

A Seychelles case of beginning teachers' perspectives of support and challenges in their pursuit of effective teaching practices

By

Steve Paul Confait

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## Abstract

Supporting teachers at the start of their career can help them to develop their pedagogical practice, and to understand the educational, political, and school systems within which they teach. Similarly, effective support can enhance the professional development and learning of beginning teachers, and contribute towards their overall path towards greater effectiveness, ensuring quality teaching. Recent education reforms in the Seychelles have placed an expressed focus on improving quality teaching.

This study explores the support for and challenges faced by beginning teachers in the Seychelles in their efforts to implement effective teaching practices. In order to understand the phenomenon of beginning teacher support, a mixed methodology within an ethnographic, sociocultural framework with an emphasis on qualitative data was used. Research was conducted in two sequential phases within the Seychelles: in-depth, site-based qualitative cases studies of three beginning teachers and their school-based contexts, followed by a national quantitative survey completed by 56 beginning teachers. The qualitative phase generated data through interviews (with beginning teachers, deputy heads, and heads of department), document analysis and classroom observations in three schools across the main island, Mahe.

The findings of this research identified that both the policy context and the more localised practical factors such as resource allocation, confidence in working with student diversity, and collegial relationships, combined to contribute to how beginning teachers experienced their induction period. The research revealed that whilst the central policy advocates for a school-based mechanism that would support and evaluate beginning teachers, schools' policies and practices around induction were for the main part, inadequately supporting beginning teachers. These results highlighted that the developmental and learning needs of beginning teachers were not clearly understood, either by school leaders or by beginning teachers. This limited understanding combined with a general conservative approach towards teaching within the schools impacted on how beginning teachers were supported and how they learnt from their pedagogical practices. The findings showed how participating beginning teachers endeavoured to align themselves with their schools' expectation for effective teaching, challenging their own beliefs about effective practice. In order to comply with routine expectations, they embraced predominantly teacher-centred practices, rather than a student-centred approach to their teaching.

In view of the ongoing effort to augment the quality of education in the Seychelles, supporting beginning teachers could be recognised as part of this endeavour. For effective ongoing support, the research findings identified the need for contexts where open dialogue around teaching is culturally encouraged, and that embrace effective support policies, professional learning, and development for all teachers. It is in such contexts that beginning teachers are more likely to work alongside colleagues, address their professional issues, and join in the collective endeavour to improve their own and their students' learning and achievements.

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## **List of Abbreviations and Acronyms**

HOD	Head of Department
DHT	Deputy Head Teacher
QTS	Qualify Teachers Status
MoE	Ministry of Education
B.Ed.	Bachelor of Education
UNisey	University of Seychelles
IGCSE	International General Certificate of Secondary Education programme
SIP	School improvement Programme

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

I embarked on this journey with a view of research as a learning process. Eisner (1998) orients education as an art and a science, and explains, that research for the researcher is about learning. Clough and Nutbrown (2002) encourage researchers to consider the drive that compels their engagement into their given research topic, and more specifically the reason for choosing specific human experience as their research focus. My interest in understanding the support for and experiences of beginning teachers in Seychelles schools arises from my own experiences as a beginning teacher with a rapid transition into other roles such as head of department (HOD), deputy head of a school, and more latterly research officer within the Ministry of Education (MoE). Through these experiences, and a rapid trajectory into leadership roles with minimal support or “training” I am interested in beginning teachers’ transition, learning, and professional development.

Prior to 1986, 75% of teachers comprising the secondary school workforce in the Seychelles were recruited from overseas. This dependency on expatriates, and the option of sending Seychellois teachers overseas for a full four-year B.Ed. (Bachelor of Education) course was incurring an unsustainable cost, a dilemma for a small island state. The government of Seychelles organised a pathway towards a B.Ed. qualification for Seychellois teachers with Sussex University in the United Kingdom. Under this directive, teachers in training spent two years in Seychelles as part of the qualification for entry into the overseas University. This programme ran until 1994 (see Lacey, Jacklin, & Leste, 1999). I joined the two-year local teaching programme as a student teacher at the School of Education at the Seychelles Polytechnic in 1996. It was not until 2008 that Seychelles established the first university in the country. The overseas university partner had then switched to Edith Cowan University (Australia) and Brighton University (England). As a Seychellois teacher, I attended the former university.

On my return, I was posted as a science teacher in one of the 10 Secondary schools on the Island. This was the year 2000, and I was the only Seychellois teacher in the department with my other colleagues recruited from overseas. Nine months into my first year and with the expatriate head of department having fulfilled his contract, I was asked by the head

teacher to take on a leadership role and head the department. I was told that I “was a very good teacher and that I had leadership qualities”, therefore, my role would make a valuable contribution to my department and to the school. But as much as I enjoyed working with the leadership and management team back then, not one person at the school had observed my teaching, not even once. Looking back, I suppose they had a “feel” of my teaching style whilst passing by my classes, but no official assessment process was conducted. As a beginning teacher, I had to both learn to teach and learn to be a department head. Following this experience, and without any formal or in-service training, in 2005 I was asked to assume the role of deputy head teacher in a school that had a reputation as one of the most difficult in the Seychelles with respect to its students’ discipline. Rather than continuing my role as a deputy head, the following year, I joined the Masters programme in educational leadership introduced by the MoE in partnership with Lincoln, and later Warwick University. The programme ran from 2002 to 2008. The introduction of this programme was driven by the changing role of effective leadership in school improvement. The expectation was for this qualification to become a requirement for aspiring head teachers, who would lead the institutionalization of school improvement processes (Bezzina, 2004).

Whilst completing my Masters’ degree I came to certain realisation: it occurred to me that as an HOD and a deputy head teacher I could have done more to create a better learning environment for beginning teachers under my responsibility. As a school leader, I found myself, along with colleagues, focussed primarily on the day-to-day running of the school rather than its improvement needs. It was then that I started to develop an interest in beginning teachers’ transitions, their learning and professional development, and in particular their teaching effectiveness, and the influence of school context on their learning and development. I therefore opted to work as a research officer at the Ministry of Education (MoE) and part-time lecturer at the then National Institute of Education where this interest could be further explored.

In 2008, I undertook an action research project with a group of beginning science teachers. Whilst this research and learning experience cannot be fully captured here, it was a first step in working in an area where together with the participants we could learn how to capture data to inform teaching practices.

In 2009, the 2008–2011 education reforms in the Seychelles were in full swing, and there were numerous conversations around the reform changes by educationists taking place

around that time. One conversation led to a colleague pointing out an excerpt from Ancess (2000) about reforms in reference to Fullan (1991):

As Fullan instructs us, the challenge rest in restructuring schools so that innovation and improvement are integral to the dailiness, the lived lives of teachers in schools. In other words, restructuring needs to be connected to teacher learning and practice in order to have an effect on student learning. It needs to be ongoing, ever-evolving process rather than a singular event with a beginning, middle and most importantly, an end. (p. 591)

A general sentiment was that reforms over the years were not having the desired impact, partly because of a specious adaptation that undermined schools' commitment to serious reforms. The reforms lead to the closure of some sections at the MoE, including the research section. We were told that our functionality as qualified teachers required our presence in schools. In fact, my abrupt progress from a beginning teacher to a HOD, then to a deputy head was partly because of the necessity to fill vacated posts. Attrition is high among both primary and secondary teachers; in 2012, 86 teachers left the profession (Seychelles Nation, 2012, November 7). This is high number for an island state with 33 schools.

It was at this juncture that I decided to undertake further studies to understand the issues and experience faced by beginning teachers in order to create a basis to address the retention rates of these young teachers.

Undertaking this research stemmed from a personal conviction of always aspiring to be a better teacher, ensuring that above all else students' learning needs are met. I recognise the beginning years of my career as pertinent because this formative experience influenced and shaped me as a teacher. Studying how teachers experience their beginning years also remind me of the challenges in becoming an effective teacher, of the ways in which support in my work contexts (or lack thereof) contributed to my experience of teaching as an isolated endeavour, often resulting in missed opportunities for shared dialogue between colleagues. This experience and knowledge has also been shaped and enhanced from my different and evolving perspectives as a head of department, deputy head teacher, and part-time teacher trainer. These roles were underpinned by the notion that all students deserve an effective teacher in their classrooms. I therefore entered this journey with a particular epistemological and ontological view of this area for research, but with a different lens: as a novice in research.

## Background to the Research Context

The Seychelles is a “small nation”, not only in terms of land area, but in terms of population too. With an annual growth rate of 1.0 per cent, the Seychelles’ entire population is 90,945 (National Statistical Bureau Seychelles, 2010). The population is concentrated on the main island and distributed as follows: Mahe, the largest island, has 88 per cent of the total population, of which 40 per cent are located between Victoria, the capital, and the International Airport, a belt of 7 by 1 kilometres; 10 per cent on Praslin and La Digue; the other islands account for the remaining 2 per cent. The low population growth rate reflects a low birth rate and until recently, net emigration (Leste, Valentin, & Hoareau, 2005; National Statistical Bureau Seychelles, 2010). Although there have been attempts at diversification, including re-exportation of petroleum products and a developing offshore section, the Seychelles economy depends on tourism and fisheries (Martin, 2010).

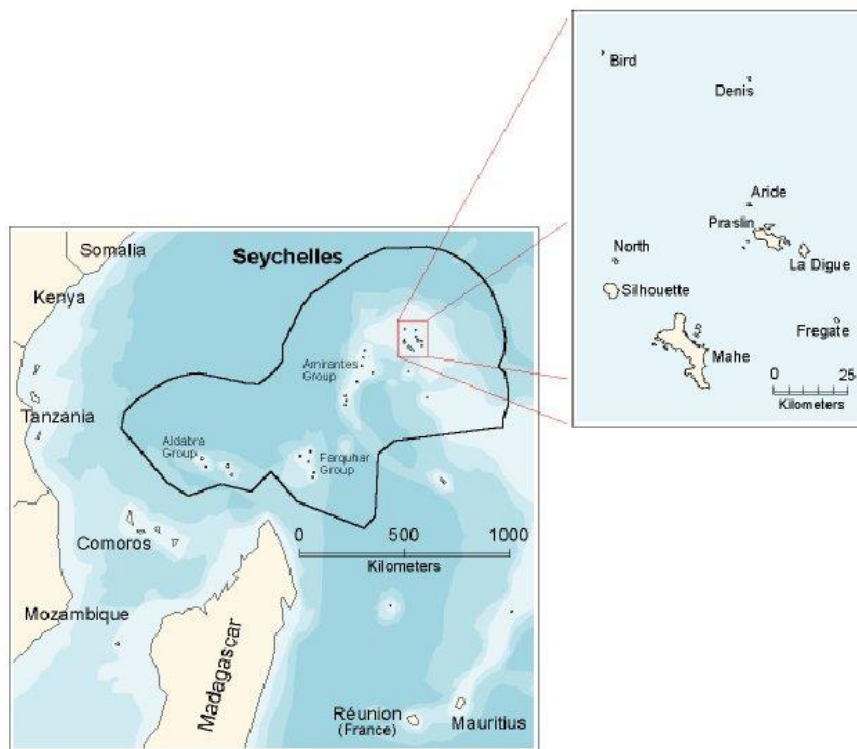


Figure 1: Map of the location of the Seychelles Islands, Note. Reprinted from “Seychelles Meteorological Service,” by Seychelles Meteorological Service, 2001, Seychelles <http://www.pps.gov.sc/meteo/index.html>. Copyright 2001 by Seychelles Meteorological Service. Reprinted here with permission.

## Brief History and Reforms in Education in the Seychelles

Seychelles is a multi-racial country, with people of diverse origins and beliefs; it has Christianity as the dominant religion and Creole as the mother tongue. English, French, and

Creole form the three national languages. It became a French colony in 1756 and remained so until 1810, when the British took over the islands. However, a majority of the initial French settlers remained on the islands. The French missionaries, under the auspice of the Catholic church of Seychelles set up the first church-owned primary schools in 1851 with French as the medium of instruction (Metz, 1995; Scarr, 1999). In 1871, the British colonial administration introduced government grant funds to all schools and a secondary school was established following the norm of English public schools (Scarr, 1999).

### **Education Reforms in the 1970s and 1980s.**

When the Seychelles Islands gained its independence in 1976, their inhabitants had access to six years of free primary schooling and three years of secondary education. In addition to this there was also in existence some fee-paying, church controlled grammar schools as well as post-secondary tertiary institutions (Campling, Confiance, & Purvis, 2011; Purvis, 2004).

Following independence in 1976 and a brief rule of democracy, a coup brought in a period of Socialist rule from 1977 to 1993. The change of government brought in the creation and implementation of education principles that enshrined a policy of comprehensive and wide-ranging education, free for all its citizens. The Seychelles education system was then guided by the following policy concerns: education for all; education for life; and education for social and national development. The numerous reforms that followed independence were driven by the egalitarian principles of providing equal opportunities, the humanitarian principles of social justice and the educational principles of experiential learning. A 1978 reform recognised English, French, and Creole as the three national languages, it also made allowance for the introduction of Creole as the first language of the Seychelles. Subsequently Creole was institutionalized as the language of instruction for the first three years of primary Schooling and as a subject for the last three years, with the intention of emphasising multilingualism in the schools (Campling, et al., 2011; Leste et al., 2005; Purvis, 2004).

### **Education reforms in the 2000s**

Two years prior to UNESCO's world conference on "Education for All" in 2000, work had begun in revising the Seychelles educational goals (MoE, 2000). It placed more emphasis on the education principles of education for empowerment, education for



productivity, education for social cohesion, and education for global participation. The pertinent focus was on ameliorating quality, and subsequently policies were introduced that allowed schools to cater for a broad range of abilities (MoE, 2000). Following the international norm, schools were prompted to begin work in institutionalizing mixed ability grouping, a move to break away from the more traditional practice of streaming (MoE, 2000; MOEEHRD, 2010). The next section details the current education system.

## **Secondary Education**

There are 10 state secondary schools in the Seychelles. Students who complete their second-level programme to the end of secondary five (S5) spend five years in secondary schools, progressing from S1 at age 11 or 12. Students sit a National Examination at the end of S3, the results of which are used to guide students in their choices and level of subjects they will take as part of the International General Certificate of Secondary Education programme (IGCSE) in S4 and S5. Before the month of September in S5, students indicate, by listing in order of choice, 1 to 7, the post-secondary institution they wish to enter after completing secondary school. At the end of S5 students sit for the IGCSE examination in the following subjects: English (second Language); mathematics; coordinated science; combined science; geography; history, and art and design. The official school-leaving age is 16. For many students, their sixteenth birthday occurs during S4. Secondary education is compulsory (a minimum of four years and a maximum of five) and students have to attend one of the 10 regional secondary schools on the three main islands, or one of the three private schools. Enrolment in state secondary schools is 94%, while 4% attend the private schools. The regional schools are inclusive in nature and are generally quite large, with 700 to 900 students per school (Leste et al., 2005; Nolan, 2008). In 2007, the student-teacher ratio was 20:1.

According to the MoE, secondary schools are required to provide comprehensive education to all its participants through the implementation of the national curriculum. Some of the goals of secondary education as laid out by the MoE are that students: (1) develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes required in key learning areas to enhance their quality of life and contribute to the society; (2) achieve high standards of learning and develop self-confidence, high self-esteem and a commitment to personal excellence, based on a positive set of values; (3) develop the ability and confidence to use the knowledge and skills acquired through formal education to make considered choices and decisions at both the personal and communal level, and (4) develop attitudes and competencies for life-long learning and establish the foundations for further education, training and employment. The overriding

objective of the MoE is to implement a curriculum that will produce flexible, adaptable students, whose education is up to an international standard, as part of the human resource development strategies of a small state (MoE, 2000; Nolan, 2008). Part of this strategy is exemplified by the free government scholarship that confines students' choices to national needs.

### **Quality Education and Teaching: An Overview of the Seychelles Context**

The quality of teaching throughout the education system in Seychelles has been described as an “area of concern” (Nolan, 2008; Purvis, 2004). The prevalent teaching styles within the Seychelles school system has been categorized as teacher-centred and traditional approach oriented, one that is atypical of comprehensive schools and which does not cater for all abilities (Purvis, 2004). This supports the view identified by the MoE in relation to schools' weaknesses in efficiently catering for all ability needs (MoE, 2003). The national school improvement programme, launched in 1995 and based on the British model was one of the most significant projects aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning in schools (SIP Secretariat, 2004). This was done through the institutionalisation of development planning and professional development in all state schools. The school improvement programme was meant to encourage a culture of self-evaluation, and collaborative work ethics and planning in school. However, it has been pointed out that practices will be transformed only when improvement in support takes place in parallel to other aspects such as improved leadership (Purvis, 2007).

Recent reform in 2008 was also in line with the setting up of the University of Seychelles (UNIsey) with the expectation for secondary and primary teachers to possess a degree in education. Primary teachers previously exited the then National Institute of Education with a four-year Diploma. The four year degree programmes at UNIsey are being planned jointly with the Edith Cowan University (Seychelles Nation, 2009, March 12), but as of 2013, the programme is yet to be implemented.

Some of the problems in the teaching and learning of secondary subjects have been identified by the MoE (2003). These include: (1) catering for mixed ability classes with students having a range of ability levels; (2) creating and sustaining interest, motivation and enthusiasm throughout the lesson stages; (3) control and discipline in some mathematics and science classes, particularly lower achieving classes; (4) staff absenteeism; (5) teacher expectations on support received from school management; (6) availability of particular teaching and learning resources to cater for different categories of learners; (7) extending the

abilities of high-achieving students, and (8) encouraging teachers to develop teaching and learning materials for the diversity of learners needs.. Another issue resulting from problems relating to teaching and learning is under-performance evident from summative school-based and international assessments, especially in mathematics and science (MoE, 2003).

In 2009, the University of Seychelles was established. The conversion of some tertiary institutions such as the National Institute of Education into the School of Education was part of this reform. Sweeping reforms continued through 2010 and 2011, with five priority areas: i) Providing for the diversity of educational needs and the national development priorities; ii) Guaranteeing quality education in Seychelles; iii) improving Quality of Teachers; iv) Improving the Governance of Educational Institutions, and v) creating Responsible and Empowered Students (MoE, 2009a, p ii)

In 2011, the Quality assurance section at the MoE was transformed into an inspectorate section with an accountability mandate for schools in an attempt to improve the quality of education (MoE, 2009b). The 2010/2011 reform was also aimed at addressing teacher retention and attrition. As a result, teachers' salaries increased from 10 per cent to 20 per cent. Finally, work on a new evaluation system geared towards teachers' professional development and learning is being carried out, but while its full implementation was anticipated in 2011 (MoE, 2009a; Nolan, 2008), as of 2013, it is yet to come into effect.

Campling et al. (2011) shed some light on the challenges to improvement in education quality in the Seychelles. They noted the major challenges as being a shortage of local teachers, the level and quality of training for teachers, scant resources linked to budgetary limitations and a general view from parents that support "the old grammar school system of colonial times" (p. 95) as the most appropriate model of practice. This has implication of how parents interact with their children with respect to their learning, as well as parents' expectation of schools. Campling et al. (2011) concluded by noting that, "the system is still unable to effectively cater for all abilities and ensure success for all" (p. 95).

## **Teacher Education**

The Ministry's policy for teacher education in the Seychelles outlines a range of expansive expectations for its teachers in-service and teacher education (MoE, 2000, see appendix A). These expectations include the mastery of subject and teaching methodologies, and the use of strategies that are both wide-ranging and able to equitably consider the characteristics of individual students. It supports the use of self-evaluation and research

approaches such as action research to ensure the use of data in teachers' decision-making about teaching and learning. The policy advocates the use of innovative and contemporary strategies in teaching, alongside the use of information technology where appropriate. This portrays a policy that does not confine teachers to a rigid curriculum, and that recognises learning as a lifelong process. The expectation is for teachers to participate in the holistic development of their students, and to consider the importance of both the formal and informal curriculum. Finally, teachers are expected to be collaborative members of their workplace, and this collaboration is extended to parents and the immediate community, who are expected to concern themselves with teachers' accountability. However, these expectations do not distinguish qualities expected of beginning from experienced expert teachers.

In a comparative study of the praxis of initial secondary science teacher education in the Seychelles with that of the University of Canterbury in New Zealand, Jules (2009) pointed to the limited experience of Seychellois teacher educators, and limited access to recent literature and empirical research at the training institution. However, she remarked that course developers may have "perhaps unknowingly" included an appropriate knowledge base in the science education courses (p.101). Jules' (2009) study called for: (1) a relook at the assessment strategies to encourage collaborative ways of working amongst student-teachers and (2) teacher educators improved understanding of the policies, principles and demands of teacher education in order to "raise the quality of teachers and the quality of education in Seychelles" (p. 101).

The next sections delve into the issue of beginning teachers' evaluation at school level leading to the conferring of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).

### **Pathway to Qualified Teacher's Status**

The assignment of beginning teachers in Secondary schools represents their attainment of the standard as prescribed by the Competency framework for newly qualified teachers (National Institute of Education, 2001) drawn from the MoE's policy for teacher education (MoE, 2000). Through its induction guidelines (appendix B), the MoE ascribed the dual roles of evaluator and support providers to school managers in the process of conferring qualified teachers status to beginning teachers (MOEEHRD, 2010; Government of Seychelles, 2003; MoE, 2003). A three-month probationary period, culminating in an evaluative report is a prerequisite for full employment. The MoE then acts upon this report, depending on the recommendation from respective school. If successful, teachers are conferred qualified teachers status, and full time employment. The probationary period is

intended to transition these beginning teachers in the profession, and at the end of the same year they undergo the yearly-evaluation like other teachers in the system, (Government of Seychelles, 2003).

The evaluation of the probationary three-month period is carried out by the school administration, and as required by the MoE, the schools adhere to the standard teacher evaluation form (appendix D). Teachers are evaluated against a rating scale consisting of seven components. That is, beginning teachers, on paper, are appraised against the same standard as other experienced teachers, both at the end of the three-month probationary period, and in the subsequent end-of-year evaluation. The form itself is not accompanied by other guiding documents that would assist beginning teachers and school leaders to ascertain the expectation for each component being evaluated, thus they are open to interpretation, which leads to inconsistencies. These inconsistencies conjure many questions about the procedure for beginning teachers' evaluation, especially regarding the expectation for what beginning teachers should achieve by the end of their probationary period in view of their status as novices.

### **Empirical Studies on Induction and Mentoring in the Seychelles**

A few studies specific to the Seychelles context provide some perspectives on the induction and mentoring of beginning teachers in schools. These studies span from 1998 to 2010. Leste (1998) called for the development of an induction model that would cater for the administrative, collegial, and specialized support needs of B.Ed. teachers. His suggestion for the MoE to involve schools in the development of a central induction programme indicated the absence of a central induction policy at that time. Barallon (2003) investigated the effectiveness of pre-service secondary teacher training. Barallon's (2003) study targeted a cohort of beginning teachers, their respective senior management and lecturers from the National institute of education. Barallon's study reveals some confusion over what constituted induction: while senior management stipulated that some sort of induction should exist for beginning teachers in their respective schools, and 30% of the newly qualified teachers stated that they were "inducted" in their schools, the research did not seek the details of the induction programmes from those respondents, which again leaves induction open to interpretation.

Arnephy's (2009) research delved into the involvement of school leaders in the management of their staff. The research was comparative in nature, involving a secondary

and primary school in the Seychelles. The process of induction was seen to be more comprehensive in the primary school, where new teachers met with the head teacher, the studies coordinators, and they were also assisted by colleagues within their departments as the need arose (Arnephy, 2009). Arnephy explained that the small size of the primary school, compared to the larger secondary school, made staff contact and sharing knowledge of procedures easier. However, the HOD in the secondary school found it difficult to follow through with inducting beginning teachers, citing time as the main factor, while the head teacher explained that the process of teacher training had sufficiently inducted teachers for their school assignments. In the same school, however, teachers were given some form of written guidelines concerning some of the schools procedures (Arnephy, 2009). The work of Arnephy (2009) further confirmed an earlier study by Estico (2005), who investigated the concept and practice of induction and mentoring in two secondary schools in the Seychelles. The case studies revealed induction as being the responsibility of the heads of department and senior management. Common to all three studies (Barallon, 2003; Arnephy, 2009; Estico, 2005) is how the concept of induction was understood by respondents. It was seen as being synonymous to an initial orientation, a process that involved some form of discussion with some or all management team members. It consisted primarily of acquiring knowledge of the school policies, guidelines and resources.

A more recent study looked at the management of the induction process and how it impacted on the socialization and professional learning and development of beginning teachers (Marie, 2009). In studying the issue, Marie (2009) opted for an exploratory rather than an evaluative approach, and indicated that this was due to scant evidence of a formalized scheme of induction for beginning teachers in the Seychelles educational system. Her study took a mixed method approach, including a survey that targeted the 2006 cohort of beginning teachers in secondary and primary schools, as well as seven senior ministry officials. The case study aspect of her research involves four schools, but this part of the study is yet to be carried out. According to Marie's findings, the induction process as reported by the 20 secondary respondents consisted of a tour (reported by 35% respondent); access to unspecified schools' policies (40%), and orientation sessions with members of the senior management (55%). There was greater variability in the process between schools than uniformity. Marie (2009) pointed to this variability as ground for greater networking amongst schools to share induction practices, to influence improvement in a "better coordinated induction programme which will benefit the country's education system as a whole" (p. 7). Purvis (2007) also pointed to this variability. Her studies delved into the effectiveness of the

school improvement programme since its inception in 1996, and took a multiple case study approach, involving two primary schools and two secondary. Only one school, a secondary school, pointed to the existence of an internal induction policy, which was linked to ensuring that new staff was acquainted with the school development plan. Since the management members of that particular school were involved in the induction process, this was audited as a feature of leadership strength. No further detail was given, as this was beyond the scope of the research (Purvis, 2007).

Marie (2009) cited the necessity for support in schools to better draft and implement school policies. She particularly emphasized the importance of framing and developing an effective induction programme, and employing evaluation to adjust for greater effectiveness, with a focus on the role of subject leadership.

### **The Purpose and Overview of this Thesis**

The purpose of this thesis is to examine and develop an understanding of the support, learning, and teaching practices of a cohort of beginning teachers in the Seychelles secondary school system. Consideration is therefore given to their induction processes, school context and perspectives and experiences of effective teaching practices by beginning teachers, middle and senior school managers. I undertook a mixed method study, positioned in an ethnographic, sociocultural framework and sought to contribute to research literature in which beginning teachers' support and effective teaching practices in the Seychelles is the focus. My research findings is aimed at contributing to an ongoing understanding of existing policies and practice of beginning teachers' work experience, and to inform the development of future practice and educational thinking in Seychelles secondary schools. My study was conducted through four primary research questions:

1. How are beginning teachers supported in their school contexts?
2. What factors influence their support and learning?
3. What constitutes effective practices for the cohorts of teachers and schools?
4. What factors influence beginning teachers' teaching practices, and why?

As noted, in an attempt to answer the research questions, a mixed-method approach was used, with an emphasis on qualitative data. The study was designed to consist of two phases, and was conducted sequentially. Given that my study puts more emphasis on the first, qualitative phase, the thesis gives more space and in-depth analysis to the qualitative results as compared to the quantitative statistical results.

## **Thesis Structure**

The thesis is comprised of eight chapters. Cognisant of scant research literature on the Seychelles education system, but more importantly because of its relevance to this study, the preceding introductory chapter has served to outline the context within which my research takes place. The chapter has provided these contextual information with a view of elucidating the challenges of a small island state in its endeavour to implement quality teaching and education. The chapter has outlined the issues around beginning teachers' pathway to QTS and the nature of induction in the Seychelles.

The next chapter presents a literature review that explores research relating to the prevailing narratives around beginning teachers' transition. It debates the nature of support for beginning teachers, and examines influencing factors in their different contexts. The chapter delves into the effective teaching and the teaching practices of beginning teachers. The implications from these findings for the study are presented in the last section of the chapter.

Chapter three focuses on the methodological and theoretical framework of this research. The study is situated in an ethnographic, sociocultural framework of a mixed-method approach to seek an understanding of beginning teachers' experiences, and in interpreting their notions of support, learning, and teaching in a multidimensional and contextually constructed manner. A discussion of the case study and survey aspect of the mixed method is presented and justified.

The research findings and analysis from the case studies are presented in chapters four and five. The focus of these chapters is on analysing the existing state of the schools and teaching culture in Seychelles, notion of effective practices; the teaching practices and experiences of three beginning teachers. The analysis chapters consider factors that are influencing the beginning teachers' pedagogical practices and actions, as well as examining "support" in terms of policy, induction, practice, mentoring, and resources as part of developing these teachers' expertise. Therefore, the views of their respective head of departments and deputy head teachers across three different schools, and the documentation of pertinent policies and documents are included.

Chapter six reports on the quantitative phase of my research, both its results, and the relevant discussions those results generate. The focus of this chapter is on describing the extent to which views implied by my case study findings are prevalent at the national level, in



particular issues around how 56 beginning teachers perceive, experience and account for effective teaching practices.

Chapter seven links the findings from the quantitative survey to those from the qualitative case studies. The product of the combination of the two phases of the study also provides explanations for the issues that arose from the quantitative phase of the study. Discussion of this project is also carried out in relation to published research and the theoretical framework. In addition, chapter seven considers the possibility of contributing to changes in educational thinking and practice regarding support for beginning teachers, and presents expectations for effective teaching practices.

Chapter eight revisits the research questions and summaries of the research findings, and explores their implications. The chapter also discusses the theoretical and applied contributions the study may make. Limitations of the study and implication for policy, practice, and suggested directions for further research are presented.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

#### **Introduction**

As discussed in my introductory chapter, the purpose of this study is to understand the challenges and support experienced by beginning teachers in their pursuit of effective teaching practices. This chapter is comprised of three main sections. The first section begins by identifying beginning teachers as a specific group of teachers with their own set of learning needs. To this end, the challenges that characterise beginning teachers' experiences and expectations of their workplace are discussed.

The second section of this chapter addresses the notion of teacher effectiveness. Attaining a consensus on a definition of effectiveness is revealed as a complex task given the disagreements in interpretation that abound. The expectations of beginning teachers' teaching both from systemic and school leaders' perspectives are outlined and debated.

Finally, the third section tackles the question of support of beginning teachers, first by framing the teaching of beginning teachers, then by addressing induction and mentorship issues, and by discussing schools as learning communities. The importance of gauging the perspectives of beginning teachers on their support and challenges in relation to their pursuit of effective teaching practices is introduced, and leads into an outline of the rationale for this study.

#### **Methodology for the Literature Review**

The methodology for this literature review entailed searches from the VUW library and electronic databases. The search descriptors of studies and literature from which this review is based on included: (1) beginning teachers' challenges, workplace expectations, teaching effectiveness, and teaching practices, and (2) support, induction and mentorship, and teaching culture. The latter list is in consideration of beginning teachers' support, contexts, and how they impact on the kind of teaching envisioned for these teachers by their immediate contexts and other stakeholders.

The literature from which this review is drawn uses the following terms: new teachers; novice teachers; newly qualified teachers; and early career teachers, all of which are

employed in reference to beginning teachers. These teachers range from those who have just entered the teaching profession from formal training, sometimes with provisional registration, to those with up to three years of experience. For the purpose of this study, the term “beginning teachers” serves this designation.

### **Locating the Beginning Teacher**

This section discusses the prevailing narratives around the challenges that characterise working life for beginning teachers. The first year of teaching represents a formal entry into the teachers’ world, often referred to as a “rite of passage”. Following graduation from university and the start of employment, beginning teachers undergo a transition that permit them access into the culturally shaped and culturally legitimated world of teaching (Elbaz, 1991). The process of becoming a teacher has been framed as analogous to the process of becoming a recognized member of a culture, as behaviours and standards are passed on to beginning teachers from members of the teaching community (Vescio, Ross, Adams, 2008). Watson (2006) described this process as a dialectic one which is marked by acceptance and appreciation of differences, and that takes place in a constantly evolving social context.

The beginning teachers’ transition is rarely smooth, but rather marked by a struggle to adjust to the professional teaching status. Notwithstanding the novelty and challenges of this transition, eventually beginning teachers experience a number of changes in their behaviours, personality, and awareness (Grossman & Loeb, 2008). Even though the first year is frequently seen as an extension of pre-service experience, beginning teachers are acknowledged as needing specific contextual requirement different from both student-teachers and experienced teachers (Grossman & Loeb, 2008). In view of the particularities and needs of these aforementioned groups, theorists have suggested that teaching as a career requires its members to undergo a number of developmental stages (Berliner, 1988; Fuller & Brown, 1975; Kagan, 1992).

Stage theories of teacher development have contributed to the present state of early career learning and support approaches for teachers. These theories assert that the first stage of the teaching profession entails concerns for new teachers about the self as a teacher, as well as concerns of survival into the professional and tasks such as classroom management, mastery of content and routines (Kagan, 1992). The second stage is marked by a shift in focus, to planning for students’ individual learning. In the third stage, a shift occurs in development, where standardised routines allow for the integration of learning and

management. During this period, stage theorists claim that teaching becomes progressively automated. In the fourth stage, teachers develop a range of problem solving skills and an increased ability to engage in routines marked by these skills (Kagan, 1992). Steffy, Wolf, Pasch, and Enz (2000) have presented a similar, but six-stage model of teacher professional growth. In this model, a series of developmental stages is marked by a process of reflection and renewal. A principle belief asserted by these researchers is that teachers should experience an increased capacity to partake in a process of knowledge and meaning construction as they develop professionally. The reflection and renewal is described as allowing teachers to process and connect thoughts and actions to emerging current knowledge and skills (Steffy et al., 2000). Stemming from these stage theories is an understanding of the necessity of support for early career or beginning teachers as a specific group. As will be detailed in later sections, when stage theories are considered, in some instances the support for beginning teachers takes a humane approach in line with the challenges that they encounter. For instance, teachers are given guidance and advice regarding how to manage the stressors of a challenging job. Yusko and Feiman-Nemser (2008) reasoned that these forms of support neglect the need to also support beginning teachers' learning inherent in their teaching. As they argue, support for beginning teachers should combine teacher and student learning with support and evaluation to aid beginning teachers in building the expertise to become accomplished practitioners (Yusko & Feiman-Nemser, 2008).

There is no consensus on a definition for beginning teachers, or on the length of time that a beginning teacher spends in each stage of the developmental models. However, there are similar views concerning what characterises a beginning teacher, as marked by their teaching during the early phases (Huntly, 2008). As previously mentioned, these early phases range from the early months of the first year to (in some cases) beyond the third year (Huntly, 2008). During this time, teaching has been described as a profession that requires the capacity to constructively handle an array of "dilemmas, tensions and contradictions and paradoxes" (Nias, 1990, p. 197).

### **Workplace Expectations, Challenges, and Experiences of Beginning Teachers**

Beginning teachers often place high expectations on their workplace as a context for the advancement of their professional knowledge and growing autonomy. A review of empirical studies of the relationship between individual teachers and their social contexts revealed that beginning teachers' perception of schools are that they are not only a place for learning, but also a place where pertinent professional issues should be sorted out (Etelapelto

& Saarinen, 2006). However, contradictions between teachers' expectations of their first year of work, and the subsequent reality within their new employment context is a common cause of attrition amongst beginning teachers (Le Maistre & Paré, 2010). Beginning teachers transit into the profession from teacher education programs where there is often freedom to make decisions, an atmosphere that is conducive to discourse and collaboration, and working environments that nurture personal relationships. In schools, beginning teachers often face a set of norms and behaviours conflicting with their experiences (Sabar, 2004). It has been argued that beginning teachers' early views of what it means to be a teacher, and their values concerning teaching as a profession is frequently challenged by their school context that did not provide support. This has consequences for their learning to teach, as they become enculturated in their cultures and organisations (Flores, 2006).

Friedman (2004) reasoned that beginning teachers' expectations from their work were comprised of social, organizational, and psychological dimensions. He explained that the beginning teacher anticipated the workplace to have a collegial, supportive organizational culture, in which the stakeholders in the educational realm, namely teachers, parents, and the public would give due acknowledgement, support, cooperation, and respect for the contribution the teacher gave to his or her work. The expectation is that the school leaders would show leadership in instructing and guiding the teacher and to be a tolerant and supportive colleague. The expectation of learners is that they would show respect, affection, and responsiveness, and treat the teacher as a leader. Friedman (2004) explained that the beginning teacher also generally has the right to expect that the process of teaching, the workplace, students, colleagues, the leadership team, and parents should augment his or her sense of personal and professional self-efficacy as a teacher.

Common issues are faced by beginning teachers in their workplace across a range of countries (The Alberta's teaching association, ATA, 2011). The main source of learning for beginning teachers occurs through practice, or experiential learning (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; Palmer, 2007). The intricacies and demand of teachers' work marks the beginning to teach period as a difficult one, and one which will remain so (ATA, 2011). Veenman's (1984) review of research pertaining to the perceived problems of beginning teachers at the beginning of their career portrayed the period as one of the most difficult and critical in the career of these teacher, one pertinent to the success of future teaching. Veenman (1984) argued that the early career period is important for beginning teachers given that they have difficulties in creating learning-filled classrooms due to undeveloped schemata for "reading" a class environment and for establishing rules and routines. Therefore, these early years are

important in allowing beginning teachers to establish and maintain rules and routines that are fair and appropriate to students. Paradoxically, it is also during this period that young teachers commonly become disheartened, and leave their career (Veenman, 1984).

Studies around beginning teachers' challenges frequently reveal recurrent areas contributing to their difficulties and reasons for leaving the profession in the first year. Wanzare (2007) detailed ten major themes on what hindered beginning teachers' transition into the teaching profession, namely: workload; professional support; reality shock; student discipline; personal versus professional demands; classroom management and isolation; students', and parents' demands; role expectations, and resources. In outlining these central themes, Wanzare (2007) explained that some school-based contexts failed in recognising the beginning phase of the teaching profession. These contexts fall short in connecting the gap between being a student in a professional training organisation to being a functional practitioner in the real context of teaching (Wanzare, 2007).

A knowledge of the challenges emerging from recurring areas in beginning teachers' professional lives are crucial in meeting beginning teachers expectations. First, the theme concerning the workload of beginning teachers reflected the expectation that they can discharge their responsibilities with the same efficiency as experienced professionals. In exemplifying this situation Bartell (2005) pointed to the number of classes and extra-curricular duties, challenging students, and subject areas for which teachers had minimal or no preparation, noting that there was often no difference in expected workload between beginning and experienced teachers. In a similar vein, many subsequent researchers have argued that beginning teachers are expected to take in the details of curriculum guides and procedures in a school community setting that is completely unfamiliar to them (Little, 1999; Menter, Hutchins & Ross, 2002; Ross, 2002). Typically, new teachers have to face surmounting stress due to heavy workload and indifferent community attitude towards teachers (Feiman-Nemser,2010; Wanzare, 2007).

Such stresses can have serious consequences for both students and teachers. Little (1999) notes that when beginning teachers' assignments are mismatched to their backgrounds and interests, they place students' learning at risk, hindered the expertise development of beginning teachers, and discourage purposeful planning and reflection. Likewise, in their meta-analysis of thirteen alternative teaching certification programmes in four US states, Johnson and Birkeland (2003) concluded that unmanageable and unreasonable teaching responsibilities cannot be accommodated by a love of young people, a passion for teaching, commitment to the profession, nor by subject matter knowledge or fast-track training.

A second area of difficulty reported by beginning teachers is student discipline. Using schools and staffing survey data from 55,000 teachers and 12,000 principals in all 50 states in the US, Ingersoll (2002) reported that student behaviour problems was a factor linked to teacher attrition. This heightened the importance of school policy and support in enabling teachers to learn to conduct effective classroom discipline. Gavish and Friedman (2010) noted that teachers' professional identities, and their understanding of their abilities as teachers are strongly linked to their perceptions of student behaviour. As they argue, when students disrespect their teachers or neglect the teachers' authority, a sense of disharmony prevails which has the potential to contribute to a profound sense of unsuccessfulness and professional failure (Gavish & Friedman, 2010). Weiss (1999) likewise argued that when beginning teachers recognised their discipline issues in the classroom as a result of school leadership issues, it could impact on their morale. In addition, Weiss notes that beginning teachers experience increased discouragement when they are not involved in making decisions concerning student discipline as part of autonomy and discretion. According to Weiss (1999), if beginning teachers believe they have some influence on discipline policy, it is more likely that they will show their best effort, that their overall certainty about their career choice will increase, and they will tend to have a greater likelihood of remaining in the profession.

A third area of challenge is linked to curriculum access. Feiman-Nemser (2010) reasoned that without the consideration that beginning teachers are not privy to an extensive pedagogical disposition or knowledge of what different aged students should be learning, their tasks in preparing for and teaching multiple subjects or classes become a difficult endeavour. Feiman-Nemser explained that numerous beginning teachers are subjected to a curriculum void (in that textbooks and teacher's guides are missing), while others face inflexible instructional materials. According to Feiman-Nemser (2010), the opponents of providing prescriptive curriculum materials reason that they de-skill teachers by neglecting their professional choices as to what their students require, whilst proponents argue that, they safeguard equity and reconcile irregularities in teachers' backgrounds. In a study that emphasized support and curricula issues facing beginning teachers, 50 teachers in their first and second year in the US were interviewed, findings revealed that these teachers struggled on a daily basis to prepare curriculum content and materials (Kardos, Johnson, Peske, Kauffman, & Liu, 2001). Their workplace environment created a sense of urgency in the face of accountability which was not commensurated with curriculum support. The authors argued that poor support for these teachers impinged on both students' achievements and teacher retention. A high teacher attrition rate ensues because of the impact of these beginning

teachers' perceived failure within the classroom, and their sense that the nature of the work was unmanageable (Kardos et al., 2001).

As indicated by Wanzare's (2007) themes of recurrent areas of difficulty for beginning teachers, a fourth area of challenge is the ability to access support. Menon (2012) investigated the main challenges faced by beginning teachers, looking specifically at the satisfaction beginning teachers had in the support they received from their head teachers in the first years of their career. Menon's qualitative study involved face-to-face interviews with 25 teachers with one to five years of experience across schools in Cyprus. Menon (2012) found that teachers reported struggling to adjust to rules, regulation and the organisational settings of their schools; they were unable to "find their way" in their setting because from the onset they were ill-informed about these matters. Menon (2012) pointed to both the absence of an effective induction programme, and teacher preparation programmes not facilitating these teachers' ability to seek the help they needed as probable causes for beginning teachers' feelings. The case studies undertaken by Le Maistre and Paré (2010), and Scherff (2008) also argue for a healthy, caring, and conducive working environment, where the ability for beginning teachers to seek help is unhindered.

Whilst the idealistic expectations of beginning teachers cannot be fully achieved, a difficult environment can hinder the reconciliation between ideals and reality. Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000) explained that career choice is influenced by the extent of match between the expectations an individual has about their profession and what the profession can in fact offer. It is common that individuals who take up teaching as a job have specific anticipations about what it will give, but when the practicality of their experience from their training is challenged, they alter their expectations to match with the level of workplace support (Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000). In Servage's (2012) longitudinal qualitative study spanning over 5 years involving 135 teachers in the Alberta school districts of Canada, teachers reported mixed views on their initial experience. Most teachers reported they began their career with enthusiasm and idealism, and that their expectation and desire were to collaborate with colleagues (though Servage did note that some teachers then opted to work in isolation). While practices that could ease the difficulties encountered by beginning teachers in the short term, and practices that can facilitate continuous professional learning, were well known in Alberta at the time of Servage's research, beginning teachers were overwhelmingly not experiencing these practices (Servage, 2012). Their colleagues went about their duties within the confines of their classrooms to the point that beginning teachers' expectation for a collaborative context was lowered. These experiences are consistent with Kardos and



Johnson's (2007) analysis of teaching as having the potential to be an isolated and highly privatised practice.

