented with markedly different school cultures and climates.

LIMITATIONS

The study was limited as the population size was limited and therefore generalisation is not possible. The schools that were included in the study were located in urban areas in close proximity to each other. Hence, the study did not take into account rural teachers' perceptions. This limitation warrants an extensive study. The assessments of school culture and climate were made on the basis of the researcher's subjective impressions. The use of a school climate scale would be beneficial in choosing participant schools in future studies. A further limitation of the study was that the research was conducted in English only and that the research was limited to only those teachers who could speak English fluently.

RECOMMENDATIONS

An in-depth study investigating rural teachers' perceptions of their interactions with their learners is recommended. Contrasting the findings from such a study with the findings from a study that is centered upon urban teachers' perceptions of their interactions with learners would serve to highlight any similarities and differences in urban and rural teachers' perceptions. Additionally, the study was limited to the geographical location of Johannesburg. A wider study that compares and contrasts the perceptions of

teachers from the various provinces of South Africa would provide valuable insight into whether or not teachers' perceptions of teacher-learner interaction vary from province to province. Additionally these findings can be used as a starting point to compare and contrast primary and tertiary level teachers' perceptions of teacher-learner interaction.

CONCLUSION

The majority of the participants in the study reported positive perceptions of their interactions with their learners. It was proposed that the belief held by many of the participants that teaching is a vocation ties into the awareness that intrinsic factors within a teacher (such as possessing a genuine passion for teaching) determines the quality of teacher-learner interactions. The findings disclosed that the participants – as teachers - are highly aware of their role as nation shapers. This is indeed interesting that the participants chose teaching for altruistic reasons, and, the key role of their interactions with their learners as an opportunity to make South African society better. Racial and cultural factors were not strong themes in the data. It was proposed that the participants largely adopt a colour-blind approach, in which the teachers view their interactions with their learners as not significantly influenced by the race, culture, or ethnicity of their learners.

These findings were present in all the interviews as well as in the focus group discussion. This reveals that these themes can be considered to be the broad perceptions that the participants hold about their learners, irrespective of the climate and culture present at the school that they work at.

The findings overall are inspiring for the future of education in South Africa, as it may reveal that many South African teachers may take ownership and responsibility for the quality and nature of their interactions with their learners, regardless of the conditions at the school where they work. These findings have important implications for future research as they can be used as a starting point to compare and contrast primary and tertiary level teachers' perceptions of teacher-learner interaction.

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APPENDIX 1

Author's Declaration of Originality

I hereby certify that I am the sole author of this article and that no part of it has been published or submitted for publication elsewhere.

I certify that, to the best of my knowledge, my dissertation does not infringe upon anyone's copyright nor violate any proprietary rights and that any ideas, techniques, quotations, or any other material from the work of other people included in my dissertation, published or otherwise, are fully acknowledged in accordance with the standard referencing practices.

Language Editor's confirmation, signature and contact details

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SECTION C

SUMMARY, REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. SUMMARY

1.2 INTRODUCTION

The previous sections described the orientation, findings and discussions of this research project. This section provides a summary of the research together with an evaluation of the research based on the extent to which the findings have met the aims and objectives of the study. Recommendations are also given for possible future research, as well as possible limitations of the current study.

1.3 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The focus of the study was to explore how teachers perceive their interaction with their learners in order to offer an in depth understanding of the phenomenon.. The problem statement was stated that the understanding as to how teachers perceive their interaction with learners is important, because these perceptions influence teacher-learner relations. It was also mentioned that teacher-learner relations shape learners' perceptions of the learning environment as well as mediate the learners' behaviour and relationship with scholastic learning (Luckner & Pianta, 2011:257). The researcher expressed her sincere desire that the exploration of this problem may reveal valuable data about this issue.

The research question was presented as *"What are teachers' perceptions of teacher-learner interaction in high schools in Johannesburg?"* The study aimed to generate broad themes about how teachers perceive teacher-learner interactions within diverse high schools in Johannesburg, South Africa. The study followed an interpretivist research design and was underpinned by social constructivist theory as well as theories of interpersonal perception. Twenty teachers from four diverse high schools participated in the study,

either in semi-structured interviews or a focus group activity.

1.4 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH PROCEDURE

The researcher followed a variety of qualitative research methods including semi-structured interviews, consisting of open-ended questions and a focus group activity, which included a collage-making exercise to gather the data to address the research problem and fulfill the aim of the research.

During the open-ended interviews members were constantly asked to clarify their descriptions. The interpretations made by the researcher linked to these discussions were checked and clarified with the members of the group who participated in the research.