Beginning teachers' expectations and their prioritization for their work are not uniform but vary according to individual views. Kyriacou and Kunc (2007) described the agenda of expectations set by beginning teachers as a complex one. Kyriacou and Kunc's study tracked, via e-mail communication, 28 teachers in their first 2 years of their teaching. The study showed the variation of the specific experiences encountered by these teachers during their training, and, then, later how these influenced their expectations and subsequent view of teaching as a profession. Kyriacou and Kunc reasoned that this reflected how these teachers prioritised different aspects of their work, for instance the sense of satisfaction coming from students was important for some, while for others not being engrossed in paperwork was a key priority. However, fulfilment or hindrance of aspects of teaching teachers prioritised were vital to shaping their views of teaching.

Studies have also shown that recognition of the beginning status of new teachers and a contextual acknowledgement of their inexperience can pave the way for a better understanding of beginning teachers' needs. Smethem (2007) explained that the novice state of beginning teachers often means they are more susceptible to the experiences they encounter, in comparison to more experienced teachers, and that experiences encountered by beginning teachers shape their personal identities as teachers. Unreasonable work expectations neglect the understanding that beginning teachers need time to look for best fit solutions (Flores & Day, 2006; Smethem, 2007). Korthagen (2007) explained that beginning teachers need time to reflect on the choices that they have made. This means that without key mediating factors stemming from school organisation, the professional identity of beginning teachers are challenged in ways which can adversely affect teachers' intention to stay in teaching for the longer term (Smethem, 2007).

A lack of experience and routines means that beginning teachers, unlike experienced teachers, do not possess a well-developed "professional wisdom" that they can rely on (Korthagen, 2007). Further to a lack of experience is a limited knowledge of school organisational issues. Gavish and Friedman (2010) argued that a limited organisational knowledge hinders beginning teachers' effective integration into schools. This view is shared by Kuzmic (1994), who explained that without a basic comprehension of the organisational life of their context, beginning teachers are less likely to be equipped to sort out the problems and difficulties they encounter. Therefore, these teachers will not have the necessary tools to

develop “political tactics” and teaching strategies to endure the pressures coming from the bureaucratic features of the school (Kuzmic, 1994).

Beginning teachers’ exposure to positive experiences of teaching, student learning, home-school partnerships, collegial support, and professional learning and development opportunities in their school-based context is pertinent. Constructive experiences augment resilience when challenging situations arise, and when intricate dilemmas present themselves as components of beginning teachers’ work (Smethem, 2007). Along the same lines, Servage (2012) underscores the existence of knowledge about the kind of work and learning experiences that can facilitate the difficulties in beginning to teach in the short term, and promote fruitful, continuous professional learning in the long term (Servage, 2012). Darling-Hammond (2006) points to the competing interests resulting from beginning teachers’ expectations and their workplace demands. These demands include, for instance, increasing expectations to improve teacher competence in addition to increasing accountability. For example, high-stake accountability policies may encourage contexts that require teachers to relate to their students differently and implement pedagogies that conflict with their view of best practices. Consequently, beginning teachers often experience high levels of stress (Valli & Buese, 2007). Darling-Hammond (2006) argued that if beginning teachers are subjected to unreasonable expectations and inadequate support, they are either unlikely to stay on, or they adopt strategies to cope or survive in their teaching environments that can move attention away from student learning (Langdon, 2011). If beginning teachers are to be successful, then their school-based context should be one where all are engaged in problem solving, share experiences and are committed to student learning (Langdon, 2011). As Servage (2012) explained, when schools provide supportive and open school cultures, teachers are more likely to engage with a sense of hopefulness, curiosity, and eagerness towards their professional career, and more likely to continue as teachers.

### **Beginning Teachers’ Effectiveness**

The section considers the notion of teaching effectiveness, professional standards for beginning teachers, and perspectives and expectations from school leaders. A determination of expectation for beginning teachers with respect to their *effectiveness* presents a series of issues, especially in determining expectation for registration (Reynolds, 1992; Huntly, 2008).

## **Defining teaching effectiveness**

Teacher effectiveness is a complex phenomenon, and as such, there is little agreement on how it should be defined. Wechsler et al. (2007) argued that the increased fixation on standards and accountability in some education systems can lead to a narrow definition of teacher effectiveness. This fixation can in turn result in the creation of school contexts that are myopically focussed on learners' achievement data. This view is supported by Williams et al. (2010), who reasoned that too much of a concerted effort on academic achievement can stymie the professional judgment and creativity of practitioners. A narrow focus on academic achievement creates the risk of moving school management's attention away from collaboration as pertinent support to teacher effectiveness (Williams et al., 2010).

The conceptualisation of teacher effectiveness proposed by Campbell, Kyriakides, Muijs, and Robinson (2003) partly addressed the concerns of Williams et al. (2010). Campbell et al. (2003) focus on a differential dimension of teacher effectiveness, "the power to realise socially valued objectives agreed for teachers' work, especially, but not exclusively, the work concerned with enabling students to learn" (p. 354). The authors assert that the choice of a working definition for teacher effectiveness should address the issues arising from not having a clear definition. Given the proposed definition, Campbell et al. (2003) identified five possible parameters of differential effectiveness, namely: 1) differences in activity; 2) differences in subjects and/or components of subjects; 3) differences in pupils' background factors; 4) differences in pupils' personal characteristics, and 5) differences in cultural and organisational context. They proposed that if schools considered all of these differentials as essential to teachers' roles in defining teacher effectiveness, a multidimensional, and more functional concept of teacher effectiveness could be produced.

Tuckman (1995) proposed that a broad definition of effective teaching should be "either that which causes students to learn and grow, or is accepted by teachers and other educational professionals" (pp. 127–128). He contended that, on the premise that there is no universally accepted definition of effective teaching, that the consideration of the above in defining it should draw a high level of agreement. Stronge (2007) explained that, given the intricate nature of teaching, effectiveness becomes an elusive term. He points to vacillations in defining successful teachers, arguing that contentions exist because teaching has influence over varied areas. As a result, it is difficult to define and measure the outcomes that might show effectiveness. Blanton, Sindelar, and Corera (2006) explained that there is no single definition or measure. They pointed to the differing perceptions people hold regarding

teacher quality and effectiveness, identifying that they prioritise diverse attributes (Blanton et al., 2006). Similarly, Berliner (2005) suggested that since quality necessitates the use of value judgments, the level of disagreement is bound to be high. According to Berliner, it is more realistic not to abandon ideals, but to balance them by making allowances for the situation in which the teaching takes place, and the goals the teacher is embracing. Teaching is full of compromise, and evaluating the quality of teaching considering these compromises is more pragmatic than endeavouring to equate reality to its ideal.

Further, a beginning teacher may necessarily embrace alternatives that would be worrying if done by an experienced teacher (Eisner, 1998). A lesson with low level, short-term objectives may be appropriate if perceived as a small step towards a larger enterprise. The context, the students, the specific demands of the teacher's context, and other exigencies the teacher must manage, all constitute appropriate considerations necessary to evaluate teaching (Eisner, 1998). Eisner (1998) proposed that given that "the perception of qualities in school situations is almost always interpreted, knowing the features of the context is likely to make the interpretation more defensible and more equitable" (p. 78).

### **Professional standards for beginning teachers**

Current endeavours to expose learners to quality teaching have heightened the requirement for beginning teachers to demonstrate their attainment of teaching standards. Darling-Hammond (1999) pointed to undertakings to better the quality of learning and teaching in schools, identifying that most were based on the notion that the teacher should be at the core of any endeavour to reach this goal. Therefore, augmenting the effectiveness and equity of schooling rest to a large extent on making sure that competent individuals desire teaching as a career, that their teaching practices are of a high quality, and that all learners have equal access to quality teaching (Libman, 2012). Likewise, Uhlenbeck, Verloop, and Beijaard (2002) explained that school reforms and innovations in curriculums are eventually dependent on the professional learning and development of practitioners. Subsequently, restructuring initiatives have entailed the establishment of standard for experienced and novice teachers. A consequence of this is a required demonstration by beginning teachers that they satisfy teaching standards in addition to having successfully gone through a teacher education program (Uhlenbeck et al., 2002). Libman (2012) explained that "standards" highlight the important goals of teaching, making clear for beginning teachers what is required of them, and laying out clearly the benchmarks that define success.

Yet the diverse plethora of standards against which beginning teachers are measured is a contentious issue. Hayes (2006) argued that from a systemic level, a broad goal for teachers is sufficient. Whilst this coincides with Langdon's (2001) view that defining standards with too much specificity can hamper the requirement to act on ongoing change, Langdon (2001) also argued that a broad definition can decontextualize and limit improvement to teaching practice. If standards are too unspecific, Langdon noted, practitioners and educators are restricted with respect to constructive feedback. Thus as Hayes (2006) has argued, the standard for the profession should be constructed primarily by teachers for teachers, in a collaborative approach with stakeholders in the education community. As argued by Groundwater-Smith, Cusworth, and Dobbins (1998), once standards are put in place, the way that they are developed and comprehended will affect the manner that the profession is seen in general, affecting its status, and subsequently the type of education offered to learners.

For this reason, Seddon (2008) warned that restricted, fixed targets supported by strong penalties and rewards were likely to adversely impact teaching outcomes. According to Seddon, command and control tactics to reform—which do not involve individuals and communities in developing and applying policy—are certain to fail. Therefore, he argued, establishing standards and requirements for beginning teachers should include these teachers' perspectives (Seddon, 2008). This is consistent with the work of Hayes (2006) who stated that standards development should take place within a discourse of the profession, and should not be imposed onto the profession by outsiders (Hayes, 2006).

Another complication for the application of teacher effectiveness standards is that the standard of professionalism applicable to an experienced teacher cannot be anticipated from beginning teachers at the start of their careers. Feiman-Nemser (2001), and Löffström and Eisenschmidt (2009) argued that teachers' growth as professionals does not come to completion upon exiting teacher-training programmes. From their position, teacher training is framed as communicating a series of crucial knowledge and in ensuring that individuals possess at minimum the competencies needed to start a teaching career. However, it is either on-the-job training, through induction programmes or other external training, that facilitates beginning teachers' attainment of full competency (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Löffström & Eisenschmidt, 2009). Cheng and Cheung (2004) pointed to the consideration of teacher professionalism as ongoing, arguing that together with competence, professionalism should be recognised as a developmental and transformable concept. Thus, competence has been seen as an early point or start of "teacher professional growth continuum" (Cheng & Cheung,

2004, p. 190). Competence as a starting point can therefore be recognised as a crucial reference value for envisioning the pathway for further development for beginning teachers. Essentially, this perception of the professional growth of practitioners validates a distinction concerning expectations that relate to beginning teachers, and those that relate to more experienced ones (Cheng & Cheung, 2004).

According to current research in education, beginning teachers' progress towards expert teaching requires a holistic notion of what it means to be a teacher, and a move away from a strict focus on standards and competency, which are seen as a linear pathway towards expertise. Akkerman and Meijer (2011) explained that this view is connected to a move towards a focus on the function of "emotions, passion, commitment, and courage in teaching" (p. 1). Akkerman and Meijer noted that this shift in focus extended what had typically served as the basis for professional growth: the gaining of "assets", including knowledge, beliefs, and competencies. These assets emphasized the significance of preferred learning outcomes with respect to what teachers are expected to learn. This asset gaining method is evident in the establishment and assessment of techniques for evaluating teachers and their development associated with pre-determined professional standards (Porter, Youngs, & Odden, 2001). For Akkerman and Meijer (2011), the main limitation of this method, evident in some educational policies, is that it assumes accumulation and linearity in transiting from novice to expert.

Beijaard, Verloop, and Vermunt (2000) framed this assumption as a matter of debate given the great differences in the way that individual teachers, and teachers from differing subject areas, develop over their career. Kelchtermans and Hamilton (2004) contributed to this debate by framing such "assets" as encouraging a discourse about teachers, whereby the latter is seen as quantifiable objects viewed from outside or from above. As Kelchtermans and Hamilton noted, a consequence of the external approach is a restriction on how teachers make sense of their teaching practice. These findings have influenced the current focus on a more holistic concern for what it means to be a teacher. Seen from this perspective, teachers are agents, who can serve as the starting point in comprehending and encouraging development for improving their practices and expertise (Kelchtermans & Hamilton, 2004; Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005).

On the other hand, standards established in education systems have been seen as pertinent in enabling beginning teachers to start their profession with the potential to further their effectiveness. It has been argued that whilst from a policy and systemic perspective, beginning teachers need to demonstrate their acquisition of competencies, government

agencies and schools should work together to identify these beginning teachers' specific needs (Dobson-Lewis, 2008; Libman, 2012). Assessing and identifying beginning teachers' requirements align well with a holistic view of teaching, because it can serve as the basis for effectively targeting professional learning and development for these teachers (Libman, 2012). Dobson-Lewis (2008) and Onafowora (2004) warned against placing too much focus on external agencies in furthering beginning teachers' effectiveness, as they found that such emphasis typically contributed to beginning teachers' attributing their struggles or shortcomings to unchangeable external factors.

Consequently, current research holds that on entering schools, beginning teachers should be seen as empowered individuals who should also look to themselves for continued improvement in their effectiveness within a nurturing context (Onafowora, 2004). In the same vein, European Commission (EC) (2009) acknowledged the need to facilitate beginning teachers' lifelong learning, but argued that the challenge of furthering these teachers effectiveness should not rest solely with schools. Requirements on the teaching profession are changing quickly, necessitating an evolution in strategies on the part of teachers. Effectiveness in teaching, the ability to adjust to the changing needs of students in a world of rapid social, cultural, economic and technological change place new demands on teachers (EC, 2009). This means teachers themselves need to reflect on their personal learning needs in their specific setting and take an increase responsibility for their personal lifelong learning. Given this, the European Commission report (2009) states that at minimum, beginning teachers should possess specialist knowledge of the area they teach, in addition to the required pedagogical skills. Furthermore, these teachers should be able to teach heterogeneous classes, make efficient use of ICT, and help learners to acquire transferable competencies. However, such endeavours are facilitated by a backdrop of key professional values: autonomous learning; reflective practice; participation in research and innovation; collaboration with colleagues and parents; and an engagement in the progress of the whole school (EU, 2009).

### **Management perspectives of an effective beginning teacher**

As gatekeepers to the teaching profession, school leaders and their leadership management team need to articulate clear expectations of effectiveness within their context in order for beginning teachers to envision and work towards these. Huntly (2008) reasoned that school leaders' notions of effective beginning teaching are vital since it can impact on the actions of the teacher, and ultimately on the learning of the students. In a quantitative study

investigating school leaders' and beginning teachers' perceptions of competency in Hong Kong schools, Cheng and Cheung (2004) found that these beginning teachers' sense of preparedness and effectiveness were higher when their personal views and those of their school leaders were aligned. As Huntly (2008) contended, it is important that from the onset principals articulate to beginning teachers what effectiveness means to the school. Cheng and Cheung (2004) argued that principals must not only communicate expectations, but also identify or emphasise for these teachers the aspects of work they saw as requiring more attention. This, they identified, was crucial, given that the success of beginning teachers towards acquiring Qualified Teachers status (QTS) in some education systems, and in attaining the ever-evolving standard of effectiveness is also conditional on the school leaders' ability to identify teachers' shortcomings, and in facilitating their developmental needs (Cheng & Cheung, 2004; Huntly, 2008). Cheng and Cheung (2004) pointed to studies revealing that beginning teachers tendencies to hold a series of self-serving bias; rating themselves higher than their peers with respect to personality traits, professional abilities and exclusion from risk. Generally, Cheng and Cheung found, beginning teachers held the assumption that what plagued others would not affect them (Cheng & Cheung 2004). Likewise, Melton (2007) called for principals to facilitate beginning teachers' insight into their attributes as a crucial step towards empowerment and encouragement.

In general, school leaders' perception of beginning teachers' effectiveness hinges less on pre-determined criteria and standards, and more on professional judgement stemming from their personal experiences. Given the contention around standards, Langdon (2001) described the principals' role in ascertaining beginning teachers' attainment of standard for registration as occurring in a climate of confusion and uncertainty. Whether principals should adhere to established standards, or place more emphasis on their own views of what constitutes an effective beginning teacher, remains a challenge for policy advisors. As Goe, Bell, and Little (2008) explained, school leaders and teachers have to contend with an array of expectations placed on them by society. In part, these underpin a certain view of the teacher. This poses a dilemma for school leaders concerning the standards that they should judge teachers against (Goe et al., 2008). As the study of Ballantyne, Thompson and Taylor (1998) revealed, school leaders' views of beginning teachers' effectiveness was constructed through the experiences of others, of their own, and their social and cultural settings far more than they were an adherence to pre-determined standards and criteria. Whilst Goe et al. (2008) pointed to an externally driven overabundance of standards for effectiveness, Langdon (2001) contended that limiting effectiveness to a specific set of teaching competencies hides



the complex, moral and ethical challenges that teachers face on a daily basis. Essentially, the views of effectiveness held by school leaders precede their judgement of beginning teachers' effectiveness (Ballantyne et al., 1998).

School leaders' expectations of an effective beginning teacher are also reflective of enduring concerns and expectations in the early career years of beginning teachers. In a recent quantitative study of 256 school leaders (namely principals, vice-principals, and heads of department), Chong, Rotgans, Loh, and Mak (2012) gauged their views on beginning teachers' effectiveness in 346 schools across Singapore. School leaders were generally positive about these beginning teachers' effectiveness although they identified the need for improvement with respect to learners' assessment and feedback, instructional strategies, and classroom management. Chong et al. argued that rectifying concerns around beginning teachers' effectiveness can have a domino effect, resulting in positive outcomes ranging from improved student learning to a possible lowering of teacher attrition rates.

Yet the complexities and contradictions inherent to beginning teachers' settings also permeate school leaders' expectations of effective beginning teachers. Fullan (1998) framed this contradiction by pointing to the school environment as one where there are socially and culturally embedded ways of doing things, while at the same time beginning teachers are involved in ongoing critical reflection that embraces change. In a qualitative study of 15 principals, Langdon (2001) identified the paradoxes, dilemmas, and implications for educational cultures emerging from these principals' views on what an effective beginning teacher should be. In this study, the knowledge ascribed to an effective beginning teacher by these principals extended beyond the school setting, to encompass the socio-political influences on education, educational law and the new teachers' role and responsibility in society. On the other hand, these principals expected the beginning teacher to be collaborative and willing. Langdon pointed to the contradictions in these expectations: while the principals expected these teachers to think critically, be professional and intelligent by showing an understanding of how their work relate to the socio-political environment, they also expected these teachers to be part of the school culture, to "fit in" and earn parental recognition. The framing of an effective teacher as revealed from Langdon's study can be further understood from Codd's (1999) perspective who described the teacher as a professional, engaged in complex decision making with a moral purpose.

This section has considered the notion of teaching effectiveness, professional standards for beginning teachers, and the perspectives and expectations from school leaders.

A universal definition of teaching effectiveness is a notable absence in the literature, partly because it entails a value judgement. One view is that a concerted systemic effort on accountability through performance can impact negatively on teachers' professionalism. Other arguments point to the need for a multi-dimensional framing of effectiveness, given the multiple roles a teacher holds. Relating to evaluation of effectiveness is the notion of a compromised expectation for teaching as oppose to one based on ideals. This connects well to the expectation for beginning teachers who are seen as requiring experience from their practices in attaining proficiency comparable to that of their more experienced and expert colleagues. It is argued that a view of learning for teachers based on a continuum demands the establishment of standards that recognise both the professionalism of teachers, and learning as a life-long process. Lastly, the insights of school leaders concerning the concept of an effective beginning teacher have been highlighted. These views have been framed as pertinent to beginning teachers' sense of empowerment, encouragement, and to their eventual impact on students' learning.

### **Supporting Beginning Teachers**

My review of educational literature now turns to the notion of effective support mechanisms for beginning teachers. The importance of induction, mentorship, and school culture are explored. Support for these teachers is seen as being best provided by envisioning specific teaching practices. Therefore, the section begins by framing two pathways for beginning teachers' practices: one that is shaped as a behavioural endeavour in the face of challenges, and another that recognises teachers' learning needs and professionalism.

#### **Framing the teaching practices of beginning teachers**

Beginning teachers' teaching is often framed as adopting a behavioural approach stemming from a concern for survival in the face of difficult challenges and unsupportive environments. Danielson (1999) pointed to the erroneous belief that beginning teachers have acquired all that is required to successfully carry out their responsibilities in their context. Thus, any shortcomings in terms of classroom delivery are seen as their fault. This situation is worse for beginning teachers who fail to seek the necessary support from experienced teachers and school leaders, mainly because such a move might be seen as a sign of weakness (Flores, 2006). As Wanzare (2007) explained, a lack of support mechanisms hinders beginning teachers' development of classroom procedural knowledge. They therefore may attempt to tackle their challenges by being disciplinarians or authoritarians, especially in an

environment with a non-supporting school culture and poor students' behaviour. Marked by a need to control their classes, beginning teachers can be tempted to plan their teaching in such a way that reduces the possibility of behavioural problems, but that does not promote student learning. Wanzare (2007) argued that for some beginning teachers, their efforts are concentrated on staying in control of the situation. When subjected to stressful situations beginning teachers switch from a professional approach to an anti-intellectual strategy of problem solving with an adherence to a behavioural and technicist strategy (Wanzare, 2007). Preference is given to teaching methodology that is meant to control learners, as opposed to encouraging reflective practices (Wanzare, 2007). As Langdon (2001) argues, this propensity to fall back on anti-intellectual strategies occurs most often when time is not provided for teachers' own reflective practices, and when the school culture perceives controlled, orderly learners as evidence that a new teacher is thriving, is respected, and that learning is taking place. As exemplified by figure 2 below, Wanzare (2007) explained that a neglect of the learning needs, challenges, and support of beginning teachers encourages attrition, and that the survival strategies teachers employ in the face of such neglect can impact negatively on students' learning.

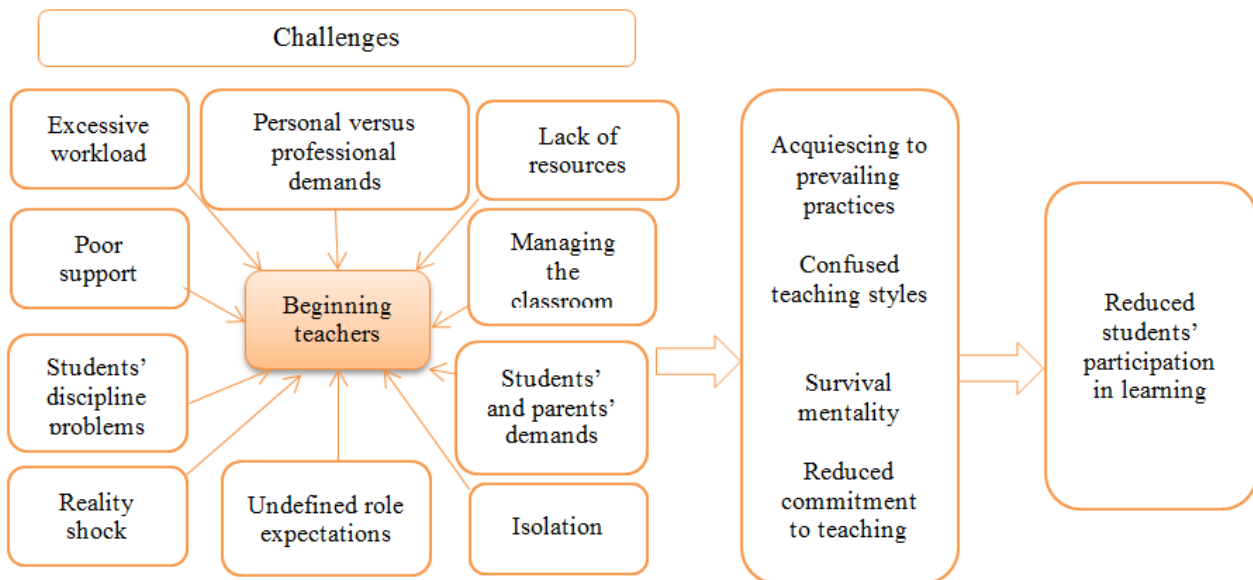


Figure 2 : Wanzare's diagram of challenges faced by beginning teachers, and their impact on teaching and students' learning. (2007, p.351)

An alternative view is to depict beginning teachers as professionals, and support them from this position. In this way beginning teachers are perceived as intelligent and possessing a philosophy relating to ideas concerning teaching and learning which can be communicated and justified (Langdon, 2001). This professional view of beginning teachers

moves away from a behavioural stance, to a teaching and learning focus (Langdon, 2001), where students and teachers are co-creators in the learning and teaching process (MacGilchrist, Reed, & Myers, 2004). Such a view mirrors the complexity that depicts teaching in the today's world. A behavioural stance of teaching has been described as anti-intellectualism, given that it renders the complexity of teaching to a technical remedy, and renders teaching methodology a means to an end, instead of something that facilitates students' learning (Kincheloe, 2005). Feiman-Nemser (2001) argued that when beginning teachers are viewed as professionals, learning is then recognised as inherent to teaching. In this instance, serious conversation around teaching becomes an essential resource for developing and enhancing practice. Learning from practice demands skills of observation, interpretation, and analysis. Feiman-Nemser (2001) points to the development of skills by professional engagement in analysing examples of student work; examining curricular materials; questioning students to reveal their thinking; illuminating the impact their instructions have on their students' learning, and studying the manner by which different teachers arrive at similar aims. These activities, when carried in the company of others, can facilitate the expectations for professional discourse, including respect for evidence, receptiveness to questions, consideration to alternative views, a pursuit of shared understanding, and agreed standards (Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

### **Induction**

The term induction is often utilised to describe a special period in the early, formative years of a professional. Research involving beginning teachers and narratives from beginning teachers convey the early years of teaching as a unique period in the professional life of a teacher. This uniqueness is contextualised, and therefore different for each individual teacher or cohort of teachers (Buchmann, 1993). The concept of induction also connotes a process of socialisation, which therefore has implications for the contexts and professional cultures of beginning teachers' workplaces, as the meaning each teacher attaches to teaching in their particular environment influences their teaching, identity, and career path. The notion of socialisation as a process highlights the conflict between supporting beginning teachers to fit into schools and helping them to participate in transforming their workplaces (Little, 1999). This transformation is to enable the context to effectively facilitate student and teacher learning (Little, 1999). Induction is considered as a period in learning to teach, a process of enculturation, and a programme of support and development, but the meanings attached to these notions bring their own quandaries and issues. Little argued that effective induction

programmes and policies rest on a comprehension of all of these notions, and what they convey for professional learning and development, teacher education, school reform, and educational policies at all levels.

Traditionally the view of induction and its influences stemmed from systems of recruitment, work initiation, and professional education, as beginners acquire full recognition as members of a professional group (Zeichner & Gore, 1990). In becoming members of the teaching community, beginning teachers are involved in a process of interaction with other teachers, where they learn and are encouraged to acquire the prevailing values, standards, language, and knowledge of their domain (Zeichner & Gore, 1990). A view of teachers' induction through a socialisation lens implies observing how they are integrated into the profession of teaching and into the specific work place (Kardos & Johnson, 2007). It also underscores the tension between the expectations of the teachers as change agents, and the process of engaging them to fit into the schools, as they are (Kardos & Johnson, 2007).

Traditional models of induction reflected traditional theories of teacher socialisation, with a unidirectional manner of fitting beginners into existing systems (Tyack, 1974). These have been criticized for depicting teachers as passively adhering to the status quo (Lawson, 1992). Socialisation takes place as beginning teachers are inducted into a specific school context. If the process enables teachers to fit into their workplace as it is, it functions as a means for continuity. If it links beginning teachers to individuals who pursue an approach of transforming current practices and norms, induction can act as a force for change. When induction is seen from a socialisation perspective, therefore, it underscores a tension between adaptation and transformation (Lawson, 1992). Current research (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002) adopts an interactionist view of socialisation, by focussing on the manner in which beginning teachers are shaped, and how they also shape their context. That is, the socialisation of beginning teachers during induction goes beyond a submission to a prevailing norm, but instead it is an interpretative and interactive endeavour between the beginning teachers and their setting (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002).

Some conceptualisations of induction frame the process as a formal programme of support for beginning teachers. Huling-Austin (1990) defines induction as "a planned program intended to provide some systematic and sustained assistance to beginning teachers for a least one school year" (p. 536). Broader definitions of induction programmes extend to beginning teachers' ongoing development and evaluation, but the link between assessment and support is still a contentious issue (Yusko & Feiman-Nemser, 2008). It has been argued

that a recognition of induction as a formal programme focuses attention on the requirement of beginning teachers that may augment an individualistic direction to teaching. This recognition can abate collaboration, and a sense of shared responsibility towards beginning teachers' issues (Yusko & Feiman-Nemser, 2008). This view of induction contrasts with the notion of an integrated professional culture, where the idea of teachers as free working agents is minimised. In an integrated professional culture, there is a collective and collaborative-shared approach to school endeavours, hence teacher induction (Yusko & Feiman-Nemser, 2008).

When induction is framed as a formal programme, the issue between the purpose of teacher retention and teacher effectiveness is brought to the fore. It has been pointed out that a number of induction programs are framed to offer immediate assistance to facilitate beginning teachers' transition into their practices by giving information, guidance, and psychological support (Gold, 1996). This is seen as helping beginning teachers cope with their first year, and intended to increase retention rates. It is argued, however, that an improvement in retention does not indicate an improvement of effectiveness in beginning teachers' practices, or the learning of their students (Stronge, 2007), a view supported by Langdon (2011) who explained, "induction programmes typically do not challenge new teachers to aspire to emulating or adapting models of teacher expertise" (p. 242). These formal induction programs also negate the ongoing professional learning and development of beginning teachers. If this learning is acknowledged, then effective induction must be embedded with strategies to augment quality teaching through professional learning and development (Feiman-Nemser & Yusko, 2008). There should also be adjustment in induction programmes to accommodate the needs of the different teachers, and to record the influence on their teaching, retention trend, and their student's learning (Feiman-Nemser & Yusko, 2008).

Current demand for extensive induction has revealed other important attributes for effective induction packages. One explanation of expansive induction is "a package of support, development and standard-based assessment provided to beginning teachers during at least their first two years of full-time professional teaching" (Alliance for Excellent Education (AEE), 2004, p. 11). Feiman-Nemser (2010) noted that these provisions link induction to teacher quality standards, and distinguish the type and amount of support available to beginning teachers in connection to their experience and former training.

Such induction programs also locate the principal as a pivotal aspect of the school culture. Langdon's (2011) case studies of beginning teachers' induction pointed to the roles

of principal in making the induction of these teachers successful. The principals in Langdon's studies involved themselves in establishing cultures that provided learning opportunities in line with the arising needs of beginning teachers, particularly needs relating to teachers' work, their own learning, and the learning of their students (Langdon, 2011). Langdon's findings are supported by Sparks (2005), who viewed the success of induction as "limited if a school's leadership and culture send contrary messages regarding performance standards" (p. 242).

Induction is a special period in the professional life of a teacher, encompassing beginning teacher responsibilities and support. It underlines the unique features of the beginning teacher's first meeting with the reality of having sole responsibility for a classroom, in contrast to supervised teaching practice (Loughran, Brown, & Decoke, 2001). As a form of support, induction is underscored as a comprehensive ongoing strategy of job-entrenched teacher support and development (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Given this, induction is connected to teacher preparation in that it places professional learning and development on a continuum, since a number of important things new teachers need to accomplish can only be learnt on the job (Loughran, Brown, & Doecke, 2001). The learning requirements and demands of beginning teachers cannot be fully foreseen or catered for by pre-service programmes, even when the experience is exceptional. While a quality pre-service programme can establish the groundwork and facilitate beginning teachers' notions of what they are required to learn and the ways they should go about it, these teachers are exposed to learning needs that surpass what is normally expected (Langdon, Lind, Shaw, & Pilcher, 2010).

The realities of what teaching demands challenge all beginning teachers, irrespective of the comprehensiveness of their initial preparation. These realities extend beyond classroom management, the issue principally considered as the main concern of beginning teachers (Veenman, 1984). Their learning requirements also entail issues of curriculum; assessment; management; instruction; school culture, and the wider community. Grossman and Loeb (2008) argued that as teachers encounter increasing demands, the necessity for comprehensive induction (e.g., as an important period to learning to teach) becomes pressing. This view is consistent with Langdon's (2011) research, which revealed that induction should provide support in classroom management for teachers, and should foster awareness of expectations for the development of beginning teachers' expertise to improve students' learning.

In research involving secondary teachers through the first three years of their career, particular aspects were identified that affected these teachers' contextual learning, and their ability to utilize pre-service ideas and strategies from their teacher preparation (Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia, 1999). These aspects included access to curricular materials, and professional learning and development opportunities, which radically affected workplace learning and teachers' abilities to make use of strategies and ideas presented in teacher preparation. These aspects come to the fore in discussing the induction period as a professional learning phase. The other side of comprehending induction as a significant period in learning to teach is to recognise its position in a professional learning continuum (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). This means recognising induction as an extension of teacher education *and* a link to the professional learning and development continuum. Therefore, in this view, induction is justified because it facilitates beginning teacher's entry into teaching; not because it makes up for insufficient preparation, but because it adds to the continuous study and development of practice (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). The early years of teaching provide a natural opportunity to locate the learning of beginning teachers in the core tasks of teaching: planning; instruction; examination of students' learning; and reflection on practice. However, it has been argued that induction literature seldom addresses the types of practice beginning teachers should be engaged in, or how they should be assisted to learn new concepts (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Borko & Putnam, 1996). Whilst incidental learning is important to beginning teachers' professional learning, making time for deliberate learning is crucial if beginning teachers are to improve their teaching practice.

Beginning teachers would have a vision of effective teaching if their pre-service preparation has been successful. They should essentially possess an assortment of approaches to pedagogy, curriculum, and assessment, as well as the disposition to learn in and from pedagogical practice (Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, & Bransford, 2005). Therefore, a primary focus of induction is to facilitate the adaptation of beginning teachers and to employ their skills in consideration of their students and context (Hammerness, et al., 2005).

According to Wilson and Berne (1999), the current nature of some professional learning and development often disconnects and isolates the continuity of induction programmes' from teacher preparation. However, in instances where induction is continuous with teacher preparation, research has shown that beginning teachers are less likely to give up on more challenging approaches for what may be perceived as safer or less complex tasks (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). This continuity presumes a connection between instructional methods and principles learnt through teacher training, and the types of learning and teaching



expected by the school (Clift & Brady, 2005). In addition to viewing induction as an extension of teacher training, the period is considered as a career-long professional learning strategy (Huling-Austin, 1990). A view of induction as a type of professional learning and development programme shifts attention to the principles of professional learning and development that can be linked to growth opportunities for beginning teachers. It also locates induction as a component of continuous, job-embedded, professional learning and development, rather than presenting it as temporary assistance for teachers (Hawley & Valli, 1999).

In summary, the purpose of induction as a unique period in learning to practise teaching identifies beginning teachers as having to learn to practise and perform in a specific context (Buchmann, 1993). If the intention is for beginning teachers' to gain effective learning from experience, then this must be facilitated with curriculum resources, feedback, and support, in contrast to a self-reliant approach to learning (Langdon, 2011; Feiman-Nemser, 2001). In addition, the type of teaching and pedagogical approach that beginning teachers are expected to learn and implement must be made clear. As the cornerstone between teacher preparation and continuing professional learning and development, induction has the capacity to link the learning of teachers, and school reform. A developmental approach to induction, in contrast to short-term personally affirming or individually-directed support, reduces the gap between induction oriented for beginning teachers and continuous learning for all teachers (Yusko & Feiman-Nemser, 2008; Langdon, 2011). With this approach, professional communities are reinforced as teachers with varied levels of experience act to augment their pedagogical practice and student learning (Yusko & Feiman-Nemser, 2008).

### **Mentorship**

Contexts that recognise beginning teachers' learning needs can be identified by the nature of their support for these novices. Studies reporting on contexts with effective mentorship culture revealed the nature and impact of the support practices (Foster, 1999; Schmidt, 2008). In these contexts, lesson observations were ongoing, and the analytical discussions that followed were highly valued aspects of mentorship, especially where they entailed joint exploration of issues for discussion. Issues identified were centered in the potential impact of teachers' observed actions, and the means by which ideas could be developed to empower the mentees to overcome impediments (Foster, 1999; Schmidt, 2008). This situation differs in contexts which do not reflect recognition of the needs of beginning

teachers. A longitudinal study spanning over two years, undertaken with 14 beginning teachers, revealed that the majority of teachers did not benefit from support coming from colleagues or school leaders, nor did they receive adequate information from these sources (Flores & Day, 2006). When some form of support was available, it did not necessarily cater for beginning teachers, and pursuing advice from more experienced colleagues was not facilitated. This came from a lack of knowledge of specific factors impeding these beginning teachers' task performances. Further to that, these teachers felt from the onset a requirement for them to be seen as professionals who were equipped to perform (Flores & Day, 2006).

Mentoring has been recognised as a crucial and efficient type of support for the professional learning and development of beginning teachers (Marable & Raimondi, 2007). Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, and Tomlinson (2009) define mentoring as:

The one-to-one support of a novice or less experienced practitioner by a more experienced practitioner designed to primarily assist the development of the mentee's expertise and to facilitate their induction into the culture of the profession and into the specific local context. (p. 1)

This working definition succinctly conveys the purpose of mentoring, with the operative words being "assist" and "facilitate". Studies reveal the benefits stemming from mentorship, including augmentation in confidence, professional development and learning, problem solving abilities, and enhanced self-reflection, as well as a decreased sense of isolation (Carter & Francis, 2001; Marable & Raimondi, 2007). One element prevalent in numerous research findings is the benefit of psychological and emotional support for beginning teachers. These have been identified as enabling teachers to put challenging experiences into perspective, and augmenting beginning teachers' morale and subsequent retention (Bullough, 2005; Lindgren, 2005; Marable & Raimondi, 2007). Research also reveals mentoring as developing the capabilities of beginning teachers in classroom management skills (Bullough, 2005; Lindgren, 2005). In terms of socialisation, mentors have been identified as facilitating beginning teachers' adaptation to the expectations and norms of their contexts (Bullough & Draper, 2004).

One limitation of research findings to date is the direct effect of mentoring on teachers' development, in particular on their instructional skills (Hobson et al., 2009), and the associated gains for students' learning (Moor et al., 2005). This limitation is due to the complications in discerning between the simultaneous effects of various contributions to beginning teachers' development, as well as to the manner that mentoring has been

implemented (Hobson et al., 2009). Studies have revealed that negative outcomes for the learning of mentees arise from situations in which mentors see their role as mainly providing a safe environment for trial and error learning (Edwards, 1997; Franke & Dahlgren, 1996), or when mentors' focus is more on issues like classroom management and subject matter knowledge than reflective practice (Lee & Feng, 2007; Sundli, 2007; Wright & Bottery, 1997). In these studies, less time was spent on pedagogical matters, with inadequate focus on social justice and reflective practices that could have explored principles driving practices (Lindgren, 2005). Additionally, some studies reported mentors' adherence to a transmission view of teaching and learning, which restricted comprehension of notions like critical reflection and a dualist concepts of theory and practice (Clarke & Jarvis-Selinger, 2005; Sundli, 2007).

Essentially, these forms of limited mentoring have been reported to hamper beginning teachers' development, and the use of learner-centred approaches. In addition, beginning teachers were less likely to question the conservatism inherent in teaching practices (Feiman-Nemser, Parker, & Zeichner, 1993). Instead of attracting a sociocultural model of learning, mentorship that emphasises the needs and challenges of beginning teachers can promote an individualistic model (Feiman-Nemser, 2010). In such situations, teachers feel that they have to find out things for themselves (Flores & Day 2006; Flores, 2004). In addition, the culture of teaching supporting an individualistic approach can be unintentionally augmented by mentoring support, especially where induction programmes are heavily reliant on mentorship (Feiman-Nemser, 2010).

Beginning teachers need to know that they not alone in their experience, and through a process of experience sharing, an experienced teacher can assume this role. Roehrig and Luft (2006) reiterated the consequential and significant role of the experienced teacher for the continuance of the beginning teacher's functioning and development. They described the experienced teacher as endowed with knowledge and wisdom based on their reflective teaching and numerous interactions with students. Timely advice and crucial support, the authors explained, ensures that new teachers are made part of the education community. The intention is to find solutions for their professional needs in order to allow them the space to focus on student learning. The actions of an experienced teacher can create an environment conducive to continuous development, hence ensuing strategic support will impact and ensure professional growth (Roehrig & Luft, 2006). Sato, Akita, and Iwakawa (1993) supported this argument when they reiterated that "many point out that the best way to improve their

teaching is to reflect upon their own teaching and that the most effective advisers are their colleagues at school” (p. 108).

Studies have also revealed that effective mentorship is not reliant on pairing a mentee with just any colleague, but rather with one who can model good professional practice, who possesses subject specialism, is experienced, and has sufficient knowledge (Abell, Dillon, Hopkins, McInerney, & O’Brien, 1995; Roehrig, Bohn, Turner, & Pressley, 2008). A few studies go further, pointing to effective and experienced colleagues as being a necessary but not adequate requirement for a good mentor, given that not all teachers make good mentors, and that a good mentor may not be effective for all beginning teachers (Johnson 2004; Schmidt, 2008). For example, school leaders are often less effective mainly due to inadequate time for mentoring, and for beginning teachers’ reluctance to reveal their difficulties to their school leaders when they are seen more as supervisors and less as colleagues (Hobson et al., 2009).

A collective endeavour to teacher support is seen as more fruitful rather than one that relies heavily on, or places high expectations on, individual mentors. Demands placed on mentors to impact or direct the practices of beginning teachers has been framed as too unreasonable (Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1993; Strong & Baron, 2004). Current research suggests that context and mentees’ high expectations of mentors can create dependency on personal preference, as opposed to shared standards of effective practices. Research has also identified a relationship between the presence of collegiality, and students’ success. For example, Newmann and Wehlage (1995) found that the most successful schools can be identified by a shared purpose of high quality learning for all, a strong professional community, and emphasis on teacher commitment and competence. These schools are said to create “opportunities for teachers to collaborate and help one another achieve the purpose; and teachers in these schools took collective — not just individual — responsibility for student learning” (p. 3). In the absence of a collective endeavour towards improving teaching, most individual practitioners will find it a challenge to maintain the enthusiasm to engage in ongoing reflection to develop their teaching to impact on students’ achievement. This is because structures such as mentoring or meetings, in themselves, are not sufficient to ensure the professional interaction and collective responsibility among teachers across experience (Kardos et al., 2001). The study of Moyles, Suschitsky, and Chapman (1999) around mentorship in schools in England, explored the views of mentors, principals and beginning teachers. Mentoring was judged effective when the general school ethos valued and utilised support systems for all staff. Beginning teachers in this study benefitted from more informal

mentoring. There was more involvement by a greater number of staff members in informal mentoring when the school had a collaborative ethos amongst staff (Moyles et al., 1999).

Within effective mentorship, several factors can enhance this aspect of induction. For instance, Ingersoll's (2002) survey of teachers and principals in all 50 states in the US. Ingersoll found that beginning teachers with both same-subject mentors and collective induction experiences were less likely to leave their schools and teaching than those who did not have same-subject mentors and collective induction experiences. Similarly, Lee and Feng (2007) identified collegial aspects as important variables in successful induction. They conducted a study in China on the forms of support that were given by eight dyads of mentoring teachers and first-year secondary school teachers, and identified that collegial cultures, teaching workload, and style of mentor-protégé interactions were among the factors that influenced the nature of mentoring support for beginning teachers in secondary schools (Lee & Feng, 2007).