The collage making technique was used to encourage and assist the teachers to share their perceptions of their interactions with their learners. The focus group activity ended with a debriefing session that enabled the participants to talk about their responses to the discussion (Liamputtong, 2011:12).

Thematic analysis was used to transform data into meaningful information. Thematic analysis was used to identify themes within the data that articulate the perceptions that the teachers hold about their interactions with their learners. The thematic analysis was inductive in nature as the researcher approached the data without a theoretically informed coding frame (Willig, 2013:61). Processing the data in this way enabled the researcher to capture significant, generalised units of meaning surrounding teachers' perceptions of their interactions with their learners as opposed to predetermining particular aspects of the narratives on which to focus (Willig, 2013:61).

The methodology used was relevant, and that the methodology that was used yielded rich results.

1.5 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The teachers who participated in the study appeared to demonstrate a subconscious awareness of the process of reciprocal determinism in their interactions with their learners. A holistic view of teachers' interactions with their learners entails teachers' personal circumstances and qualities as well as the individual school environments that shape their interactions with their learners. This finding has important implications as it suggests that the participants accepted a degree of responsibility for their learners' success or failures. It can be proposed that the participants with a strong sense of personal responsibility were the teachers who viewed teaching to be a vocation, versus just a job. The teachers who believe that teaching is a vocation perceive their interactions with their learners to be extremely positive. The findings indicated that when teachers believe that teaching is a vocation, then teaching is approached with vigour and engagement. This belief in turn resulted in learners responding mostly in a similar manner; the teachers who expressed a dedication as to the subject matter that they were teaching saw the same enthusiasm and passion mirrored in their learners. This finding points to the need for further research about how teachers in South Africa perceive teaching as a profession and why teachers enter the field if they do not feel that teaching is a calling.

Teachers from schools with a reputation of having a culture of "excellence" and "learning" tended to describe teaching as a vocation more often. The teachers from schools not known for their academic or sporting achievement did not often make reference to teaching as vocation. The above finding could be attributed to the idea that schools with positive cultures attract and can secure the employment of highly desirable, committed teachers while the schools that are not known for fostering a positive school culture attract less desirable teachers, thus maintaining the status quo in terms of school culture. It is proposed that schools are essentially closed systems, that are stable and predictable, and that schools attract teachers that will engage in the same type of interactions with their learners as their predecessors did.

Similarly the teachers who came from schools that are well known for producing high achievers and a culture of achievement often made reference to the importance of creating a "warm" and caring classroom atmosphere or climate in order to facilitate positive learner-teacher interactions. It is important to underline that the teachers who did not come from schools that produced high achievers less often referred to the necessity of environmental factors in order to facilitate positive teacher-learner interaction; instead, these teachers tended to make reference to the necessity of setting firm behavioural boundaries in order to maintain an ordered classroom climate. This finding points to the interdependence of classroom climate and school culture. It seems that this reciprocal influence could explain why schools with positive cultures have classroom climates that are conductive to learning, while schools that do not have positive school cultures have classroom climates that are more strict by necessity.

The teachers viewed their daily interactions with their learners as character-building exercises that served to shape the personalities of their learners. This finding has huge implications as it reveals that the participants do not just believe that their roles are merely to teach the curriculum to their learners, but rather that they see themselves as contributing positively to South African society. This social contribution was voiced as guiding their learners' moral development, and, indicating their importance as role models. This research finding supports South African research as to social well-being and the role of values towards positive youth development.

Another noteworthy finding showed the link between teachers-learner interactions and the participants' experience of job satisfaction. It is proposed that the teachers involved in the study largely adopt a humanistic approach to teaching, as teaching the syllabus is not an end in itself. This means that teaching and specifically teacher-learner interactions are rather the means to help learner's progress towards the height of self-development, or self-actualisation. This finding is intimately linked to the finding that the teachers perceive their interactions with their learners to be character-building exercises that shape the personalities of their learners, as it further

emphasises that the teacher-learner interactions have far reaching implications.

The impact of years of teaching or experience highlighted that teachers perceived a decrease in negative teacher-learner interactions with an increase of their experience, namely, the longer they were teaching. This finding can be attributed to the teachers gaining more experience, especially in terms of good classroom management practices such as effectively maintaining discipline, which is related to increased perceptions of self-efficacy. This finding added insight to the interplay of self-perception and the perception of relating and interacting with others.

It was found that the participants largely adopted a colour-blind approach when interacting with their learner's as they did not emphasise the influence of cultural, racial or ethnic differences on their interactions with their learners. While some postulate that this denial of difference could be harmful as the value of difference is negated and undermined, it is the opinion of the researcher that the participants had good intentions and chose not to differentiate between their learners on the grounds of race or culture.

The teachers noted that they enjoyed interacting with learners who reminded them of themselves when they were learners at school. Variability in school climate and culture did not play any role in moderating teacher perceptions about the type of learners with whom they favour interaction. It is proposed that a desire on the teachers' part to reconfirm their self-concepts through their interactions with their learners is responsible for teachers favouring learners who remind them of their younger selves. These relationships are seen as displaying high levels of complementarity, which confirm these self-concepts and therefore are experienced as comfortable and anxiety-free (Roorda *et al.*, 2013:144).

1.6 IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

The findings have important implications for scholars and researchers who are interested in the influence of school culture and climate on teachers' perceptions. The findings support the idea that school culture has a direct influence on the nature of teacher-learner interactions. The findings of the research can also be extended to include the hypothesis that schools are closed systems, with schools attracting teachers whose teacher-learner interactions maintain the dominant school culture. The above finding has positive implications for schools that have a positive school climate that fosters excellence and learning. Then again, negative implications for underperforming schools or schools that have a culture of violence.

It is however promising for the future of education in South Africa that the teachers who participated in the study showed an awareness that their personal attributes played a key role in their learners' successes and failures. Many of the participants further viewed their roles as being more than just educational instructors. These participants instead saw their interactions with their learners as character building exercises. Based on a consideration of the above- finding, it is proposed that educational theorists need to place a greater importance on empowering teachers with the skills to effectively deliver social and moral messages during their interactions with their learners.

The fact that the teachers tended to have a colour-blind approach during their interactions with their learners could imply that diversity is not celebrated and acknowledged during their interactions with their learners. This implies that key socio-cultural realities are not being fully acknowledged by the teachers during their interactions with their learners.

1.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

As the study did not take into account rural teachers' perceptions it is recommended that further studies should be undertaken in this regard. Also, contrasting the findings from such a study with the findings of a study that is

centred upon urban teachers' perceptions of their interactions with learners would serve to highlight any similarities and differences in urban and rural teachers' perceptions. The assessments of school culture and climate were made on the basis of the researcher's subjective impressions. It is recommended that a school climate scale is used to choose participant schools in future studies as this may result in a more objective assessment of school climate, thereby providing quantifiable results.

1.8 LIMITATIONS

The study was limited as the population size was limited and therefore generalisation is not possible. The schools that were included in the study were located in urban areas in close proximity to each other. Hence, the study did not take into account rural teachers' perceptions. The research gap in this regard warrants an extensive study.. A further limitation of the study was that the research was conducted in English only and that the research was limited to only those teachers who could speak English fluently. This limitation offers the possibility that future research could look into different cultures and the perceptions of teacher-learner interactions.

1.9 FINAL COMMENTS

Although we are living in an age named as the age of information, it is clear that teaching is never just about the conveying of information; it is the mainly the transference of knowledge via teacher-learner interactions. It is the researcher's perception that the media generally portrays teaching as an undesirable profession defined by difficult teacher-learner interactions. The researcher is of the opinion that the teachers who participated in the research study found teaching to be a challenging yet fulfilling profession, marked by generally positive teacher-learner interactions. The sentiment of the research that was forged through the research process is eloquently summed up in the words of participant 9:

> "*Teaching is a profession that makes a very real difference. In many cases we are the closest thing to a mother or a father that many of*

these teens have. We share our wisdom, we promote growth and hopefully inspire our learners to make life affirming choices. In that we are the ones who are responsible for healing the wounds of the nation. This makes my heart reverberate with joy" (S4 P9, I).

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APPENDIX 2

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Interview guide for the semi-structured interviews:

1.1 Background / demographic questions:

- Can you tell me a little bit about yourself and why you chose to become a teacher?

1.2 Opinion / value questions:

- How do you think your learners perceive their interactions with you?

1.3 Experiences / behaviour questions:

- Overall, would you describe the interactions that you have with your learners as positive or negative in nature, and why?

- What are the most meaningful / positive interactions that you have had with your learners?

1.4 Feeling questions:

- How do you feel after a day of interacting with your learners?

1.5 Sensory questions:

- When you are interacting with your learners in the classroom context, what bodily sensations do you become aware of?

2. Interview guide for the collage-making exercise and focus group:

2.1 Collage-making exercise:

- Can you please cut out words and images from magazines that reflect your perceptions of teacher-learner interaction within your school and explain your choices to the other group members?
- To the group: How do you feel about the images that your colleagues selected?
- Are they accurate representations of your interactions with your learners?

2.2 Interview guide for the focus group:

- What teacher and learner behaviours contribute most directly to developing and maintaining a positive and supportive teacher-learner relationship?

- Are there any learner characteristics that make interaction difficult, and if so, why is this the case?