Literature on mentoring demonstrates a near-consensus in arguing for a sense of communal responsibility for teacher learning. In the absence of this, beginning teachers may not position themselves as members of a wider collectivity, in which they perceive themselves as functioning toward improved learning and teaching for all students. The characteristics of school culture and attributes of school organization are crucial interceding factors in determining the socializing impact of colleagues, and the characteristics of the mentoring relationships in beginning teachers' induction.

### **Schools as professional learning communities**

This section presents the concept of schools as professional learning communities. It argues for contexts that can encourage beginning teachers' professional learning and development as they assume membership of their specific community.

Professional learning communities originate from the concept of "communities of practices" developed from the works of Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger to describe contexts where individuals jointly construct, transform, conserve, and or negotiate meanings of practices (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Professional learning communities have been framed as recognising teachers' professionalism, and promoting their learning. Hargreaves (1991) explained that teaching in such cultures is marked by "beliefs, values, habits, and assumed ways of doing things among communities of teachers who have had to deal with similar demands and constraints over many years" (p. 271). Day (1999) reasoned that an understanding of teachers and teaching entails the consideration of the cultures and

communities they work in. Attached to professional learning communities are two main assumptions: first, that knowledge is contextualised in the daily experiences of teachers, and best comprehended through reflection with others who share the same experiences, and second, that active participation of teachers in professional learning communities will consolidate and then augment their professional knowledge and improve students' learning (Buysee, Sparkman, & Wesley, 2003). Bianchini and Cavazos (2006) recognised membership in professional learning communities as one of three dimensions in encouraging teacher reflection and transformation, in addition to learning from inquiry into one's practice, and learning from students. Bianchini and Cavazos (2006) pointed to typical characteristics of professional learning communities as consisting of meeting frequently over prolonged periods; sharing similar goals and values; participating in collaboration, and critique of personal work and that of others. In this model, professional learning communities recognise teachers as capable professionals with numerous perspectives to share (Bianchini & Cavazos, 2006).

The learning that takes place in a learning community has been defined as a process of constructing knowledge of practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). Given this, teachers are viewed as creating this knowledge across a professional lifespan. In such instances, classrooms and schools are regarded as contexts for inquiry and teachers connect their work in school to a wider context and take a critical view of the philosophy and research of others (Bianchini & Cavazos, 2006). Learning demands obtaining skills, language, habits of mind and knowledge required to become members of a community of practice. Therefore, for a beginning teacher, at minimum learning to teach is learning to take the role as a member of a specific school and department (Bianchini & Cavazos, 2006). The establishment of a community of critical colleagues is pertinent for beginning teachers if they are to transform their context. This can occur in settings where critical friends "debate, critique, and challenge one another to go beyond their current ideas and practices" (Nieto, 1999, p. 160). The tendencies that encourage transformation are underscored by the notion of equity and diversity. Diversity and equity entail the constructing and maintenance of critical collegiality as means to challenge and move past the status quo (Nieto, 1999).

Schools that display cultural strengths marked by shared values can provide a nurturing environment for beginning teachers. Feiman-Nemser (2003) argued that the teaching culture beginning teachers encounter in their workplace can determine whether the early years of teaching becomes a period of constructive learning or a period of coping, adjustment, and survival. Transforming schools into effective cultures has been a

preoccupation for many stakeholders (e.g., policymakers; school leaders; teacher educators, and teacher education course providers) as they have come to recognize their role in facilitating improvement in teaching and learning (Flores, 2004). Effective cultures can encourage teachers' empowerment through professional growth, facilitate innovation and reform implementation (Day, 1999). Sarason (1990) pointed to the difficulties in establishing and sustaining fruitful circumstances for students' learning when they do not exist for teachers. An environment that facilitates positive beginning teachers' experience, and provides for their professional learning and development at the beginning of their career seems to have a positive domino effect. Such environments connect well with beginning teachers' ability to create a positive learning environment for students' learning (Sarason, 1990).

School cultures are important in helping beginning teachers' meet the high expectations of their workplaces as contexts for advancing their professional autonomy. Etelapelto and Saarinen's (2006) review of empirical studies of the relationships between individual teachers and their social context revealed that student-teachers perceived schools as places for learning and for professional issues to be sorted out. Etelapelto and Saarinen (2006) pointed out that if this is to occur, then schools needed to enable the learning of teachers by establishing features that nurtured the beginning teachers' aspirations, thus creating a context which facilitates and acknowledge beginning teachers' input. A school culture that fosters learning and makes it permissible for teachers to question the status quo is important. This tendency creates a culture conducive to working and learning environments (Wood, 2007). It also means fostering a cooperative culture that goes beyond the engagement of just a few staff in school activities (Weiss, 1999). If there are only a few committed staff, most will be deprived from such engagement. This is linked to the concept of weak cultures where the influence to get staff working within a desired parameter is lacking (Kardos & Johnson 2007). Weiss (1999) takes this issue further by connecting weak cooperative cultures to teacher attrition. In Weiss's study of nationally sampled first year k-12 teachers, in the US, he found that a school culture supporting teacher participation and collaboration in decision-making was linked to stronger commitment to teaching, higher morale and intentions to stay in the profession. A weaker culture was found to have limited collaborative and participatory work ethic, which did not sustain commitment but rather impinged on beginning teachers' socialization and retention. This link between weak school culture and teacher attrition has been the focus of policy makers, who target a change of school culture in policy effort (Cooper & Alvarado, 2006).

A cooperative atmosphere marks a strong school culture, where beginning teachers' interaction and contribution are welcomed alongside the input of the more experienced. Kardos and Johnson (2007) explored "integrated professional culture" through a survey involving 486 first and second year teachers (p. 261). In this survey, they investigated beginning teachers' experience in their workplace and alongside their colleagues. "Integrated professional cultures" were identified as cultures that encouraged mutual and recurrent interactions between staff with varied experiences. The findings showed that in these cultures beginning teachers' requirement as novices were acknowledged and participatory roles between teachers at the school were cultivated (Kardos & Johnson, 2007). In an earlier study of beginning teachers' status in an integrated culture Kardos et al. (2001) explained that the "novice status" of the teachers did not hold a negative connotation, or an official label. It indicated an existing attitude towards these teachers that took into consideration their novice status, and support systems were incorporated to cater for their requirements.

Other cultures encountered by teachers in the study by Kardos and Johnson (2007) included a veteran-oriented professional culture and a novice-oriented professional culture. In the veteran-oriented culture, teachers' autonomy and privacy was the norm. This did not exclude the fact that the experienced teachers were socially friendly; however, beginning teachers did not benefit from the advice of the more experienced teachers about effective practices. Therefore beginning teachers reported that they worked in isolation as solo practitioners. The assumption held by the experienced teachers was that these beginning teachers would exhibit the qualities of expert practitioners from the moment they entered the workplace, in the absence of a professional network at school level (Kardos & Johnson, 2007). Another group of beginning teachers reported being assigned to a school where the school community had a larger group of beginning teachers. Given this, the values and perceptions were marked by a novice-oriented professional culture. The views and values of beginning teachers were dominant in the professional culture at the expense of the professional expertise of more experienced teachers (Kardos & Johnson, 2007). Kardos and Johnson (2007) argued that whilst the experiences of beginning teachers were different in both novice and veteran oriented cultures, the results were similar: limited guidance from more experienced teachers. In integrated cultures, assistance within the school for beginning teachers was in the form of "sheltered opportunities" (p. 2100), which entailed roles suitable to their experience and expertise, alongside the provision of extra assistance. This situation provided beginning teachers with the space to improve their practices, and share in responsibility for students and school. Kardos and Johnson's study identified the pivotal role



of school leaders in creating an environment to acknowledge the needs and status of beginning teachers, and challenging the “sink or swim” concept (Kardos & Johnson, 2007).

Schools as communities that encourage learning, especially for beginning teachers are crucial in facilitating beginning teachers’ transition to expert. Day (1999) portrayed the first few years as a two-way struggle, where teachers attempt to form their own social reality by trying to align their work with what they envisioned it to be. This attempt is carried out against the backdrop of “the powerful socialisation forces of the school” (Day, 1999, p. 59). A study undertaken by Flores and Day (2006) revealed the presence of competition and balkanisation amongst teachers, and unwritten and inherent rules at the schools that adversely affected beginning teachers’ attitudes as well as their pedagogical practice. In particular, innovation and progressiveness were impacted. Therefore, learning for these beginning teachers became a lonely process and their identity was bounded and confined by culture, resulting in idiosyncratic coping strategies in the face of poor induction, and lack of guidance from school leaders (Flores & Day, 2006).

These coping strategies are linked to Lacey’s (1977) notion of “social strategy” (p. 67). The socialisation process of the early career teachers into the school culture entailed an adoption of its norms and values. Using social strategy, most teachers gradually adopted an attitude of social compliance, despite this not matching with their beliefs and values. The beginning teachers’ proactive enthusiastic attitude, visible during their first year of teaching, was replaced by a sense of conservatism (Lacey, 1977; Flores & Day, 2006).

Thus evidence suggests that too much emphasis on collaboration to lessen isolation and individualism can impact negatively on teaching culture. Within the context of effective school culture, literature reveals that while teacher collaboration is a cornerstone to facilitating teacher and school development (Sanders, Sharp, Eames, & Tomlinson, 2006), and has the potential for fostering innovation and change within a school, teacher contrived collaboration will not prevent teacher individualism (Avila de Lima, 2001; Hargreaves, 1991; Huberman, 1993). Avila de Lima (2001), for example, argued against the assumption of teacher collaboration as comparable to unequivocal improvement in teaching and learning. Hargreaves (1991, p. 80) pointed to the problems of “contrived collegiality”, and suggested this may impede teachers’ professional growth rather than support learning. It has been indicated that an over-emphasis of collegiality and teacher collaboration may ironically facilitate teacher competition, visible in balkanised school cultures (Avila de Lima, 2001; Hargreaves, 1991). Hargreaves explained that the imposition of collaborative working

arrangements by administrative means may undermine teacher individuality in a way that impacts negatively on practice. Hargreaves (1991) pointed out that some teachers prefer working alone whilst others like working collaboratively, thus contributing to the diversity of school culture. Forcing collaboration can lead to the unravelling of co-existing cultures within a school, undermining the opportunities for teaching growth and development (Hargreaves, 1991).

In brief, an understanding of teachers' professionalism and teaching entails the consideration of the cultures they work in. Recognising schools as professional communities means comprehending the standards and beliefs of practice, mutual goals, and circumstances for cooperation (McLaughlin, 1993). By participating with colleagues in professional tasks and conversations, beginning teachers can augment their knowledge of instructional practices. This can take the form of a social process where learning to be critical and reflective moves away from an individualistic endeavour (Putnam & Borko, 1997). This social process conceptualises learning as getting to understand how to partake in the practices of the community and participating in the discourse (Putnam & Borko, 1997). Learning based on a continuum means depicting beginning teachers collaborating with other teachers on professional activities. Working with others on tasks relating to teaching and thinking, and talking about challenges, exposes teachers to a divergence of ideas. Knowledge of what underlies the practices of others and self provides a way of altering beliefs and gaining knowledge of other instructional practices (Uhlenbeck et al., 2002).

### **Key principles of effective induction**

As revealed by this literature review induction is framed as a process of enculturation, a phase in learning to teach, and a programme of support and development. Research has clearly established what constitute effective key components of effective programmes. Effective induction programmes are seen as crucial enterprise in building the teaching profession and making sure that all teachers are part of a learning community aimed at improving the learning outcomes of all students (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2011; Servage, 2012).

In New Zealand and Canada, for instance, an effective induction programme is seen as being comprehensive, educative, and evaluative. The comprehensiveness of any programme is evident in its numerous components of support that are implemented and sustained for at least two years. Given the varied and personalized requirement of beginning teachers' support and professional learning needs, a wide-ranging programme includes various interventions that in

turn add to the quality of the programme (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2011). The comprehensiveness of an induction programme is also pertinent given the objects or purposes of induction. Anthony, Haigh, and Kane's (2011) research revealed four objects of induction namely; "orientation to learning about the context", fitting into the school, completing registration requirements, and becoming a professional inquirer" (p.864). However, while beginning teachers are expected to experience these objects as part of their induction, the balance and focus of these objects are likely to vary depending on the localised and systemic context (Anthony et al, 2011).

The various interventions that add to the comprehensiveness and effectiveness of an induction programme necessitate a series of support mechanisms. Continuous professional development and support from a variety of sources, contact to external professional network, quality mentoring, and evidence-based teacher evaluation all add to this comprehensiveness and effectiveness (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2011). A corollary of these features is the role of individuals involved. Support from mentors, school leaders, and beginning teachers' colleagues have been underscored as most essential when planning effective first-year teacher support (Curran & Goldrick, 2002; Johnson & Kardos, 2005; Wong, 2004). It is likely that the nature of the roles of these individuals is determined by the context where beginning teachers' induction support occur.

As noted a key principle of an effective induction programme is that it is a period of learning in addition to assessing whether a beginning teachers is ready to gain full registration. Therefore, effective induction programmes are both evaluative and educative in nature. An educative component, as Servage (2012) noted, orients induction as a period of intensive and sustained professional learning. The implication is the exposure of beginning teachers to learn and practice a range of skills and attitudes to allow them to become competent professionals who can improve students' learning (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2011). What is required from beginning teachers to gain full registration is a matter for the national registration body of respective countries. However, it is reasonable to suggest that evidence collected by the beginning teachers can serve as indication of progressive feedback, reflection, and learning. Evidence often in eportfolios or portfolios can also serve to ascertain the progress of beginning teachers towards registration requirement. In summary, effective induction programmes are comprehensive, educative, and evaluative. Such programmes fulfilled and embrace different purposes from enabling beginning teachers to fit in the

context, learning about their schools, learning to teach, and learning to become competent professionals (Anthony et al, 2011).

This section has argued for a view of beginning teachers as a special group of teachers that enter their workplace with particular professional learning needs. If these learning needs are neglected or left to chance, they will impact negatively on both these teachers' learning and that of their students. Effective induction, supportive school cultures, and mentorship have been discussed as facilitating the professional learning and socialisation of new teachers. These supports acknowledge that beginning teachers are still learning although they have responsibilities as teachers. As teachers engage in teaching practices that recognize their professionalism, they must also be recognised as learners that need guidance, curriculum resources, and feedback. Support programmes for beginning teachers must be fostered in supportive, collaborative, and learning focussed school cultures.

### **Rationale for the Study**

Given the complexity of teaching, and the challenges faced by teachers with increasing technology, socio-political contexts, and economic globalisation, it is important that both support provisions, and the notion of teaching effectiveness itself, reflect these complexities and changes. Change has certainly affected the Seychelles Islands, as exemplified by the reforms that has taken place over the last decades. Beginning teachers in this period of rapid transformation are required to undertake numerous roles and often take on additional responsibilities. As Cheng and Cheung (2004) explained, these roles are associated to pedagogical practice; changes in curriculum; student learning experiences; educational innovations; professional learning and development, and working with parents and the community.

Reviewing the current trends in research into education has highlighted the challenges that beginning teachers face as they increase their responsibility for the learning of their students. It has also highlighted the challenges for current induction programmes in enabling beginning teachers to learn the political, social, pedagogical, and contextual nuances known by effective teachers. In the Seychelles, while the centralised education system does aspire that its beginning teachers thrive in their working environment, a practical process to support this aim is still developing. Ensuring access to timely and effective support programmes for beginning teachers comes to the fore as a crucial endeavour for schools, MoE, and teacher education in facilitating quality teaching. Support for beginning teachers can also be a

challenge depending on the facilitating and impeding factors. Given the absence of empirical research on beginning teacher's support and effectiveness specific to the context of Seychelles, the study undertaken in this thesis will complement and extend the existing knowledge base on the issue.

Given that the nature of beginning teachers' support, the notion of effectiveness, and subsequent learning processes to acquire expertise is contextual, it is important to understand how the formal and informal induction process for beginning teachers is played out in the Seychelles context. An in-depth investigation, employing qualitative multiple case studies and a national survey, will contribute to a comprehensive understanding of this area.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

This research, which is predominately of a qualitative nature, presents a multi-faceted view of beginning teachers' support, learning, and teaching practices. This chapter identifies the specific methods used for data collection and analysis, and examines the principles and paradigms underlying my research design. Specifically, it establishes the sociocultural lens and ethnographic methodological framework used for this study; explores the mixed-method approach chosen for this investigation; describes and provides a rationale for the research tools used; and explains the procedures for sampling, piloting, data collection, and analysis. The issues of reliability, validity, data triangulation, and ethical implications are also explored.

#### **Research Questions**

The research methodology in this chapter addresses the following major research questions:

1. How are beginning teachers supported in their school contexts?
2. What factors influence their support and learning?
3. What constitutes effective practices for the cohorts of teachers and schools?
4. What factors influence beginning teachers' teaching practices, and why?

#### **Theoretical Influences**

The intention of this research is to contribute to and inform current practices about beginning teachers' support, learning, and teaching within the Seychelles context. It adopted both qualitative and quantitative methodical approaches. The use of the qualitative interpretive and subjective approach allowed for descriptive, phenomenological views of the studied context as perceived by participants (Cohen et al., 2011; Flyvbjerg, 2004). The quantitative approach was utilised to further understand the degree to which identifiable phenomena were present in the group of beginning teachers, which enabled formal generalisation (Flyvbjerg, 2004). The use of both qualitative and quantitative orientations addressed the issues of breadth and depth that tend to arise with the use of a single approach (Flyvbjerg, 2004).

Contemporary and ongoing debates concerning the nature and intention of educational research internationally set the context for my research (Atkinson, 2000; Ball, 2001; Hammersley, 2007; Hargreaves, 1996). Current debates have tended to foreground the tensions between researchers and educational practitioners. Hammersley (2007), Day (1997), and Bates (2002) point to the research field as being too complex to presume that a direct link can be made in relation to research and its applicability to classroom contexts. Hargreaves (1996), on the other hand, attested to the serious contribution that research could make towards knowledge, and in particular, its applicability to practice. Atkinson (2000) argued that the function of educational research is mainly to increase the crucial discourse between teachers and researchers, as well as providing the opportunity for deliberation and contemplation of a greater scope of solutions to classroom issues. A similar position is taken by Ball (2001) who showed how research as an educative process has the potential to enrich teachers' decision-making, reasoning, and reflection concerning their practice, even if it does not provide definitive solutions.

Hammersley (2007) traced the increasing tendency of research to inform practice and policy, and to involve both researchers and practitioners. He points to the deficiency of research paradigms adapted from the natural sciences as one of the factors that may impede this process. Hammersley (2007) argued that a scientific model with positivist tendencies failed to produce conclusive and cumulative findings in response to genuine issues in educational research. There has been wide ranging discussion on the issue (and according to Hammersley, some wallowing), however, he upheld the view that one can approach a science of human behaviour modelled, even tenuously, on the natural sciences.

Deliberations over methodology, especially those concerning the influence of the natural sciences on educational research have been referred to as the *paradigm war* (Gorard, 2001), in which educational research, more particularly practitioner research, has tended to "side" with ethnographic research approaches. Gorard (2001) perceived this as counterproductive, noting that either positivist or ethnographic research methodologies could be effectively used, depending on fitness for purpose. On the other hand, Morrison (2002) argued that researchers should be clear about the philosophical tradition and epistemological perspectives supporting the research, as these may have substantial bearing on the researcher's personal point of view and, to some extent, the outcomes of the research.

## **The sociocultural theory**

This study draws upon a sociocultural theory for an improved understanding of how a better model for supporting beginning teachers can be implemented. This theory is premised on the notion that contextual factors can determine beginning teachers' pedagogical practices and actions. These factors include, "support" in terms of policy; practice; mentoring, and resources which are pertinent in developing beginning teachers' expertise. The sociocultural theory is used as a lens in examining and understanding the interactions between these beginning teachers in their individual settings. In doing so, it is hoped the manner in which learning occurs, and the manner that support facilitates such learning, are better highlighted. Putnam and Borko (2000) argued for a comprehension of the settings where teachers learn and practice their profession through an adoption of sociocultural theory approaches.

Different perspectives within sociocultural theory describe learning as occurring in social contexts (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1986; Wenger, 1998). The basis of the sociocultural theory is the work of Lev Vygotsky. Central to the sociocultural theory is the argument that the human mind is mediated by socially constructed artifacts, including, most importantly, language. Mediation is the means by which external forms of social interaction are internalized into forms of mental function (Eun, 2008). Biologically, humans are endowed with cognitive skills, which, to a large extent are shared with higher primates. However, from a sociocultural viewpoint, memory and thinking emerge in, and are essentially formed through, social interactions in which we are engaged (Valsineer & Van der veer, 2002). This calls into question the notion that learning is only an internal or mental activity marked by individuals accruing knowledge and skills, commonly assumed to be transferable from setting to setting (Niewolny & Wilson, 2009). In fact, even in the most private spheres of human consciousness, mental functions still maintain a social nature (Eun, 2008). Therefore, cognitive growth is necessarily socially facilitated, and the manner in which our consciousness grows is reliant on the specific social activities in which we participate (Valsineer & Van der veer, 2002).

Contemporary sociocultural theory suggests the notion of a situated learning in professional learning communities consisting of experts and novices (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Knowledge is therefore bounded to specific settings of social practice, and is always entrenched in a social context shared within a group or community (Valsineer & Van der veer, 2002). Within a community of teachers, those developing capabilities and the more capable partners who provide assistance are both present for the duration of the collaborative



enterprise (Kaarinen, 2009). The implication of Vygotsky's theory is that learners should be provided with socially rich environments in which to explore knowledge domains with their fellow students, teachers, and outside experts (Kaarinen, 2009).

Human interactions and negotiations prevail when teaching and learning occurs in socially contextualised activities. Given this, the roles of culture, motives, values, and discursive practices become central (Goos, 2008). When teaching and learning are situated as social activities, practitioners' beliefs, objectives, behaviours, and their settings are assumed to interact dialectically (Dunscombe & Armour, 2004; Lyle, 2003). From a sociocultural perspective, a dialectic view is seen as the best means through which beginning teachers can become involved members of a community of teachers through socialisation (Dunscombe & Armour, 2004; Lyle, 2003; Schempp & Graber, 1992). The dialectic works in order to help individuals examine the context they exist in, to be cognisant of the difficulties that impede a transformation of the world in which they live, and to facilitate a communal endeavour to change that world (Schempp & Graber, 1992). Therefore, the nature of social contexts in which learning and teaching communities are situated has been recognised as highly relevant to learning (Dunscombe & Armour, 2004).

Another central tenet of Vygotsky's theory is that their learning is impacted through its zone of proximal development. This "zone" is the region of exploration for which the learner is cognitively prepared, but needs assistance and social interaction for development within (Valsineer & Van der veer, 2002). One implication of this is the need to situate social interaction in purposeful activities geared toward realizing specific goals. Another implication is the need for support providers to adequately assess prevailing and potential levels of development for beginning teachers (Eun, 2008). In addition, effective application of Vygotsky's theory is conditional on knowledge of students, self, curricula, and subject matter (Cobb & Bowers, 1999).

In sorting out pedagogical issues, for instance, collaborative approaches necessitate a view that teachers' development and learning does not occur in isolation (Putnam & Borko, 2000). The learning that stemmed from teacher support is socially driven and gives rise to professional growth within the confines of existing social settings (Valsineer & Van der veer, 2002). Given this, support at school level also determines teachers' future development. For beginning teachers, this means the array of activities in which they participate as learners and professionals in schools mould their thinking, which then serves as a foundation for their reasoning as teachers. This reasoning is first used as an instrument to think about the nature

of their involvement in activities that they are engaged in (Valsineer & Van der veer, 2002). Second, it serves as an ingredient in the development of activities with advanced complexity and creativity (Valsineer & Van der veer, 2002).

From a sociocultural standpoint, social activities achieve meaning and are structured by cultural and historical instances (Valsineer & Van der veer, 2002). For example, when a teacher describes a classroom activity as successful or a student as unprivileged, these portrayals have certain roots. They are entrenched in sociohistorical concepts that define being unprivileged in a given society and that explain what success is in a given educational organization (Johnson & Golombeck, 2002). The definition and explanation alters depending on the context. The means that although individuals carry mediated history and memory, these traces are redefined as the individual interacts with each specific sociocultural setting (Mayo, 2000). Redefinitions in new settings is dependent on whether the individuals have access to, and are ready to utilise practices, beliefs, and identities which constitute effective participation in their specific setting. Further to that, as discussed in earlier sections, “effective” itself is subject to individual definition (Mayo, 2000).

Sociocultural theory provides a lens for examining how beginning teachers become expert in their profession, and how they learn to appropriately teach students. The theory serves as a means of understanding and examining how beginning teachers’ are supported in this endeavour. Such a lens also allows for a comprehension of the settings where teachers learn and practice their profession. The aforementioned can be achieved, for instance, by gauging their interactions with colleagues, students, mentors, administrators, and subject specialists in their environment. All these influential factors in beginning teachers’ contextualised challenges, learning, and support are viewed with a sociocultural lens.

### **Ethnographic research**

This study was conducted within an ethnographic framework, in order to understand the context and conditions for beginning teachers in the Seychelles, and the influences on their early experiences of teaching. Ethnographic methods offer opportunities to elicit participants’ experiences and provide rich descriptions of them, just as sociocultural theory provides a theoretical lens for the researcher to try to understand the insights, meanings, and experiences of participants (Whitehead, 2005; Williamson, 2006). From an ethnographic perspective, it is through frequent observations, dialogues, and structured interviewing that the ethnographer gets to comprehend the sociocultural contexts, processes, and meaning systems that are pertinent to the study participants (Whitehead, 2005).

Fetterman (2010) described ethnography as naturalistic, observational, contextual, descriptive, in-depth, and open-ended. A methodological approach considers the interplay between empirical variables as they emerge naturally, rather than as according to a prior manipulation or arrangement by the researcher (LeCompte, Preissle, & Tesch, 1993). Given this, LeCompte et al. (1993) reasoned, “the naturalistic setting both facilitates on-the-spot and holistic analysis of causes and processes, and precludes precise control of so-called extraneous factors” (p. 39).

As a methodology, ethnography has been described in various ways, due to its evolution and growth through time and use in various contexts (Fetterman, 2010; Murchison, 2010). Nonetheless, Brewer (2000) remarked that researchers must not disconnect with the conceptual and theoretical link of ethnography to the discipline of anthropology, that is, it is charged with interpreting and describing cultural behaviour. These views are reiterated by Schensul, Schensul, and LeCompte (1999), who explained that whilst within an ethnographic framework, methodologists take different stances, they should adhere to four principles. As they argue, research should be: (i) guided by and generative of theory; (2) both quantitative and qualitative; 3) conducted locally; and 4) applied (p. 1).

There has been much debate over the inclusion of quantitative research within such a framework. Opponents point to the impossibility of converting beliefs or behaviour to numbers (Maruna, 2001; Schorr, 1997), whilst others affirm that only in its numerical form could data be amenable to statistical analysis (Sale, Lohfeld, & Brazil, 2002). These divergent arguments have also been rejected by those that see quantitative research as an inherent part of an ethnographic framework. For example, Schensul et al. (1999) argued for collection and integration of both types of data in ethnographic research, framing both numerical and descriptive elements as important aspects of the ethnographic research undertakings. As they argue, collecting valid and reliable qualitative and quantitative data is reliant on careful framing of culturally appropriate questions. Ethnographic research is described as typically generating quantitative data based on prior, locally based qualitative research (Schensul et al., 1999).

In carrying out my research into beginning teachers’ support, challenges, and teaching practices, I considered education as a cultural process. As Spindler and Spindler (1971) explained, such consideration recognises the individual members of a society; in this case the beginning teachers who are learning and acting within the context for improvement and maintenance. Spindler and Spindler (1971) see education as a tool for survival, adaptation, and change. Given this, they explained, “to understand education we must study it as it is –

embedded in the culture of which it is an integral part and which it serves” (cited in Sanday, 1979, p. 7).

### **The Mixed-Method Approach**

The research involved a mixed-method approach of three in-depth case studies and a national survey. As a method, the emphasis was on collecting, analysing, and incorporating the qualitative and quantitative data sets to contribute to a larger single study. This was based on the premise that both types of data in combination provided a better understanding of the research questions.

Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) asserted that mixed-method as a research approach has the potential to respond to research questions with greater depth and, therefore, produce more substantial data than using a single method. Mixed-method research reinforces theory building, generalising, and assumption testing (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Since both quantitative and qualitative methods each possess weaknesses and strengths, McMurray (2004) explained that “mixing” facilitates the compensation for the weaknesses of each method. The utilisation of mixed-methods therefore reinforces the validity of research by creating a network in the form of bridges connecting the two methods. This can improve the harmonisation amongst the techniques to identify relevant correlations, and generate ideas. McMurray, Pace and Scott (2004) term this approach as inter-triangulation. The incorporation of several techniques in a research design may generate a more precise perception of reality. It may also connect the gap between larger scope and more intricate levels of social reality. Simply put, quantitative research has the tendency to investigate social life and order from an extensive scale, while qualitative research principally examines the behavioural attributes of social realities at the micro level (Bryman, 2012).

The use of a mixed-method approach in this research was both a tactical deployment and pragmatic response, simply because it involved a reference to a situation where one method is applied with reference to another in order to engage a research agenda (McKendrick, 1999). Tactical deployment within the context of mixed-method implies the gaining of confidence of an audience; as McLafferty (1995) explained, policymakers have a tendency to be more mistrustful of conclusions drawn from small sample. Mckendrick (1999) explained that if the researcher intends to convey pertinent findings of mixed-method approach, then cautious assimilation of findings from a quantitative survey could prove supportive in acquiring the conviction of an otherwise wary audience. This is consistent with Fielding and Fielding’s (1986) suggestion concerning guidelines in using mixed-methods.

They indicated that “what is important is to choose at least one method which is specifically suited to exploring the structural aspects of the problem and at least one which can capture the essential elements of its meaning to those involved” (p. 34). Therefore, in aligning with the ethnographic framework and in consideration of the pragmatic and tactical deployment, the case studies served to inform the survey aspect of this research. This approach to implementing the mixed-method is commonly used, whereby the researcher explores how individuals describe a topic through case studies, and then uses analysed data to construct a survey instrument to administer to a larger sample of the population (see Ely, 1995; Tashiro, 2002). Similarly, in this study, the survey was aimed at generalising aspects of the case study findings in targeting policy makers, and in addressing the first three research questions from a larger sample of beginning teachers. In addressing this aim, a contribution was also made to the breadth of the findings.

### **Case Study**

Within the framework of this research, the case studies had both formative and summative elements (Bassegy, 2002). They endeavoured to facilitate further improvement of support for beginning teachers in their transitions, learning, and teaching by taking stock of the current situation (Bassegy, 2002). This relates to another definition of case study put forward by Yin (2009), that takes into consideration the embodied nature of this research approach, “covering the logic of design, data collection techniques, and specific approaches to data analysis” (Yin, 2009, p. 14).

Yin (2009) defined case study as: (1) an empirical investigation that seeks an occurring phenomenon within a contextual reality, in particular when the limitations between content and phenomenon are not clearly palpable, and (2) an enquiry that deals with precise and unique contexts in which there are multiple variables of interest rather than data points. As a consequence, case studies are dependent on various sources of evidence where data congregate in a triangulating manner. This can benefit the research with an earlier development of theoretical propositions to facilitate data collection and analysis. This definition, according to Yin (2009), identifies the case study as a wide-ranging approach, uniformly applicable to both multiple and single case studies. This was so with my research as it involved a case study design which considered multiple sites, and was both exploratory and, to some degree, evaluative in nature. Case study is currently widely accepted and utilised as a model of research both as a constituent of a larger research design, and as relevant in its own right (Simons, 1996; Yin, 2009).

Given that the underlying principle in selecting a research approach is fitness for purpose (Gorard, 2001), case study was chosen as one of the approaches for this research as it was well suited to the research design. One purpose of my research was to establish a comprehensive picture of the various constituents and processes of support for beginning teachers' in facilitating their teaching practices. This perception was described by individuals; the case study was therefore judged as being able to generate the richest data sets in terms of both the intricacies and distinctiveness of the situation (Simons, 1996). Verma and Mallick (1999) point to one of the strengths of case study being its ability to allow the researcher to centre on a particular instance or context, and to examine the differing and shared processes in action within the situation.

Some of the probable advantages and weaknesses of case studies are pointed out by Cohen et al. (2011, p.19) as follows:

- i) Case study data is strong in reality, being contextual and near to one's own experience. The authors affirm that although it is hard to organise, the outcomes are more often than not presented in language accessible to a wider audience.
- ii) There is a tendency for case studies to capture unique aspects of a circumstance or phenomenon, attributes which may be pertinent to providing comprehensiveness to the context. Case studies acquire the nuances and intricacies of the case specific to its context.
- iii) Consideration to unforeseen occurrences and independent variables is taken into account.
- iv) Case studies provide insights into other comparable situations and in doing so permit a level of generalisation in relation to an occurrence, or from an occurrence to a class.
- v) In relation to a wider perspective, the outcome of case studies is limited in terms of generalisation, apart from situations where other researchers foresee their applicability.
- vi) There is a tendency for case studies to be selective, subjective, and biased, and not inclined towards crosschecking
- vii) Case studies attempt to address the issue of reflexivity but are subjected to issues of observer's bias.

Concerning generalisability, Bassey (1999; 2002) suggested the use of fuzzy generalisability, which he differentiated from statistical and scientific generalisations, based

on the premise that fuzzy generalisations contain aspects of inconclusiveness. He explained such generalisation as a “qualified generalisation”, which carries possibility but not certainty (Bassey, 1999, p. 49). He proposed that this notion of fuzzy generalisation is a suitable one in terms of research in areas of education where human complexity is crucial (Bassey, 1999). Hammersley (2007), however, disputed the indistinctiveness of generalisation. According to Hammersley, Bassey's fuzzy generalisation is a type of formulation which is applicable to all predictions related to scientific generalisations in any case.

Yin (2009) added to the debate by comparing the scientific generalisations within case studies with scientific experiments where generalisation can be based on a single experiment. He concluded that case studies, like experiments, are generalisable to theoretical propositions but not to universes or population. Consequently, similar to experimental approaches, the case study is not representative of a sample, but rather it caters for the likelihood of developing and generalising theories. Yin termed this “analytic generalization” (Yin, 2009, p.37), and explained that in case studies a researcher is trying to generalise a certain set of outcomes to a broader theory.

Any theory should be subjected to testing by replicating outcomes in further cases, where the theory has pointed to the occurrence of similar results. Once the replications have been done, the outcomes might have the possibility of being accepted as giving sufficient support for the theory; this irrespective of further replication being carried out. Since this particular study consists of similar types of enquiry implemented in three different schools, there is a possibility of using Yin's concept of analytical generalisability to form a theoretical framework which can be used to generalise the findings of the cases (Yin, 2009).

Case study research in principle refers to two distinct research approaches. Within the context of an educational setting, the first entails an in-depth study focussing on a particular school with the intent of providing a nuanced description of the permeating cultural backgrounds that influence education (Flyvbjerg, 2004). In addition, the relationships of interactive actions that occur between relevant persons are also divulged (Flyvbjerg, 2004). The second approach in relation to case study comprises the utilisation of quantitative research methods to non-probability samples. This will accumulate and provide results with limited designs for generalisation.

As mentioned, this research attempts to provide perspective and understanding of the status of beginning teachers' in their pursuit of improved teaching practices. This therefore, required an ethnographical examination of the situation. Consequently, the multiple case

study aspect of this research was exploratory and discovery-oriented. Whilst attempts were made to present theories relating to the topic at hand, the underlying concept was “grounded theory” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p. 52).

## **Survey**

Surveys gather data about people and their thoughts and behaviours and describe a population using quantitative descriptors or statistics to explain basic components of the experiences of large or small populations; they count, and describes what is out there (Sapsford, 2007). Groves et al. (2009) defined the survey as “a systematic method for gathering information from (a sample of) entities for the purposes of constructing quantitative descriptors of the attributes of the larger population of which the entities are members” (p. 4). They suggested that the goal of a survey, as indicated by the definition, sets it apart from other attempts to describe events or people.

Groves et al. (2009, p. 20) described surveys as essential building blocks in a contemporary information-based society. They distinguished surveys from other information-gathering activities based on the following characteristics:

- i) information is collected mostly by asking people questions;
- ii) information is gathered either by interviewers posing questions and recording responses, or by getting people to read or hear questions and record their answers;
- iii) information is retrieved from a representative subset or sample of the population.

Groves, Biemer, Lyberg, Mathiowetz, and Sudman (2004) pointed out the adverse impacts of survey measurement errors, indicating that at the time survey responses are collected such errors may interfere and connect in a manner that will cause degradation in the accuracy of response. Conversely, Wood, Daly, Miller, and Roper (1999) pointed to surveys as having high external validity, good potential for theory creation, ease of repetition, and being relatively inexpensive to organise. Furthermore, Biemer and Lyberg (2003) pointed to the attributes of survey as follows:

- i) it provides a unique way of gathering information not present in other sources;
- ii) the probability sampling used is objective and represents population interest;
- iii) the data collected from every respondent is based on a standardised form of measurement;
- iv) when an analysis needs perspective, the collected data is used to complement those from secondary sources;



- v) rather than collect information from all members, it does so from a subset or sample (Biemer & Lyberg, 2003).

A context-specific surveys design was utilised in this study allowing for the collection of data across a cohort of 78 beginning teachers in the 10 secondary schools in Seychelles. Findings and analysis from the case studies formed the basis for a framework and development for survey questions. The use of survey not only provided a profile of information valid to the situation and conditions of the phenomena, but also allowed for generalisation (Sapsford, 2007).

### **The Case Study Schools**

One of the central principles of case studies is recognising the pertinence of the setting within which the phenomena under investigation occur. Cohen et al. (2011) asserted that case studies acknowledge that the setting is a crucial and mutual determinant of causes and effects. For instance, Bassey (1999) asserted the unlikelihood that educational actions, or the repercussions of educational decisions, could not be studied reliably outside their normal context. Johnson (1994) similarly stressed the importance of setting, suggesting that case study allows for exploration of a contemporary phenomenon in reality when the confines between phenomenon and context are not evidently clear. Fertig (2000) argued that consideration for context in educational research is especially pertinent for developing countries, where adoption of educational models from the developed world occurs without proper contextualisation. Fertig's argument is relevant to the Seychelles secondary school system, where many of the features of the system are adopted or adapted from overseas (for instance, the secondary curriculum and the school improvement programme).

In this research, case study data were gathered in three secondary schools in Seychelles, all located on the main island, Mahe. The availability of science beginning teachers, and consent received from them, contributed to determining where the study took place. Sampling was therefore focussed on subject specialisation (science). It is generally agreed that researchers need to articulate their skills and experiences to make explicit their location in the research process (e.g., Creswell, 2009; Giddens, 1982). According to Creswell (2009), qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups attribute to a social or human issue. Giddens (1982) noted that valid descriptions of social activities assume that researchers have those skills essential to partake in the activities. Giddens (1982) noted:

I have accepted that it is right to say that the condition of generating descriptions of social activity is being able in principle to participate in it. It involves “mutual knowledge,” shared by observer and participants whose action constitutes and reconstitutes the social world. (p. 15).

The choice of three science teachers in the case study exemplifies this “mutual knowledge”. Given that these teachers’ lessons were to be observed and discussions were to be held about their teaching, as researcher I felt that sound subject knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge (i.e., a special kind of knowledge that teachers need in order to teach a particular content knowledge in a manner that could be understood by a particular group of students to enable their learning) were necessary. My background as a former science teacher and part-time lecturer constitute a prerequisite understanding of the development and needs of beginning science subject matter specialists and other beginning teachers in general.

The sizes of the schools range from about 700 to 1,000 students. These schools are representative of the 11 secondary schools spread across the three main islands in which the survey that targeted the 78 qualified respondents was conducted. General comprehensive education in Seychelles is guided by principles that underpin inclusive teaching and learning (MoE, 2000). The schools’ budgetary resources are almost entirely financed by the state, even though recent changes have facilitated respective school councils in approaching the community for additional resources (Seychelles Nation, 2010). Areas relating to management and resources are based on a centralisation system controlled by the MoE (Leste et al., 2005).

### **Case Study Instruments**

Bassey (2002) explained that relating to case study research, in which the methods of data collection and analysis are not specific, that researchers should be guided by attention to research ethics. He further pointed to three main methods of gathering research data in case studies: i) posing questions; ii) observing occurrences; and iii) reading documents. Cohen et al. (2011) pointed to the use of a wide-range of techniques in the gathering and analysis of data. Simon (1996) asserted that case study allows for the inclusion of several modes of data collection which, in turn, can allow for a greater understanding since it is more complex and allows for several perspectives.

Fogelman (2002) emphasised the need for care in sampling in order to facilitate generalisation. Cohen et al. (2011) further explained that with regards to qualitative and quantitative data, the pertinent prerequisite is that the sample should effectively be

representative of population from which it is taken. For this study, three beginning teachers, their heads of department, and deputy head teachers in three separate case study schools were selected. Several methods of data collection were used in the case study part of this research including document analysis as well as semi-structured interviews with all participants. Three classroom observations were carried out in each of the three beginning teachers' classes, and these were followed with post-hoc interviews. Informal discussions also occurred with beginning teachers. The utilisation of multiple collection techniques caters for the possibility of methodological triangulation, and consequently greater validity (Cohen et al., 2011).

### **Interviews**

Interview displays the centrality of human intercommunication for knowledge creation, and accentuates the social situatedness of research materials (Cohen et al., 2011). Essentially, interview allows interviewers and interviewees to discuss and negotiate their interpretations of their context. However, the level of formality of an interview can influence the degree of such interpretations. Wragg (2002) proposed the use of structured interviews as being most suitable when numerous questions are posed which are not necessarily antagonistic or thought provoking. On the other hand, semi-structured interviews are more appropriate where the query entails a deeper deliberation and probing. Wragg (2002) explained that semi-structured interviews are typically directed by a carefully phrased interview schedule, but the interviewer can ask further probing questions, take notes, and allow for the interviewee to respond at length within the confines of the questions posed. These interviews are based on a continuum running from formal interviews to the most informal conversations (Murchison, 2010).

In this study, the formal interviews took place in two parts for all participants and were conducted in the first and last week of the data collection period; informal discussion took place only with the beginning teachers. The use of informal discussions in addition to the formal interviews allowed the beginning teachers to express their ideas profoundly and, consequently, allowed the researcher to probe their interpretations of those beliefs. Some of the participants in this study engaged in code switching between three languages – English, French, and Creole – but mostly used English and Creole. Therefore, they had the choice of replying in all three languages, even though the questions were written in English. Participants were free to choose the language that they wanted the interview to be transcribed into (though for the purpose of communicating the research, the interviews were then translated into English).

The interview schedule for beginning teachers consisted of questions guided by the research questions relating to four main areas: i) their experience and adaptation into the school culture; ii) the nature of their support and the school/department teaching culture; iii) their notion of effective teaching and what it entails; and iv) their teaching practices and justification for their approaches. The questions ranged from general to specific issues with further probing (appendix 9).

The informal dialogues with these beginning teachers were conversational in nature, focusing on experiences, feelings, and perceptions to provide information about challenges they were experiencing, or their thoughts about the lesson. These dialogues were not recorded directly, instead the researcher took notes which were transcribed into a research journal. Given the spontaneity of these dialogues, the beginning teachers were informed that all conversations were to be regarded as data for the research. Nonetheless, these teachers were sent all transcribed materials for their verification and comments. One teacher requested that certain words or phrases not be used in direct quotes since they represented her “thinking aloud thoughts” or was “nonsensical phrases”. These were seen as muddling the meaning of sentences and, as such, her request was adhered to.

Within the selected cases, the respective heads of the mathematics and science departments, as well as the deputy head teachers, were involved in individual interviews. Given that there were two deputy head teachers at each school, priority for the interview was given to the deputy overseeing the mathematics/science department, in line with the beginning teachers’ specialisation. Interviews with deputy head teachers covered four main areas: i) their roles, responsibilities, and the school culture; ii) the nature of support for beginning teachers’ and the teaching culture; iii) their notion of effective teaching and what it entailed; and iv) teaching practices at the school. The questions ranged from general to specific issues, and made provision for further probing (appendix 10).