- Are there any negative interactions that you have had with a learner that really stand out?

- Have you noticed any difference in the way learners interact with you over the last five years, and if you have what do you attribute this to?

APPENDIX 3

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION

Excerpts of interview transcriptions of teachers from the focus group activity. Wednesday, 17 July 2013.

Researcher: "If you had to go back in time and choose teaching again would you make the same choice?"

P1: "Yes, definitely. I enjoy the work that I do and the challenges that it brings with it. It has made me grow and learn through the experiences with the learners."

P2: "I would make the same choice again. However, I would try to find a teaching post outside the official academic system. I would like to become a remedial teacher so that I can focus on helping just one learner at a time. I think that once the love of teaching is in your blood it's there. Interacting with 'my children' leaves me invigorated."

P3: "Yes! I enjoy my job more and more as the years go by. I find it fascinating to watch how my learners develop and grow over the years."

P4: "Yes and no. I love the teaching part of my job. The profession has changed greatly over the past thirty years for the worse as the public tends to look down on teachers. I feel that if I had chosen a different career I would have been financially better off. However, it is still a very rewarding career and, like I said, I enjoy the teaching. We are all here because we love what we do."

P5: "Absolutely! I became a teacher after experiencing the dynamism of school life and continue to revel in my job today. Young people may be

boisterous or lazy but few of them are cynical. I love their energy. I also love sharing my passion for English on a daily basis."

P6: "I have to disagree with everyone. I like teaching but I don't love it. It is just a way for me to put bread and butter on the table for my family. Teaching a classroom full of kids day in and day out is draining."

P7: "Yes. I am passionate about my job and find it rewarding. I do think that it is an extremely demanding profession. Yet, the more that you invest into your calling, the higher the job satisfaction."

P8: "If given the chance again, I wouldn't choose teaching. I think that I would have been happier as a lawyer. When making a decision about my career path, my guidance counsellor at the time swayed me to become a teacher, but I've just never really felt that it's for me."

Notes: There appears to be a distinct difference in perceptions of teacher-learner interaction between teachers who consider teaching to be a vocation and those who do not. The teachers who consider teaching to be a "calling" or "vocation" tend to report that they experience more fulfilling and enjoyable teacher-learner interactions than those who do not.

Researcher: "Do you think that either a teacher's and learner's race or culture influences the way that teachers and learners interact?"

P1: My culture has never caused problems between my learners and myself."

P2: "Learners are the same at whichever school you teach at. I've taught at schools where the learners were predominately white and at schools where the learners were predominately black. I found that any prejudices that I may have held about the learners at the predominately black school soon fell away. The learners at that school may have at first seen me as different from them but I don't think that this perception lasted long."

P3: "As a white English-speaking female teacher, it has been eye-opening to work at a 'black' school. I feel that the learners respect me for my language skills but it was difficult in the beginning to form bonds with the learners because they were not used to interacting with young white females."

P4: "I try to encourage an open dialogue about any cultural differences that may be present. Having always implemented this practice I have never run into any problems when interacting with learners."

P5: "I have no idea. Maybe."

P6: "Not really. I make a concerted effort to understand learners who are from different cultures. I think that as long as the learners' value systems are reasonably similar to the teacher it should not cause any problems in interaction."

P7: "I agree with (P6), if a learner is taught the values of respect and common decency at home, then any cultural differences will just add richness to our interactions."

P8: "It is a bit disconcerting starting at a new school where all the learners and parents are a different race from you and the culture seems foreign. Then you get used to it and everyone doesn't seem so foreign anymore."

Notes: Race and cultural differences do not appear to have a negative impact on teacher-learner interactions, at least not in the long term. The teachers emphasised dialoguing about difference, the necessity of common values and familiarity.

APPENDIX 4

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Data from the interviews with all participants and the focus group activity was read and re-read until patterns and THEMES emerged. The categories were then broadened, and themes and sub-themes were formed.

The table below shows how certain themes emerged:

EMERGENT THEMES	DATA	DISCUSSION
Teaching as a vocation	*"Yes, I would have definitely made the same choice. I enjoy my job as well as the learners. There appears to be a distinct difference in perceptions of teacher-learner interaction between teachers who consider teaching to be a vocation and those who don't. The teachers who consider teaching to be a "calling" or a "vocation" tend to report that they experience more fulfilling and enjoyable teacher-learner interactions than those who do not experience something exciting that happens every day. I feel blessed to be able to*	There appears to be a distinct difference in perceptions of teacher-learner interactions between teachers who consider teaching to be a vocation and those who do not. The teachers who consider teaching to be a "calling" or a "vocation" tend to report that they experience fulfilling and enjoyable teacher-learner interactions more often than those who do not.