It should be noted that these listed investigation areas served as a *guide* in eliciting responses. In line with an ethnographic research framework, interviews were used as a way of accessing the participants’ meaning-endowing capacities, and to produce rich, deep data that came in the form of extracts of natural language (Brewer, 2000). As a result, probing took place, allowing participants to raise or further explore issues that they deemed appropriate to the issues around the four areas.

## **Observations of classroom teaching**

In this study, an unstructured observation schedule was used to gather data (appendix 11). The observation data were interrelated and correlated with other methods to facilitate an understanding of classroom behaviours. Moyles (2002) explained that the use of observation provides for a more holistic picture, especially where data may not necessarily be forthcoming via interviews. Moyles (2002) pointed to observation as pursuing explicit evidence from the perspective of the observer; it has the potential to augment and supplement data retrieved through fundamental and flexible research tools, enabling the researcher to collect live data from real contexts. Classroom observation allows for a rich description of the actions of teachers and other students (Brodner & Brickhouse, 1992).

In conducting this study, six lessons were observed from each interviewed beginning teacher, with attention paid to the inclusion of low and high achieving classes. The observations were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim into field notes. The field notes concentrated on collecting data the audio-recorder could not capture, such as the teachers' and students' interactions, movement, and written responses or notes. The beginning teachers were given copies of the written observations to check for accuracy, and to comment on any areas that they thought did not represent their ideas or views. The three teachers expressed satisfaction with all details. Based on these observations and subsequent post-hoc interviews following these lessons, a holistic picture of these beginning teachers' teaching was built.

## **Document analysis**

Document analysis has a venerable tradition in research, a consequence of the value associated with written text in administrative systems (Cortazzi, 2002). Cortazzi asserted that written text should serve as contributing data in a manner that is independent of the researcher, as well as of the time and place of the communication. Nevertheless, a lack of understanding of the circumstances of document formulation may result in an impairment of understanding (Cortazzi, 2002). Documents used in this study (e.g., lesson plans; professional development files; school development plans and policies, and recent inspectorate reports) served to complement, and in some instances supplement, other sources of data. Cortazzi (2002) proposed that document analysis as a secondary form of research allows for triangulation in a case study, and such triangulation enhances the validity and reliability of the research study. Dually, it serves another crucial purpose: providing evidence of teachers' effectiveness when it is difficult for teachers to explain in speech. This function of document analysis is supported by Brown and McIntyre (1993), who have pointed to the challenges that

effective teachers have in articulating what they do in the classroom. Further concurrence also comes from the study of Cooper and McIntyre (1996) whose research points to the difficulties that teachers have in articulating their craft.

Documents were purposively sampled for their relevance to the enquiry (Fogelman, 2002), and allowed a further dissection of beginning teachers' support, learning, and teaching practices. In short, the documents yielded information that gave a fuller picture of the background and the context of the phenomena being researched.

### **Questionnaire**

The survey in this study was designed to gauge beginning teachers' views at the national level; in particular issues around how beginning teachers perceive, experience, and account for effective teaching practices, and their view of the support they receive. The questionnaire was organised to gauge respondents' opinions through a series of rated items and open ended questions (appendix 13). It targeted the estimated 78 beginning teachers teaching across all subject areas in the Secondary School system, with one to three years of teaching experience. This constitutes a comprehensive selection, since all members of the relevant population of beginning teachers were targeted (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). Targeting all potential participants ensured a greater chance for a high response rate. Therefore, a quantitative-survey-relating variable was used in addition to a qualitative section. An overview of the research design is presented in Figure 3.

A Seychelles case of beginning teachers' support, learning, and teaching practices

Case study school A

*Interviews*

Focussing on a beginning teacher: Two formal interview, six post-hoc interviews and informal discussions

Head of department: Two formal interviews.

Deputy head teacher: Two formal interviews.

*Classroom Observation*

Six unstructured observations using field notes.

*Document Analysis*

School policies, departmental professional development files and lesson plans, and recent inspectorate report.

Case study school B

*Interviews*

Focussing on a beginning teacher: Two formal interview, six post-hoc interviews and informal discussions

Head of department: Two formal interviews.

Deputy head teacher: Two formal interviews.

*Classroom Observation*

Six unstructured observations using field notes.

*Document Analysis*

School policies, departmental professional development files and lesson plans, and recent inspectorate report.

Case study school C

*Interviews*

Focussing on a beginning teacher: Two formal interview, six post-hoc interviews and informal discussions

Head of department: Two formal interviews.

Deputy head teacher: Two formal interviews.

*Classroom Observation*

Six unstructured observations using field notes.

*Document Analysis*

School policies, departmental professional development files and lesson plans, and recent inspectorate report.

**Survey**

Targeting beginning teachers with 1 to 3 years of experience from all 11 Secondary Schools in the Seychelles

Figure 3: Diagrammatic representation of the ethnographic research framework; data from the interviews, document analysis and interviews formed the basis for three case studies. A survey component of the mixed-method approach was formulated from the case studies' findings.

## **Accessing the Research Sites**

Once the administrative, ethical, and logistical processes to select the respective candidates for the case studies was complete, data collection commenced and was undertaken from February 2011 to July 2011. Approval to conduct this research was sought from the Principal secretary of education via e-mail. A letter, generic in nature, was acquired from the MoE introducing the researcher and indicating that the MoE was aware that the researcher would be approaching schools for consent (appendix E).

The three participating schools were contacted for consent through the Head teacher, via a letter (appendix F). Once the head teachers consented to research taking place in their individual schools, information sheets (appendix G) were passed on to the case study beginning teachers, HODs, and Deputy head teachers directly by the researcher. Each participant returned the completed consent forms (appendix H) to the researcher in sealed envelopes. In the case of targeted questionnaire respondents, there were no separate consent forms, only an information sheet (appendix H), and the receipt of the completed questionnaires indicated consent.

## **Piloting of Instruments**

The evaluation of research instruments to ensure greater reliability and validity can be achieved through piloting (Cohen et al., 2011). Prior to authentic fieldwork it is pertinent to seek feedback on the validity, clarity, and quality of the instruments in order to ensure achievement of purpose (Bell, 2005). This is particularly so when fieldwork includes interviews and observation, as the probability for subjectivity is higher. In cases where there is direct intervention with participants, either through interviews or observation, there is always the possibility of researcher bias and interpretation. A pilot trial can reveal where the instruments can be strengthened, and can identify issues for address before time and resources are spent on the real, larger studies (Cohen et al., 2011). Furthermore, piloting the instruments provides an indication of the amount of time it takes to administer the instruments, and the feasibility and relevancy for participants of the whole endeavour. It provides a framework to enable decision-making about the process and eventual analysis (Bell, 2005).

Therefore, all instruments used in this study were piloted with leaders and teachers in a secondary school that did not participate as a case study school. Following the framework that guided access to the research sites for the research proper, permission to access the pilot



site was sought and consent obtained from participants. Piloting comprised of formal interviews with a head of department (HOD), a deputy head teacher, and a beginning teacher. A lesson observation and subsequent post-hoc interview were also carried out. In piloting the questionnaire, to extend the sample size, teachers with up to five years of experience were chosen and 10 questionnaires were returned.

In piloting the instruments, I also adhered to Moyles' (2002) notion of piloting as a form of training for the researcher. Accordingly, data gathered from the pilot phase, and comments from participants and supervisors were gauged to ensure that the process was ethical and yielded quality data. For instance, the pilot revealed a need to remain alert to respondents' interpretations of questions and their responses that required further probing. As a result, careful and systematic use of probe questions was added to my interview design, to be used to aid respondents to elucidate, elaborate on, or amplify their responses.

Feedback from respondents and further consideration by the researcher also provided insights on improving the collection of observation data. For instance, it was found necessary to focus more on jotting down thoughts and hunches, or analysis whilst observation data were being gathered. This was found to be important because it added to the descriptive and rich account of the classroom, and also because quite often a question or insight came up that required a follow up during the post-hoc interviews, or as a supplement during the formal interviews. The pilot also prompted the need for the operationalization, or unpacking, of some of the noted teachers' or students' action. A few minor changes were also made to the questionnaire following the piloting.

### **Validity, Reliability, and Triangulation**

A series of actions were taken to facilitate the reliability, and validity, of this research study. While risks to reliability and validity can never be completely avoided, however, the effects of those risks can be underscored by attention to validity and reliability during the whole research process (Cohen et al., 2011). Bush (2002) explained that although several types of validity have been identified by writers on research methods in education, the main distinction is between internal and external validity. Validity, reliability, and triangulation are all significant, but their importance and salience varies according to the standpoint of the researcher (Bush, 2002).

My first focus was reliability of data. Since the piloting of the interviews and questionnaires was carried out with a group of individuals who did not participate in the

study, this, to some degree, ensured greater reliability, as pilot participants provided suggestions about instrument design. Bush (2002) explained that instrument design and testing are vital components of the reliability process, and should be considered well ahead of research commencement, as in some cases, the researcher may not be present as the data are collected. According to Hitchcock and Hughes (1995), “validity is concerned with the extent to which descriptions of events accurately capture these events, for example, the extent to which the material collected by the researcher presents a true and accurate picture of what it is claimed is being described” (p. 105).

The strength of the survey findings was augmented by the representativeness of the sample. The respondents to the survey aspect of this mixed-method study were highly representative of the beginning teachers’ population, as evidenced by the response rate of 72%. In addition, and in accordance with Cohen et al. (2007), the parameter features which were utilised as the sampling frame for recruiting participants to the survey were set clearly at the commencement of the study. They were rigorously and systematically adhered to throughout the entire process of sampling participants. All surveyed beginning teachers had between 1 and 3 years of experience, and were recruited from across all relevant secondary schools.

Triangulation of data involves comparing many sources of evidence in order to establish accuracy, and is a means of cross-checking data to provide its validity. Bush (2002) identified two main types of triangulation, stating that both were important: i) methodological triangulation where several methods are used to explore the same issue, and ii) respondent triangulation where the same questions are asked of many different participants. Methodological triangulation was ensured through the collection of data from questionnaires, classroom observation, interviews, and document analysis, thus comparing many sources of evidence in order to determine the accuracy of information or phenomena. Respondent triangulation was done by interviewing different groups of people (School managers, HODs, and beginning teachers) concerned with beginning teachers’ support, learning, and teaching practices and factors influencing these.

### **Data Analysis, Organisation, and Interpretation**

The process used by a researcher to reduce data to a story and its interpretation is called analysis (Lecompte & Schensul, 1999). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) state that, “analysis involves working with data, organizing them, breaking them down into manageable units, coding them, synthesizing them and searching for patterns” (p. 156). This transformation of

data is aimed at producing concise statements that describe and explain what has been studied (Lecompte & Schensul, 1999). Stake (2005) detailed a metaphorical presentation of analysis as findings emerging “like an artistic mural created from collage-like pieces that make sense in ways when seen and understood as part of a greater whole” (p. 432).

An inductive analysis approach (Patton, 2002; Stake, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) was used for analysing the qualitative data of the study undertaken. Patton (2002) described induction as, “immersion in the details and specifics of the data to discover important patterns, themes, and interrelationships; begins by exploring, then confirming; guided by analytical principles rather than rules and, ends with a creative synthesis” (p. 41). Therefore, an inductive approach is aimed at allowing important patterns identified from the cases being researched to surface from the data, rather than presuming what these dimensions will be (Patton, 2002). Inductive reasoning means allowing for adjustment in concepts, and relationships between concepts, that pervade the research process. The intention is to accurately depict the reality of the situation (Patton, 2002).

Data analysis was ongoing throughout this study, rather than being limited to the end of the data collection period. Schensul et al. (1999) explained that with ethnographic studies, important parts of the analysis are often made while the researcher is still gathering data. Ongoing analysis allows for flexibility where the researcher can widen, narrow or change the direction of the research in light of what is found, or as the theory is developed (Schensul et al., 1999).

An inductive approach to data analysis meant coding (classifying, or sorting) data without a pre-conceived coding frame (Patton, 1990). Stake (2005) described coding as a common aspect of qualitative analysis, while synthesis meant to sort data sets into topics, themes and issues crucial to the study. This identification of themes or patterns adhered to a “bottom up” approach as opposed to a deductive approach or the “researchers’ analytic preconceptions” (Clarke & Braun, 2013). An inductive approach also required an immersion into the data descriptions in order to comprehend and interpret particularly meaningful sections arising from the descriptive cases. Data were not regarded meaningful by themselves, but were rather driven by what the researcher sought and ways that data were interpreted. This entailed identification of meaningful sections or patterns dependent both on the research focus and theoretical orientation (Hammersley, 2007). While initial categorizations were shaped by pre-established study questions, the analysis process remained open to inducing new meanings from the existing data (Berkowitz, 1997).

Hammersley (2007) explained that a commitment to a “dialectical interaction between data collection and data analysis is not easy to sustain in practice. It may well demand lengthy withdrawals from the field in order to process and analyse the data before returning to collect further data” (p. 159). This is particularly relevant and an important consideration for this research, given that the data collection phase was carried out overseas. Whilst data analysis was seen as an ongoing process, three weeks were spent solely on immersion in data analysis, subsequent to the three weeks that were spent collecting data in one school. This “withdrawal” immediately after data collection in each school was to capitalize on the familiarity with the data and allow for any immediate follow up. The process also alerted the researcher on issues that could be picked up in other schools.

Berkowitz (1996) suggests considering the following questions when coding and analysing qualitative data:

1. What patterns and common themes emerge in responses dealing with specific items? How do these patterns (or lack thereof) help to illuminate the broader study question(s)?
2. Are there any deviations from these patterns? If yes, are there any factors that might explain these atypical responses?
3. What interesting stories emerge from the responses? How can these stories help to illuminate the broader study question(s)?
4. Do any of these patterns or findings suggest that additional data may need to be collected? Do any of the study questions need to be revised?
5. Do the patterns that emerge corroborate the findings of any corresponding qualitative analyses that have been conducted? If not, what might explain these discrepancies? (p. 38).

These questions are crucial in enabling what Patton (2002) called “working to be true to the data” or to ensure that the analytic process is “data driven” (p. 58). Inductive analysis is therefore built on a solid foundation of particular, concrete, detailed observation, quotations, documents and cases. As Patton (2002) explained, an overarching construct develops during analysis, as the researcher continuously goes back to the cases, and rereads field notes and transcribed interviews. This means working from the bottom up, remaining grounded in the underpinning of the case write-ups, and therefore examining emergent themes and constructs in view of what they provide about the case study descriptions on which they are based (Patton 2002).

The “database” developed from collected case study data was comprised of three units of data, one from each of the three schools, and was compiled to preserve as much of the initial detail as possible (Yin, 2011). This approach was adopted to allow focus on differences in individuals’ experiences, and subsequently the case studies were written using data from each research participant. Given the use of personal judgement to decide what to extract from the data, Yin (2011) describes the process of building a database as vulnerable to unknown biases. Precautions to minimize or prevent such biases were undertaken by using three procedures: (1) constant comparison (to produce and determine new categories by finding connections and variations; (2) negative instances (finding mismatch in items that were on first consideration identified as being similar) and, (3) rival thinking (looking for other explanations for early observations) (Covan, 2007; Howitt & Cramer, 2011; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The quantitative data were analysed using SPSS version 18. This allowed the responses to be coded and aggregated in ways that yielded frequencies and percentages. The use of descriptive statistics established the extent of the participants’ views, at the national level, around their support and how they perceived, experienced and accounted for effective teaching. Bryman (2012) explained that percentage distributions and the number of participants within any particular category could be easily interpreted. The reported frequencies and percentages as outcomes from the survey have been reported in order to allow judgment to be made about the conclusions reached. The frequencies and percentages were calculated to reveal trends in support and notions of effective teaching for beginning teachers. Both the qualitative aspects of the survey and the case studies provided explanation for the trends revealed by the use of descriptive statistics.

Interpretations of the cases were built through “thick description” (Yin, 2011). According to Yin (2011), thick descriptions help readers to recognise the worth of, and acquire a greater understanding of, the issue being studied. Patton (2002) argues that endless description can “become its own muddle,” so argued that purposeful analysis should make the data manageable, writing that “description provides the skeletal frame for analysis that leads into interpretation” (p. 437). The descriptive framework used in this study fits Yin’s (2011) “description plus call for action” (p. 214) mode of interpretation.

This study attempts to propose a model for support for beginning teachers’ that translates into effective classroom action. Therefore, this study presents its findings by adapting a context sensitive, holistic approach (Patton, 2002). This is done in an attempt to

avoid simplistic linear modelling based on linear assumptions (Patton, 2002), and in order to find greater understanding of the particularities of each case, as well as the complexity of the realities beginning teachers experience (Stake, 1995).

Drawing conclusions from the gathered data is linked to both the interpreting phase and empirical findings, and can therefore be considered as an analytical phase (Yin, 2011). The conclusion of this research has adopted two approaches: (i) calling for new research, given the exiguity of research in the Seychelles on past or current practices related to beginning teachers' support and transition, and (ii) proposing a support model, which provides a framework for beginning teacher support, guided by emerging findings. Yin (2009) explained that a commendable case study is portrayed by its "significance" and "completeness," that it contemplates other empirical standpoints, is mindful in its inclusion of ample evidence and is "engaging". I have conducted this study with the aim of fulfilling these criteria.

### **Ethical Issues**

The phrase "research ethics" invokes a series of important matters, which are often taken for granted (Macfarlane, 2009). Research ethics primarily surrounds the conduct of researchers towards research subjects, especially relating to issues like: i) the treatment of individuals with dignity and a guarantee of respect for their rights; ii) ensuring the anonymity of the research subjects; and iii) keeping collected data confidential. In all manners of research conducted with human subjects, the need for informed consent is of prime consideration. Essentially, it should ensure that research subjects understand what they are engaging in. These are some of the important considerations of research ethics. Macfarlane (2009) argues that a movement towards acquiring knowledge of the ethical challenges of research does not only relate to the role of the researcher, but also to the growth of a specific character, one equipped to steer past the enticements of the whole research endeavour (Macfarlane, 2009). Researchers have an obligation to refrain from causing harm to research subjects or to the socio-political context in which they work (Busher, 2002). On the one hand, it is challenging to foresee the types of harm that can be created as a result of research taking place. It is an obligation on the part of the researcher to lessen any inconvenience that could be caused to participants. This could include physical harm or/and psychological pressure (Busher, 2002). Overall there is a necessity to maintain a balance between the participants' rights and the researcher's attempt to pursue their research endeavour (Cohen et al., 2011). Cohen et al. (2011) asserted that the comportment of the researcher should not be distorted

into by the confines of a relentless mode of ethics. Last but not least, Cohen et al. (2011) affirmed that in contemplating possible solutions to specific moral challenges, individual situations often present a range of possibilities.

In view of the small size of the Seychelles secondary school system and the fact that there was a possibility that the school leaders were personally known to the researcher, ethical consideration was a critical issue. In such situations, and where a certain level of professional trust already prevails (Bell, 2005), it was relatively easy to seek the participants' informed consent and to deliberate with them, which arguably increased the likelihood of avoiding bias. However, overfamiliarity with the participants – at least those who had been the researcher's working colleagues – could also attract the danger of both parties being familiar with each other's views on various aspects of education, which may colour their responses to interview questions to some extent. Such issues necessitate the process of triangulation as well as that of piloting the interviews (Moyles, 2002).

With some participants, especially the beginning teachers, the researcher had to also face the challenge of re-positioning himself, to be seen as a doctoral candidate from Victoria University of Wellington (VUW), rather than as a ministry official. For instance, discussion with ministry officials in accessing schools and participants required a simple phone call once the MoE had given *verbal* consent. The absence of a well-laid out approach in accessing schools for research is also partly based on the small size of Seychelles, and familiarity with individuals. In addition, research as an activity is not well embedded in the Seychelles education system. Perhaps the 2008 establishment of the University of Seychelles will serve as a catalyst for research and will heighten awareness of the role of ethical conduct as research is increasingly pursued. However, with due regard for ethical values, the following concerns were given consideration: i) the choice for respondents to exclude themselves from the research at any time, without prejudice; ii) an assurance of confidentiality concerning information obtained through questionnaires, document analysis, interviews, and classroom observations; iii) citing particular cases through the use of pseudonyms throughout the research thesis; and iv) mutual agreement of the time for interviews and classroom observations through negotiation.

Participants were assured of confidentiality with regard to all information provided through the interviews. These were not shared with any other person except the researchers' supervisors. Participants' schools were not named at any point in reporting of the research. Where it was necessary to cite particular cases, pseudonyms were used throughout. Interview

transcripts were taken back to each respondent for verification, and these were later collected from the respondents by the researcher personally.

But as well as issues stemming from the small size of the Seychelles secondary school system, there were also cultural and socio-political issues that needed to be addressed. In beginning my research, I expected that some participants might take a formal or cautionary approach in interacting with the researcher. This cautionary approach has its roots in a socio-political context where alternative perspectives are open criticism of “authority” or the “system”. This is linked to Lacey, Jacklin, and Leste’s (1999, p. 171) notion of a “gossip network” prevalent in the Seychelles, which the authors noted “are extremely influential in the Seychelles at all levels” (p. 171). This concern was heightened as participants’ views were being recorded, and by someone they were likely to continue to perceive as a ministry official. Nonetheless, the researcher adhered to the principles espoused by the New Zealand Association for Research in Education (NZARE) professional code of ethics. Furthermore, in meetings with participants, the local language was used to better relate and establish understanding. It was also emphasised to these participants that their voices, through this research, would serve to contribute to policy decisions about enhancing support in response to the needs of future beginning teachers.

However, it was inevitable that some challenges would be faced. Internal mail from MoE addressed to individual staff is opened first by the Management if “through management” is written on the mail. This was cited to the researcher by a participant who opted for the interview transcript to be posted to her residential address instead of the school, since according to her, management, by mistake, may read her interview transcript. In another instance, a beginning teacher later asked that the interview be handwritten, though she had previously consented to a digital recording, nonetheless, she consented to additional time given that the interview would be handwritten. In this instance, the researcher had to seek consent from another beginning teacher as the process would have been tedious and important data could have been omitted. A knowledge and consideration of these cultural and contextual factors were deemed important for ethical reasons, and to ensure that in-depth data were captured from willing participants.

## **Summary**

This research was undertaken within a sociocultural theoretical framework, using ethnographic methodology. The research methods used in this enquiry are both qualitative and quantitative in nature. Using a mixed-method reflects the necessity for richness of the



data, allows for multiple perspectives on the phenomenon, and brings depth and breadth to the study. The choice of research tools – document analysis, interviews, observation, and questionnaire – augments the reliability and validity of the data, and this chapter has discussed the procedures that were followed to ensure that augmentation. Processes and techniques for data analysis were discussed, and the application of research ethics within the special context of Seychelles was fully considered.

## Chapter 4

### Case Study Descriptions

Three case studies taking place within different schools are presented within this chapter. Each case study foregrounds the experiences of a beginning teacher—Felicity, Ryan and Meg—through the integration of multiple data sources. The data are intended to establish the respondents' reality as they endeavour to implement and support effective teaching practices within the background of their specific school culture.

#### Description of the Data

The data for each of the three case studies were collected from three respondents from each of the three schools; the beginning teacher, the HOD, and the deputy head teacher. Each participant was involved in two-part semi-structured interviews, conducted at the beginning and end of the data collection process. The semi-structured interviews with the beginning teachers focussed on six main areas: (1) training and background; (2) perceived effectiveness of their teaching; (3) the process of induction they experienced at the school; (4) their views on the school culture; (5) the mentoring and monitoring process; and (6) the opportunities for professional learning and development at the school and in the departments. In line with the ethnographic framework, in all cases, the interviews were interspersed with supplementary and probing questions as the interviewees raised issues that required elaboration.

The beginning teachers' description, clarification, and meaning of classroom actions are presented from the six classroom observations and subsequent post-hoc interviews to gain an understanding of their teaching practices. Finally, data from documents are analysed and presented in order to substantiate other data sources. These documents included school development plans which detailed the schools' mission, vision, and improvement priorities, and the most recent schools' external evaluation report. Where available, school policies were also included, with the expectation that they would shed light on governing principles, expectations, and accountability. The reporting of these findings in this chapter takes a descriptive tone with salient quotes from participants. The next section gives a time-based narrative of the data collected at school A, beginning with a description of the research site.

## **Case Study A**

### **Description of the context**

School A, an urban school catering for about 700 students, is classified as a medium sized school. The school has more or less equal numbers of boys and girls. At the time of data collection, the school had approximately 60 teaching staff and 15 support staff (The approximation is given to maintain confidentiality). The senior management consisted of a head teacher and one DHT. Normally, there would be two DHTs; however at the time of research, and for the preceding three school terms, the school had only one. The DHT was responsible for overseeing the implementation of the national curriculum, and for pastoral care. With the senior management, the heads of department (HOD) (six in total), two heads of cycle, and the professional development facilitator formed the management team. The management team and the senior management also doubled up as the school improvement team, overseeing the implementation of the School's Development Plan. School development planning, alongside school-based professional development and learning is institutionalised as part of the national school improvement strategy. The professional development facilitator, typically an experienced teacher, assumed the additional role of overseeing the planning and implementation of professional development and learning activities in line with the school Development plans.

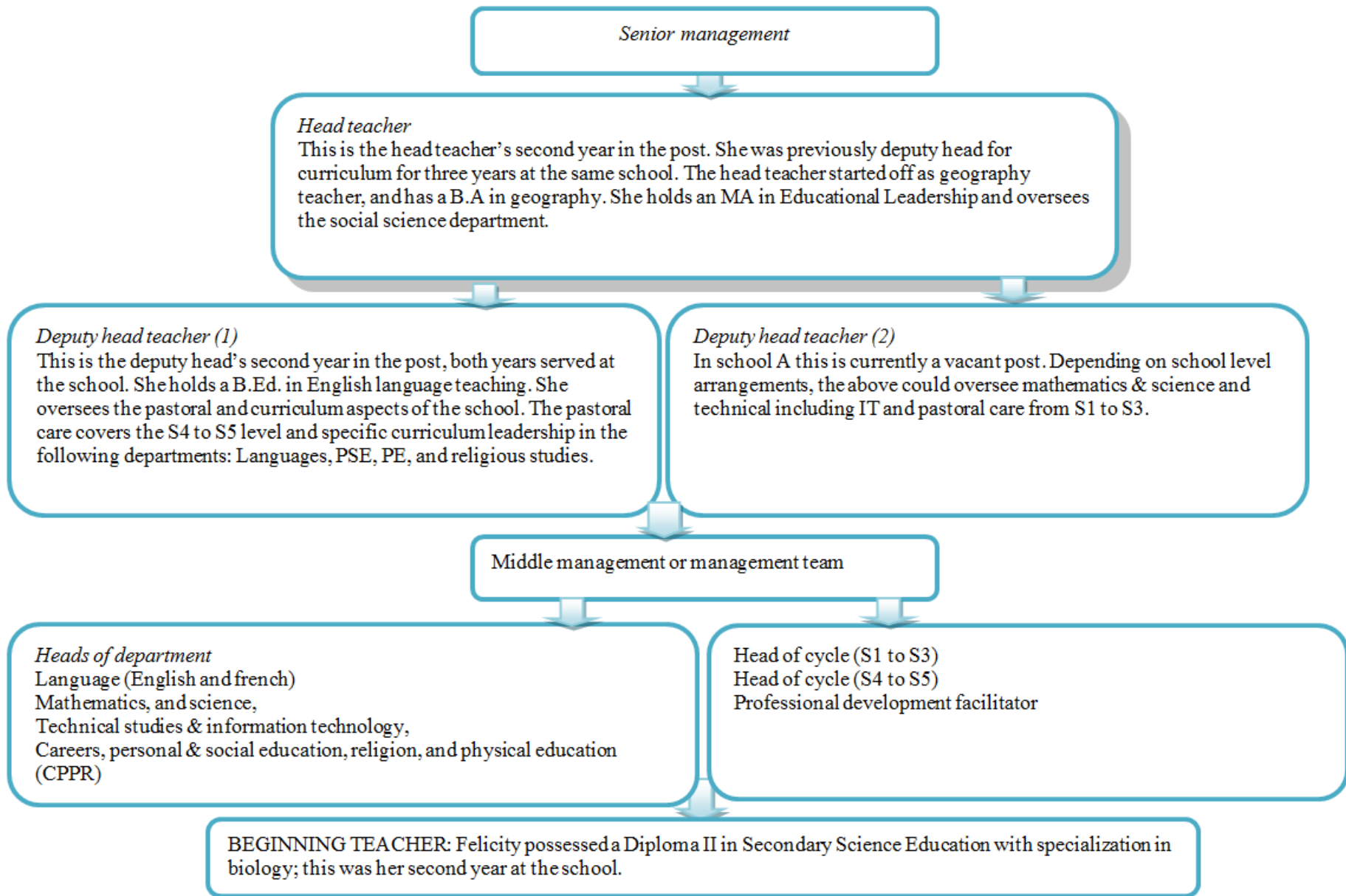


Figure 4: Diagrammatic representation of the national school structure in the Seychelles, with some details specific to the beginning teacher, Felicity in School A.

## **The Beginning Teacher's Experiences**

This section presents a time-based narrative description of data that emerged from the beginning teacher's interview. Interview data were clustered around areas: 1) The beginning teacher's background, and responsibilities; 2) Support, collaboration Professional development and learning; and 3) perception of self-effectiveness.

### **Background, transition, and responsibilities**

Felicity is a 25 year old teacher at school A. She had completed a two-year Diploma in Secondary Teacher Education in Science, a route necessary to pursue a two-year conversion Education degree in an Australian university. During her studies, an Education reform within the Seychelles resulted in the overseas degree arrangement being annulled. However, a Higher Diploma was established, for those teachers affected by the change, and Felicity completed this. The programme consisted mostly of generic education units over a period of six months. Felicity was then waiting for the University of Seychelles to formalise the local degree so that she could enrol in it. At the time of data collection, she was in the beginning of her second year at the school.

Felicity explained that she had to rely on her own initiative, without an initial orientation phase from either her department or her school as part of her induction and transition. In fact, Felicity revealed that she was unaware if the school had an induction programme. Like most participants in the research, there was a tendency for Felicity to use the term orientation and induction interchangeably. The term "general school induction" when used by participants meant an early orientation period, and these terms had to be clarified. She attributed the facilitation of her transition partly because she sometimes approached her former science teacher, who also once held the science HOD post. As Felicity explained, "she explained some procedures, like how to go about preparing assessments or the different formalities involved in planning and teaching". Whilst these interactions and advice were useful to Felicity, she had to seek them out.

She speculated that the school might have assumed she had knowledge of procedures and documentation. She explained, "maybe, because I went to this school when I was in secondary myself, the teachers were thinking that I know my way around". A lack of a subject specific induction or early orientation period meant that she had to learn some procedures by trial and error. She cited an example: "the lab

technician told me that you do not come today and ask for equipment for later during the day, you had to request well ahead”.

She also attributed some of her initial ill-preparedness at the beginning of her career to her training institution:

Also with the National Institute of Education, they did not train us well about procedures like taking registration and, of course, during my first year I was a class teacher so this I learn from one of my colleagues ... and how to put the register in order. Some of the courses they provide, when we've completed our training and we are teachers, we do not see the relevance of what we've gained—some main courses are missing, for example, teaching low ability students, the different procedures when you are a class teacher. Except for the courses that taught us about the content of our subject we're going to teach—that was relevant.

At the beginning of her second year at the school, in 2011, Felicity was approached by the head teacher to take on the role of head of cycle for the senior years. This inducted Felicity as a member of the school management, overseeing, alongside the deputy head, the pastoral care of students. Felicity's responsibilities entailed a supervisory role of students' pastoral issues, including meetings with parents when required. Given that she had to deal with these issues as they arose, she claimed that her schedule was generally more hectic than most teachers in her department were. However, she was not regretful of her decision, revealing that even with hindsight she would not relinquish it, “I think I would still have accepted because it is a plus for me to try out the job to see if I can do it or not and it would be an experience for me”.

### **Support, collaboration, professional development and learning**

Having gone through the transition period Felicity did not foresee moving to another school through her own initiative. She explained, “I wouldn't go to another school to teach, well if they send me because there's no other teacher then I might, I like my school”. She attributed the lack of progress in some areas such as access to resources to the MoE, “I am not happy how the ministry handles things, like being too lenient with very disruptive students and the problems of resources for the school, there's a lack of core text-books”.

Felicity noted opportunities she received to discuss issues with other members of her section, “Yes, I do talk about my teaching in my department and even during our department meeting. Also we do share some of the experiences we are encountering in our classes”. This opportunity was extended by virtue of her role as head of cycle, “I attend the special needs meeting, the disciplinary committee meeting, and even the management meeting”. Those meetings also provided Felicity with a platform to convey her challenges at a higher level, “I do share some of the experiences and if we discuss a particular student who belongs to one of my classes I do discuss [the student] behaviour”.

The HOD, being Felicity’s immediate supervisor and a member of the management, was pointed out as the one who enunciated, and monitored teaching standards in the department. Felicity gave the example that the HOD “emphasized on differentiating lessons,” that entailed teacher’s provision of worksheets and varied resources to facilitate delivery of concepts. A second focus was with respect to the standard of assessments. She described this as the time when the HOD “stressed a lot on good presentation and quality of questions, the clarity, and quality of diagrams”. However, Felicity’s description of the senior management’s involvement in her teaching over the two years she has been at the school revealed minimal direct contribution. Felicity stated that, “they do go around for classroom observation but unfortunately they have not come to any of my classes”.

Felicity felt free to approach some of her colleagues who were described as contributing towards her support needs. Apart from one of her classes that was observed by the HOD at the beginning of her first year and the subsequent feedback process, Felicity had not received further mentoring nor had any of her classes been observed after that. She pointed to the usefulness of that earlier feedback, which supported her teaching and classroom management in her low academic classes. Felicity explained that she did not hesitate to approach her former teacher for occasional support. This was important given she acknowledged some gaps in her subject matter. She explained, “Whenever I am teaching the chemistry part of the syllabus. I sometimes go to her for help with some concepts”. This relationship, which Felicity developed as a former student at the school, also extended to other teachers in her department, as Felicity relayed: “with Physics I get assistance from another colleague and even Biology though I am more confident”.

Felicity explained that since 2011, the science section within the mathematics-science department had assigned teachers to help the two beginning teachers and a supply teacher in the department. Felicity was assigned to support the supply teacher. The criterion for the assignment was primarily based on similarities in curriculum area. Felicity described her interaction with the supply teacher: “I clarify her questions, and if there’s an assessment that she prepares, she come to me to check her assessment”. This relationship involved, for the most part, the beginning teachers approaching their mentors for advice. The advice sought could be about location of specific resources, or issues of improvisation in the face of lack of or inadequate resources. Felicity’s role in giving support, stemmed from lessons learnt during her first year, “with the supply teacher I sometimes advise her on how to manage her class because she has a really tough class with many students having behaviour problems. I personally know some of the students. I taught them last year”. In addition, Felicity explained her role as guiding the beginning teacher towards resources and other curriculum material, as required.

Professional development and learning were largely obtained by Felicity through her participation in a two-year action research project and her on-the-job experience as a teacher. School-based professional development sessions that considered teachers’ immediate needs were less common. With respect to long-term professional development opportunities, Felicity expressed her desire to pursue her degree, especially since she wanted to stay in the profession. The main aspect of professional needs Felicity felt the degree would cater for was in the biological field. Having gained some experience in teaching, Felicity was able to contextualise the area that her training could cater for: “mostly at times if I don’t see the lab technician around I try to look for the chemicals and do the experiment myself ... simple experiment like testing gases, I have done it on my own but I need help with complex set-up”.

Despite the infrequent externally-based professional development opportunities, Felicity pointed to her participation in a two-year action research project that had direct impact on her teaching. She highlighted the main principles she learnt and is still applying: “to evaluate what you have taught and after that you can amend if there is any need and then re-teach the concepts”. Amongst the school-based professional development sessions held at the school, Felicity cited a recent one that directly catered for her needs and where she was also one of the facilitators. She explained, “It was about communicating with our students...it helped me to understand how to be



assertive with students”. Whilst pointing to her ability to utilise materials from the session, Felicity was not reluctant to admit to her shortcomings. She explained that “managing her students”, that is establishing productive relationship with them, was an area she was continuously exploring.

### **Perception of self-effectiveness**

Felicity explained that she felt a personal responsibility for her students’ learning and achievements. Part of this responsibility according to her was to recognize her shortcomings, and she engaged in professional activities that tackled these shortcomings. She explained, “I think it is important that I am good at what I do. It means being able to teach well, improving yourself, and asking when you are not sure”. She reported that her ability to freely approach her colleagues contributed substantially to her attempt to improving aspects of her subject matter knowledge and pedagogical skills. As Felicity reported:

I cannot teach students what I myself do not understand. I am a little stuck on Physics topic ... by talking to my colleagues, I sometimes ask them what would be the best way to teach certain topics or how to teach certain concepts to students.

Felicity was also cognisant of the importance of the internet as a vital reference tool to her improvement endeavours. She reported, “I get access to different sources like lesson plans that I find helpful, worksheets teachers have devised, to help with my physics and chemistry”. Time and access were limited at school level, therefore, internet was accessed at her place of residence. Felicity’s motivation to improve her teaching practice was reported to emanate from a love of her profession and a desire to augment her students’ achievements.

To gauge her effectiveness as a teacher Felicity placed a large focus on students’ academic achievements. She explained, “well, if by checking the students’ performance I see that students are performing well then I might come to the conclusion that I did a good job here”. There was less focus on gauging success based on classroom climate and relationships that could encourage more students to be successful. Indeed, as previously noted this was an area that Felicity struggled with in her low achieving class. She explained:

There are five boys in there having problems beyond my capabilities because of their social problems. I don't think they can stay in a classroom environment because, first, they do not want to attend classes; they just disturb others even if I have used different techniques on how to manage classes, but their problems are beyond my control.

Her efforts in establishing a nurturing relationship with those particular students was portrayed to be beyond her expertise. She explained that other experienced teachers reported to experiences of a similar nature.

### **The Beginning Teacher's Practices**

Six classroom observations were carried in three different classes, with two observations per class. Similar to other classes at the school, students across Felicity's classes were grouped into "low, average, and high ability" students<sup>1</sup>. In these classes Felicity was covering either the Chemistry or Biology content of the combined science curriculum. The weekly plans of all the above-mentioned classes, covering a period of six weeks, were also documented and clarifications were sought as required. Based on these observations, subsequent post-hoc interviews, and informal discussions a description of trends in Felicity's teaching was produced.

The lessons enacted by Felicity were generally structured and she had total control over information to be given to students. She adopted a piece-meal approach of presenting concepts through whole class explanation and discussion, interspersed with oral questioning or written exercises. In a way, this piece-meal approach was useful as it allowed a sequence from presenting concepts to regular checking of learners' understanding. Most oral questions were simple recall questions requiring one word or short phrase responses. In the instances where questions provided the opportunity for elaboration, students still opted to provide answers with the fewest possible words. These were rarely in complete sentences and it seems students had developed a habit of doing this. Take as an example a questioning session with a high achieving class of 14-15 year old students:

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<sup>1</sup> Whilst students and classes were referred to as high, average or low ability by participants, for the purpose of this research the term low, average and high achieving students or classes will instead be used.

Teacher: What is the function of the heart?

Student (no. 07): Pumps blood.

Teacher: Hazel, do you want to add to that?

Student (no. 09): Pumps blood around the body.

Teacher: Good.

Teacher: We know about our chambers, the chambers of the heart?

Student (no. 12): Ventricles and atria.

However, there was potential for the inclusion of student-centred teaching in Felicity's teaching classes. Positive student-teacher relationships were visible which served to create a nurturing environment. She explained, "I don't think I am strict, students know the class rules; I just need to make sure they know I will not allow poor conduct but apart from that they participate freely in my class". This was evident by virtue of her students' willingness to question their teacher as indicated by the field notes I took during observation:

1). One girl told the teacher that the periodic table indicated 'B' as the symbol for Beryllium and not 'Be' as presented by the student and endorsed by the teacher. 2). Felicity pronounced "Nitrogen" as "nahytrogen" a female student replied it was not so and that it is pronounced as "neetrogen", 3). Felicity explained that 72 beats indicates the normal pulse rate for someone who is healthy. She explained that below 72 that it means you are very active with your exercise but above that, it meant you are not exercising at all. One of the boys who gave 90 as his pulse rate interjected, explaining that he exercised a lot.

Right or wrong, these assertions and misconceptions had potential for Felicity to allow students to become co-creators in the teaching and learning process. Felicity, however, had yet to make the best of these opportunities. In addition Felicity presented some misconceptions, six were observed over the period of lesson observations. Take this example from the field note, "Felicity further noted that she preferred to measure at

the neck as opposed to the wrist, because of the Jugular vein”. Here she presented the notion that arterial palpation of the heartbeat can be evaluated from the venous system.

There was limited evidence in both her planning and in the lessons observed of Felicity teaching science as an inquiry. This was a missed opportunity given that the classroom environment was primed for students-centred approaches, as previously mentioned. For instance, in a lesson about the fractional distillation of crude oil, students were asked to first copy a series of written activities to be completed after the activity. In random groups, they then gathered around the set-up, whilst Felicity explained the process taking place in different areas of the set-up. Students freely asked for clarification and then resumed their places to copy a diagram from the board and to complete a series of exercises. These exercises required factual and discrete information. Therefore, the activity, a teacher demonstration, was prescriptive and confirmatory in nature rather than explorative. Overall, there were potential for the implementation of student-centred practices that were not being maximised.

One factor that impacted on Felicity’s teaching responsibilities was the overlapping that occurred with her responsibilities as head of cycle. For instance on her way to a class which was to be observed by the researcher, she arrived 15 minutes late as indicated by the subsequent field notes:

Felicity had to make calls to two parents to inform them that their daughters had been spotted in their uniforms in town since this morning. She then proceeded to the resource room and three students were already waiting to collect the science textbooks. On her way, back she stopped to talk to a girl as a follow-up on a social issue, whilst the students proceeded to the classroom with the books.

Whilst, as previously noted, the head of cycle’ responsibility was welcomed by Felicity it took time from her teaching sessions and at times appeared to take precedence. For example, Felicity would leave work for her students to attend parent conference alongside the DHT.

### **The Head of Department**

This section presents a narrative description of data that emerged from the HOD’s interview. Interview data were clustered around four main areas: 1) background

and responsibilities of the HOD; 2) induction and mentoring of teachers at the school; 3) the school's definition, standard, and expectation for effective teaching and; 4) support, collaboration, professional development and learning.

### **Background and responsibilities**

The head of the mathematics-science department at school A was in her fourth year as a B.Ed. teacher and second year as the HOD. She oversaw a department of 13 members, including six teachers specialising in the teaching of science and seven in mathematics. She was a mathematics specialist and had been at the school since undergoing her formal teacher-training.

Given the absence of training for the HOD position, the HOD reported a concerted effort in understanding her responsibilities and learning from her experience from the onset. She reported that she consulted her teachers and acknowledge their input. She explained, "It took me a while because I had to go back and forth to get information from the teachers". In 2009, the mathematics and science departments were merged into one department in all state schools to free up a HOD to assume the role of a full time teacher. Given the training path of teachers, the HODs were either a mathematics or a science specialist, with limited knowledge in one subject area. The HOD described how her experience as a former mathematics teacher influenced her responsibilities: "sometimes I really feel maybe I neglect the science section a bit, I am getting a bit better at it though".

The HOD also questioned the merging of the two sections, stating that "we had a talk about this merging last year, or the year before, we told the ministry it's a disadvantage...because the science teachers know their subject and section better". She was of the view that the science section needed a science specialist as its HOD.