	follow my calling." *"No teaching is too personally demanding for me. I find it hard to relate to teenagers. They are sometimes cheeky. Teaching is not the right fit for my personality, but during apartheid there were not too many other options available for Indian women."*	
Teachers' love of subject matter as a vehicle for positive teacher-learner interaction	*"Both my parents were Math's teachers. They fuelled a keen interest in the subject in me. I like to think of myself as promoting this same interest in my learners, especially in the girls. I feel like I engaged best with the learners when I am trying to convey a concept to them in the classroom."* *"I have taught both History and Geography. I enjoy Geography but I feel most alive when teaching History. Getting learners to critically reflect on the history of our country and the decisions that the main role players have made really stimulates me. I never felt this way when teaching*	There appears to be a link between teachers' love or passion for the subject matter that they are teaching and teachers' perceptions of their learners. Teachers who display a passionate love for the subject that they are teaching tend to report that they see their learners as mirroring this passion.

	Geography."	
Teachers' interactions with their learners as learner character building	*"I enjoy spending time with kids and giving back to the community. It gives me pleasure knowing that I have taught an individual something new. Maybe one day my learners will help transform society."* *"I feel that I influence them positively to reach their full potential and to work harder to become successful in their future lives. Our country needs empowered, hard-working thinkers."* *"If we are don't shape them who will?"*	The teachers view their interactions with their learners as character-building exercises that serve to shape the personalities of their learners so that they may one day positively contribute to society in a meaningful manner.
Teaching duration and teachers' perceptions of teacher-learner interactions	*"The first year of teaching was tough and discipline was a problem, but it seems to be getting better with every passing year. This could be due to the fact that as I age, I gain experience."* *"I enjoy my job more and more as the years go by. I find it fascinating to watch how my*	Teacher narratives tend to contain references to a decrease in perceived negative teacher-learner interactions the longer they teach. This finding appears to be linked to the teachers gaining more experience, which is related to increased

	learners develop and grow over the years. I think I've grown in my ability to engage with learners as individuals." *"It is very difficult being a new teacher at a school. Learners interact with you better the longer you are at a school. I think that this boils down to the fact that learners must learn to trust adults and the longer a teacher remains at a school the more trust is gained."*	perceptions of self-efficacy.
The type of learners with whom teachers favour interactions	*"I often interact with outspoken learners as I am outspoken myself. The qualities I possess often attract interaction from similar learners, for example arty learners and learners who like to read."* *"I like learners who like my subject, those who are quiet and inquisitive. Come to think about it, I like learners who are like me!"*	Teachers appear to enjoy interacting with learners who remind them of themselves when they were younger.
Classroom climate and management	*"I really put a great deal of effort into making my classroom feel comfortable and*	The key theme that emerges is the importance of creating a

	inviting for my learners. I have a library system in my class where learners can borrow books; I regularly change the posters on my wall to ensure that they continue to stimulate creative enquiry and interest. All of these small things result in my learners approaching the lesson and myself with excitement and energy." *"Every day, I try to demonstrate to my learners what it means to be a kind, respectful and well-mannered individual. I treat my learners with respect, as I believe this results in them being respectful to me. I find that clearly negotiating classroom rules and behavioural consequences is far more effective at creating a well-ordered classroom than punishing learners."*	"warm", caring classroom atmosphere or climate in order to facilitate positive learner-teacher interactions. This is a component of classroom culture. Key references relating to the necessity of setting firm behavioural boundaries in order to maintain a fair and ordered classroom climate are raised. The teachers show a preference for acting as a model of good behaviour for their learners as opposed to resorting to punitive measures to manage a classroom.

APPENDIX 5

CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT

Informed consent
North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus
Researcher: Michelle Motara

CONSENT FORM
Teachers' perceptions of teacher-learner interaction in high schools in Johannesburg.

Invitation to participate
You are invited to participate in this research study because you were identified as a high school teacher in Johannesburg who complies with the set criteria.

Purpose of the research project
The researcher intends to explore the perceptions of high school teachers of teacher-learner interactions. An exploration of the meanings and perceptions that high school teachers attribute to the interactions that they have with their learners may serve to generate overall themes about how teachers perceive teacher-learner interactions. This study is important as it may facilitate the understanding of misconceptions as well as positive insights that teachers may have about teacher-learner interactions.

Possible risks

The interview will have no more risk or harm than you would experience in everyday life. If you decide not to participate in this study, your decision will have no effect on what happens in your work environment or in any other context. You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to participate. You can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering.

Interviews

You will be asked to voluntarily participate in an interview in which the researcher will ask you questions designed to assess your perceptions of your interactions with your learners. The interviews will each take one hour. The interviews will be recorded. These recordings will be kept in a safe place for a period of five years and will only be viewed by the researcher. The recordings will not be made public.

Costs of participation

There are no costs associated with taking part in the study. Interviews will be held at the applicable schools to exclude additional travelling.

Benefits and compensation

There is no guarantee that you will benefit directly from the study. You will not receive any compensation for participating in this study.

Confidentiality

The researcher will make every attempt to keep all information collected in this research project strictly confidential, except as may be required by court order or by law. The information gathered from the interviews will be combined with information gained from the other teachers taking part in the study. When the study is compiled into written format, the writing will be about the combined information that has been gathered; not about individual teachers, schools or classrooms.

You and your school will not be identified in these written materials. The results of this study may be published. However, your name and the school's name and any other identifying information will be kept private. Should any publication result from this research, all names will be kept anonymous.

Additional information

Participation in this research project is completely voluntary, and you are free to choose not to participate. Participation may be discontinued at any stage without prejudice. In the event of discontinuation of participation in the research, you may request that the researcher not use any of the information already provided. You are encouraged to ask questions concerning the study at any time as they occur to you. Any significant new findings obtained during the course of the study that may influence your willingness for further participation will be provided.

Feedback

You hereby give consent that the feedback on the research may be provided via email.

Disclaimer/Withdrawal

If you decide to take part in the study, you have the right to decide at any time that you no longer want to continue. You agree that your participation in this study is voluntary and that you understand that you are allowed to withdraw at any time.

Subject rights

If you have questions, suggestions, concerns or complaints about the study or your participation in it, you can contact the researcher (Michelle Motara on 076881729). You will be told if any new information is learned which may affect your condition or influence your willingness to continue taking part in this study.

Conclusion

By signing this document, you are indicating that you have read and understood the consent form and that you agree to participate in this research study.

_____   _____

Participant's signature   Date:

_____   _____

Researcher's signature   Date:

APPENDIX 6

CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH: FOCUS GROUP

NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY ®
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT

Informed consent

North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus

Researcher: Michelle Motara

CONSENT FORM

Teachers' perceptions of teacher-learner interaction in high schools in Johannesburg.

Invitation to participate

You are invited to participate in this research study because you were identified as a high school teacher in Johannesburg who complies with the set criteria.

Purpose of the research project

The researcher intends to explore the perceptions of high school teachers in terms of teacher-learner interactions. An exploration of the meanings and perceptions that high school teachers attribute to the interactions that they have with their learners may serve to generate overall themes about how teachers perceive teacher-learner interactions. This study is important as it may facilitate the understanding of misconceptions as well as positive insights that teachers may have about teacher-learner interactions.

Possible risks

Your involvement in the focus group activity will expose you to no more risk or harm than you would experience in everyday life. If you decide not to participate in this study, your decision will have no effect on what happens in your work environment or in any other context. You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to participate. You can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering.

Focus group discussion

You will be asked to voluntarily participate in a focus group activity with other teachers in which the researcher will ask the group questions designed to assess the participants' perceptions of their interactions with their learners. The focus group activity will take one hour. The focus group activity will be recorded. These recordings will be kept in a safe place for a period of five years and will only be viewed by the researcher. The recordings will not be made public.

Costs of participation

There are no costs associated with taking part in the study. Interviews will be held at the applicable schools to exclude additional travelling.

Benefits and compensation

There is no guarantee that you will benefit directly from the study. You will not receive any compensation for participating in this study.

Confidentiality

The researcher will make every attempt to keep all information collected in this research project strictly confidential, except as may be required by court order or by law. The information gathered from the interviews will be combined with information gained from the other teachers taking part in the study. When the study is compiled into written format, the writing will be about the combined information that has been gathered; not about individual teachers, schools or classrooms.

You and your school will not be identified in these written materials. The results of this study may be published. However, your name and the school's name and any other identifying information will be kept private. Should any publication result from this research, all names will be kept anonymous.

Additional information

Participation in this research project is completely voluntary, and you are free to choose not to participate. Participation may be discontinued at any stage without prejudice. In the event of discontinuation of participation in the research, you may request that the researcher not use any of the information already provided. You are encouraged to ask questions concerning the study at any time as they occur to you. Any significant new findings obtained during the course of the study that may influence your willingness for further participation will be provided.

Feedback

You hereby give consent that the feedback on the research may be provided via email.

Disclaimer/Withdrawal

If you decide to take part in the study, you have the right to decide at any time that you no longer want to continue. You agree that your participation in this study is voluntary and that you understand that you are allowed to withdraw at any time.