### **Induction of beginning teachers at the school**

Recent changes to the initial orientation period were reported to have taken place for all staff new to the school. This consisted of, first, "a meeting with the senior management" to introduce these teachers to the school policies and guidelines. Second, the HOD explained that a tour was given to familiarize teachers with the school layout and key facilities. Third, teachers were reported to spend "a day or two to get

accustomed with [their] duties” before being fully assigned. This entailed classroom visits in order to observe their colleagues and see “how teaching was taking place”.

There were variations in the support approach for beginning teachers between departments at the school. The HOD reported to assigning individual mentor teachers to each beginning teacher, a practice, which she explained to have been taking place for a while in another department. She reported that, “I think this was a practice that other departments were doing, for example the social science department. The HOD has been here quite a while so she assigned an experienced teacher to a beginning teacher”. Senior management’s encouragement and her view that assigning a specific teacher was better than the involvement of the whole department served as impetuses to this practice. She explained, “I’ve never done that but now they [senior management] are asking for that...maybe instead of the whole department involved it would be better to assign a teacher. Otherwise a beginning teacher will wait for someone to help”.

Another reason for this change, as previously noted, was that the HOD reported to her inability to support science teachers in areas directly relating to their subject area. In her previous role as the mathematics HOD, she took the sole responsibility to mentor a beginning teacher without the involvement of the mathematics-staff.

A closer look revealed the criteria used in assigning a mentor to a beginning teacher. First the HOD was available to all teachers, even those with mentors. She reported, “I also mentor them and try to go to their classes more often. I give them support ... we expect that maybe they do not know all the procedures”. Second, the HOD reported to assigning a more experienced and qualified teacher as mentor. However, with a high number of beginning teachers at the school, a teacher with one year of experience could be assigned as the sole mentor to a beginning teacher.

She exemplified the process by explaining the mentoring of two beginning teachers in her department, and the challenges the mentoring process was facing. Whilst a mentor was delegated to one of them, his hesitation to approach was hampering his mentorship. As the HOD explained, “I feel that he needs help but he is not talking...going to the mentor to get help with classroom management ... Like unofficially I talk to him about how he deals with classroom management and all that, maybe it will help him out a bit more”. This contrasted with the situation of another beginning teacher who was depicted as having qualities that facilitated her mentoring,

“She is more confident; she can control her class better and she knows her content very well, but we are still mentoring her”.

A challenge that arose for beginning teachers is the degree to which they can negotiate their assigned duties. The HOD exemplified one such situation involving a beginning teacher in the department:

I came late and most teachers had taken their classes. When he was given his timetable, he had thirty periods<sup>2</sup>. It took me two weeks to sort out the timetable to get teachers to help him out. He was new and he was the one with the most teaching periods. Maybe next year we don't mind giving him the thirty but now for the first year, it can't be. So, what happened is that we tried to share the periods of a class.

In assigning classes, the situation reflected a context that did not acknowledge the beginning status of teachers. The HOD further explained that beginning teachers were assigned to the school to replace two experienced teacher who had left the profession, thus making it difficult to assign the beginning teachers less classes.

Attempts were made in using lesson observations as means of providing purposeful feedback to teachers on their teaching. However, the drive to ensure that a minimum number of these observations were carried out rested more on the need to meet end-of-year appraisal requirement. The HOD explained, “I tried to observe them at least thrice a year in preparation for their appraisal”. Therefore, whilst the HOD did gather data from classroom observations, it was driven more by an accountability need, rather than to also serve a supportive role. It was explained that a reliance on the HOD as the primary individual to carry lesson observation for the 14 teachers in her department was taxing, and that she ended up observing each teacher at least once a year. Nonetheless, she reported occasional assistance from the DHT, noting that “on a few occasions the Deputy does make time to see me alongside the teacher she observed for feedback”.

The weekly lesson plans for all teachers were verified on a fortnightly basis again, mostly for an accountability purpose. Given her limited science background, the HOD acknowledged that she did not give science teachers' weekly lesson plans a

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<sup>2</sup> A state secondary school time-table has forty weekly periods, each period last for forty minutes. Subjects are assigned in blocks of two-forty minutes period with occasional single periods.

thorough check. Nonetheless, she pointed to her endeavour in learning more about the subject. She explained, “well, there is a pattern for the weekly scheme, but like I’ve said I am still trying to figure out the [science] subject ... I don’t give a lot of feedback to the mathematics teachers because they know their stuff, you know”. Therefore, the resulting feedback served mostly as an acknowledgement that the documents had been submitted and verified.

The interview revealed that school leaders were not directed by a well laid out set of induction and appraisal procedures. This was exemplified by the HOD’s comments that did not portray induction processes as systematically guided: “there was this guideline about three years ago about how to monitor and mentor new teachers, compiled by the school, the head teacher has a copy”. Even though the whole school had been involved in producing such a document, access by school members to a single available copy is indicative of a document that was not frequently referred and abided to. Given that the process of identifying teachers’ support needs was not embedded and systematic, special circumstances pressured the science-mathematics department to act more directly in supporting individual teachers. She exemplified this with a situation where poor academic achievements and students’ grievances caused parents to show their concerns—“last year we had lots of complaints from parents [about a beginning teacher], this year we said we have to be more prepared to help her out”. This resulted with the class in question being reassigned and “prepping sessions” being held with the teacher in question alongside the HOD and a fellow colleague. The HOD reported, “I told her, you will be more confident you will know your content and manage your classes better’. She is positive, she sees that we are not taking it as a weakness but we are rather helping her out”.

### **Support, Collaboration, Professional Development and learning**

The inadequacy of resources was highlighted by the HOD as a major problem both at school level, and nationally. In addition, access to core curriculum textbooks and photocopiers were reported to fluctuate. The HOD acknowledged that the ministry was about to replace the photocopier, but believed that regular repair would have ensured that the school did not have to cope without a photocopier for two years. She remarked, “for example, at secondary level you want to give students more hand-outs, more worksheets. You would also want to give them more assignments, so [lack of access to] photocopying is a big problem; it limits and hinders what you can do for



students”. The HOD summarised the situation as restricting flexibility in the manner that teachers could present curriculum materials from varied sources to students.

The HOD explained that the organised professional development practices at the school were not impacting sufficiently on teaching and learning. Whilst she explained that some professional development and learning opportunities endeavoured to improve good practices, she also noted that, “more could be done to develop teachers”. The HOD advocated for a greater understanding of students’ backgrounds to shape professional development and learning provisions. In her opinion, there was a tendency for teachers to adhere to teaching strategies in spite of evidence that they were not improving students’ learning. She expressed a need to seek alternatives, given continued student misbehaviour and disengagement from their learning. According to the HOD, there was also a need to understand these students’ social background. In line with this, she pointed to the potential role of professional development and learning opportunities that would allow teachers to determine and use the most suitable pedagogical approaches. She explained:

Also, to tackle students with behaviour problems, I think maybe we could have more workshops to help teachers to know more about aspects of students’ challenging background. Maybe we get these workshops to enlighten us on the different social problems. [In] dealing with these students, we can then understand a little bit better, and help them to learn.

Another perspective on professional learning and development the HOD offered was that the school should consider the diverse needs of all students, rather than considering needs in isolation. The HOD explained: “this morning we had a workshop regarding special needs of low ability students, again, but what about higher flyers?” These considerations were, according to the HOD, pertinent, first because they would give due consideration to all segments of the school, and second because, whilst the HOD acknowledged that teacher education should not be all-encompassing, she was of the view that it had not equipped her and teachers adequately in other important areas. She stated, “I think we have been trained but there are certain areas that we have not been [adequately trained for], like pedagogy”.

The level of collaboration amongst teachers was described as going in the right direction, though the HOD advocated for greater support from the MoE. She explained, “I feel that most teachers have the best interest of their students and for their learning, so as long as we are working with the same aim we will improve on these aspects”. In her view, the potential for improved collaboration was greater between the MoE and the school. Reducing teaching load and alleviating teacher shortage were cited as examples. The HOD expressed her disappointment with the MoE in not following through with their plan to facilitate the return of retired and exited teachers as supply teachers. She explained, “they talked about teachers coming for part-time. Okay, if they did this it would give teachers who are employed at the school more time to focus on teaching”.

The effort of the MoE to provide support to schools through the current reforms—in particular to address students’ discipline—was critiqued by the HOD. She reported:

The revised code of conduct is student friendly, yes, and being very lenient to the students and the students know that. Teachers get discouraged. I think if they can deal with the social aspect with the disciplinary problems, and they put stricter rules into place our education system will be better, teaching and learning will be better, and our performance as teachers will be better.

The general view, as espoused by the HOD, was for greater accountability and for higher expectations from the MoE towards both parents and students. This view stemmed from the HOD’s perception that the recent reforms have not had the desired effect. She pointed to the 2009 reforms, stating, “we heard about reforms, everybody was really looking forward ... but when we look at it nothing much has changed”. She explained that it was necessary to improve the generally non-committal attitude of parents toward the education of their children, both at home and school. These were seen as necessary measures to ensure greater adherence to school policies and more value to education. She explained:

When we look at the independent school [private school], they do not have that major disciplinary problem. There are stricter approaches over there and parents are contributing [financially] so they are putting more pressure on their children. [In state schools] parents they tend to

take the school as a day care centre; they say you can do whatever you like with the students but keep them in the school. With this disciplinary and financial issue in place, students' performance will improve. We as teachers are the ones in the field; maybe the ministry should listen a bit to the teachers, take the suggestion. Why not try it [in state schools] for a year or two?

In addition to improving teachers' pedagogical practices through schools' professional development and learning, the HOD was of the view that a combination of a school fee for parents and the inclusion of stricter rules for students' misbehaviour by the MoE, would mitigate the issue of student disengagement and poor discipline in schools.

### **The school's definition, expectation, and standard of effective teaching**

In defining an effective teacher, the HOD explained that teacher commitment and careful planning were fundamental. She stated, "teachers who ensure good planning, delivery of lesson, and the commitment apart from what we've got inside the classroom that goes a little bit outside the classroom, makes an effective teacher". The HOD described an indicator of teaching effectiveness in the flexibility by teachers to clarify and address students' needs beyond classroom time. Likewise, some teachers were described as giving extraclasses even during weekends; however, this time was used for curriculum coverage or to prepare students for high-stakes examinations.

According to the HOD, "the school expects teachers to enact good lessons [and] to keep all their records ... we expect teachers to give their uttermost to improve students' performance each and every day". When prompted on what constituted a good lesson, the HOD described it as one that engaged students in their learning and ensured student achievement. However, in ascertain students' achievement, the HOD described this as being chiefly measurable through students testing.

The HOD described the standard of teaching at her school as improving, given a focus on meeting students' needs. She pointed to teachers' strengths in her department in using differentiated instruction to meet varied students' learning needs. One approach to cater for these needs was described as follows: "we have students with different abilities within our classes so we tend to prepare for the high, average, and low

achievers. It is not that easy but teachers do try”. Differentiated instruction was reported to consist of having similar lesson objectives taught to the whole class. However, students’ understanding was checked using three different sets of questions directed to the three different groups within the same class. However, this portrayal of differentiated instructions seemed to pigeon-hole students rather than being responsive to their individuality and specific needs.

Areas impeding effectiveness in teaching were reported to involve students’ discipline and language barrier. First, the HOD reported difficulties for a number of teachers in establishing and nurturing relationships that could create an environment to foster learning. She made particular reference to expatriate teachers, who were described as being unfamiliar with the local settings and were not equipped to deal with poor student discipline. According to the HOD, related issues surrounded the use of English as the medium of instruction. The expatriate teachers advocated for the use of English in teaching across all levels to increase students’ familiarity and understanding of the language. The HOD explained that expatriate teachers were in some senses justified in this belief, given curriculum materials and assessments, including national and international exams are written in English. However, low achievers were said to prefer local teachers because they all used Creole. Seychellois teachers adhered to code switching, and argued that students could better relate and grasp concepts when code switching was used. The HOD supported this view, “the less achieving students may not understand English very well, this hinders teaching and learning ... finally they [expatriate teachers] get discouraged, and they go in class just for the sake of it

### **The Deputy Head Teacher**

This section presents a narrative description of data that emerged from the DHT’s interview. Interview data for all DHTs were clustered around the following headings: 1) background and responsibilities of the HOD; 2) teaching support, collaboration, professional development and learning; 3) induction and mentoring of teachers at the school; and 4) the school’s definition, standard, and expectation for effective teaching.

## **Background and responsibilities**

The deputy head at School A entered the teaching profession as an English Teacher. Having completed her B.Ed., she was promoted to HOD the same year. She was currently functioning as the deputy head at school A, in her second year, after serving as HOD at another school for four years.

She noted that she was the sole DHT at school A, with the second post vacated with the resignation of her former colleague. She described how she was managing, “to be honest, I feel that it has been very hectic, and I have to chair everything myself, like the pastoral and the curriculum meetings, so I don’t get a breathing space as such”. The 2008 reform placed both the curriculum and pastoral portfolio in the DHTs’ responsibilities in state schools, whilst previously, curriculum, and pastoral responsibility was split between the two DHTs. The DHT found this a challenge, and reported that her attention was skewed more towards her pastoral responsibilities. She exemplified:

I was in class observing a teacher. I went, that was on my plan for classroom observation. A fight broke out, the HOC (head of cycle) was not around, half way through the observation process I was removed from the class. So, it is hectic, but being hard working as I am, I suppose I try to cope despite missing out on my lunchtime and break, so this is impacting, and getting home very late.

Given that the school faced numerous pastoral issues arising from its student population (e.g., truancy and disciplinary issues), these took priority over curriculum issues. As a result, the DHT felt she was not handling the curriculum side of her function to her expectations. However, she reported good working relationships with her HODs. This has facilitated an understanding that HODs’ consultation with the DHT around curriculum matters would diminish over time. Given this, the situation has resulted in increased involvement of HODs with respect to curriculum matters at department level.

## **Induction of beginning teachers at the school**

The DHT explained that despite her best intentions, pressing issues prevented her direct involvement in the early orientation period and induction of beginning teachers in her first year at the school. She reported to an introductory meeting involving all new staff in her second year at the school. She explained: “I made this as

one of my targets at the school ... I say I will try to help new teachers, but the reality of things it doesn't really work that well". Several factors impeded her full involvement in the early orientation period and induction in the past two years. First, she reported to the absence of a handover by the former DHT and a focus in adjusting to her role in the first year. She claimed, "sometimes we are pressed to start a job, okay, to adapt to the new structures set up by the ministry or anything; like the new pastoral reform, we're all new and coming to a new school".

Second, she reported that the transition from HOD to DHT entail no preparation by the MoE. She expressed a need for a redress of this situation for new DHTs, stating, "I would like to see an improvement, even from the ministry's end. Like we were thrown into the job, I had [to use] my own skills". Third, her lack of involvement in the induction and early orientation period was attributed to the absence of a clear guidelines or policy. The DHT explained that she dedicated her time to what was deemed more important to the school. Furthermore, given that the beginning of the school year was a busy period, she was required to prioritize her responsibilities.

At the beginning of her second year the absence of a second DHT meant the deputy head teacher had to, again, limit her involvement in the induction process. However, the DHT explained that a short introductory was organised with the head teacher, noting that, "when we receive new staff we do some form of introduction and hand the person to the department". Additionally, the DHT noted that she was still familiarising herself with the specific details of the induction process at department level, for which the HOD was the responsible person.

The DHT described her involvement as going beyond a mere introductory meeting with a category of staff at the school. These were the pre-university students completing a mandatory one-year teaching experience at the school as part of the eligibility process for their scholarship. Her involvement entailed a session at the MoE with the pre-university students allocated to her school. She explained how the outcome of the session translated into a supported transition for these pre-university students: "we don't really throw them in the deep end to start off with, we attached them to someone, like for the first two weeks at least they go for classroom observation attached to a teacher and then they can start". The DHT reasoned that beginning teachers had some training compared to the pre-university students, which accounted for this special

consideration by the MoE. In addition, she noted, “we would love to do this for beginning teachers as well but we don’t have enough staff to look after their classes for two weeks”. However, it was pointed out that in some departments some beginning teachers, upon request, do get a chance to observe experienced teachers for a day or two whilst concurrently teaching their full load. It was explained that these teachers were not expected to replicate the teaching practices of these experienced teachers, but rather to get examples of good practices. However, the DHT revealed that typically no discussion ensued from these observations, which would have provided the beginning teachers with opportunities to clarify and initiate further dialogue.

Meeting her targets and expectations in monitoring curriculum implementation was noted by the DHT to be a challenge that was rarely met. This was again attributed to the vacant DHT post, unfilled for almost a year. She explained, “so far our plan of work was like the Deputy Head was a science person, so we sort of divided the duties ... this year I try to oversee at least the preparation of exam papers for which he was responsible”. Therefore, whilst the DHT was still able to monitor her assigned departments (Figure 4) she was only able to handle a few major aspects of the former DHT’s responsibilities, as she noted, “I don’t make it to the [science and IT] classes for observation”.

Classroom observation was seen as by the DHT in enabling the identification of issues for evaluative and feedback purposes. The fortnightly curriculum meeting allowed her to be briefed by the HOD. However, follow-up alongside the teacher, and HOD, as preferred by the Deputy Head, was not always possible:

To be honest the feedback I’ve got from the HODs, we haven’t really got into it because of other pressing issues. Sometimes you have the HODs doing this and that, chasing people, people being absent, lateness and absenteeism is a bit of an issue at our school.

Most of the lessons observed were done for appraisal purposes. Identifying teachers’ areas of need from observation data and mentorship was reported to be limited to beginning teachers. The DHT explained, “maybe this is yet to be discussed, but I see the HODs giving more focus to the new teachers, kind of a mentorship”.

### **Support, collaboration, professional development and learning**

Improving the level of teacher collaboration was presumed on the ability of some teachers to embrace other teaching approaches. An example cited was groups of teachers, whose beliefs and reluctance to learn and incorporate aspects of student-centred teaching clashed with the teaching approaches she was advocating. The DHT explained, “sometimes I have difficulties convincing other people ... especially the old ones who are used to their traditional way of teaching”. She perceived this reluctance to change as undermining the engagement of teachers new to the school. She exemplified this with a beginning teacher, who approached an older teacher about a school visit and was told that school visits were not done at the school. The DHT described how she handled the situation, “I spoke to her, and I said Go ahead—when you have your visits come to me. I am going to back you up and I am going to give you the go ahead”.

The resistance to innovation and adherence to traditional approaches by some teachers were framed as part of a bigger issue that required redress. Mindful of the democratic stance of the school in its decision-making processes, the DHT was reluctant in mandating practices as means of promoting change. She advocated for ways of convincing teachers, as according to her it would then be easy to encourage them to use and share effective practices. She explained, “It’s good to work with people who meet you more or less on the same wavelength and see the logic and the rationale behind everything”. The DHT was supportive of teachers who reflected on their teaching practices, and noted that when this did not happen, some teachers “do not always want to take the blame; they always want to blame students”. Therefore, in her endeavour to effect change, she reported to using the curriculum meetings to allow HODs to share good practices being implemented by teachers with the expectation that these reflective practices could then be shared in other departments.

A shift towards improved collaboration that encouraged teachers to work together was acknowledged. She detailed the possible cause of this shift, “There’s team spirit in certain departments ... especially this year, now that maybe teachers have come in and old teachers will be leaving, I see more of a team spirit this year”. The DHT cited this team spirit as important in allowing staff to be receptive to ideas. These ideas were described as encouraging student-centered practices. The DHT cited some examples as incorporating ICT and using a range of teaching strategies that encouraged active



learning and provided for students' diverse learning needs. Her responses indicated that beginning teachers and other new staff served as key agents, and that the exit rather than sensitization of older teachers were expediting the process of change.

The DHT revealed that the different forms of professional development and learning opportunities at the school were designed to meet the priorities of the three-year development plan. However, the need for organised professional development that went beyond a rigid adherence to the three-year plan was called for. She explained, "I don't see any harm in other things being looked at if there's a weakness". She revealed that the MoE was willing to provide support for such sessions, "the principal secretary ... saying if you notice there is a weakness at your school and you want a PD session ... the ministry will provide the necessary support to handle this". Despite this, whole school professional development sessions only occurred occasionally, and the frequency of these sessions was not up to the Deputy Head's expectations. She commented, "yes, we were even asking teachers to suggest, but sometimes you ask them to suggest but they don't".

It was explained by the DHT that in meeting the professional needs of teachers, some misplaced views on professional development and learning needed to be dispelled. She explained, for instance, the need for a few HODs to remain open to the possibility that not all teachers are fully equipped to perform all aspects of their duties. She reported, "so there are issues which might have been overlooked in teacher training, and maybe it's when you come on the job that you are able to pick up such experiences, such skills". She reasoned that removing these assumptions would encourage teachers' willingness to approach their HODs for help, and would provide a better picture of teachers' professional learning and development needs.

Addressing resource needs to support the day-to-day teaching tasks of teachers was seen as crucial. In most cases, delayed repair or replacement of equipment by the MoE was said to have negative impact. The DHT explained, "I don't have access to the internet in here, the computer is broken down, I don't have a printer, and all my documents are in there. I found myself handicapped". This had a cascading effect, since the same facilities were made available to teachers. She explained, "teachers used to come here to type assessments and exams and now [we are] without this. We are being asked to use our laptop, but carrying a laptop day in day out is not easy". Given that, the

school was reported to have only a photocopier or scanner, long delays in repair was said to create a great impediment.

### **The school's definition, standard, and expectation for effective teaching**

When asked for a definition of effective teaching the deputy head teacher did so in reference to her own teaching practices. A trained English teacher she was taking a final year high-stake examination class:

Getting ready for your class well ahead, being consistent in your routines, teaching meaningful topics connected to student's everyday experience. It's being democratic allowing students to voice their opinion as well as being firm but fair. Humour is important, and managing your class watching out for inappropriate behaviour.

Her definition suggests student-centered teaching with students as co-creators in the process, as learners with ideas that matter and merit consideration. She also pointed to preparation and planning as the first consideration:

It's like getting prepared for your class beforehand and knowing what you are going to teach and not at the last minute finding out. You do your homework beforehand, definitely, if you know you are going over a test or something, you need to mind your different vocabulary, mind you, if you face very good classes ... you'll look like a fool in front of them.

She described the second aspect as prepping the environment with the purpose of creating a suitable learning atmosphere. She explained, "I would be looking at my seating arrangement, that's the first thing—the environment of the class and the way you welcome the students, the way they come in, ensuring that you follow your normal routine, and being consistent". The third aspect related to the quality and forms of teaching approaches, "of course teaching meaningful topics would be useful to students, you try to relate it to their everyday life and change your strategies". The change of strategy was seen as crucial for diversity in approaches, and to allow content to be better delivered. As she put it, "it's easy to be monotonous, we have to realise students bore easily sometimes, even if you think they should value learning. It's what you do to get them involved that's important and matching content with method so it's

appropriate”. In the fourth phase, the DHT included the students’ management and engagement in their learning:

I believe that a teacher needs to be fair, although you are firm, you need to be friendly as well, you need to crack a joke, okay, but when there needs to be discipline. You should also allow students to voice out their opinion, okay, but as long as you ensure they are not talking all at the same time, enforcing your rules and being democratic in a class, respect for each other’s point of view. To notice if someone is ridiculing somebody for something else and a lot of praise. What I see is, there are some teachers doing it, but there’s room for improvement.

These school’s expectations as espoused by the DHT, that is, the notion of firmness but fairness, praising students, maintaining and promoting good behaviour also reflected the deputy’s own perception of effective teaching.

“There is room for improvement” was the phrase used by the deputy head teacher to describe the overall extent to which teachers met the school’s expectations for effective teaching. The inability of some teachers to apply basic management strategies concerned the DHT, because this was pervasive in the classes of teachers who faced classroom management issues. She explained:

You would have teachers complaining of a particular class or particular group of students. However, you don’t see teachers applying the basic strategies to enable them to have class control in terms of seating arrangements or having the same group of boys at the back of the class. These are the little things that I wish they would improve on.

These strategies were assumed to be within teachers’ repertoire, but the DHT reported they were not being deployed. They were reported to not only slow teachers in meeting the schools’ expectations, but also described as needlessly engaging the DHT: “the job being hectic itself, people make their problem become your problem”. She felt that teachers could tackle the issue whilst she could concentrate on promoting advanced teaching practices, stating that, “some people need to pull up their socks and be on board”. Interestingly, “very good classroom control” or classroom management on the

part of a number of teachers, particularly the local teachers was also seen as a strength. This was reported as important, since it enabled teachers to move from basic requirement of effective teaching to those that engaged students in their learning.

When she had concerns that the English department was not equipping students with important skills early enough she also intervened. She explained:

They were not really putting the focus on oral with [Junior secondary] classes. The earlier we start with this the better. Summary writing is another issue I am taking up with the HOD. You can't expect students to be doing the oral IGCSE or the national co-ordinated exam where you have the summary writing component, the oral component, and yet you are not preparing the students to cope early. I was mentoring the HOD and I am happy to see that they are taking on board my suggestions.

The DHT was of the view that with another DHT and with more staff becoming reflective in their practices, the standard of teaching would improve at the school.

### **The policies and documentation–document analysis**

This section presents evidence through the documentation of the School Development Plan, the latest external evaluation and department minutes of meetings. These were examined with a focus on teaching and learning. Features pertaining to the school culture that impact on teaching and learning were also sought; this is to allow triangulation of data.

The school's vision emphasised the involvement of parents, teachers, students, and the community in working towards making the school a warm and welcoming place. It focussed on students' acquisition of skills, knowledge, and values in order to equip them as independent learners, able to choose appropriate career paths. The school's vision also stated its endeavour to promote certain values in its students and staff, including team spirit, team building, effective mentoring, efficiency, order, courtesy/respect, and accountability/responsibility. In order to attain this, the school envisioned improving and motivating students to commit them to learning. Likewise, the school aimed to cater for its teachers' needs "to become good classroom

practitioners with good organizational and management skills, in order to meet pupils' needs and deliver quality teaching".

The school external evaluation report indicated that management should work with the community and take urgent measures to establish the root causes of students' problematic discipline and defiance of authority in the school. Following this, the report suggested that it should ensure students are empowered to demonstrate respect for the self, respect for others (inclusive of figures of authority), and respect for school property. It encouraged the school to develop strategies to inculcate in students a greater sense of responsibility for their own learning and development. Another area pointed to the need for management to take urgent steps to improve the overall quality of the teaching process in the school. The report placed special emphasis on meeting the needs of the various groups of students. In addition, it indicated the need for teachers' empowerment to trigger, as well sustain, students' motivation throughout the lessons. The report pointed out the need to convince teachers of the importance of self-evaluation, and for them to be equipped to become reflective practitioners. With the involvement of their students, the report asked for engagement in regular critical reflection of their own teaching, and the ability to identify aspects of their teaching that required re-teaching. The senior management was asked to use the school's existing structures more effectively in order to draw from them regular information to allow the team to systematically, and critically, evaluate its own practices. Consequently, the senior management was encouraged to adopt a more systematic, purposeful, and planned team approach to the monitoring of teaching and learning across all departments in the school. Monitoring needed to be better organised with well-defined roles for all its members. The report also pointed out the need for senior management to development of a support programme to address teachers' needs.

The department minutes of meetings examined revealed the scope for formal and intentional discussion on teaching and learning, though they commonly served as a forum for the dissemination of information. Teachers tended to use these meetings to advance their concerns around factors impeding their functions. The exchange of ideas that took place did not extend to the sharing of concerns around individual teaching practices.

### **Summary of Case study A**

Felicity reported a desire to continue working at her current school, and to maintain her management (Head of cycle) position in spite of the challenges. She entered the school without having experienced an early orientation period or formal induction, but with a love for working with her students. Unlike Felicity, recent beginning teachers benefitted from an introductory meeting with senior management, and upon request, they also observed the class of a more experienced teacher for a day or two.

In the year of data collection, the HOD had been encouraged by the senior management to allocate other experienced teachers as mentors. This mentorship arrangement was still in its developmental stages given that: (1) mentorship was not intentional, beginning teachers still had to approach mentors for occasional support; (2) the criteria for selecting mentors were not clearly laid out, and (3) mentors were not observing the classroom practices of beginning teachers to provide feedback but rather provided occasional clarifications to their concerns.

The school's formal and informal support did not amply facilitate Felicity's transition and support her teaching, and while Felicity reported opportunities to discuss her teaching in formal settings at department meetings, departmental minutes revealed that this was not systemic. The meetings served to disseminate information and gather teachers' views around other issues, rather than serving as forums for intentional discussion around teaching practices.

Still, the informal talk at department level, and her familiarity with the school and colleagues contributed towards Felicity's transition and adaptation. Her former experiences as a student and student-teacher at the school were reported to have eased her ability to approach her colleagues. In addition, internet connectivity at home helped her to access resources around some subject matter to complement what was available at school level.

As a form of support, lesson observation was meant to be carried out thrice over the school year. Given that it took place only once and that it occurred during her probation period is indicative of its use as a requirement for Felicity's attainment of QTS rather than as a consistent component of her support. Another potential source of

feedback was from the weekly lesson plans, checked by the senior management and HOD. A lack of feedback from the lesson plans meant that the process of verification served an administrative requirement rather than a supportive one.

Effectiveness in teaching practices was an important notion for Felicity, and for her HOD, and DHT. Felicity placed an emphasis on students' achievement as a way of gauging her effectiveness. This emphasis was echoed by the HOD. For the HOD, effective planning and subsequent teaching in order to advance student performance was important. An effective teacher, according to the HOD, displayed commitment through a willingness to extend teaching time after normal school hours. This occurred mainly with high-stakes examination classes. On the other hand, the DHT described effective teaching as entailing a consideration of students' voices, effective classroom management and teaching of meaningfully and relevant topics. The three respondents also reported classroom management as an issue, especially in low achieving classes. Therefore, conversations around teaching effectiveness portray classroom management skills as crucial.

Felicity's teaching practices skewed more towards teacher-centeredness, with elements of student-centeredness. The latter can be exemplified with students' willingness to challenge materials presented by Felicity and an overall positive student relationship that prevailed. However, Felicity did not sufficiently challenge her students or gave them the opportunity to participate in inquiry learning. The former can be exemplified in Felicity's questioning techniques and written exercises that required low level of thinking. Finally establishing a positive relationship with some of the most disengaged students in her low achieving classes was still a challenge for Felicity. She attributed this shortcoming to lack of preparation from her formal training.

## **Case Study B**

### **Description of the context**

School B, an urban co-educational school catering for about 700 students, is classified as a medium sized school. At the time of data collection, the school had approximately 60 teaching staff and 15 support staff. The senior management consisted of a head teacher and two DHTs. The DHTs were responsible for overseeing the implementation of the national curriculum, and for pastoral care. With the senior management, the Heads of Department (six in total), two heads of cycle, and the professional development facilitator formed the management team (See figure 5). The management team and the senior management also doubled up as the school improvement team (SIT), overseeing the implementation of the school's development Plan. School development planning, alongside school-based professional development, was institutionalised as part of the national school improvement strategy.



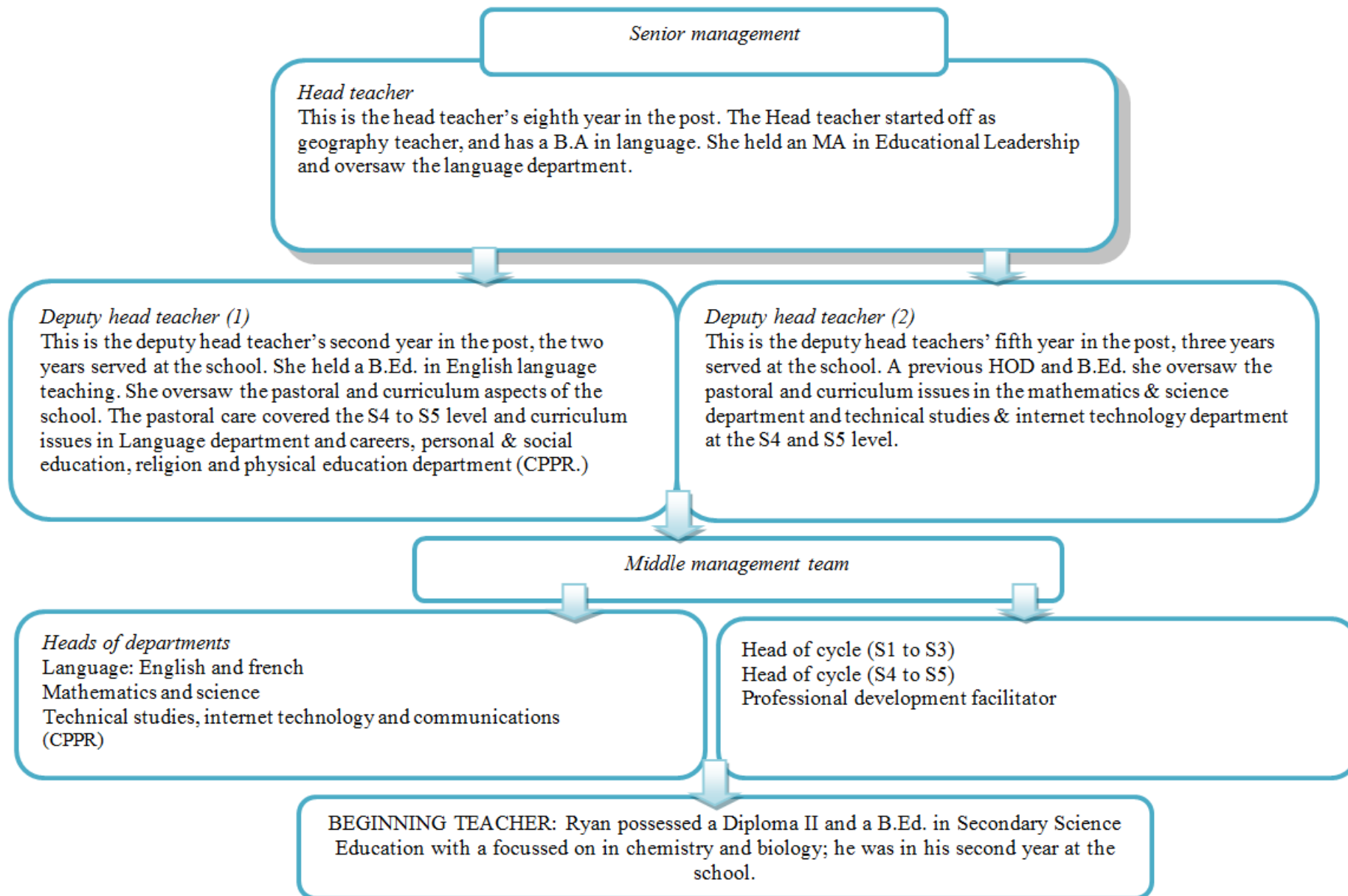


Figure 5: Diagrammatic representation of the National Secondary Schools' structure in the Seychelles, with some details specific to the beginning teacher, Ryan, in school B.

## **The Beginning Teacher's Experiences**

This section presents a time-based narrative description of data that emerged from the beginning teacher's interview.

### **Background, transition, and responsibilities**

Ryan was commencing his second year at the school at the time of data collection in January, 2011. As with other student-teachers who undertook teaching as a career prior to 2009, he completed his two-year DSTE in the Seychelles. This was followed by a two-year conversion education degree in an Australian university, where he majored in Biological sciences and Chemistry. Ryan explained that one shortcoming of his training in Australia was the missed opportunity for classroom experiences in another context.

Ryan expressed satisfaction with his initial orientation period, but explained that he had experienced little formal induction. Ryan explained that his orientation period, which included a short introductory meeting and a single lesson observation, comprised his formal induction. Ryan pointed to his previous experiences in the state school and how he adjusted his expectations, stating that, "I was not surprised with the lack of support, I knew what to expect, and I knew I had to be proactive". Nonetheless, he pointed to some factors that enabled him to transition into his role and set the tone for the kind of work that was expected from him. For instance, the introductory meeting he had on his first day at the school:

When I came to this school, I had an introductory one-on-one meeting with the head teacher, and she invited me to join the School Improvement Team. This really had an impact on me because I felt personally welcomed and the meeting made me aware of what the head teacher and school expected from me.

This exchange with the head teacher was reported by Ryan to have encouraged his dedication to his work. Ryan also valued the manner that he was received in his department. He claimed, "the members of my department were welcoming, including the HOD". Ryan explained that he was able to learn from his first year experience at the school by getting to know how things were done. For instance, he reported his adherence to procedures, in

requesting equipment and help in the classroom from the laboratory technicians. He reported to doing this well ahead of his scheduled lesson. Ryan was therefore able to maximise and learn from the experience and expertise of these laboratory technicians. This learning as communicated by Ryan was reciprocal, and as he reported, it enabled the development of a professional relationship that endured:

You know, they see my enthusiasm and they appreciate this. I work with them, we discuss, and we learnt from each other. This year, one of the laboratory technicians was transferred and he called me about a particular set-up he wanted to share at his new school.

When Ryan was further questioned about his transition period as a Diploma teacher, in comparison to the same period as a B.Ed. teacher, he used the word “tumultuous” to describe the former. He claimed that he had a range of challenges during this time including, a perceived barrier in approaching his colleagues to discuss pedagogical strategies, as well as difficulties in establishing positive relationships with his students. In his interview he claimed that the recent school reform aimed at addressing quality teaching have not adequately addressed these prevailing issues. One reason for this assertion was that he still faced these challenges along with other beginning teachers in his department. Ryan’s expectation was that UNISEL, through the upcoming locally based B.Ed. programme would better prepare beginning teachers for some of the challenges in the local schools.

Notwithstanding his love for teaching, Ryan acknowledged the main challenges of the profession. He explained, “a lot of teachers like me still face problems, like the current behaviour problems and lack of students’ interest, I know, I talk to those teachers”. Ryan cited limited resources, poor public perception of the profession, the schools’ physical environment, and remuneration as the main factors that needed redress. He was contemplating a move to teacher education, given the prevalence of these reported compounding factors in state schools.

### **Support, collaboration, Professional development and learning**

Ryan claimed to having experienced limited support at the school. Nonetheless, he reported to have been inspired by the trust and expectations placed in him. He provided as an example his appointment on the school improvement team when he first arrived at the school. He stated, “I am lucky to be on the SIT and have the privilege of contributing towards the professional development sessions. It helps to know first-hand what the school wants to achieve”. This opportunity not only allowed Ryan to contribute and learn from other staff members, but also provided the means for him to gauge his leaders’ vision for the school from an improvement perspective.

Even though Ryan explained that his work ethic was aligned with the expectations set by the school management, direct support towards his teaching was limited. He pointed to the feedback he had received from the single lesson observation he had had as part of his probation:

I remember the Deputy Head Teacher telling me that was a top class and the students really needed to be pushed. We had a brief conversation after the lesson. I appreciated the fact that he stayed for the whole 90 minutes though I did not receive detailed feedback on my teaching approaches.

This observation and subsequent feedback served as an encouragement for Ryan. However, the school did not provide him with enough details to impact his teaching. Ryan’s reasoning for his limited support was the assumption by the school management that degree holders had all it took to teach.

Within his department, Ryan reported to an amicable atmosphere, but noted that this did not extend to professional dialogue on pedagogical matters. He claimed, “you are a bit alone with regards to your teaching. I think we don’t share enough, teachers are reticent in discussing teaching issues”. The absence of a formal mentorship programme at the school meant that Ryan had to rely on approaching his colleagues and HOD for guidance. However, Ryan reported that he rarely did so. He explained: “Sometimes you are reluctant to approach them when everyone is treating you as if you should know all your stuff”. He pointed to

missed opportunities to learn from his colleagues which would have also given him a chance to share good practices, saying, “I tend to do a lot of research on my own and preparing my own materials, hand-outs, and worksheets. It would have been nice to share these as well as discuss what goes on in my classroom”.

Therefore, whilst Ryan was motivated during his first year of teaching and was willing to work collaboratively with his colleagues, his teaching became an isolated endeavour. Likewise, Ryan had a cordial relationship with his HOD, but Ryan reported mixed feelings with respect to the leadership style of his HOD:

The HOD is a hard working individual and he thinks by doing a lot of the Department’s work on his own we will be happy. It would be good if he was more open in getting the department to work together on this.

Ryan cited examples of this approach, including the department’s progress on its action plans and compiled students’ assessment results. Ryan saw these as missed opportunities for the HOD to get teachers to work together and discuss professional issues in a collaborative manner. Additionally, Ryan explained that he looked forward to the departmental meetings, as they gave him the chance to move away from the informal discourse at department level and toward a more professional setting. Nonetheless, he described the nature of the meetings as being more often an information-giving session by the HOD, rather than a venue for teachers to share good practices and sort out their challenges.

Ryan was conscious of the need for support materials to improve students’ access to the curriculum. He described how implementing ideas acquired from his training was influenced, stating, “I don’t want to remain stagnant, but sometimes I have great ideas which the limited resources can affect, like access to better and more science equipment and resources, media resources, printing and photocopying facilities”. However, Ryan conveyed an understanding of why his school might not be able to make adequate improvement in this area. He claimed:

We have other priorities like keeping a budget for the basic stuff; furniture, renovation, and books. These are lacking and they take precedence over quality. I understand however that the school's ability to provide is restricted by what the [MoE] can offer, since we are dependent on resources from them.

Given his expressed understanding of the issue of limited resources, Ryan explained how he coped with the situation. He explained: "the laboratory lacks equipment for certain practical work or are insufficient for group work, so I have to make a compromise and sometimes improvise". One such compromise was opting for demonstration rather than group work, due to limited availability of equipment and supplies. A situation faced by the school was limited access and availability of ICT. Ryan pointed to the lack of flexibility and convenience of ICT to his work as the main reason he had made this access at home possible. It was allowing him to incorporate different types of questions, and diagrams in worksheets, and implement continuous assessment that would otherwise be limited if he had used the blackboard. He also reasoned, "students work at different paces so they can select questions they want to attempt first, writing on the board means removing some question after a while, to make space for the next question".

Ryan noted that he was not benefitting sufficiently from departmental and whole-school professional development sessions. He explained, "we do have some interesting sessions at times but overall I think teachers do not see these impacting on their teaching". Even though professional development and learning opportunities were reported to have limited impact on teaching and learning, Ryan reported that they were useful from a certain perspective, stating that, "if not teaching we still get a chance to listen to teachers' views on other areas that are important to school improvement, such as how to increase involvement in decision making".

### **Perception of self-effectiveness**

How he was perceived by his colleagues, management, and students in terms of his competence was very important to Ryan. For him, being seen as competent by his students and peers was one way of earning their respect. Ryan explained that his experience with his

students as a Diploma teacher has provided some lessons which he had endeavoured to learn from:

There is the issue of not looking competent in the eyes of your students, management, and other teachers, you will not be respected. Students will not care about paying attention to you and if you already have a difficult class, being a poor teacher will worsen the situation.

Having a sense of responsibility for his students' learning also drove Ryan to find ways of improving his practice. According to Ryan, being effective entailed an awareness of the learning needs of his students and the ability to respond and adapt to these needs. An example cited was how he could switch between different modes of presenting concepts and to alternate between these as he is guided by students' understanding:

If you recognise this and you adopt strategies to suit those needs, as well as improvising on the spot, because, believe me sometimes your plan might not work out at all. If you can do this then I believe you can start calling yourself a responsive teacher, when you get this adaptation right.

As previously reported, one concern Ryan had was the issue of infrequent monitoring of his teaching. This did not allow him to get adequate feedback from which he could improve his teaching. He explained, "teachers are rarely made accountable in the system if they are underperforming in their profession, unless they have done something, you know, serious". He attributed this minimal monitoring as a view by the management that B.Ed. teachers were qualified professionals. This view negated his needs as a practitioner who was still learning. However, the recognition of his professionalism had some positive effect on Ryan, who reported, "when you come back from your degree [training] you are recognised as fully equipped. In a way it boosted my confidence and I aspired to this expectation".

In the long term, Ryan found it challenging to rely entirely on himself as he attempted to address his shortcomings. He discovered that he could not look upon the school for support. In the interview, he rationalized his situation:

So far, my biggest difficulty has been with effectively catering for low achieving students. After a while, I realised that it was not just me. I have a Degree colleague who arrived here at the same time that I did and she has expressed the same concerns. Even the more experienced teachers as well ... I am not alone, but it makes me wonder whether current qualification and experience alone will help because others with more experience are still trying to sort it out.

In rationalising the challenges he was facing with his low achieving class, he pointed to a specific class, "I really have a difficult S3 class and this is my second year and still I can't go into that class without a few misbehaviour incidents that interrupt the lesson". The difficulty in surmounting this challenge was partly based on his perceived inadequacies, such as in managing some of his classes or meeting the learning needs of his low achievers. Ryan also felt the school could do more for beginning teachers:

Perhaps my training was inadequate in that regard ... perhaps it is more of a professional development issue ... the school should have gathered information about handling those classes and help the new teachers as they enter the profession, to deter them from getting helpless and discouraged.

Given the magnitude and complexity of the issue, Ryan felt that beginning teachers could also be exempted from those classes at the beginning. He explained, "perhaps not assigning beginning teachers difficult classes at the beginning ... those students have little motivation, they have a lot of social problems and at the same time they have learning difficulties".

Ryan identified several means of gauging his effectiveness. First, "the level of students' engagement in learning through their responses as well as changes in their performances". These were described by Ryan as contributing towards his reflection on his teaching practices, and validating the teaching methods he utilised. Another method of reflection Ryan employed was to directly involve students in evaluating the lesson. Ryan explained, "Sometimes you just have to ask the students. At the beginning they will be reluctant, not a lot of teachers do it, but eventually they will ... it is not a perfect indicator



but no one indicator is”. Ryan also viewed his students’ contribution in evaluating the lesson as allowing them to participate in their learning. Another way of gauging his effectiveness was to balance his expectations with management’s criteria of an effective teacher. As Ryan explained, “it is important to see whether the gap is reduced between what they want and what you have set for yourself, if you are exceeded, so much the better”.

### **The Beginning Teacher’s Practices**

Six sessions of Ryan’s classes were observed. These classes comprised of low, average, and high achievers in combined science and chemistry classes. Following the observations and subsequent post-hoc interviews with Ryan, a description of trends in his teaching was produced.

Features of student-centred approaches were evident in Ryan’s teaching but in the majority of his lessons, his teaching skewed towards teacher-centred. As a result, the opportunities that students had to develop their own explanations, work with data, or to formulate their own questions were limited. Indeed Ryan acknowledged that he was the central figure in most aspects of the lesson he taught. On emerging from his high achieving class, he commented:

Those students are very focussed and hardworking, as you saw I had their attention throughout the lesson. This gave me the opportunity to present all the materials that I prepared. I guess I love teaching those kids and they in turn give me their attention.

Ryan was therefore the one who asked most of the questions, challenged responses which were usually from the same small group of students, provided authoritative comments and, managed the few discussions. According to Ryan this was not the approach he envisioned when he first started to teach at the school. He claimed that students were entrenched into the notion that everything had to be done for them. Ryan explained: “I am eager for their involvement, and I think this is an area to improve but it comes down to the students developing their confidence as well”. He held the view that student-centred teaching was not maximised, because the problem was mostly with his students.

Ryan's weekly work plans were quite detailed in that they identified the concepts he intended to cover and the written exercises to be given to students at each stage of the lesson. He often prepared hand-outs with notes for his students as well as worksheets for the written exercises, and all were typewritten. He claimed that unlike him, the majority of teachers worked within the confines of resources available at the school. He explained: "you know, I purchased a desktop computer, peripheral, and got connected to the internet mainly because of my job; we can't get access to these at the school, the school is restricted technologically".

Ryan frequently negotiated with the laboratory technicians about practical work he wanted to set up. He frequently made a follow-up on what he had instructed them to prepare for his classes. He also reported that he frequently discussed ideas that he encountered on the internet. Some of those ideas deviated from what was prescribed in the curriculum and Ryan would spend time discussing and sharing these ideas with the laboratory technicians. He explained: "I value their opinion, I really do, because I know that the following year they'd be equipped to better prepare what I ask and perhaps improve on what we previously discussed".

Ryan rarely used the blackboard to copy notes or write questions. Rather, he presented printed materials to his students with summaries of concepts and exercises covered. In addition, he dictated notes; students raised their hands and repeated words they could not write. Ryan used the blackboard to write those words as well as other keywords that he himself identified without prompt. In those two classes, his students were not allowed to use the local language and even when he was talking informally with them. This differed from his less achieving class, where Ryan did not dictate any notes; he used the local language alongside English to emphasise concepts. He explained, "they won't understand everything if I use only English. I have no choice as much as I believe that they need to grasp the language of instruction. If I use only English they'd be more disruptive".

Ryan had difficulties in maintaining the students' attention with his low achievers. They would often go off-task and talked amongst themselves. At times, Ryan reprimanded the students. On occasion, he had the whole class lined up before they would be allowed back to their seat. He explained that part of his shortcomings to work with his most

disengaged students was because he was ill-prepared by his formal training, “Admittedly, I lack some skills. The training programme does not help with that, I have to make the most of my limited skills, and I really get discouraged at times.”

Ryan reported limited opportunities to discuss those issues in the informal setting of his department. He explained: “we simply don’t talk about our challenges and it is a pity because some of my colleagues face this issue, and I have passed by their classes and I have noticed things”. One incident also revealed how this lack of support played out. In explaining indicator reaction to acid, Ryan erred, telling his students that, “in strongly basic solutions, phenolphthalein undergoes a colour change from pink to colourless”. When a few students tried to correct him, Ryan was adamant about his factual reasoning. The following day he explained:

It happens, you know, but one or two students went to my HOD and he corrected me in front of the entire department staff. I was embarrassed and since yesterday, a bit annoyed with the two students. In hindsight, I should have gone away and checked on this.

However, other incidents of misconceptions in Ryan’s teaching were not observed.

### **The Head of Department**

This section presents a narrative description of data that emerged from the HOD’s interview.

#### **Background and responsibilities**

The head of the mathematics-science department at school B, a Biology specialist, was in his fourth year as a B.Ed. teacher and third year as the HOD, of which two years had been spent at school B. He was responsible for the supervision of 14 staff members.

The HOD provided an overview of the main issues influencing the management of his department. First, he expressed great satisfaction with staff attendance. He explained: “we are lucky in this department because we don’t face a lot of absenteeism like in other departments, which is an issue in a number of secondary state schools”. Second, he

expressed his concern with the potential of a few members to be effective teachers. He explained: “to be frank, I think sometimes the bar is lowered because of a lack of teachers. We take people with degrees in other fields and perceive this as being adequate, you know, we lower the status of the professional”. He exemplified this with a situation he faced first-hand when he assigned a senior high-stake exam physics class to a teacher recruited to his department. According to the HOD, the students reported the “incompetency of the teacher,” to the DHT and the HOD was asked to assign another teacher to the class. He explained: “we have to be more stringent with recruitment. The ministry should look at this closely ... Perhaps the teacher should have also told me that he couldn’t teach at that level, or I should have been more thorough before assigning”. He pointed to the flexibility in recruitment as part of a bigger issue, given a high level of attrition and low intake of potential candidates joining teacher-training.

Given this, the HOD reported that pre-university students have been mandated to work in state schools for a year as a prerequisite for government scholarship. The HOD explained that a number of teachers welcomed this idea mostly because it lessened their teaching load. Nonetheless, he held a different perspective, first, that the move placed unskilled individuals in the classroom, noting that, “[pre-university students] lack pedagogy, and this hampers students’ ability to learn effectively”. Second, he claimed that it contributed towards society “undervaluing the [teaching] profession”.

Another challenge reported by the HOD was getting teachers to utilize the best teaching practices. He explained that a number of teachers adhered to a combination of approaches including student-centered, however some were skewed more towards teacher-centered approaches. According to him, this was an attempt by teachers to strike a balance between senior management’s expectation for orderly classrooms and teachers’ perceptions that they needed to adopt “controlling” approaches to maintain student discipline. Therefore, getting teachers to use student-centred teaching was reported as difficult, with the HOD stating that, “I think that sometimes teachers are reluctant because students need adjustment to make the best of these opportunities and as a result they go off-task and teachers give up”. He explained that it is more likely for teachers to use student-centred teaching if they know

what works best from others, but that it was a challenge to get teachers so share good practices.

### **Induction of beginning teachers at the school**

The initial meeting with the senior management at the beginning of the year was reported to consist of an informal session to provide a background of the school and facilitate beginning teachers' familiarization. The HOD explained that all new teachers are similarly introduced to department staff. He pointed out: "I make this preliminary introduction so that new teachers feel comfortable to approach their colleagues". He explained that the seating arrangement of staff in department meetings, where teachers face each other, was done intentionally to encourage exchanges. In such an environment, it was expected to also facilitate the adaptation of beginning teachers by promoting discussion with other colleagues.

Induction was framed as a process involving all members of teaching staff, and members of management. The moral obligation of staff and the willingness for beginning teachers to approach members was described as pertinent. In addition, each beginning teacher was assigned to an experienced teacher who had previously taught one or two classes now time-tabled to the beginning teacher. The HOD described the role of the experienced teacher as, "to keep an eye on whatever needs the new teacher might have. In addition they can approach me, we can discuss; I am always available". This arrangement was dependent on beginning teachers' willingness to approach staff. The experienced teachers had not undertaken any classroom observation in these beginning teachers' classes.

It was reported that the DHT and the HOD placed a priority in observing the classes of beginning teachers during the first term. The observations—one or two in total—constituted a mandatory aspect of the beginning teachers' three-month probationary period, and served toward their acquisition of QTS. When lessons of beginning teachers were observed following the probation stage, this was done in line with that of other experienced teachers. This meant that in the subsequent year, lesson observations—again one or two in total over the whole year—served towards their end-of-year appraisal, and did not necessarily provide any feedback for beginning teachers.

The possibility of increasing lesson observations and mentorship as means of improving beginning teachers' practices was raised with the HOD. He acknowledged this as a necessity for beginning teachers, but pointed to his highly loaded schedule and that of the experienced teachers. He further added:

I don't think it is a good idea to throw everything at them at the beginning, some teachers don't like too much intrusion in their classes. We make an effort for Diploma teachers, we've found that they need a little more help. But it is not always possible.

The assignment of classes to teachers was done in recognition of their different qualifications and experience. Supply and Diploma teachers were reported to be rarely allocated to high-stakes exam classes and other high achieving classes. A cited reason was that these teachers were not fully qualified and had limited experience. Meanwhile, B.Ed. teachers new to the school were seen as qualified and experienced, given that they had spent a year in school as Diploma teachers before completing their B.Ed. However, often, Diploma teachers were assigned challenging classes despite the HOD acknowledging that they encountered problems in such classes: "it's not easy to give them only classes where they will have minor classroom management problems since I will not be able to fairly allocate classes to all teachers".

### **Support, collaboration, professional development and learning**

The HOD noted the different forms of collaboration that existed in the department, which would ideally be extended to areas where it most mattered. Collaboration, in some instances was reported to involve the cooperation of most members. The HOD pointed out: "it amazes me to see how members of the department get together and work to produce nice exhibitions, or organise a social event". Overall, the channelling of this effort to improve teaching was seen as a challenge. Teachers were described as having established a routine of being alone with their teaching. He argued that, "this needs to be changed and teachers must make a habit of sharing good practices and see the benefits. Perhaps they feel that by sharing they will expose their weaknesses".

The HOD pointed to opportunities that members of his department had had with respect to professional development and learning. He reported having trained teachers in implementing central assessment policies, and on one occasion he had held sessions on inclusive teaching. Specific to departmental meetings, he reported to using this time to disseminating information and gauging teachers' concerns. He also acknowledged that this time could be better used to engage teachers in reflecting on and sharing good practices

The HOD described the role of the senior management in supporting his department. The senior management was reported occasionally encouraging certain expectations for teachers' work. These ranged from a requirement that teachers, "manage their students, set class rules and provide for their students' needs", to cite a few. Specific to support that targeted his current role, he explained that prior to his promotion he had not benefitted from training. As former HODs and MBA holders, the HOD depicted the senior management as potential support providers for HODs. He revealed, "We have so few training [opportunities] ... plus HODs does not have the opportunity for formal leadership training in education like our senior members".

### **The school's definition, standard, and expectation for effective teaching**

In providing a definition of an effective teacher, the HOD described it as changeable depending on the class, school, and individual student. This contextualised definition was presumed on the specific challenges that a particular school offered. He explained, "like most secondary schools around the country, you have to take charge of your class and earn students' respect, but still each school is different". In addition, he explained that the definition might also vary slightly amongst teachers at the school depending on their personal experiences. He perceived the definition in high achieving classes as being slightly different to classes for low achievers, as the definition for high achievers entailed "pushing the students further". Nevertheless, he proffered a general definition: "an effective teacher is someone who can engage, motivate, and manage students. These are important in addition to having your subject knowledge and how to *deliver* such content".

The HOD described the expectations for effective teaching at the school as being based on broad principles. He explained: "the senior management expect you to engage your

students, get them on task, and improve their learning”. He categorised these expectations as removed from “rigid accountability and unrealistic goals”, primarily due to the senior managements’ flexibility, stating that, “you won’t see the management scrutinising your teaching and making detailed observation, thoroughly checking students’ exercise books ... I guess they respect your professionalism”. The implication was that senior management trusted teachers with their classrooms. However, professionalism can also entail having open classrooms where teachers can benefit from feedback. The HOD stressed on the importance of engaging students in their learning:

At the end of the day if you don’t meet those simple expectations you set yourself up for failure. If you don’t engage your students, they will be more than often off-task and the class will be disruptive. Then suddenly you will be alone with no major support, without your students’ respect, so you need to take charge early.

However, he also portrayed teachers as being placed in a sink or swim situation. For instance, the notion that support would not be forthcoming if students are disengaged depicts teaching as requiring the teacher to survive in the classroom.

The HOD reported that teaching standards in his department were influenced by the background of centrally recruited teachers. He explained that some teachers, both local and expatriate, struggled to cope. Reasons cited included the fact that they did not have a teaching qualification; that the expatriate teachers were not used to teaching Seychellois students, and that the system had the least qualified candidates for training. He pointed out: “I must say we have to be more stringent with regards to recruitment”. On the other hand, he attributed the strength of the science section to the presence of specialist teachers for at least one of each of the pure science subjects (Biology, Chemistry, and Physics). Conversely, the weaknesses he identified he linked to the inability of two or more teachers to effectively teach all three subjects at all level. He attributed this to the training path for Seychellois teachers, which he claimed placed restriction on the effective assignment of classes to teachers.



## **The Deputy Head Teacher**

This section presents a time-based narrative description of data that emerged from the DHT's interview.

### **Background and responsibilities**

The DHT at school B started her career as a science teacher with a B.Ed. She worked as a science HOD and DHT for two years before pursuing her Masters in education. At the time of the study, she had accumulated five years of experience in the position of DHT, of which three were acquired at school B.

### **Induction of beginning teachers at the school**

An orientation meeting with the senior management was said to take place with all beginning teachers assigned to the school. The meeting was depicted by the DHT as an opportunity for the senior management to lay out a high expectation of quality work. It also enabled beginning teachers to acquaint themselves with the senior management and for the senior management to communicate their approachability. The DHT explained: "It is expected that they will take time to adapt so we encourage them to approach us or their HOD or their colleagues in their departments".

Induction was framed as ongoing and reliant on beginning teachers approaching relevant individuals. The DHT assumed that the beginning teachers had an in-depth knowledge of their subject matter, and this was therefore not an area where support by the school was invested. The DHT explained that beginning teachers were supported as "the need arises". This necessitated beginning teachers' willingness to approach other members of their departments, including their HODs, as they identified their professional needs. Whilst a single lesson observation, followed by feedback, was expected for all teachers once a term this was not always possible. The DHT explained, "we [DHTs] are also responsible to observe teachers with follow-up feedback but not to the level that we would have wanted to, mostly because of unforeseen events that often come up". Examples of unforeseen events were cited as: parents showing up without appointments; students' truancies and misbehaviour that required follow-up; and, at times teacher absenteeism. These were reported to take precedence over planned curriculum activities.

When prompted, the DHT had mixed views about a formal induction for beginning teachers. Partly defending the status quo, she explained, “B.Ed. teachers have spent a year teaching as Diploma teachers before proceeding overseas. They are not really considered beginning teachers on their return”. At the same time, she revealed that with a four-year localised B.Ed. programme in the works, current support for beginning teachers would require assessment.

### **Support, collaboration, professional development and learning**

The DHT explained that supporting teachers in attaining the school’s expectation for quality work was vital. The dependency on the MoE for human and curriculum resources was seen as a challenge to quality teaching. For instance, the DHT pointed to the presence of some teachers at the school that required a level of support which the school was unable to fully meet. An example cited was an in-depth knowledge of their respective subject matter. The DHT reported, “I would have expected teachers joining the school to need support with some pedagogy ... this could be sorted out ... but the situation is different”. The DHT claimed that some teachers needed long-term professional development and learning or/and training that the school was not equipped for. The DHT further argued that whilst both the school and MoE aspired for certain standard of teaching, the DHT was of the view that the MoE’s efforts were not commensurate with the school’s needs.

The DHT reported that there was still room for improving support for teachers at the school by senior management. One possibility was to make better use of targets set by individual teachers during their appraisal for the following year. The view was that these targets for improvement were not seriously addressed at department level. The DHT explained: “it would be better perhaps to have those end-of-year individual teachers’ targets linked to the Departmental action plan. In that way, teachers can have targets that are linked to their teaching and learning”. According to the DHT, if these targets were taken up and worked on in departments, then the discussion of these targets during the appraisal time with the senior management would be more meaningful (and helpful) to teachers. If these targets were included in the departmental action plan, the DHT argued, colleagues would be more aware of each other’s needs, and therefore willing to help each other. Direct feedback from lesson observation and monitoring of lesson plan was also reported as a goal. However, as

previously stated, lesson observation scheduled by senior management was often not adhered to because of other activities that arose on a daily basis and which took precedence.

For the deputy head teacher, collaboration was seen as crucial for professional learning and development, but what prevailed at the school did not typically exemplify professional sharing and discussion around teaching. She explained that this collaboration existed because of a sense of commitment and understanding on the part of some teachers: “sometimes you will find that colleagues might not use all of their sick leave and turn up for duties, so as not to burden others taking their classes”. Other forms of collaboration cited by the DHT included instances of teachers working together to prepare examination papers, and the willingness of teachers to take classes for absent colleagues. When further queried, the DHT explained that there was scope for teachers to collaboratively solve problems. She explained that one possibility for greater collaboration was for senior management to encourage greater teachers’ self-reflectiveness. This was seen as having the potential to help teachers better articulate their work as they shared with colleagues.

Since the recent changes to increase school autonomy, the DHT reported that the school was better able to concentrate on the areas for improvement it identified as contextually important. This meant that there was less pressure for the school to work within a rigid time frame to produce periodic progress reports on its developmental plan for the MoE. In addition, there was now less support and monitoring from ministry officials. However, it was reported that professional development and learning areas identified by teachers tended to be repetitive, for instance the focus on “managing students”. The DHT explained that one reason for this was that it was “a challenge for them [teachers] to critically identify their weaknesses and articulate them”. For instance, teachers frequently asked for the opportunity to re-look at the issue of classroom management, and this was described as a perpetual issue by the DHT. She posited that this rested with some teachers’ tendencies not to be reflective about their teaching practices:

[Some teachers] tend to identify changes they would like to see in students. Look, we all know that students’ interest in their learning is at a low point, more so for some than others. However, teachers need to think more about what they can do differently when they teach.

The sentiment was that teachers should look at how they can better work with students and re-focus on how they can make changes to what they do. The DHT acknowledged the challenges in working with some students. However, she was of the view that teachers were not looking enough at their teaching practices and ways they could improve these.

### **The school's definition, standard, and expectations for effective teaching**

The DHT explained that the definition of effective teaching also encompassed the holistic development of learners. She defined an effective teacher as, “someone who appropriately plans for students’ learning, and provides for all students by executing learning objectives”. In providing to the holistic dimension of students’ learning, an effective teacher was portrayed as demonstrating qualities that extended beyond the learning of subject matter. She explained, “there is also the emotional, creative, and social aspect of learning that is equally important”. Therefore, according to the DHT an effective teacher must cater for these aspects when they teach.

According to the DHT, teacher effectiveness was not only conditional on qualities teachers brought to the school, but also how they adjusted and respond to their contexts. She reported, “effectiveness is conditional on a number of factors: types of resources, the attributes of your students, required planning and the relationship you have with other staff members”. She claimed that these factors would vary from school to school, and that successful effectiveness would be dependent on adjustments to individual school and classrooms’ limitations and characteristics.

Similarly, expectations for effective teaching set by schools was said to be reliant on realistic principles. She explained that schools were not idealistic settings and teachers were not idealistic individuals. She explained: “we need to be realistic—you know, teachers’ effectiveness is dependent on the quality of resources, support, and facilities at their disposal”. The view was that teaching expectations set for teachers needed to be set in consideration of factors such as support and resource conditions. Nonetheless, it was expected that teachers did not use these challenges as excuses, “but we can still improve with what we have, if we worked together”. Finally, she explained that effectiveness in teaching must align with the national trend of meeting individual learners’ needs:

The school expectation is for a teacher to plan appropriately for diverse learners' needs, to have sufficient classroom management skills. You can't teach if students are not listening. The school expects teachers to use teaching techniques that engage all students.

As a state school in a centralised system of education, the standard of teaching at the school was said to be dependent of both internal and external factors. The deputy head referred to the most recent external evaluation carried out by the Inspectorate unit at the MoE, noting that, "the report pointed out that there was good teaching in about 55% of classes observed with strengths outweighing weaknesses in those classes". In referring to the report, she also acknowledged constraints faced by the school in attaining a higher standard. She categorised these as, first, the qualities the teacher brings to the school, stating that standards were "conditioned on the motivation of the teachers, their experience, expertise and qualifications". These external qualities were seen as being partly outside the control of the school, which (as noted) was restricted in its inability to select the best teachers with the best qualities. Hence, the second factor was in the supply of quality resources and qualified staff and for the school:

If a teacher is not performing well or if a school asked for the teacher to be transferred, the teacher is not re-trained but rather transferred to another school. Now we don't have lot of them—perhaps four or five in this school—but it does make an impact, you know.

The third factor, in her view, related to parents and community involvement in influencing students' perceptions of the value of good education. As she put it, "students' motivation varies from class to class, and this has a key role in engaging teachers in their teaching and students in their learning. It is conditioned on how they are encouraged, engaged, and supported at home, partly". Finally, according to the deputy, the role of the Senior Management was also pivotal: "the standard of teaching is obviously also marked by the management support for, and promotion of good teaching". The standard of teaching was surmised to be influenced by the involvement and contribution of all of the aforementioned stakeholders.

### **The policies and documentation–Document analysis**

This section presents an analysis of documents, including the school's policies available at the time of data collection. The school development plan, recent external evaluation and minutes of meetings were examined with a focus on teaching and learning. In addition, features within the documents pertaining to the school culture that impacted teaching and learning were examined. This was done to allow triangulation of the evidence collected from respondents, as with the case study of School A.

The school's vision emphasised team, communal, and collaborative work to empower students and to equip them holistically. The focus was on students' acquisition of values, knowledge, and skills for self and societal benefit. In order to achieve these, the school planned to cultivate a sense of commitment and responsibility in students for their learning. It envisioned that teachers acquire and augment skills to better manage and equip themselves for students' varied needs.

The most recent school external evaluation reported indicated that within the school development plan, "due attention had been given to activities aimed at improving students' performance, the quality of teaching and behaviour management in the school" (MoE, 2009, p. 10). Nonetheless, it also revealed that the views of the students and parents were not sought in the audit process leading to its formulation. Still, the action plans were generally well conceived and comprehensive in scope. Due attention had been given to activities aimed at improving students' performance, the quality of teaching, and behaviour management in the school. However, the report explained that these outcomes were not stated in measurable terms. In addition, the plan had not outlined sufficiently how information that was to be gathered from monitoring activities would be brought together for a summative evaluation of the overall impact of the plan, (MoE, 2009, p. 10).

The external evaluation further detailed the attributes of the school with respect to teaching and learning and other aspects affecting the school culture. It revealed that a strong sense of collaboration and unity prevailed across the various departments, with teachers collaborating readily with their HODs in covering for absences and staff shortages. However, departmental minutes from meetings revealed a lack of professional discourse around teaching and learning.

Behaviour problems were identified as an issue at the school, leading the report to suggest an inculcation of a sense of basic courtesy in students. Two other issues were identified by the report: the first was the need for a coordinated, school team approach to the monitoring of teaching and learning across the school. It called for the HODs to adopt a more systematic and consistent approach to classroom observations and the monitoring of classroom practices in their departments. Secondly, the report identified the need to take immediate measures to address the quality of teaching in the school was pinpointed, in order to meet students' needs.

### **Summary of Case study B**

A second year B.Ed. teacher Ryan claimed to have a passion for teaching, and that his aim was to teach students to enjoy learning science, yet he was considering an application as a teacher-trainer. The higher status of a teacher-trainer, scant resources for teachers, isolation in teaching, and some students' disengagement and indiscipline were the main reasons for Ryan's considering a career change.

Whilst he did not experienced a formal induction, Ryan reported to have felt personally welcomed at the school through an introductory meeting with the head teacher. The HOD and DHT pointed to this introductory meeting with all new teachers at a group or individual level as a way of setting expectations for quality work and to give a background to the school. Ryan felt that he received professional recognition when he was given a position on the School Improvement Team.

But in spite of a cordial atmosphere in his department, Ryan pointed to limited support for teachers. Both the HOD and DHT explained that beginning teachers could approach the HOD, or a designated experienced teacher when support was required. However, Ryan pointed to the fact that he was recognized by the management as fully prepared for his responsibilities as an impediment to accessing support. In addition, conservatism around teaching practices encouraged him to treat teaching as a solitary pursuit. Nonetheless, Ryan pointed to a productive professional relationship with the laboratory technicians, where they frequently discussed new ideas about practical work for students.

Ryan experienced limited direct support and collaborative work around his teaching. Whilst Ryan pointed to the department meetings as potentially allowing for discussion of professional issues, he reported that they were primarily used to disseminate information. His classroom teaching was observed once, probably as a requirement to confirm his status as a degree teacher. Whilst he welcomed the visit by the DHT into his classroom and felt encouraged by the feedback he received, it was brief.

Ryan acknowledged that his training had not equipped him to deal with the issues of student disengagement and discipline, and felt that given the prevalence of these issues, the school could have done better in supporting its teachers. Therefore, his expectations of his workplace in supporting his professional needs were not being met. He was not confined by the curriculum and was able to incorporate ideas and practical work in his teaching by accessing the internet at his place of residence, but such access was limited at the school. Nevertheless, this self-reliance was not sufficient to allow him to resolve the challenges he faced in helping disengaged students.

Being an effective teacher was important to Ryan. He claimed to appraise his effectiveness by getting students to participate in evaluating his lessons. The degree to which he had earned his students' respect and that of the school management was used as an indicator to also gauge his effectiveness. This meant being responsive to students' needs, as well as meeting the school's expectation of what an effective teacher should be. The notion of earning students' respect was echoed by the HOD, when he stated that respect was evident when a teacher was able to motivate, engage, and "manage students". Meanwhile, the DHT described an effective teacher as involved in the holistic learning of the learner, and explained that this entailed a consideration of learners' emotional, creative, and social qualities.

Overall, the view of the management members was that the school did not set an unrealistic expectation of teachers. This was said to be evident when the constraints of the school (such as resources) were considered in articulating the expectation for effective teaching.

It was observed that Ryan overwhelmingly used teacher-centred approaches in his teaching. He further confirmed this in interviews, and attributed the dominance of this



approach to students' expectation that the teacher should be the central figure in learning. He did not challenge this expectation. Therefore, there was a focus on subject matter rather than one of student-centred pedagogy. Ryan tended to use several teacher demonstrations in his teaching, and students were observed participating in a number of practical science activities. His lesson plans demonstrated that practical work in his classroom was well prepared and researched, but was confirmatory rather than open or guided inquiry in nature.

## **Case Study C**

### **Description of the context**

School C, a suburban coeducational secondary school catering for about 675 students, is classified as a medium sized school. At the time of data collection, the school had approximately 60 teaching staff and 20 support staff. The head teacher and one of the deputy head teachers (DHT) both had masters degrees in educational leadership, and they each had over 10 years of experience in senior management positions. The second DHT was a former head of department (HOD) with two years of experience in her current post. Both the DHT and the HODs oversaw the curriculum implementation. Alongside the head of cycle, the two DHTs oversaw the pastoral aspects of the school. The School Improvement Team, comprising of the six HODs, the two head of cycle, the senior management, and two teachers coordinated the School Improvement Team, ensuring the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the school development plan (See figure 6).

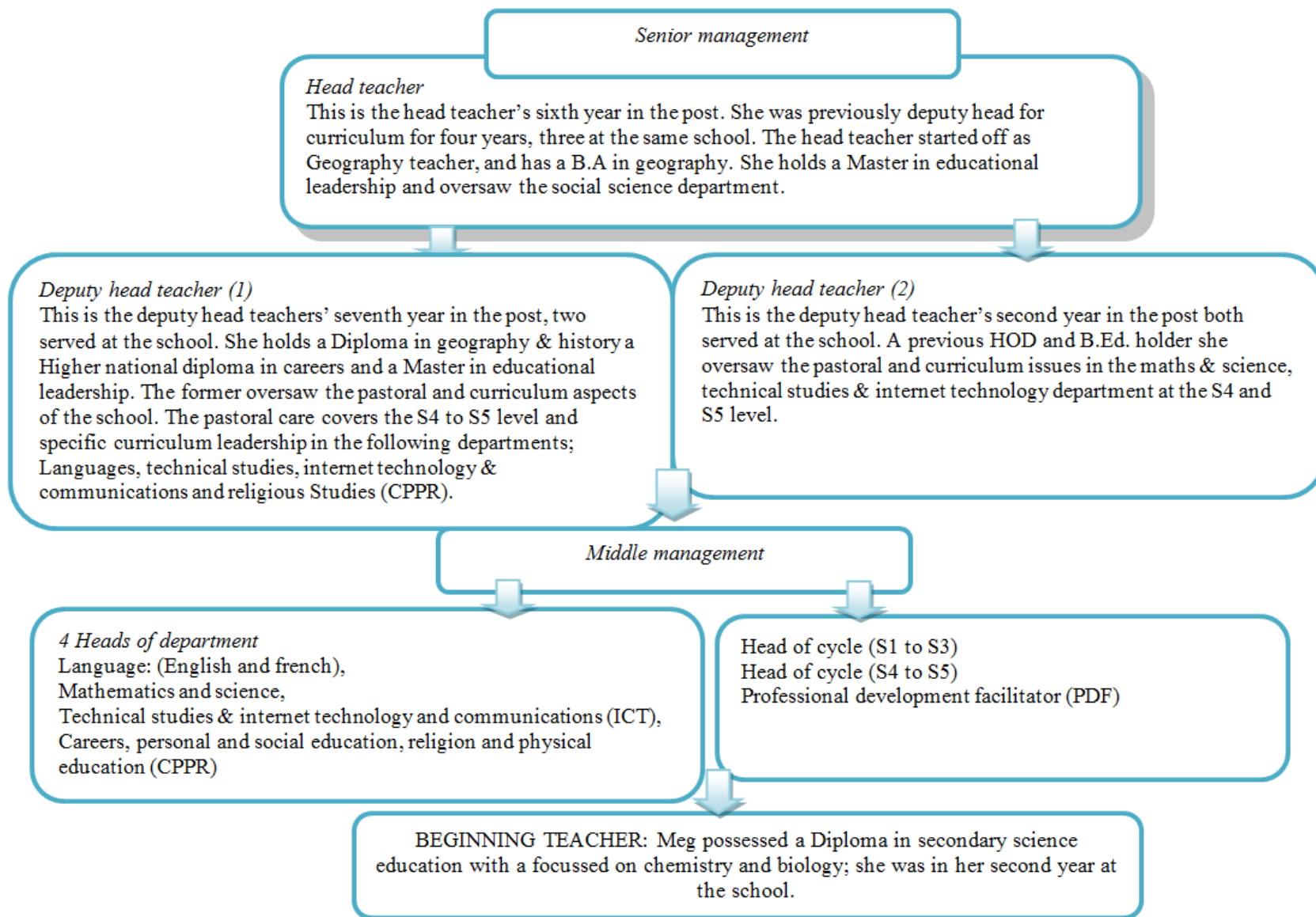


Figure 6: Diagrammatic representation of the national school structure in the Seychelles, with some details specific to the beginning teacher, Meg in school C.

## **The Beginning Teacher's Experiences**

This section presents a time-based narrative description of data that emerged from the beginning teacher's interview. Interview data are clustered around three main areas.

### **Background, transition, and responsibilities**

Meg was in the beginning of her second year as a Diploma teacher at the time of data collection. Upon completing her diploma, she concluded an advanced diploma locally, with the anticipation that she would enrol in the B.Ed. programme at the University of Seychelles.

A good part of her experience as a student-teacher was gained at her school C. Meg's early orientation period involved a brief tour that focussed on the science facilities and an introduction to the science staff. She claimed, "I was shown where the labs were and how to request materials, but other things relating directly to the school itself [other school facilities e.g., the library] I discovered for myself". Like most participants in the research, there was a tendency for Meg to use the term orientation and induction interchangeably. She explained, "if I think about induction, where you go to each individual staff [at the school], then it was not a proper one". Her descriptions depicted induction as being limited to a brief orientation period.

Meg explained that she had the opportunity to negotiate her assigned responsibilities at the beginning of her second year at the school. She remarked that in her first year she was handed a time-table without her input: "I was treated like any other teacher, in terms of the number of period I was given". She also pointed to early challenges in sorting out her time-table, stating that, "I remember last year on a Friday I had eight out of eight [periods]. I cried and explained that this cannot be and eventually they changed". She reported that her involvement in negotiating her class assignments began in her second year at the school: "this year I chose a single Chemistry class, but my HOD encouraged me to take both senior classes. This indicated that they trusted me". This claim of trust stemmed from the tendency to assign high-stakes exam classes to B.Ed. teachers rather than Diploma teachers. As a Diploma teacher, she reported that this has been achieved during her appraisal. Senior management indicated to her that she had the capacity to manage her students, earn their respect, and teach her subject well.

Meg reported the development of a positive work relationship with her HOD. Her view was that though the HOD had a management position, she was willing to take

the classes of absent teachers, and also assigned to herself low achieving classes. These actions, and her approachability, were reported by Meg as conducive to a good working relationship:

I would say that she is someone helpful, if you go to her and explain the situation that you are facing, she will understand you. She is also taking a lower band class and goes for cover so she is at the same level as we are.

Meg explained that she had earned the respect of the majority of her students. However, she pointed to the attitude of some of her students as one of her concerns. She reported, “some students I would say don’t value you as a teacher ... it impacts on you, teaching is from the heart, and not being valued by others you feel discouraged”. An overall poor academic achievement was another area that she was concerned about. According to Meg, this was not restricted to her classes, and the general sentiment in the school was that students were not taking their learning seriously. She explained, “when you think about students’ attitude towards their learning, it worries you, they are not giving priority to their learning ... some of them cannot find the benefit of being in a class”. Nonetheless, Meg expressed her desire to continue working as a teacher and particularly at her current school.

### **Support, collaboration, professional development, and learning**

The extent of mentorship from the senior management was reported by Meg as minimal. Nonetheless, Meg acknowledged their contributions to teaching and learning at the school. She pointed to three areas: first, they checked teachers’ lesson plans on a fortnightly basis. It was a formality, however, and Meg reported that tangible feedback was not forthcoming. Second, as part of their “high-visibility” practices, senior management also showed up in classrooms or on the school ground. This was explained by Meg as something done to curb students’ indiscipline. Third, two of the senior management members were also taking classes on a permanent basis. Meg valued this direct involvement, as their subsequent advice to teachers would stem from on-going personal experiences.

Meg had mixed views on the manner that some members of senior management supported her in sorting out pastoral issues. Particularly, Meg felt that a more professional approach could be used at times. She reported to being interrogated twice in front of her students when Meg sought management intervention over an issue with a particular student. She explained, “they just want to come in and give you a good

telling-off, you can only accept it". Meg framed this as scope for senior management to further value teachers' contribution and trust. She described this disciplinary approach as having the potential to impede senior management's approachability, and thus increase teachers' reluctance to partake in decision making.

However, overall Meg expressed satisfaction with the manner by which the senior management attempted to resolve students' misbehaviour. This was particular to cases involving students with serious behavioural issues, who were seen as creating the greatest challenge for teachers. Nonetheless, the senior management's ability to resolve these cases was delayed by the MoE. According to Meg, these cases took longer to sort out, and students with severe behavioural issues continued with their old ways at school. Meg's view was that these students required help that was beyond the expertise of teachers. The involvement of the MoE was seen as important, to temporarily or permanently remove these students from the school and provide them with external help.

Meg felt that the collegueship between herself and her HOD was a strong one. Given this, the involvement of her HOD in providing support to her was viewed positively. But rather than providing direct support for teaching, the HOD's involvement was described as encouraging good practices. In addition, Meg pointed to her as acting as a go-between in relaying teachers' concerns and suggestions at senior management level. Meg explained:

You mentioned something or share something that you did not like or want to improve; she would encourage you. If you bring up something in a constructive way, she would normally bring it to the attention of the senior management.

Meg pointed to the opportunities that she got for informal discussion in her department as being beneficial. She reported that she had opportunities in both formal (such as department meetings) and informal to "talk about [her] frustrations. We shared how the class was, what we've done ... the good things that happened or shared a little joke or talk about something we did not like". Given this cordial atmosphere, Meg explained that she was able to freely approach her colleagues. She explained, "it is not only me seeing them as professionals; because they come to me they see me to talk about how I cope with certain students or the kind of book I am using to teach a topic". The minutes meeting revealed that these professional discussions did not entail in-depth discussion around effective teaching practices.

Meg's classroom teaching, as for other teachers, was meant to be observed once a term, but Meg reported that this had happened only once since she had been at the school, as part of her probation to secure QTS. She detailed the feedback given to her by the HOD:

She writes a report to submit based on her observation. I remember that day she said that I relate well with my students, sometimes I allow them to make presentation whilst I would seat amongst them, be one of them. She told me that was something good that I was doing. I am not sure about the weaknesses but she will tell you both.

Meg explained that she could get access to this report in her administrative file. However, this was kept in the head teacher's office and there was, therefore, a sense of formality in accessing this report for reference.

### **Perception of self-effectiveness**

Meg felt that she was able to gauge her effectiveness based on the extent that she allowed students to participate in their learning. Of the criteria she used for herself, Meg reported, "one is how far I am facilitating students' learning. I maximize practical activities and other activities, maximize students' engagement, take in their contribution, and perhaps ask them what they want to do. Students would then feel more valued". Meg's means of gauging her effectiveness portrayed elements of student-centered learning. She was of the view that by seeking students' contribution, she would make their learning relevant.

Another means Meg cited for assessing her effectiveness was the extent to which she felt she was able to successfully teach low achievers, given that they were perceived as the most disengaged. She explained that identifying an effective teacher was presumed on their ability to successfully teach these students. As she explained, "some teachers would punish the students, for example going to a low achieving class, knowing that students are not interested and you give the students a whole page to copy". She explained that to teach those students well in those classes an effective teacher has to plan well in striking a balance between managing the students, motivating and engaging them.

Feedback from her students was an important means Meg reported to use in adjusting her teaching. The feedback was said to come directly from students whilst teaching, and from their continuous assessment results, which were often used for re-teaching. Whilst teaching, and depending on students' reactions to curriculum material

presented, Meg explained, “I will change something on the spot, and at times, even if I have notes as guide I will sort of modify it”. According to Meg, students in one of her classes presented challenges she had not faced from her previous cohort. She explained, “you are not always in a position to give them a satisfactory explanation, meaning that there [is] room for improvement, new condition is there for me to meet with new students”. A consideration of these factors presented by students was said to enable her to assess her effectiveness. Finally, Meg pointed to gauging her effectiveness through discussion with colleagues: “sometimes you can see that you are not far from more experienced teachers as well”. This comparison to other experienced teachers stemmed from the informal discussion at department level. It gave Meg the opportunity to learn and compare her challenges with that of her more experienced colleagues.

Meg also pointed to the potential to better her teaching. As she claimed, “I can still improve further by reflecting about my teaching”. She explained that pursuing a teaching degree could contribute towards her ability to further reflect on her practices and add to her subject matter knowledge. Nonetheless, she was not confident that a tertiary qualification would empower her to address and resolve one of the major issues she was facing in her teaching:

A Bachelor [degree] will help you gain skills and knowledge. I don't think that any qualification will help with students' behaviour and attitudes, because this is something that can that be tackled in part by family or at national level.

This is likely to stem from Meg's view that other more experienced and qualified teachers were facing similar challenges, including effectively teaching disengaged students.

Meg also identified that limited resources were hindering her ability to diversify students' activities. In part, she attributed this as contributing to poor students' interest in their learning. She explained, “like in my department, for example, chalk is a core material we need but you find yourself not getting enough. You find yourself going through many channels to get it”. Meg's reference to difficulties in accessing a basic material exemplified how the provision of quality resources was an issue.



## The Beginning Teacher's Practices

Two observation sessions per class were carried out in three of Meg's science classes. Following the observations and subsequent post-hoc interviews, a description of trends in Meg's teaching was produced. Meg exhibited enthusiasm and self-confidence, and her teaching style contained elements of student-centred principles but skewed more towards teacher-centered. This contrasted to how Meg viewed her teaching style:

I would describe myself as someone who is student-centred, I think that this is displayed in the strategies that I use in the class. I am someone who allows for classroom discussion to generate and build on students responses. I believe students are not empty vessels, they have a little something it is just that they don't have what you want, or they want you to ignite it for them. So apart from classroom discussions I enjoy doing a lot of experiments and giving students the chance to perform.

Her assertions about her own practices revealed some contradictions. Indeed, Meg did engage her students in practical work. This engagement was partly based on students' interest that she often gave due consideration. Nonetheless, the opportunity to augment student-centred or inquiry-based teaching was restricted because she saw herself as the custodian of students' knowledge. For example, Meg did not opt for inquiry-based teaching because she felt that it would take too much time and affect curriculum coverage. She also pointed out that students were not adequately prepared to carry out such activity, that they needed more structured and guidance work to "minimize confusion" in their learning.

The classroom observations did reveal Meg making frequent use of practical work. However, she opted for prescriptive close-ended laboratory investigations where procedures and results were not left open. In low achieving classes, she followed the same principle but started with a teacher demonstration for students to replicate. She justified the use of demonstrations as follows: "the demonstration showed what they'd be doing afterwards and for them to see how equipment are handled, to know what to look for in the observations, to make it more clear how they would do activities in their groups". Consequently, in her science classes students were not observed grappling with data, in developing explanations for various results, and in asking questions from

these. Rather, students would use emerging data to complete structured exercises that would guide them to pre-determined conclusions.

Meg tended to use questioning techniques that involved low order questions. In addition she was not observed asking students to use complete sentences or to elaborate their responses. Take for instance the following excerpt of a questioning session that was meant to recapitulate part of the lesson:

Teacher: How many cells are there in our body?  
Chorus response (few students): Millions.  
Teacher: How many muscles cells are there in our body?  
Chorus response (few students): A lot.  
Teacher: How does a muscle cell work?  
Student (no. 09): With other cells.  
Teacher: Very good.  
Teacher: Can we still call a group of muscle a cell?  
Student (no. 04): No.  
Teacher: What do we call a group of muscles cells?  
Teacher: A tissue.