Subject rights

If you have questions, suggestions, concerns or complaints about the study or your participation in it, you can contact the researcher (Michelle Motara, 076881729). You will be told if any new information is learned which may affect your condition or influence your willingness to continue taking part in this study.

Conclusion

By signing this document, you are indicating that you have read and understood the consent form and that you agree to participate in this research study.

_____   _____

Participant's signature   Date:

_____   _____

Researcher's signature   Date:

APPENDIX 7

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT FOR THE FOCUS GROUP

NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT

Your identity will be known to other focus group participants and the researchers cannot guarantee that others in these groups will respect the confidentiality of the group. The researcher asks that you sign below to indicate that you will keep all comments made during the focus group confidential and not discuss what happened during the focus group outside the meeting.
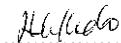
Signature of Participant: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX 8

PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OFEDUCATION

1. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned must be presented with a copy of this letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
2. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.
3. A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
4. A letter / document that outlines the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.
5. The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.
6. Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.
7. Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.
8. Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.
9. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.
10. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
11. The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.
12. On completion of the study the researcher/s must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.
13. The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.
14. Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards

JHflido

Dr David Makhado
Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management
DATE: ..2013./.06./11....

Appendix 9

TECHNICAL GUIDELINES FOR JOURNAL

Journal submission guidelines

The South African Journal of Education

Author Guidelines

Guidelines for Contributors: Editorial policy

The South African Journal of Education (SAJE) publishes original research articles reporting on research that fulfils the criteria of a generally accepted research paradigm; review articles, intended for the professional scientist and which critically evaluate the research done in a specific field in education; book reviews, i.e. concise evaluations of books that have recently appeared; and letters in which criticism is given of articles that appeared in this Journal. Indicate the relevance of the study for education research where the education system is characterised by transformation, and/or an emerging economy/development state, and/or scarce resources. Research articles of localised content, i.e. of interest only to specific areas or specialists and which would not appeal to the broader readership of the Journal, should preferably not be submitted for consideration by the Editorial Committee. Ethical considerations: A brief narrative account/description of ethical issues/aspects should be included in articles that report on empirical findings. All articles will be submitted to referees (national and/or international). The consulting editors/referees will have documented expertise in the area the article addresses. When reviews are received, an editorial decision will be reached to either accept the article, reject the article, request a revision (in some cases for further peer review), or request arbitration. As a rule not more than one article per author or co-author will be accepted per year for refereeing and possible publication. Authors bear full responsibility for the accuracy and

recency of the factual content of their contributions. A signed declaration in respect of originality must accompany each manuscript. On submission of the manuscript, the author(s) must present a written undertaking that the article has not been published or is not being presented for publication elsewhere. Plagiarism entails the use of ideas that have been published previously and is prohibited. Word-for-word copying of the work of others should be indicated by means of double quotation marks. When quoting, always provide the author's surname, year of publication and the page number e.g. (Brown, 1997:40-48). Redundancy/self-plagiarism is unacceptable. It may occur in the following ways: 1) Authors reproduce sections of their previously published papers without quotation. 2) Authors create several papers slightly differing from each other, submitting it to different journals without acknowledging it (Information adapted from Code of Ethics for the Journal of International Business Studies (n.d.). Available at *http://www.palgrave-journals.com/jibs/author_instructions.html#Ethical-guidelines*. Accessed 20 March 2013). In cases where redundancy is suspected, the Editor in collaboration with the Editorial Board, will investigate the matter. Plagiarism and redundancy/self-plagiarism will be dealt with as follows: 1) With regards to papers already published – a formal notice of redundant publication will be issued to readers as part of the next edition. The Editor has the right to refuse accepting submissions of those authors for a certain period of time (Information adapted from Redundant Publication: The Editorial Policy Committee of the Council of Science Editors (n.d.). Available at *http://natajournals.org/userimages/ContentEditor/1256771128861/redundant_pub.pdf*. Accessed 20 March 2013). 2) In cases of major concerns authors will be denied the privilege of publishing the particular paper in the South African Journal of Education. 3) In cases of minor concern authors will be asked to rephrase the duplicated sentences. It is expected of authors to cite materials which overlap with their work within the manuscript. Upon request of the Editor, the information should be made available where necessary (Information adapted from Code of Ethics for the Journal of International Business Studies (n.d.). Available at *http://www.palgrave-journals.com/jibs/author_instructions.html#Ethical-guidelines*. Accessed 20 March 2013). The author(s) must ensure that the language in the manuscript

is suitably edited and the name and address of the language editor must be supplied. Copyright of all published material is vested in the Education Association of South Africa (EASA).

Page charges: Article processing charges (APCs) – ZAR R4500 per article. Authors will be invoiced for the required charges. Total number of pages should preferably not exceed 15 pages (± 5,500 words).