This typified her frequently used approach of questioning techniques. In a way, this aligned with Meg's philosophy of ensuring that students got the "right answer". This was not really an issue for Meg because her students were answering her questions correctly and they were used to this routine. Another reason for this was to augment students' achievement. She explained:

Performance is not up to standard, it is almost average I can say for one or two students. Even if they'll be good at answering question orally, but when it comes to writing down it is not as good. It is a bit of language barrier but I think they are not able to interpret questions as well.

Therefore, the adherence to her teaching approaches was aimed at improving her students' academic performance. Her teachings was infused with student-activities and interspersed with oral questioning that elicited short-phrase or one word answers. However, there was less focus on higher-order learning skills, given a preoccupation on students' acquisition of discrete information.

One feature of student-centred teaching was in the opportunities students got for independent learning. Meg explained that her average and high achievers got the chance to research on topics they learnt in class. Research reports guided by questions were usually collected for marking and returned to students with feedback and grades, to encourage them and strengthen their research skills. However, she viewed this approach as detrimental to the learning of her low achievers, stating that, “for low ability classes I will not encourage that, since sometimes they will come across information that will confuse them and this will make your life as a teacher difficult”.

Given the school’s priority on classroom management Meg reported that she had high expectations with respect to her students’ behaviour. She pointed to her networking with the tutor teacher (Teacher in charge of students’ welfare in a particular class) in sorting out misbehaviour promptly at an individual level as they arise. She reported, “there has been some remarkable improvement, because I report it to the class teacher who told me to report if it continues”. This networking was emphasized alongside Meg’s approach to setting the standard of student’s behaviour: “I also emphasized on this acceptable level of behaviour, though it is not written down, I keep reminding them so that this standard is maintained”. Meg attributed her students’ attention in most of her classes to the relationship she had established. She explained:

My belief is that when someone teaches, someone listens, if you want to learn, to grasp what is being taught, you need to follow. This comes to the issue of order in class; you can’t talk at the same time and want to learn something.

Her approach to tackling misbehaviour contrasted with the types of problems she experienced with her low achievers compared to other experienced teachers.

I have problem with specific students. There are teachers however, who complained about the whole class, that they will not work or cannot do anything, I don’t get this. I have been with them going on two years; I have been their [tutor] teacher and science teacher, so this helps as well.

The kind of relationship she had built with her student should not restrict student-centred learning. However, Meg explained, “I want to minimize confusion at all cost I want to take my time with whatever I want to *deliver*, I don’t want to see myself rushing with a topic, this is why I *direct* them where to go”. Therefore, students were not observed challenging materials that Meg presented.

Meg was selective in what she taught her low achievers. She explained, “some of them cannot read, some of them cannot write, and sometimes they do not write what you have written on the board, so that is why I select topics I think they will grasp”. To facilitate students’ understanding of the material she delivered in her low achieving class, Meg frequently used Creole alongside English. Students followed a pattern of using the local language interspersed with English phrases. Another strategy employed by Meg would be to continue using English whilst students would continue communicating with her in Creole, she would keep it simple, and cognisant of her perception of students’ levels of understanding. Meg also reported that her knowledge of the local language had helped her to better enact her lessons, and in turn had curbed disciplinary issues.

### **The Head of Department**

This section presents a narrative description of data that emerged from the HOD’s interview.

#### **Background and responsibilities**

The head of the mathematics-science department at school C completed her university training with a science degree, and following a year-long post-graduate certificate in education, she spent five years teaching in a secondary state school. At the time of the study, she was in her third year at the school, of which one year was served as the HOD.

Where her responsibilities proved to be challenging, the HOD reported that it was because of her lack of training and limited experience. She highlighted the lack of training for HODs both prior and subsequent to their appointment, and the need for in-service training, reporting that, “the members of the senior management possess Masters Degree, the HODs have qualification only in teaching so they should pass this on, if not them, then the MoE”. Another source of challenge was the average 10 years that most members of her department had in comparison to her one year experience as a HOD. As she put it, “when you think about managing twelve people, especially people who have been longer at the school than you and older than you, it is a challenge”. Finally, she felt hindered in her responsibilities by her limited knowledge of mathematics, stating, “I don’t know much about the teaching of mathematics, even though you learnt along the way; I would have been extremely comfortable being only a science HOD”.

These reported shortcomings were somewhat mitigated by the support given to her in leading the department. This support emerged through respect earned at two different levels: “I would not say enjoying it but I am trying my best and I am grateful that I received the support of my head teacher and that of some of my colleagues in the department”.

### **Induction of beginning teachers at the school**

Notwithstanding an orientation period, prolonged support specific for beginning teachers was limited, but nonetheless justified by the HOD. She stated, “These teachers even though they just came from university, they were teaching in local classrooms”. Her involvement in helping a former diploma teacher now a B.Ed. teacher exemplified the extent she felt support was needed:

I knew he was at the school before he went for his studies. I knew he was familiar with the school environment. I also assumed he knew about the different records he had to keep, perhaps little things that might have changed whilst he was away I did try my best to bring those things to his attention.

Previous experience in state schools as former diploma teachers or student-teachers were perceived as sufficient to exclude a formal induction that extended beyond familiarization to support in learning to teach. However, beginning diploma teachers were not assigned the high-stake examinations classes, which were typically reserved for beginning B.Ed. or more experienced teachers. The HOD further explained an attempt to assign a lesser load to both groups of beginning teachers: “I would say it depends, we think about the fact that they are beginners; we try to give a lighter load but it is not always possible”. In consequence, beginning teachers often ended with similar load to experienced teachers because of limited staff, as well as the HOD’s reported attempt to “fairly” distribute classes amongst all teachers, that is, to assign each teacher a balance of “difficult” classes and high achievers.

Whilst the HOD had high expectations of beginning teachers as potential contributors of up-to-date teaching practices, she also presumed that teacher training had fully equipped these teachers. She claimed:

A good thing is that they have gone through the NIE [National institute of education, now university of Seychelles], so they know what they can do in class, and they can manage. They are fresh from

university with new knowledge and ideas so they are innovative. The more older teachers they have been here a long time they are tired and the beginning teachers they have the energy and the new ways.

Given her view of the more experienced teachers, it is likely that the perceived potential of these beginning teachers were not being effectively shared. In part, this sharing may have also been limited due to the nature of collaborative work relationship that existed in the department, as detailed below.

### **Support, collaboration, Professional development and learning**

Teacher collaboration was reported to be more evident in other forms rather than instances that specifically encouraged the sharing of pedagogical practices. The HOD acknowledged that mutual respect and good relationships that existed between members of her department. The mathematics and science sections were seated separately, but each around large tables in the staffroom. This setting was described as facilitating the potential for verbal interaction. The HOD expected more exchanges from teachers about their practices, stating that, “they should capitalize on this but unfortunately, they see this as a place to cool off from their hard work in the classrooms”. Collaboration was reported to be more evident when teachers organised social activities, open days for school, or events during teachers’ week. These forms of collaboration were seen as bringing teachers together, but did not extend to discussion on teaching practices. The HOD explained, “I wouldn’t say that there is enough cooperation to improve teaching, maybe one thing I would suggest is that there should be sessions for teachers to share good practices”.

The HOD highlighted the fact that senior management directed focus to other aspects of the school’s functions, as opposed to teaching. The HOD reported that school’s focus was primarily on pastoral and administrative matters, including documentation, and attending to parents. The HOD explained:

Let’s say I go round and I see that one of my teachers has problems with classroom management, even though you write this on the classroom observation sheet I don’t see anything being done about it. Even though we have professional development session linked to the SIP [School improvement Programme] they are not fruitful.

The senior management’s direct involvement in improving teaching was seen as important for the HOD, in particular when this involvement supported her role. For

instance, she expected that a member of the senior management should observe the lessons of a more experienced teacher alongside her, for appraisal purposes. She explained, “at the end of the day they want to see results, but maybe they are too caught up with other issues to really focus on teaching”.

The working environment for teachers, and resources for their work, were explained as requiring improvement. Requirements ranged from increasing space in an overcrowded staffroom to the replacement of furniture for staff. She explained, “I think the condition impact on teachers’ sense of professionalism”. Concerning curriculum resources, the HOD explained that most teachers were compelled to improvise for most classes, and thus worked within the confines of available resources. However, she explained that the IGCSE syllabi were updated yearly, and that most of the requirements for this high-stake examination could not be fully met through improvisation. For instance, she pointed to inadequate and out-dated curriculum materials and equipment resulting in insufficient student exposure to practical work.

### **The school’s definition, expectation, and standard for effective teaching**

Effective teaching was defined broadly by the HOD. She explained, “at the end of the day if you’ve achieved your objectives, [and] the students have understood, for me this is effective teaching”. The achievement of these objectives was determined through a review or assessment of students’ understanding at the end of the lesson or topic. However, a determination of effectiveness through the assessment of students’ understanding placed a strong (if not exclusive) focus on content area.

An expectation for effective teaching was reported to require teachers to be selective with what was advocated by their training institutions. The HOD referred to the use of student-centred learning approaches: “usually at the teacher training centre, they are for student-centred learning but when you reach the school you are visibly discouraged to use this approach because it disturbs other classes. It is not something which is supported”. The HOD described student-centred as enabling learners to participate in more hands-on activities, and to carry out their own research. Employing approaches that entailed an inclusion of student-centred models of teaching meant a perception that disruption was bound to occur. Consequently, the HOD explained that she did not encourage these approaches with the most disengaged students, typically the low achievers. Given this view of student-centred teaching, she explained that it was only encouraged with the more disciplined high achievers. As she noted, “I personally do that, for instance asking students to research, let’s say about seed dispersal and

present, instead of me standing in front of the class and teaching them”. Teacher’s choices of activities were influenced by the expectations set by the senior management. She explained that whilst certain activities would have suited low achievers, aligning teaching practices to senior management expectations took priority. She explained, “it is also better to do more practical work, field work with low ability students but nowadays fieldwork is not encouraged ... they [senior management] want to have a school where there is discipline ... I don’t blame them”.

The current standard of teaching at the school was described by the HOD as having potential for improvement. She pointed to teacher commitment as vital. She highlighted the commitment as encumbered by three main issues. The first involved student engagement. As she explained, “one thing I would say is that normally the level of teaching reflects the kind of students you have, because if you have students who are not motivated then you are not encouraged to really teach”. Therefore, teacher commitment to teaching was presumed on the notion that students should enter schools with a predisposition to learn.

The second issue was described by the HOD as requiring school policy to tackle poor student discipline. Issues encountered with student discipline was described as pervasive, “so maybe if there were strict rules in the school then the teacher wouldn’t have this problem of classroom management. So, this is one problem affecting teachers”. However, the HOD acknowledged that teaching may not necessarily be the priority of some teachers, some of whom were, she felt, enticed into the profession for monetary reasons, rather than by a love of and commitment to the profession.

In the HOD’s view, a final issue impinging on the overall standard of teaching at school C was limited central support, for instance in addressing curriculum requirements (i.e., material support). These requirements were cited as important in addressing the need of high-stakes exams preparation. Another form of central support the HOD expected was that more teachers enter the profession, as this would help to reduce class size to about 25 students. The HOD reported that class size at school C currently averaged at around 32 students.



## **The Deputy Head Teacher**

This section presents a time-based narrative description of data that emerged from the DHT's interview.

### **Background and responsibilities**

The DHT explained that whilst she had curriculum responsibilities, given her experience, her responsibilities focussed more on the pastoral side. With a cumulative experience of almost twenty years, the DHT started her career teaching geography, history, and personal and social education. Equipped with a Master's degree in educational leadership, she had been discharging the role of DHT for seven years of which two were served at the current school.

### **Induction of beginning teachers at the school**

The DHT explained that she was the one who often held an introductory meeting with all beginning teachers during their early days at the school. This meeting was described as conveying to the beginning teachers what their roles as members of a department and as practitioners in their classes would be. Another introductory meeting was held by the HOD at department level.

The DHT acknowledged the absence of a written induction policy at the school. However she also pointed to examples of support available to beginning teachers. There was also a tendency for her to use descriptions that framed "induction" and an "orientation period" as interchangeable terms whilst she was explaining the early orientation phase. Nonetheless, the DHT pointed to lesson observation, mentorship, and instances of professional development and learning specifically for beginning teachers. Mentorship stemming from lesson observation was described as occurring twice per term. The DHT explained that these activities were undertaken by both herself and the HOD at different times, stating that, "this monitoring is to help with facilitating instruction and demands my physical presence in the classroom". In circumstances where the beginning teachers faced major difficulties, direct intervention in the form of professional development and learning were provided. However, this was reported to have occurred only once during her two years at the school, and it had involved lesson planning with a physical education teacher.

Classes assigned to beginning teachers before or after acquiring QTS did not differ markedly from their more experienced counterparts. The DHT explained that

beginning teachers' successful completion of teacher training and targeted support at school level justified this:

Yes, because he or she has graduated, but before that, when we monitor that teacher we need to show him or her where he/she is doing wrong for improvement, once there is improvement, that's good. If there is no improvement, we need to move [support] further.

In fact, the DHT pointed to exemplary practices by beginning teachers at the school, which with time became sub-standard.

They would follow everything that they learnt [from teacher education], within two or four years everything comes down, they would not really prepare lesson according to what they have learnt, they would prepare may be just short notes. Maybe correcting exercise books, they would rarely do that, homework also.

The DHT attributed this change to either a lapse in monitoring, or reluctance on the part of those beginning teachers to seek help or “maybe we did not give them the support that they expected”.

### **Support, collaboration, Professional development and learning**

Specific to the level of collaboration that existed within Departments, this was expressed as varying depending on the department. Given that the DHT did not monitor the mathematics-science department, she was briefed during the various management meetings and by her other DHT colleague. She explained, “Some departments they do [work together] but concerning mathematics-science, they are in their little groups. Within the department they don't tend to collaborate as we would want them to”. Improving the collaborative atmosphere was seen as important by the DHT, as she reported a need to improve the quality of teaching of some teachers in that department. In her opinion, the leadership role of the HOD was pivotal in this endeavour.

The DHT described the school's senior management as being proactive in catering for some of the professional needs of teachers. This involvement entailed a reliance on external support providers from the MoE: “last year we had support officers to present during the PD [professional development] time”. These presentations ranged from exam preparation, marking, and development of specification tables, which was found to be necessary by both management and teachers. But other than the externally

facilitated sessions, which seemed to be generic in nature, the DHT did not expand on the senior management's proactive role in addressing the concerns of leadership and quality teaching in mathematics-science department.

### **The school's definition, standard, and expectation for effective teaching**

In providing a definition of an effective teacher, the DHT explained that this must not only reflect the role of a teacher in teaching content matter. She defined an effective teacher as “an individual who [could] act as a model to all stakeholders, plan and teach with his or her students' learning in mind, differentiate instruction, and form good student teacher relationship inside and outside the classroom”. The DHT was of the view that an effective teacher must be responsive to reasonable demands of all stakeholders in the community. This definition was partly influenced by the DHT's work with students' pastoral care; she framed students' social well-being as important to learning. Teaching effectiveness was seen as exemplified by teachers' work beyond the confines of a classroom. As an example, the teacher's interaction with parents was cited. A possible purpose of this was to establish an understanding of parents' and teacher's expectations by forming a better picture of a particular student's background.

In line with the definition of the expectations reflective of a successful teacher not being limited to the classroom, the DHT depicted an effective teacher as contributing towards the school vision and mission, and who felt they belonged to the community of teachers. Student learning was said to be at the core of the school mission and vision, and therefore a successful teacher was said to keep this in mind in his/her endeavour. The DHT explained:

If we want to give a chance to students, if we are here for the students then that individual will work with other teachers like her or prompt others to network, share good practices, in the end we will see that our school benefits.

That is, the common goal of improving students' learning and achievements must be seen as a driving force in encouraging teachers to share good practices and empower fellow colleagues.

The nurturing of a positive student-teacher was reported as a key disposition of an effective teacher. This relationship was said to allow the teacher to deal with behaviour or social issues affecting students' learning:

The teacher tries to understand the student, if there is any problem you'll see that the teacher will tell the student to come even during break time or lunch time, there the teacher will stay with the student. The teacher will call the parent if he sees that the student's level has gone down. The teacher concerned about that will find the reason for it, this will be passed on in the department meeting, the HOD will inform us in our management meeting and we will take action if necessary.

Specific to classroom planning and teaching the DHT cited some key expectations. In addition to having well planned lessons, frequent research to augment content knowledge and teaching strategies, effective teachers at the school were expected to have on-hand supplementary work for students' individual needs. The DHT claimed that "this [was] crucial to prevent disruptions and push bright students". In addition, she noted other qualities of effective teachers: "she will have visual aids, provide timely feedback to students on their work, the teacher will go out for fieldwork".

With respect to the standard of teaching, the DHT pointed to the areas she monitored closely. She cited languages and history as the area with the best students' performance. She referred to these sections as engaging in student-centred learning, with teaching marked with a value for student's input and praising, noting that "there is good team work in language department". This team work was said to facilitate teachers working together in tackling, for instance, the re-teaching of topics. However, the DHT explained that students were underperforming in school-based and external exams for mathematics, science, and geography. She further pointed to this as a national trend and concern.

Teacher absenteeism was another area affecting the school. She explained, "I wouldn't say the majority, perhaps three or four, maybe they do not like the low achieving classes, where they encounter disciplinary problems. These teachers are mostly absent on the day they have these classes". One approach used in sorting out the issue was to take it up in the end-of-year appraisal, but this had mixed results: "some have improved, but there are other teachers who are still absent at times. Students' disengagement, poor literacy, and numeracy was said to be a common feature of low achieving classes. This has led the school to developing a special curriculum for a few of its low achieving classes. However, rather than numeracy and literacy the focus was

on practical skills development. This entailed the inclusion of more “on-hands subjects like physical education, art, and craft”.

### **The Policies and Documentation–Document Analysis**

This section presents documentation of the school’s policies. Both the School Development Plan and its recent external evaluation report were examined, with a focus on teaching and learning. The focus of the aforementioned documents was on the identified strengths and challenges for teachers, and how these were being tackled. As with the case studies of schools A and B, this was done to allow triangulation of evidence collected from respondents.

School C’s vision stressed the development of both social and behavioural skills for its students, in order to contribute towards their academic and pastoral needs. The school’s mission focussed on striving for equity and consistency in education, which the school considered important to developing pro-active citizens. In order to achieve this, the school planned to inculcate its students with a sense of responsibility and commitment towards their learning. Similarly, in order to provide for its teachers in this endeavour, the school envisioned a more consistent approach to classroom management, as well as an increasing sense of responsibility and commitment for its students with respect to their learning.

The action plans tackling the areas for improvement were, in general, detailed and comprehensive in scope. Attention had been given to activities aimed at facilitating students’ sense of responsibility and commitment towards learning, and a consistent approach to classroom management. In contrast, however, the plan did not amply convey how information could be gathered from the monitoring of activities, or how this information would be collated for the summative evaluation of the school development plan. An analysis of the school’s minutes of meetings revealed a lapse in documentation and limited discussion on progress of action plans. This may not facilitate the provision of information to management and school improvement team to effectively follow up issues.

The most recent external evaluation report called for the school to review the importance of school development planning and to engage its staff, students, and parents more actively in the development planning process. This, in order to develop a greater sense of ownership that would entice commitment to the implementation of the school plan and achievement of adopted priorities. The report recognised an overall improvement in students’ discipline, and attributed this partly to the increasing

collaboration between staff and students (MoE, 2008). Nonetheless, the issue of vandalism by students was reported to have resulted in enormous loss of resources with broken chairs, and desks stacked at the back of most classes. In addition, progress in renovation was also hampered, as “a recently renovated S1 block, now housing the S5 students had been vandalised and bore very limited signs of the recent renovations” (MoE, 2008, p 12).

A team-planned approach was recommended into the monitoring of learning, mentoring, and practices of teachers:

Management should adopt a planned team approach to the monitoring of teaching and learning and mentoring of teachers in the school. Records of monitoring and mentoring activities should be kept consistently to facilitate evaluation and forward planning for improvement (MoE, 2008, p. 5).

The evaluation pointed to the school’s endeavour in making teaching more effective. To facilitate this endeavour, a formalised structure that embedded “self” in the culture of the school was called for. The onus was placed on the management in sensitising its teachers to participate in the continuous evaluation of their teaching. Management was asked to actively engage in diagnosing the strengths and weaknesses of existing systems and structures in the school. At the same time, management was asked to ensure that the structures in place provided regular information to allow it to systematically evaluate its own practices. Further suggestions called for a reinforcement of the collaborative effort to find ways to motivate students and elicit the best from them. A final mention with respect to learning was the need to sustain the interest of low achievers by finding new skills for those students to develop.

### **Summary of Case study C**

Meg, an advanced diploma holder in her second year of teaching felt a responsibility towards her students learning, especially given her view that students in general did not take their learning seriously, which she felt was evident in low assessment performances. Nonetheless, she planned to remain in the profession. As part of her orientation period, Meg was given a tour of the science facilities, was introduced to members of her department, and briefed on some departmental procedures.

Meg explained that she had not gone through a period of induction at the school. Her teaching practices had been observed once as a basis for her QTS. She appreciated

the feedback in spite of the fact that it did not amply detail the specific successes or failures of her teaching approach, or indicate how her teaching could be improved. There were some contradictions around support for beginning teachers: the HOD was of the view that B.Ed. teachers did not require ongoing support given their previous one-year experience as diploma teachers. Yet Meg, a diploma teacher found her support to be wanting.

The use of lesson observation by the HOD was seen more as a way of identifying areas where teachers were getting difficulties in their lesson, for example classroom management. Yet the HOD found this work somewhat futile, because senior management did not act on her report to help specific teachers. The HOD described senior management as preoccupied with other administrative matters besides teaching and learning. Meg also stated that direct support from senior management was limited, for instance a lack of feedback on her lesson plan or an absence of direct mentorship. However, management's high visibility in classrooms and school ground was noted and appreciated by Meg.

A positive collegueship was said to have developed between Meg and her HOD. This was facilitated when the leadership status of the HOD did not dissuade her from allocating herself some "difficult" classes, or from taking classes of absent teachers. It was also claimed by Meg that the HOD persuaded the senior management to allocate Meg additional high-stake examination classes.

Meg revealed to have a positive relationship with other colleagues in her department. A collegial atmosphere allowed Meg to discuss her teaching in both formal and informal settings. For example, she claimed to share resources, and her management skills, which she identified as her strong point. As a beginning teacher Meg was pleased that she could engage in professional sharing with more experienced teachers. However, opportunities for greater exchange around pedagogical practices were not adequately facilitated by the HOD. She viewed beginning teachers as possessing contemporary ideas around teaching, but the more experienced teachers as "tired" and possessing out-dated teaching methodologies.

Meg's explanation of effective teaching portrayed the concept as having elements of student-centred teaching. Eliciting students' contribution in their learning around practical activities they found interesting and relevant was important for Meg. She explained that teaching low achievers was a challenge for a number of teachers, and that identifying an effective teacher was presumed on their ability to successfully teach these students. Adjusting her teaching approach based on student' feedback was

something Meg reported as pertinent to effectiveness in teaching. The DHT explained that in addition to differentiation in instruction and the establishment of nurturing relationships with students, an effective teacher should consider the pastoral background of students, which necessitated constant contact with parents on students' academic and pastoral issues.

Lesson observations and subsequent interviews depicted some contradictions around student-centred teaching that Meg described in her formal interviews. The skew towards teacher-centred teaching was justified by Meg's view that she had to be the central figure in student's learning. This was well-intentioned; Meg was concerned over her students' poor performance in assessment, and perceived that a controlled dissemination of curriculum information was the right approach. Meg expected her students to be focussed and attentive throughout her lesson. She used whole class teaching in all lessons observed, and prescriptive, close-ended investigations in the laboratory.

### **Summary–Case Study Descriptions**

The presentation of the multiple case studies has endeavoured to highlight issues around beginning teachers' support, their challenges and what it means to be an effective teacher in their context. The manner in which prevailing issues have influenced their adaptation and teaching has also been highlighted. The differing meanings attached to effectiveness, and diverse expectations for teaching have been outlined, as have the prevailing standards of teaching. In the chapter that follows, an in-depth analytical approach will consider the challenges and support experienced by these beginning teachers in their attempt to teach effectively.



## **Chapter 5**

### **Analysis of Case Studies**

The purpose of this chapter is to reveal the relationship between the range of factors that influenced the transition, support, and teaching practices of the three beginning teachers. The focus of this chapter is on contextualized factors specific to each teacher and to their own school-based context, factors similar across the three case studies are also highlighted.

Analysis of the qualitative data using an inductive analytical approach was conducted within each case study (Patton, 2002; Stake, 1995; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Yin, 2011). The data from and across each case study were analysed in order to extract and interpret issues that arose for the participants. The research questions focussed the issues to foreground the nature of the support these beginning teachers received, and what influence that support had on their teaching, as well as what constituted the effective teaching practices for the school and teachers, and what expectations guided their teaching practices in light of those understandings. Themes were identified from within the individual case studies, as well as across the three cases studies (Stake, 2006). Differences and similarities between issues were also captured through the generic inductive qualitative analysis approach (Patton, 2002; Stake, 1995; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

#### **Background and Training of Participating Teachers**

Two of the participating teachers (Felicity–school A, and Meg–school C) had some concerns, given the hiatus to their degree training whilst another (Ryan–school B) was considering a position in teacher education. Ryan was the most qualified of the three beginning teachers, possessing a teaching degree from an Australian university, and at the time of data collection, he was in his second year of teaching at the school. Ryan expressed regret at the missed opportunity to gain some experience in an Australian classroom setting. He was contemplating a teacher-educator position if the current conditions at school B the school prevailed. Meg and Felicity both possessed a Higher Diploma and were both in their second year at their respective schools. Both Meg and Felicity had their much anticipated overseas B.Ed. training cut short as a result of the Seychelles’ ongoing reforms to establish a local degree. Ironically, as of 2012 they were still waiting to be enrolled, and this impacted on both teachers. For example,

Meg expressed less desire to pursue her degree training at the local university. Her reluctance to consider enrolling in a local degree in education also stemmed from concern as to whether the current diploma lecturers at the university could teach at a higher degree level, given that overseas lecturers were not being recruited at the time of the research. While this latter sentiment was shared by Felicity, she also pointed to a possible role conflict, given that she had started her family. She reported her role as a mother as influencing her commitment to full time study. Both teachers, however, valued further training and pointed to its potential impact in their professional lives, in particular in relation to their subject content areas. Given that Ryan left for his overseas degree training with a local diploma, he did not have the same concerns as Felicity and Meg with respect to his training.

### **Responsibilities**

The three teachers taught across all grade levels, and all were assigned lower achieving classes. In the three schools, it was considered a privilege to teach the more academically able and senior students, especially by beginning teachers. The teachers revealed reluctance to take up lower achieving classes, the main issue reported being that students in those classes exhibited challenging behaviours, and also had highly specific learning needs. Whilst in general teachers taught across all grade levels, beginning teachers with diploma qualifications were usually assigned only junior classes (the first three of five grade levels in secondary schools).

Meg (school C) reported that she had to prove her ability both to her students, and to management members. Meg had developed a good working relationship with her head of department (HOD), and this special relationship acted as a factor in getting Meg certain recognition. Like other teachers in her department, she proposed her own class schedule for her second year. Meg's HOD insisted that Meg add all the high achieving Chemistry classes to her class timetable. She attributed her ability to manage her students and to teach her subject well as the recognition and respect she received.

Felicity, by contrast, taught mostly junior secondary classes, with a range of low and high achieving classes, and had one low achieving senior secondary class. Felicity reported that her working relationship with students prompted the senior management to encourage her to undertake the role of head of cycle for the senior years, a responsibility that she accepted.

Ryan reported that he received automatic recognition as a professional given his degree qualification. The perception from management was that he had all it took to

carry out his functions. A high expectation was placed on him to tackle the challenges his work demanded. This was evident when, for instance, Ryan was assigned to the School Improvement Team from the moment he joined the school. As a beginning teacher, he was expected to help in the implementation of the school development plan. He had mixed feelings about such recognition. Some of these difficulties were evident with both his low and high achieving classes. However, this assumed “completeness as a teacher” did influence the way Ryan handled his responsibilities. As evident from classroom observations, students rarely challenged the material he presented. In one example, he reported that his more achieving students approached his HOD to clarify a concept. To his class Ryan was adamant that he was right, but was corrected by his HOD. He also internalized these difficulties, for example the challenges he encountered in creating positive relationship with his low achievers.

Teacher shortage was a national issue. This was evident by the mandatory requirement for pre-university students across the country to teach for a year in schools as part of their scholarship requirement. This was a contentious issue: on one hand, it was seen as helping to alleviate the teacher shortage, but it was also framed as negating the professional training required to teach (HOD–School B). Participants in this study reported that teachers’ entry into the profession was not reliant on stringent screening process, which did not facilitate the selection of the best candidates. The unlikelihood of poor performing teachers being removed from the school system was reported. Instead, they were often transferred to another school rather than being re-trained or dismissed (DHT–school B). As evident by the appraisal form, school managers can request for transfer or rotation of specific teachers (appendix C).

The teaching shortage also placed certain restrictions on the effective deployment of staff. For instance, at school A the absence of an experienced teacher at the beginning of the year prompted the MoE to assign beginning teachers with diploma qualification. The school had to deploy these teachers as they would an experienced one, as they had to ensure that all classes were allocated. Attention by management to the capability and needs of these teachers were given less consideration.

Felicity, for example, reported a shifting priority towards her head of cycle responsibilities, which inadvertently impacted upon her teaching. As a teacher and a head of cycle, Felicity was still learning to teach. However, her responsibility as a management member had greater short-term scrutiny and accountability than her responsibility as a teacher. This was evident when she reported leaving her classes to

conference with parents, or when she left her students with written materials so she could attend meetings relating to head of cycle duties. This represented a shift of priority from the continued development of her teaching and her students' learning. Roles that had more and greater exposure to stakeholders, and roles that had greater oversight by management were given priority over classroom teaching.

Whilst beginning teachers were supported in the first three months, they were expected to take similar responsibilities to experienced teachers. This was evident in the work assignments of the beginning teachers who participated in my case studies. It was explicitly and implicitly revealed that these teachers had “graduated”, or that they had previous experience as student teachers or diploma teachers. This was seen to justify that they should be assigned similar responsibilities to their colleagues, and there was limited recognition of their beginning status. The three-month probation operated more as a period during which beginning teachers had to prove their abilities to be eligible for qualified teacher's status, rather than serving dually as an evaluative and supported period.

An equitable distribution of classes, as defined and executed by these secondary schools, meant that beginning teachers had to face difficult classes from the onset. Evidence from the three case study schools indicated that this was done as part of the schools and departments tendencies to demonstrate and practice fairness in class distribution. The HODs had a strong influence in determining fairness in assigning classes, and teachers viewed their leadership positively when they also taught classes of students who required additional support, or took classes of absent teachers. These were seen as attempts by the HODs to be a member of the teachers' cohort (contributing to a “one of us” culture) given their dual roles as teachers and managers (Meg–school C).

Difficult classes were one example of the fact that beginning teachers had the same responsibilities as more experienced teachers from the commencement of their three-month probation period. Yet diploma beginning teachers, unlike degree beginning teachers, were not seen ready to take high achieving senior classes. It was more likely that these schools regarded diploma beginning teachers as lacking experience, and therefore considered it a risk to assign them to high-stake classes. The schools did not recognise that the knowledge and skills required to teach low and high achievers were the same.

It was also explained by one DHT that beginning teachers had to be exposed to challenging classes to expose their shortcomings (DHT–school C). The DHT explained,

“we need to show him, or her what he, or she is doing wrong...if there is no improvement we move on [use another strategy to support]” (DHT–school C). This view was partly shared by another participant who pointed out, “we also expect beginning teachers to discover, and take in relevant experience during their first year” (HOD–school B). The argument was that beginning experiences in difficult classrooms was important from the onset for teachers’ professional learning. This was seen as creating circumstances for the identification of their shortcomings and support needs.

However, whilst early beginning teachers’ experiences are important, the absence of substantive and consistent support did not allow the conversion of these experiences into learning opportunities. Support for these beginning teachers would serve to channel their experiences towards a productive integration into their profession, and towards improvement in their teaching, but this was not in evidence in the schools that participated in my case studies. These issues are addressed in the section that follows.

### **Induction Period for Beginning Teachers**

Sorting out challenges emanating from their classrooms was largely dependent on each teacher’s personal predisposition, partly as a commonality between the first-year induction periods that participating teachers reported on was a reliance on themselves. One teacher (Felicity–school A) relied on her own knowledge of the school both as a former student, and as a student teacher on practicum, to transit through her first year. Her knowledge of and familiarity with former teachers facilitated her adaptation. Whilst the process was by no means smooth, her contextual knowledge increased the approachability of colleagues. Her adaptation served as impetus for the school management to assign her new responsibility, as a head of cycle in her second year.

Another beginning teacher (Ryan–school B) entered his current school from his degree training with one year’s experience as a Diploma teacher. Whilst Ryan considered his diploma year “tumultuous”, he also stated that it had helped him to reconsider his expectations and align them to his context. He had an introductory meeting with the head teacher on his arrival to discuss school expectations. He described his HOD and staff members in his department as cordial. His colleagues respected him, but Ryan did not benefit from sufficient collegial sharing. On the other hand, his recognition by management as a professional who had acquired all necessary skills from his training boosted his confidence in the short term, because he felt welcomed in

his educational community. Whilst he felt valued by this recognition and the high regard from his colleagues and school management, he also found that it impeded his willingness to articulate his own personal and professional difficulties. He opted not to approach his colleagues to share his challenges. An automatic recognition without formal induction did not contribute towards informing and shaping his path towards greater effectiveness.

Meg, like Felicity, was familiar with her current school, having undertaken her practicum there. Meg was not clear what her induction period should entail for her, though she was given a tour of the school. As Meg put it, “if I think about induction where you go to reach individual staff then it was not a proper one ... I was shown where the labs were and how to request materials” (Meg-school C). To some degree, this mirrored Meg’s HOD’s view on induction, for the HOD induction was about completing new or beginning teachers’ knowledge about schools’ procedures. Beginning teachers, according to her, had more to offer to the school and other staff, as “they are fresh from university with new knowledge and ideas so they are innovative” (HOD–School C). The view of beginning teachers as change agents boosted the confidence and social status of Meg in the department: as Meg reported, “it is not only me seeing them [other teachers] as professionals, at times because they come to me they see me as the ideal support regarding whatever specific issues they have”. At the same time, however, the HOD’s stance negated recognition of the specific support needs of the beginning teacher. Participants’ view around induction reflected a trend across the three schools, in that there were variations in what the induction period should entail, but all participants felt that it was insufficient.

There were marked differences in the way that teacher induction was understood and conducted at the three schools, and a majority of participants acknowledged the absence of a written school policy that specifically addressed induction. The schools were responsible for ensuring these policies were in place, as official MoE policy provides schools the mandate to develop school-based support packages for beginning teachers, stating that, “each package must include monitoring and support procedures and mechanisms for staff on probation, and the persons directly responsible for these roles must be specified” (MoE, 2010, p. 30). The latest education reforms in the Seychelles from 2009–2011 placed strong emphasis on the decentralization of schools. The wording of the excerpt could indicate flexibility on the part of MoE to allow schools to provide induction support for their beginning teachers as they see fit. However, the ministry policy does not define induction, nor does it set a minimum

standard of what these teachers are expected to have achieved by the end of the probation period.

Inarticulation by the ministry of what and how teacher induction should play out in schools has resulted in different meanings attributed to “induction” across schools, departments, and individuals within departments. This raises some serious issues with regard to whether beginning teachers experience induction in the same way, and whether similar levels of support are made available to them. For example, induction could include a short meeting with members of senior management; it could include the assignment of an experienced teacher to liaise with a new or beginning teacher as required. It could also include inviting beginning teachers to observe the class of an experienced teacher for a few days, or getting a tour of the school. In all cases within this study, induction included one or three classroom visits in the first three months followed by a feedback of the lessons. Induction for these three beginning teachers did not consist of all the elements detailed above.

A key figure in induction for the beginning teachers across the three schools was the HOD. In my studied cases, the HODs had a greater role in organising induction, leading professional development sessions, providing feedback, and chairing department meetings. Change within the induction at School A was underway at the time of the research. The HOD at School A, who initially spearheaded the induction in her department, was changing the approach due to her increasing responsibilities resulting from the merging of the science and mathematics departments, and the increasing number of beginning teachers in the department. The change entailed assigning beginning teachers to a more experienced teacher within the same subject. As a mathematics specialist, the HOD’s limited knowledge of science had partly encouraged this shift.

This change in induction was not taking place in the other two schools. Whilst a novelty in the science-mathematics department at school A, the assignment of beginning teachers to more experienced ones was already an established component of beginning teachers support in another department at the same school. This further indicated discrepancies in the nature of induction between and within schools. That not all schools employ a mentoring approach to induction is a reflection of variation in both unwritten school policies, and interpretation of the central policy.

The assumption at the three schools was that the most experienced teachers or other colleagues could essentially provide for the needs of beginning teachers. However, since the needs of these beginning teachers were not well defined this was

not necessarily the case. Put another way, assigning mentors to the beginning teachers seems not to have been based on a set of defined skills necessary to assist. There were also discrepancies in what being “experienced” for mentors meant, and what support for beginning teachers should entail. Felicity, having undergone her first year of teaching, was looked upon as an experienced candidate to provide support to a supply teacher in her first year. Felicity reported to giving occasional advice to the teacher on “managing students” with disciplinary issues, especially when they were past students of Felicity’s, but besides this, Where it occurred expectations for support provided by colleague teachers did not emerge from a well laid out induction program. “Mentoring” was taking place in the absence of a structured support system, and in the absence of targeted training for these experienced teachers. Another issue with the mentorship approach (e.g., in school A) was that the experienced teacher never visited the beginning teachers’ classes. This was not a requirement and, in addition, there was no reduction in the assignment load of mentors that might allow them to attend such observations. Lack of observation meant that areas of concern, or areas that required growth were not being identified, which presented a risk to the levelling of support after a short time.

The assignment of mentors did not deter one HOD from observing and conferring with the beginning teachers (school A). The type of advice stemming from her visit would typically focus on how beginning teachers could better manage and keep their students on task. She also explained to these teachers how to better adhere to school policies and procedures. In the case of beginning mathematics teachers, and given her background in mathematics, the HOD would to a lesser extent advice these beginning teachers about content delivery, stating that, “I don’t give a lot of feedback to the mathematics teachers because they know their stuff, you know”. Essentially the emphasis of the limited available support was on getting the beginning teachers to teach in an attentive classroom. The main criterion for achieving this skill was to develop, and display good classroom management. Both schools’ and national concerns about students’ discipline heightened this need, but this focus meant that beginning teachers were not being adequately challenged in higher-level areas to improve their pedagogical practices.



## Qualified Teacher Status

As part of the national policy, the MoE, upon recommendation from school management confers Qualified Teacher Status. To ascertain beginning teachers' attainment of standards for QTS, schools are expected to assess them at the end of a three-month period, called the probation period, which in participating case study schools also served as the induction period. Schools used the yearly teacher appraisal form (appendix C) to assess these teachers. That is, participating beginning teachers were appraised against the same standard as other experienced teachers at both the end of the three-month probationary period, and the end of year. The appraisal system against which they were assessed was not a well-articulated and properly defined professional teaching standard that gave due consideration to their beginning status and varied qualifications. At the end of this period, and upon recommendation from the schools' senior management, the MoE conferred onto Ryan a degree teacher status whilst Meg and Felicity were confirmed as diploma teachers.

These teachers were not privy to detailed sources of evidence from which the appraisal report was compiled. They would have benefited from a detailed rationale of what the appraisal would entail from the outset, as they would therefore have been able to work to meet the requirements. As it were, the procedures and policies were not clear to these teachers, or even to some members of management at participating schools. During and after the three-month period, beginning teachers did not go through a feedback process to enable them to gauge their overall specific needs and strengths. A main source of data, from which the appraisal report was produced, stemmed from lesson observation. The connection of lesson observation towards the appraisal process for each of three teachers is given in table 1.

Table 1:

Lesson observation and feedback experienced by these beginning teachers

	<i>Lesson observation</i>	<i>Lesson Feedback</i>	<i>Outcome of probationary period</i>	<i>Perception of probation support</i>
<i>Ryan</i>	Single observation carried out by DHT.	This lasted a few minutes and was mostly conversational in tone. An emphasis was placed on teaching to improve students' outcome.	Teachers received letters confirming QTS from MoE. They did not benefit from a detailed breakdown of outcome.	Generally perceived as Inadequate
<i>Meg</i>	Single observation carried out by HOD.	The strengths and weaknesses were identified. The focus of these was on classroom management and student-teacher relationship.		
<i>Felicity</i>	Single observation carried out by HOD.	The strengths and weaknesses were identified with a focus on managing low achievers.		

Feedback to the beginning teachers from the HOD about their lesson observations was limited. In all three cases, the single lesson observation leading to their appraisal was the only occasion teachers had to demonstrate their competency, from the moment they entered the school up to the end of the data collection period. Few lesson observations were carried out, irrespective of the schools' stance advocating for at least one lesson observation per term (DHTs and HODs). The nature and quality of feedback resulting from the single classroom observation was generally a surface description of these teachers' strengths and weaknesses. In the case of Felicity and Meg, they reported that the focus was on classroom management. The feedback from lesson observations did not engage these teachers in thinking of ways to better their teaching practices. Ryan had the least feedback from his lesson observation, and what he could get from the conversation with the DHT was that, "[The] deputy head teacher told me that this being a top class, the students needed to be pushed". This was a missed opportunity for the DHT to provide quality feedback but it further supported the view that the support providers did not effectively identify and articulate these teachers' specific needs. As Ryan explained, "I appreciated the fact that he stayed for the whole 90 minutes, though I did not get feedback on my teaching approaches". However, irrespective of this limited feedback all the three beginning teachers were appreciative of the experience, and their views indicated that they wanted more professional learning opportunities.

The nature of these beginning teachers' support during the probation period premised on several factors that limited rather than extended their support. For instance in Meg's and Ryan's schools, there was a tendency to look upon practicum and the graduated status of these teachers as a justification for the schools to water down or

minimise the induction experience. The process culminated in a report based on professional judgement that did not rely heavily on evidence. This is apparent in the single lesson observation that took place in the first year to fulfil the MoE requirement for these teachers' appraisal. In part, this approach also arose from the schools' understanding of their role towards the probation period, especially that it was more about fulfilling an obligation to the MoE. It was about the beginning teachers proving themselves worthy of QTS, rather than benefitting from a probation period that provided for their shortcomings. Essentially the support nature of the probation period reflected a gap between what the central policy advocated about probation procedure and the school's interpretation of the same.

The school culture could in part, be responsible for the way that induction support was carried out. Unravelling support could also be linked to the prioritization of the schools' obligations in the face of increasing responsibilities, heavy teaching loads, and a limited number of teachers. It was easier to meet the exigencies of the MoE than to fundamentally view the probation period as a support period for these beginning teachers. The status of induction support was a compromise in what the school could achieve for these teachers.

Shortcomings in terms of expertise and ongoing professional development and learning for support providers were also observed. This could have augmented the ability of the HODs, other experienced teachers and the DHTs to provide substantial support for beginning teachers, which would have then constituted a move towards the empowerment of these beginning teachers beyond meeting the requirement for QTS. Support could have served to encourage beginning teachers to strengthen the foundation that guided their teaching practice.