Preparation of manuscripts: The manuscript, including abstract, figure captions, tables, etc. should be typed on A4-size paper and the pages numbered consecutively. Manuscripts should be in Microsoft Word format. Text should be set in Arial font, 12 point in size with 1.5 line spacing. Margins should be 2.54 cm all around. The title should be brief (max. 15 words), followed by the author(s) name(s), affiliation(s) (Department and University), and an e-mail address for the corresponding author. An abstract in English (approximately 190 words) must be provided, followed by up to 10 keywords, presented alphabetically. The text of the article should be divided into unnumbered sections (e.g. Introduction, Method, Results, Discussion, Acknowledgements, References, Appendix, in that order). Secondary headings may be used for further subdivision. Footnotes, if any, will be changed to endnotes. Authors must observe publishing conventions and should not use terminology that can be construed as sexist or racist.

Figures should be clear, black/white originals, on separate pages – not embedded in the text. Grey or coloured shading must NOT be used.

Tables/figures should be numbered consecutively, with a brief descriptive heading/caption. Information should not be duplicated in text and tables. Each table/figure must be referred to in the text by number – not 'above' or 'below'. They will be placed where possible after the first reference.

References: References are cited in the text by the author(s) name(s) and the year of publication in brackets (Harvard method), separated by a comma, e.g. (Brown, 1997). If several articles by the same author and from the same year are cited, the letters a, b, c, etc. should be added after the year of publication, e.g. (Brown, 1977a). Page references in the text should follow a

colon after the date, e.g. (Brown, 1997:40-48). In works by three or more authors the surnames of all authors should be given in the first reference to such a work. In subsequent references to this work only the name of the first author is given, followed by the abbreviation et al., e.g. (Ziv et al., 1995). If reference is made to an anonymous item in a newspaper, the name of the newspaper is given in brackets, e.g. (Daily News, 1999). For personal communications (oral or written) identify the person and indicate in brackets that it is a personal communication, e.g. (M Smith, pers. comm.).

List of references: Only sources cited in the text must be listed, in alphabetical order, after the article. References should be presented as indicated in the following examples. Special attention should be paid to the required punctuation.

Journal articles: Johnson DW & Johnson RT 1999. Gifted students illustrate co-operative learning. *Educational Leadership*, 50:60-61.

Books: Van Zyl R (ed.) 1994. *Recent advances in classroom research.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Chapters in books: Dukzec S 1988. Gender issues. In D Hicks & J Brown (eds). *Education for peace.* London: Routledge.

Unpublished theses or dissertations: Squelch J 1991. Teacher training for multicultural education in a multicultural society. Med dissertation. Pretoria: University of South Africa.

Anonymous newspaper references: *Citizen* 1996. Education for all, 22 March.

Electronic references: *Published under author's name:* Wilson J 2000. The blame culture. *British Educational Research Journal,* 26. Available at http://www.govsources/gtp%access. Accessed 20 April 2005. *Website references: No author:* These references are not archival and are therefore subject to change in any way and at any time. If it is essential to present them, they should be included in a numbered endnote and not in the reference list.

Personal communications: Not retrievable and not listed.

Submission of manuscripts for publication: Manuscripts may be submitted electronically by e-mail or via the internet. Manuscripts should be submitted in MS Word format.

E-mail submissions: Manuscript and covering letter must be e-mailed to *Estelle.Botha@up.ac.za*

Internet submissions: Website: *http://www.sajournalofeducation.co.za* Use the "Register as Author" link to register and submit an article. This will enable you to track the status of your article on the website. For inquiries contact *Estelle.Botha@up.ac.za*

Submission Preparation Checklist

The submission has not been previously published, nor is it before another journal for consideration.

The submission file is in Microsoft Word or RTF document file format.

All URL addresses in the text (e.g., http://pkp.sfu.ca) are activated and ready to click.

The text adheres to the stylistic and bibliographic requirements outlined in the Author Guidelines, which is found in About the Journal.

The text has had the authors' names removed. If an author is cited, "Author" and year are used in the bibliography and footnotes, instead of author's name, paper title, etc. The author's name has also been removed from the document's Properties, which in Microsoft Word is found in the File menu.

The article is approximately 5500 words or 15 pages.

The text was approved by a language editor.

Empirical data must be checked by a statistical consultant.

Copyright Notice

If the article is accepted for publication, copyright of this article will be vested in the Educational Association of South Africa.

Privacy Statement

The names and e-mail addresses entered in this journal site will be used exclusively for the stated purposes of this journal and will not be made available for any other purpose or to any other party.

APPENDIX 10:

JOINT COLLAGE FROM THE FOCUS GROUP ACTIVITY