### **Views of Workplace and Perception of Career**

All three teachers reported entering their school-based workplace with an initial passion for teaching. However, their workplace experience influenced them differently and led to unintended outcomes about their aspirations for their teaching career. Whilst teaching was not Ryan's first career choice, he had grown to love teaching partly because of the subject he was teaching. Whilst Ryan wanted to remain in the profession, he was contemplating a move to teacher education as a lecturer within a few years. He felt that he might remain in the current post given certain adjustments. He cited issues with resources, students' attitude, and public perception of the profession, the physical environment, and remuneration as the main factors influencing his decision. Even

though Ryan had a good working relationship with members of his department and a positive view of the members of the management, this was not sufficient in persuading Ryan to remain in the secondary school system for long. As a teacher-trainer, he felt that the professional status of a lecturer, student teachers' attitude, and resources at the university differed markedly with the secondary schools. This contrasted to how Felicity viewed her school: "I wouldn't go to another school to teach, well if they send me because there's no other teacher then I might, I like my school". Felicity had connected well with her colleagues, students, and management. She had moved from a former student to a member of management, with a role that connected her even more to students. In fact, Felicity attributed some of the school's shortcomings to the MoE, particularly the issue of resources and perceived leniency on some students. According to Felicity, students that had repeatedly and blatantly ignored the school's behavioural policy should face more severe consequences. As the head of cycle, she felt that she had a responsibility towards both students and teachers. She saw her role as engaging to find solutions to students' pastoral issues alongside the senior management. Felicity enjoyed teaching, and had a passion for working with adolescents, and she wanted to pursue additional training at Degree level to augment her professional capacity. This was an indication that she had a positive view of the profession and that she wanted to commit herself to it as a career. Similarly, Meg had a special affinity to her current school, having undertaken the majority of her practicum requirement there. Her views of students at the school, and her existing relationship with the HOD further contributed to this attachment. In fact, Meg did not envisage a change of workplace to another school. She explained that all schools had the challenges she experienced, but having overcome or come to terms with those of her specific workplace, she did not foresee a need for change.

Having undergone a transition period, these beginning teachers had emerged with different ambitions for their teaching careers. They had established a better understanding of their workplace, though Ryan, the more qualified teacher had decided that prevailing factors were not enticing him to remain as a secondary teacher. Even though Meg and Felicity were facing the same challenges, they were hoping that their degree training would equip them to surmount future challenges.

### **Establishing Positive Relationships with Students**

The three beginning teachers enjoyed working with adolescents, and as such positioned themselves as committed to nurturing good relationships with their students.

In classes other than the less achieving ones they did not encounter major disciplinary issues. The teachers reported that in general students fell short of producing high academic results partly because they did not show great enthusiasm in their learning at school. However, it should be pointed out there was less talk about ways in that high achievers were further challenged.

Participating teachers set expectations for desired behaviour in working with their students. There was an emphasis on acceptable level of behaviour, and students were frequently reminded of these standards. These standards or rules were either written down or articulated as the situations demanded (Meg–school C; Felicity–school A). However, it was not evident whether these standards were negotiated between teacher and students, and the ways expected standards of behaviour unfolded differed between teachers. Lesson observations revealed that Meg was “firm but fair” with her students (Meg–school C). This was working for Meg in that she felt she had her students’ respect, and there was minimum disruption in all her classes except for a few individual students in her lower achieving classes. Felicity’s position as the head of cycle served to heighten a need to model her relationship with her students for other teachers. She was satisfied with her current relationships with her students. Felicity had the respect of most her students, in that she experienced minimal issues with regards to challenging behaviours expressed by students. Students’ participated more freely in Felicity’s class and were less “controlled” than the students in Meg’s and Ryan’s classes (Felicity–school A). Students saw Felicity as an approachable teacher and in part, as observed on several occasions, this facilitated her ability as head of cycle to interact with her students.

The commonalities of these teachers’ challenges rested on their expressed difficulties in managing and providing for the learning needs of their low achievers. The manner that the aforementioned issues could be addressed was partly shifted to schools, society, and parents. Teachers reported that schools could do more by collecting data in order to identify the root causes, to formulate strategies, and equip current and new staff to sort out the challenges that student behaviour presented. Ryan, the only degree holder amongst the three beginning teachers, further pointed out that, “I really have a difficult S3 class, this is my second year, and still I can’t go into the class without a few incidents from time to time”. The possibility of transitioning beginning teachers in these classes was further proposed by Ryan. Ryan saw this as important to gradually equip beginning teachers to address their professional needs as well as to acquaint themselves with the needs of less achieving students (Ryan–school B).

All three teachers were able to articulate what it took to establish positive relationships with their students. One notion was that a good relationship rested on their ability to teach their students effectively. Ryan believed the process of forming good relationships with students was hampered if, in the eyes of the students, the teacher was seen as being incompetent. However, the attempt to implement these notions unfolded differently for each of these beginning teachers. Observation of Ryan's lessons revealed that he often reverted to more direct teaching. When his students became disruptive, his classroom management skills were brought to the fore, leading Ryan to overtly confront students.

All three participating teachers felt that teacher education had not prepared them fully for the demands of their context. Meg was also sceptical that any future degree training would empower her to resolve students' poor attitudes. Students' poor attitude toward their studies was seen as a challenge too big for them to address on their own. Part of this reasoning was justified when experienced and qualified teachers were reported as experiencing the same issues of poor behaviour and poor motivation from students. These reported issues were sometimes described as being worse for experienced teachers than what these beginning teachers encountered (Meg–School C; Ryan–school B). Essentially all three teachers mentioned the limitations of teacher education and professional development in equipping them to teach students that misbehaved in the classroom.

Professional learning and development opportunities organised by schools that specifically targeted “student management” was cited by participating teachers, but in all cases it was perceived by these teachers as inadequate for their needs. Students' lack of motivation, enthusiasm, and discipline issues were overwhelmingly attributed to a lack of parental involvement (Meg–school C). In other words, participants felt more parental involvement could curb students' misbehaviour, and improve their engagement in their learning. There were fewer suggestions from most participants about listening to students, or allowing their voices to influence the kind of teaching that might better connect with students (Ryan–school B; Felicity–school A). A greater use of student-centred teaching was perceived as a risk-taking endeavour. In part, this was because the student misbehaviour was most noticeable in less achieving classes, which as participating teachers perceived, further justified a need for teachers to become authoritarian, custodial, and dominating.

There were, however, some pedagogical practices used by these beginning teachers to encourage positive relationships with students who experienced difficulties

in learning. Ongoing communications with parents and increased parent-teacher interactions provided useful first-hand information about problematic students' social situations (Felicity–school A). Another teacher (Meg–school C) pinpointed misbehaviour issues in specific students and less on the whole class, and by networking with the teacher in charge facilitated the attempt to collaboratively identify and resolve issues as they arose. Emphasis was placed on appropriate behaviour and students were reminded of the established standards for behaviour from time to time. In Meg's class, students' views around activities that they preferred were sought and incorporated into their learning to maximise student interest and engagement. The combinations of the above factors were reported to have reduced some misbehaviour problems in these beginning teachers' classes. However, issues with discipline were a daily occurrence for all three teachers, and as they saw it, this hindered a move to higher-level concerns, such as better teaching methodologies and greater nurturing of students' interests, needs and associated learning.

### **Support from and relationship with management**

Positions held by participating beginning teachers outside their classroom responsibilities shaped their relationships with the senior management members. These positions also provided new perspectives of the complexities of issues at their schools. In this case, reference can be made to Felicity who held a management position as head of cycle (a responsibility that was largely pastoral), and Ryan who as a member of the SIT contributed towards the implementation of the school improvement programmes. These responsibilities enabled the beginning teachers to be privy to the workings of their schools, and to partake in discussions relating to what the school wanted to achieve. The beginning teachers were further able to build on the existing professional relationship. Felicity reported a greater awareness of the complexities of the challenges the school was facing. She pointed to shortcomings with the MoE, or with training institutions, and attributed less to her school or management members. For instance, when she pointed to the perceived inaction of the school towards misbehaving students, she cited ineffectiveness of MoE policy and lack of parental involvement. The positions held by these beginning teachers also boosted their confidence, especially when they partook of whole school presentations.

In general, the nature of support from management varied, but direct support for teaching from management was limited across all three participating schools. One strategy employed by a beginning teacher to deal with this limitation was to adjust and

lessen his expectation for the support that he would receive from the onset (Ryan–school B). Ryan reported that this lowering of expectation stemmed from having experienced former unsupportive school cultures as a diploma teacher and student teacher. In Ryan’s view, management had set teaching expectations at the school. The reality, however, revealed that in combination with other factors his self-reliant approach had negative consequences ranging from difficulties in classroom teaching, to a re-examination of whether teaching in secondary schools was the right choice of career (Ryan–school B). Felicity, meanwhile, reasoned that the experience of being a former student and student teacher at the school had shaped the justification for the limited support given by the management (Felicity–school A). Indeed, this notion of having been a diploma teacher or a student teacher was also cited as a basis for management members to rationalize the limited support for beginning teachers (school C-DHT/HOD).

However, management was not necessarily using these beginning teachers’ prior experiences as an excuse for the lack of direct support. Rather, the data from this research shows that in part the management team believed that having acquired QTS or university degree, these beginning teachers were capable of responsibilities beyond their classrooms. This was evident when beginning teachers were appointed into senior positions: Felicity as head of cycle (Felicity–school A); and Ryan as a member of the School Improvement Team. The limited support that these beginning teachers experienced from management was not unique to them, but was also shared by other teachers. For instance, management at the schools checked teachers’ weekly lesson preparation. When these were returned signed and dated by the HOD and DHT it served only as a formality to confirm that teachers were in fact preparing for classes. Therefore, as explained by one of the beginning teachers (Meg–school C) this was a missed opportunity for tangible constructive feedback to further align her to the kind of teaching and preparation expected by the school managers.

In articulating support from their school leaders, some beginning teachers pointed to actions by the former that served as encouragement. For instance, members of the senior management and head of cycle were frequently seen around the school and had occasional brief presence in some classrooms. This raised their visibility, which was appreciated since their presence served to elicit positive student conduct (school A, school C). Some senior management members also volunteered to teach a single class on a permanent basis (DHTs in school A and school C). When senior management members assigned classes to their own schedule, it was viewed positively by the



beginning teachers. It exposed the senior members to recent and direct teaching experiences and served as a sign that they were connected with teachers' daily experiences. Senior members were likely to develop a practical and theoretical standpoint from which they could promote realistic expectations for teaching.

The senior management of each school saw HODs as the leaders of their departments. Therefore, these HODs were key to facilitating the implementation of expected teaching practices, and answering support needs for teachers. However, in actuality what the HODs did in their capacities as supervisors varied between schools. In one school, the HOD served merely as a bridge between teachers and senior management in providing information from meetings (school B). In school C, the HOD was unclear about her responsibilities. This HOD explained that once she had identified the support needs of teachers around teaching and reported these to senior management, there was a lack of follow-up. She framed this situation as resulting in inadequate support around teaching for members of her department. The focus of the senior management was viewed by the HOD as being more on the administrative and pastoral aspects of the school, such as frequent meetings with parents of students who disrupted the teaching of classes. The HOD exemplified this by stating that, "at the end of the day the senior management want to see results but maybe they are too caught up with other issues to really focus on teaching". Given this perceived limited involvement, she described the process of providing support and feedback as hampered.

In describing, these inactions on the part of the senior management the HOD in school C did not place herself as part of the solution. She referred to the senior management by explaining, "I see that one of my teachers have problems with classroom management, even though you write this on the classroom sheet I don't see anything being done". She reported her limited knowledge in mathematics and inexperience relative to the more experienced teachers in her department as disadvantages rather than framing these as possible assets. A contradiction was revealed when the DHT referred to the HOD as the primary support provider in her department. The DHT also pointed to mediocrity in the teaching practices of some teachers in the department. The recent external evaluation report (school C) squarely placed support for improving teaching practices on school leadership. It encouraged management to convince teachers of the need to become reflective practitioners. Such critical reflection is likely to allow teachers to identify effective teaching practices, as well as to identify those that require improvement to better foster students' learning.

## **Teaching Effectiveness: Perception, Standard, and Expectation**

The notion of effective teaching is complex, and the management of the three schools used the term in different ways. With regards to effective teaching, management referred to effective classroom management, maximizing students' engagement, and use of pedagogical practices that provided for a range of abilities. The concept of effectiveness was seen as changeable depending on school, class and individual student's learning needs (HOD–school B). Crucial to defining effective practice within these three secondary schools was the notion of managing classrooms and engaging students. Teaching effectiveness was seen by the DHT (school B) as encompassing the holistic development of all students. Effectiveness was perceived by the DHT as conditional on factors relating to resources, students, planning and relationships between staff. Therefore, effective teachers were seen by the DHT as being able to adjust and improvise to meet their expectations, rather than using limits as an excuse to lower their expectations. In addition, school C linked effectiveness to teacher responsibilities that were not confined to the classrooms. The ability to communicate with stakeholders, for example, exchange by teachers with parents about students' learning was highly valued. The expectations from the respondents across all schools were generally pragmatic.

Contradictions in the responses from management participants about their expectations for effective teaching practices were evident at the same schools. Disagreements were more common when participants were asked to give specific examples. Experienced teachers (school A) were reported to discourage recent teachers at the school from undertaking fieldwork (DHT–school A). Similarly, at school C, the idea that the senior management did not support curriculum activities outside the classroom setting (HOD–school C) was contradictory to the DHT response. The expectation from senior management was that fieldwork could be undertaken but that students' behaviours be consistently appropriate within and outside the school environment. This meant that teachers needed to encourage and facilitate positive behaviour and relationships with their students.

Another contradiction identified was with regard to recent teachers to the schools who were discouraged by experienced teachers to incorporate information and communication technology (ICT) into their lessons. In school A, the recently appointed DHT reported her intervention, and expressed that there were challenges to encouraging innovative practices. In fact, this DHT saw innovative strategies and approaches in

teaching certain topics as encouraging students' learning and motivation. These contradictions over specific pedagogical ideas indicate some disagreement over what constituted best teaching practices. Reluctance to incorporate some teaching practices by some experienced teachers showed possible resistance to up-to-date practices. However, in school A, the recently appointed DHT was more privy to the specifics of the senior management vision of effective teaching practices. That beginning teachers had encountered contradiction revealed that management intentions had not been effectively shared with teachers.

In the three participating schools, management saw the teaching standard of teachers as having potential for improvement. Some of these improvements were recognised as being within the abilities of staff. The use of routines and basics strategies to manage students and to capture their attention were cited as examples. The DHT at school A explained that, "these are the little things that I wish they would improve on ... to have class control in terms of seating arrangements or [not] having the same group of boys at the back of the class" (DHT-school A). When this was lacking from teachers' practices, the DHT considered that the teachers had set themselves up for failure, since they were not implementing what should come naturally given their training. There was a sense that this did not need management intervention. In the worst case scenario, absenteeism of some teachers on the day they had difficult classes was reported (DHT-school C). The DHT saw this as preventing some teachers to explore and use diverse pedagogical strategies, which she considered key to improving the standard of teaching at the school. Therefore, the inability of a few teachers to master management skills, and to access required help, intensified the disciplinary problems they encountered.

A focus on gathering data to allow teachers to account for their performance and improve their practices did not prevail. Both the beginning teacher and the DHT at school B reported that too much focus was placed on teachers' professional obligations in carrying out their roles as teachers (DHT-school B; Ryan-school B). Ryan, and the DHT at school B, explained that teachers' neglect of their responsibilities would result in losing students' respect, and the respect of colleagues and management. Therefore, they anticipated that most teachers would make an effort to meet these reasonable expectations (Ryan-school B). As they saw it, a teacher who did not plan and teach effectively ran the risk of way of losing students' respect, thus eroding any improvement in the much valued classroom management skills. This risk therefore served to encourage thorough planning for teaching (Ryan-school B, DHT-school A).

Other participants considered that management was acknowledging the professionalism of teachers by placing focus on professional obligations, and that the expectations that came from this focus were reasonable (DHT–school C; DHT–school B; HOD–school B), however, acknowledging the professionalism of teachers does not mean leaving them alone with their teaching. In practice, the notion of providing space and flexibility appeared to limit the ability for school leaders to systematically identify, and to follow up on, the developing needs of beginning teachers. In all participating schools, feedback and support was crucial for these beginning teachers given their learning requirement to integrate into the profession, and in many cases, this appeared to be inadequate.

For participating beginning teachers, the degree to which students were involved in their learning served as an indicator of their effectiveness. This involvement entailed the inclusion of feedback from students. This meant that students were encouraged to provide their opinions about choices in their learning, such as tasks or activities they felt they could connect with (Meg–school C; DHT–school A). Similarly, Felicity cited the need to amend and update teaching resources and teaching approaches to suit students’ learning, based on a consideration of each student’s assessment results and responses in class (Felicity–school A). Thorough planning was seen as pertinent when teaching low achievers, given that these students were seen as the most challenging to teach. How planned lesson unfolded into actual teaching practices that engaged and motivated these students was seen as important in gauging whether or not a teacher was effective (Meg–school C). Therefore, these beginning teachers were cognisant that a dimension of effective teaching entailed the inclusion of student feedback throughout planning and enactment of the lesson plan. Classroom observation and interviews revealed an attempt in Meg’s classes to include students’ voices around activities that they preferred, but also that revealed that science inquiry activities that were confirmatory in nature. Overall, there was still a gap between what participating teachers were accomplishing and what research says about evidenced-based teaching.

Acknowledging a need for continuous improvement, freely approaching colleagues for clarification (Felicity–school A) and using the internet at home to access up to date resources were also presented by teachers as strategies for improving teaching (Felicity–school A; Ryan–school B).

Responses from the beginning teachers indicated that they felt a degree qualification would contribute towards certain aspects of their teaching effectiveness. For example, a degree might augment their subject matter knowledge (Meg–school C;

Felicity–school A). Classroom observations also indicated that Ryan (degree qualified) expressed more confidence in his subject area in comparison to Felicity and Meg. On the other hand, Ryan pointed to the importance of experience, skills and the time needed to improve his teaching practices, and he was of the view that a teaching degree did not represent automatic effectiveness and expertise. Meg pointed to a degree qualification as limited in allowing her to improve students' discipline and attitude (Meg–school C). She felt that whilst it would empower her with subject matter knowledge, it would not make changes in these areas without communal and parental involvement. This perception perhaps stemmed from Meg's view that some of the qualified and experienced teachers at her school were experiencing the same problems as she was, and in some instances worse classroom challenges than her own. Therefore, Meg's view was that external elements (parents, MoE, and community) could do more to manage students' behaviour and their attitude towards their learning. A pattern emerged where the participants tended not to look upon their own school-based professional community to address their professional challenges and learning.

The schools' end-of-year teacher appraisal did not adequately enable these beginning teachers to capture the shortcomings and effective aspects of their teaching practices. Meg explained that the end of year appraisal provided her information as to what management thought of her effectiveness as a beginning teacher (Meg–school C), and that these reports pointed to her ability to get along with her students. However, in these reports she was unable to specify other attributes of her effectiveness as identified by management. Therefore, while the appraisal process provided these teachers a general sense of their performance, it also revealed that management's knowledge of their teaching practice was cursory. However, through discussion with senior management and HOD, teachers emerged from the process of evaluation with a set of improvement targets to work on the following year (appendix C).

In their classrooms and with colleagues at department level, beginning teachers are better prepared to meet these targets as they articulate and ascertain the specifics of their teaching practices together with colleagues and the HOD. As Meg pointed out, to ascertain her effectiveness, she would often compare and assess herself against experienced teachers, by learning about their challenges through informal conversations (Meg–school C). Still, overall, senior management in participating schools tended to view the HOD as the primary support provider in their department, rather than promoting collegiality between beginning teachers and their immediate colleagues.

This section has examined how participants articulated a pragmatic view of the expectation for effective teaching practices. A detailed comparison of management notions of the definition, standards, and expectations for effective teaching across the three schools showed broad definitions and reasonable expectations (appendix N). However, the manner that perceived effectiveness was defined and translated into teaching practices was influenced (and challenged) by a series of factors as evident by the standard of teaching (appendix N). Through interviews and classroom observations, the data showed that effective communication could convey to a greater proportion of staff as to what the school wanted to promote as effective practices. In some cases the schools' expectations of what constituted specific features of effective teaching were partly misinterpreted, and there were conflicting views of these expectations between staff members at differing levels (school A; school B). Better professional sharing could serve as means of allowing the schools to look amongst themselves for improvements. In such contexts, it would be easier for beginning teachers to connect to the realities of classroom teaching of colleagues, which would allow them to ascertain and access the specifics of best evidenced-based teaching practices.

### **Teaching Practices**

All three beginning teachers reported that they were mainly using student-centred approaches in their teaching. However, as evident from the lesson observations their teaching practices had the potential to incorporate more student-centred approaches. For example, teachers were observed: opting for class demonstration rather than group work due to undeveloped classroom management skills; using practical inquiries that were confirmatory rather than explorative in nature, and working from a view that students' learning had to be tightly controlled. These teachers acknowledged missed opportunities to focus their teaching more towards a student-centred approach, but rationalised this as resulting from factors outside their control. Meg's expressed view was that the notion of student inquiry, as espoused by the teacher training institution, did not reflect the realities of day-to-day existing school context and practices (HOD-school C; Meg-school C). Given that these beginning teachers were for the first time fully responsible for teaching their students the designated curriculum, they became more aware of the limitations in their settings. Ryan gave the example of the challenges he faced in gaining greater access to curriculum resources (Ryan-school B; HOD-school A). Beginning teachers also cited a more realistic understanding of students' attributes. Examples such as student discipline and mediocre performance (HOD-school C; Meg-school C), and an unwillingness on the students' part to actively

participate in their learning were cited by teachers as impediments to student-centred learning (Ryan–school B).

Such contextual factors led these teachers to make compromises in their teaching approaches. This entailed negotiating between the forms of student-centred approaches encouraged during their teacher training to approaches that considered their students' disposition, and other contextual factors. Teachers felt that these factors restricted their ability to challenge students, and to allow those students to explore materials on their own. In one instance, the inclusion of research work as part of students' learning was seen as having the potential to confuse students' learning processes (Meg–school C). The teachers also believed they were required to cover as much material as possible, and as a result, they favoured direct instruction in order to cover the material. Therefore, their methods tended to favour a transmission model rather than a co-construction of knowledge (Meg–school C). Restriction of student-centred teaching in some instances was justified by these teachers as an attempt to align with the school expectations for effective teaching practices. The view was that student-centred learning as encouraged by the training institution conflicted with management expectations (HOD–school C; Meg–school C). The form of student-centred learning advocated by teacher training institutions was seen by these beginning teachers as requiring students to have more choices, greater freedom, and autonomy within the classroom, which meant teachers losing their perceived control over students (HOD–school C; Meg–school C). Meg framed this as a risk to her own classroom control.

Senior members of management commonly advocated for student-centred approaches (DHT–school A; DHT–school C). However, participants taking classes (teachers and HODs) better articulated the compromises they had to make in enacting student-centred teaching. The HOD also pointed out that senior managements' focus was not prioritised towards teaching and learning (HOD–school C). In general, management members had a cursory rather than in-depth knowledge of ongoing classroom practices, as evidenced by the surface feedback teachers received on their work. Given a reliance on management for feedback data, this meant that teachers could not act effectively on such data. It also meant that the senior management did not support specific professional needs beginning teachers had. Senior management, however, considered that HODs should be the ones to lead their department, especially with respect to teaching and learning. In one school, the HOD was seen as falling short in leading improvement needs in her department (DHT–school C). Essentially these inconsistencies hindered the process of getting much needed support for teachers to

better shape their teaching practices to the schools' expectations. This lack of clear leadership from senior management hindered the potential for improving beginning teachers' teaching practices, especially in reducing the gap between a perceived need for direct teaching and one that advocated increased student-centred teaching.

During the systematic observations of the classrooms and teachers, research revealed missed opportunities for teachers to encourage or support their students to think critically. These missed opportunities were possibly related to beginning teachers' limited expertise with student-centred teaching, expertise which was still developing. There were also occasions when teachers did not link the material covered within class to the students' own experience. Even Ryan, who had a more advanced qualification, dominantly employed direct instruction approaches. On one occasion, it became apparent why Ryan adhered to teacher-centred rather than student-centred approaches. In this example, Ryan had completed thorough planning, including the devising of worksheets. He had also prepared practical group work for his students, but on this occasion, he could not command his class attention and the students were not fully engaged in the lesson. Ryan therefore opted for a demonstration of the practical work, followed by individual work in place of group work. Meg, though less qualified than Ryan, was more effective at getting her students' attention throughout the six lessons observed.

Another missed opportunity for more student-centred teaching was the tendency for beginning teachers to hold the view that they had all the knowledge, and that students required teachers to direct them toward "correct responses" (e.g., Meg). Consequently, the types of question teachers used during their questioning sessions were designed to elicit only one word or short phrase responses. Teachers were also concerned about the low academic performances of their students, and wanted to ensure that they elicited the right information. As Meg explained, "minimized confusion" was the aim (Meg-school C). In addition, Meg did not want to fall behind on curriculum coverage. Ryan was the exception, in that he taught materials outside the curriculum, because at the time he was able to meet curriculum coverage. Essentially these teachers were trying their best to excel in developing effective teaching practices within the confines their developing skills and concerns over classroom management.

Participating teachers' approaches in instructing low achievers differed from the manner in which they taught other students. In the Seychelles, the senior secondary classes follow the British general certificate secondary programme, which presents materials for extended and core students with corresponding examinations. Students



who struggle with learning have the option of following the core programmes in all subjects. In contrast, the national curriculum for junior secondary students does not make that distinction. In all three cases, these teachers used their personal judgment in selecting what to teach students with less academic ability. Their view was that some of the concepts were too abstract and therefore beyond the ability of these students. It was also in these classes that their classroom management skills were tested the most. Most teachers of low achievers engaged in code switching or code mixing between English and Creole, in part to break down and explain complex terms and concepts. The use of the local language was due to a perception that students had a limited grasp of English. These students' limited English skills were seen as a barrier to their learning as well.

The use of Creole in instruction created a tension between the expatriate teachers and local teachers. The expatriate teachers saw the local teachers as eroding any progress made with the students with respect to their use of English (HOD–school A). The use of the local language was seen as discouraging students to make an effort to communicate in English, and therefore develop these skills further. Instructions in classes where students were struggling with learning were even more teacher-centred. Curriculum materials were simplified, and students were not challenged but guided toward “right answers”. Meg used more effective classroom management and routines, compared to Felicity and Ryan. Her students appeared to be more engaged with the material presented to them. She had numerous student activities in those classes which demonstrated consideration of her students' contribution to their own learning. Nonetheless, the practical works undertaken were confirmatory in nature and did not challenge the students enough to augment skills acquisition (appendix O gives a detailed comparison of pertinent beliefs and features of the teaching practices of all three teachers).

### **Teaching Culture, Collaboration, and Professional Learning and Development**

In one school it was acknowledged that beginning teachers were more meticulous in their planning and teaching in their first year. However, within a few years these activities were described as levelling off (DHT–school C). The DHT from school C attributed this change to reluctance on the part of these teachers to ask for help, or to insufficient support at the school, suggesting that, “maybe we did not give them the support that they expected” (DHT–school C). Conversely, the beginning teachers saw themselves as engaging in practices encouraged by the schools and as practised by other teachers. This acquiescing to the prevailing teaching practices was

also seen as a compromise by these teachers. This compromise resulted from limited support and a teaching culture that did not encourage these teachers to develop and grow their effective practices.

In these schools, there were missed opportunities to utilise the experience of veteran teachers, and the agency of beginning teachers within a collegially supportive environment. In some instances, beginning teachers were seen as having the capacity to display exemplary and up-to-date teaching practices stemming from their recent teacher training (HOD–school C; DHT–school A). They were also valued given their potential to share these teaching practices. A recently appointed DHT described her school’s endeavour to promote more up-to-date practices (school A). Some current staff members, however, were seen as discouraging beginning teachers and other new teachers from engaging in certain teaching practices, such as using ICT in teaching. The DHT saw this as a challenge to overcome, and required that teachers come to her for approval. However, one impediment to these schools’ promotion of exemplary practices was the absence of a context that would have allowed the reported up-to-date practices of these beginning teachers and facilitate that the experience and expertise of other teachers be shared. Similarly, in another school, the HOD was unable to bring the experienced and beginning teachers together to understand and utilise each other’s strengths. The HOD described herself as too inexperienced relative to the more experienced teachers. She explained that “the older teachers they have been here a long time they are tired and the beginning teachers have the energy and the new ways” (HOD–school C). Likewise, the DHT at school C reported that more could be done to bring all teachers to work together in her department. A collegially supportive environment within a community of practice was, therefore, not prevalent in these school contexts.

An embedded culture of collaboration in teaching from which these beginning teachers could benefit was not established in their departments. Progress in their teaching was reliant on the interplay of several factors. These factors included both a prior knowledge of the school and relationship with department staff as a former student Felicity had at school A and student-teacher Meg had at school C. Ryan also pointed to his knowledge of the workings of the secondary schools as a student-teacher as a strength. However, he tended to be more self-reflective and pro-active towards developing his teaching. For Ryan, his previous knowledge and relationship facilitated the approachability of members of staff. Where opportunities for informal talk with colleagues existed, it was Meg and Felicity who benefitted somewhat. Meg tended to

compare herself with experienced teachers in her department when they talked informally. Felicity was more comfortable in approaching members in her department and she was seen as a potential source of support for recent beginning teachers. On some level, all three teachers were valued and recognised as professionals. However, the caring environment may have helped in establishing rapport and reducing their isolation on some level did not amount to an embedded culture of collaboration in teaching.

Whilst recognising these beginning teachers as professionals their contexts did not amply recognised their “learning to teach” status. To do so would have meant open communication, where their genuine concerns could be brought up and clarified. At school B, the external evaluation report revealed a “strong sense of collaboration and unity that prevailed in the departments” (MoE, 2009, p. 10). These, however were not around sharing of practices, rather an example cited was the willingness of teachers to take the classes of absent colleagues. The unfulfilled potential for collegial work was reported (Ryan–school B). For instance, the HOD at school B opted to work on department reports alone, with the intention of sparing teachers unnecessary work, while Ryan felt that teachers could have benefitted from being involved.

As a national mandatory requirement, all teachers participated in professional learning and development sessions. These sessions served to strengthen the teachers’ abilities in order to help the schools achieve targeted improvement as part of a three-year school development programme. Sometimes these sessions took the form of whole school plenary sessions. In fact, the schools were commended by the external evaluation report for their thorough planning in targeting the teachers’ areas of professional need. Nonetheless, there were shortcomings in the effective implementation of the plan, as well as shortcomings in the systematic collection of data for subsequent follow up. Part of this discrepancy was pointed out by the external evaluation report at school C. The report called for the involvement of stakeholders in the planning process in order for them to develop a greater sense of commitment and ownership of the plan and its priorities. However, given the nature of these professional learning and development sessions, they served as part of the whole school improvement endeavour and were not geared to target the specific professional and developmental needs of the beginning teachers. When members met in departments to implement school development plans, it was done to contribute towards school priorities and not specific teachers’ needs. Nonetheless, both Ryan and Felicity as members of their respective school Improvement Teams helped in organising some of

these plenary sessions. They felt partly empowered by this process, indicating that refocusing this time could have served a dual purpose of addressing specific teachers' needs and school improvement targets.

In addition, as part of their professional learning and development both Meg and Felicity had participated in an action research project outside the school organised by an external body. Both teachers viewed the aim of the project as enabling them in having the potential to become reflective practitioners in generating and using data to provide for their students' learning, and in transforming their own teaching. The members of the department were aware of these beginning teachers involvement in the project (Felicity–school A, Meg–school C). However, the collaborative nature of the departments, or lack thereof, indicated that other members did not benefit beyond a cursory sharing of these beginning teachers participation in the project. Essentially, a collaborative culture though perceived as existing in some form did not substantially extend to a culture of shared practices. This culture prevailed in social or non-teaching activities but did not extend adequately to the core business of these schools, that is, teaching and learning.

### **Resources and Curriculum**

Overall, the participants in this research reported that more could be done to improve their access to the quality and quantity of curriculum resources. Given that resources were centrally controlled, participants reported that the inadequacy was the MoE's responsibility. Overall, participants were not optimistic that there would be improvement in the quality of resources, given that schools were still struggling to obtain adequate core resources. As Meg explained, "in my department, for example, chalk is a core material we need but you find yourself not getting enough" (Meg–school C). Schools were also facing an issue of vandalism that resulted in loss of resources such as chairs and tables, as well as damage to buildings, which hampered progress made in renovation. Ryan elaborated further: "we have major issues like keeping a budget for the basic stuff; furniture, renovation, and books. These are lacking and they take precedence over quality" (Ryan–school B).

The beginning teachers reported that these issues around resources partly hindered their ability to effectively provide for their students' learning needs. Resource limitations also impacted on the ability of teachers to meet curriculum requirements. The participants believed the lack of resources hampered some students' ability to fully tackle some international examinations with confidence. For example, a reference was

made to students taking alternatives to practical international examination. The HOD in School A reported that teachers were limited in their ability to fully prepare senior students in this area, due to lack of science resources (HOD–school A).

Given this, management recognised that teachers had to improvise (DHT and HOD–school B; HOD–school A). In school A, beginning teachers were encouraged from the onset to improvise in the face of these inadequacies. Management in school B was also cognisant of this situation, and encouraged their teachers to make the best of what they had. In school B, it was recognized that some teachers had devised worksheets and handouts to support their teaching. This was seen as having the potential to encourage collaboration amongst teachers. In trying to meet their own expectations of quality resources, Ryan and Felicity opted to compensate for the inadequacies at school level by relying on personal resources. These included connection to the internet for additional curriculum materials (Felicity–school A), and incorporating resources into learning materials for students such as worksheets and handouts (Ryan–school C).

There was variation in the manner that these beginning teachers viewed and implemented the curriculum. Their choices were partly influenced by their philosophy of what students' learning should entail, and by influencing issues in their settings. Ryan did not confine his teaching to the curriculum, in order to extend students' knowledge by exposing them to more materials. In a number of practical set-ups in science, Ryan personally assisted the laboratory technicians because they were not used to some of the set-ups and practical work Ryan designed for his students. Therefore, in addition to providing for his own learning, Ryan was also empowering staff around him. However, this engagement did not extend to other teachers in his department. Whilst all three teachers selected aspects of the curriculum in teaching students with limited academic ability, Meg was more focussed in keeping to curriculum coverage and in using specified curriculum-based materials. Meg's teaching philosophy was that information not controlled by her would confuse students, and would negatively affect students' performance. Some of variability in these teachers approach to curriculum delivery, such as Meg's notion of controlling students' learning, is reflective of weak support, where the entire burden of a teacher's learning and development is on their shoulders. It is worth noting that schools did not rigidly confine these teachers to the curriculum in terms of content delivery or teaching approaches. However, this flexibility was within a context that created few opportunities where risky philosophies

and teaching approaches that influenced beginning teachers' curriculum choices could be rectified.

## **Summary**

The analysis of the three case studies has revealed the interplay of a range of factors that influenced the challenges, support, and teaching practices of three beginning teachers. Whilst there were contextualized factors specific to each teacher, and to their own school-based context, commonalities existed across the cases.

Some of the schools overlooked the “beginning” status of their beginning teachers by, in some cases, assigning them additional and complex responsibilities. The kind of support available to these teachers through either induction or mentorship did not appear to significantly benefit these beginning teachers. Support included professional development and learning sessions, but these were linked to school development plans, and were not specific to the professional needs of teachers. There were discrepancies in what induction should entail, partly because the beginning status of these teachers were not fully recognised by the school management teams. The ministry's policy on three-month probation period was seen by the MoE as allowing for a period of both support and evaluation, but both the MoE and schools focussed more on accountability issues (i.e., the product, as represented by producing a report) than on effective teaching and induction (e.g., as represented by supporting the teachers). There were attempts made by management in school A, led by the HOD, to reinforce the existing support structure, in particular through the introduction of mentors, which proved useful in part but was dependent on the approachability of mentors and the relationship developed between the mentor and their beginning teacher. In the two other schools the management suggested that these teachers could approach any members in the department for help, but the beginning teachers' willingness (or lack thereof) to do so was one of the sources of continued challenge.

For these beginning teachers, developing effectiveness as teachers was very important. Their notion of what effectiveness meant and how they measured it, was focused on self-evaluation, using students' engagement as an indicator. They placed less dependence on the school appraisal system as a means of gauging their teaching effectiveness, given that the appraisal system did not thoroughly reflect or assess their teaching practices. However, the importance that teachers placed on effectiveness did not always translate in enhanced student-centeredness in their teaching. A tendency towards more direct teaching was attributed to attempts at “managing” students, a

compromise made to meet management expectations, and an adjustment to contextual setting that they were not purview to during their teacher training.

School management teams had limited knowledge of these beginning teachers' practices. The HODs were described as the person to lead teachers in working together towards improving and using effective teaching practices. However, there was inadequate structure or foundation within the schools to build on a community of practice. Evidence indicates that more could be done for teachers to allow greater access to data about teaching and learning, with the purpose of sharing and improving teaching practices. In all three schools, there were conflicting expectations about pedagogical practices and miscommunications between management members. More importantly, in all three schools, collaborative work settings that encouraged discourse and sharing of evidenced-based practices were not evident. Consequently, the beginning teachers relied on themselves to augment their effectiveness within the confines and constraints they encountered. Teaching effectiveness, though encouraged by management, was not commensurate with the right support and teaching culture, thus its pursuit became more of an isolated endeavour. Whilst self-reliance can be viewed as a positive attribute, it negates the benefits that could be gained from learning in a professional community. The participating teachers' views of schools expectations, their students, the available resources, and adherence to certain teaching methodologies influenced their teaching approaches. This resulted in missed opportunities by these teachers towards the co-constructing of knowledge with students and in providing challenges for their students and extending those students who needed it.

When teachers in school A showed willingness to take the classes of absent teachers, it demonstrated willingness for collaboration at some level. However, collaboration between staff members did not prevail strongly in areas that mattered the most for these beginning teachers, particularly: (1) support for new and beginning teachers, and (2) endeavours in improving and developing effective teaching practices that would have benefited all teachers. That is, collaboration across the teacher cohort was not entrenched in the teaching culture of any of the three schools. Still, the prevalence of collaboration, albeit in social activities, is indicative of the potential for its promotion by the schools' management teams. Such promotion may subsequently lead to greater engagement of staff in improving teaching and learning. Beginning teachers wanted to improve their ability to understand students and their learning (i.e., addressing the root causes of students' misbehaviour, and their attitude to their learning). They also favoured transformation in teaching based on improvement in

resources, teacher preparation, effective teacher recruitment, and school-based professional development.



## Chapter 6

### Survey findings

#### Introduction

The ethnographic questionnaire in this study was devised specifically for this research. The questionnaire was shaped based on issues emerging from the three case studies and literature. These issues pertained to aspects of support for beginning teachers and dimensions of effective teaching practices. However, provisions were made to elicit other responses from questionnaire participants through a free response section and structured questions.

The survey was sent to teachers in ten participating secondary schools, nine located on the main island of Mahe, and the tenth on the inner island of Praslin. These schools provided for approximately 9025 students in 2011, with an average of 900 students per school and 30 students per class. The secondary teacher population in 2011 was 595, with 47% holding a teaching degree (MoE, 2010; Nolan, 2008). Of these 595 teachers, 78 were early career teachers (for the purpose of this research these were teachers with one to three years of experience). Ten questionnaires were sent to each of the participating schools, using the Department of Education internal mail dispatch. Permission was sought and granted at ministry level to administer the questionnaires to these schools, in order to ensure ethical procedures were followed (appendix E). I then sought permission from the head teacher in writing (appendix F), with a subsequent follow-up telephone discussion about the research. A total of 58 questionnaires were returned to the researcher, each in sealed envelopes. However, two of these were discarded because the respondents removed the demographic data page. The returned questionnaire represented a response rate of 72%, involving 56 questionnaires.

This chapter presents the participant responses on either a series of rated items or open ended questions, which included: (i) personal qualities and expectations for effective practices; (ii) ranking and description of supportive nature of their schools; (iii) rating of factors important to effective practices; (iv) description of attributes of effective teaching practices and the improvement needs for these at their school; (v) management contribution to their teaching practices; (vi) supportive aspects of their schools, and (vii) aspects of their school that needed improvement. The first section of this analysis considers the demographic data of the questionnaire participants.

## Demographics of Early Career Teachers

Table 2

Demographics of Early Career Teachers (N=56)

<i>Item matrix</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
<i>Gender</i>	F= 71.4% (n=40) M= 28.6% (n=16)
<i>Age range</i>	
20 to 25	82.1
26 to 30	10.7
31 to 35	3.60
Above 40	3.60
<i>Qualifications</i>	
Diploma in Secondary Education	67.9
Advanced Diploma in Secondary Education	3.6
Bachelor of Education Degree (Two-year-conversion)	28.6
<i>Experience (years)</i>	
1 or less	44.6
2	26.8
3	28.6

Table 2 indicates that, the majority of beginning teachers held a Diploma–level qualification. In 2008, the international B.Ed. programme was suspended, with the ongoing development of a local programme in which diploma teachers were expected to enrol in 2012, which explains the higher percentage of Diploma teachers in schools. At the time of implementation of the questionnaire, nearly half the teachers (44.6%) were in their sixth month as beginning teachers. A further 26.8% of the teachers had been teaching for eighteen months, and just 28.6% were in their third year teaching.

Also worth noting is that the “Advanced Diploma”, an optional six-month course for “Diploma” holders, was implemented in 2008. This served to bridge the gap for beginning teachers who wanted continuity in their training whilst the B.Ed. programme was being formalised; the course entailed general education units with a research component. This explained the lower percentage of teachers with Advanced Diploma. An examination of table 3 below revealed a greater consistency in the spread of qualification between the second and third year cohort. The majority of the first year cohort (77.3%) held a Diploma in Education.

Table 3:  
Cross tabulation of cohorts Years of Teaching Experience and types of teaching qualification

		Types of Teaching Qualification			Total
		Diploma in Secondary Teaching Education	Bachelor of Education	Advanced Diploma in Education	
Years of teaching experience	1	17 (77.3%)	4 (18.2%)	1 (4.5%)	22
	2	12 (63.1%)	6 (31.6%)	1 (5.3%)	19
	3	9 (60%)	6 (40%)	0	15
Total		38	16	2	56

The beginning teachers' specialisation fell into eight different subjects. Of the 56 respondents, 14 were science teachers and 14 were English teachers, which accounted for half the total respondents. This is in line with the current training path for teacher trainees, with history and geography being the only subjects where teachers can alternate between the two. Only two of the 14 identified themselves as specialized in teaching all the three areas of biology, physics, and chemistry across the secondary level. It is to be noted that the subjects are taught in a combined and spiral form across all secondary levels in the Seychelles. This has repercussions in that a number of beginning science teachers were ending up teaching a science area where they had limited expertise.

### **Teacher Disposition and Practices**

This dimension presents a series of items rated by respondents to indicate the extent that these items reflected their actions in practice. The ratings were based on five point scale ranged from never (1) to always (5). The four highest rated items were: (i) I focus classroom time on teaching and learning (82.8%); (ii) I value what students say; (iii) I am able to challenge high ability students (80%), and (vi) I set high expectations for all learners in the classroom (80%).

Table 4:  
Teachers' ratings of their classroom practices and personal attributes

<i>Item matrix</i>	<i>Mean (%)</i>	<i>S.D.</i>
I focus classroom time on teaching and learning	4.14 (82.8)	.645
I value what students say	4.05 (81.0)	.616
I set high expectations for all learners in the classroom	4.00 (80.0)	.786
I am able to challenge high ability students	4.00 (80.0)	.809
I consider the experiences of my students when planning the lesson	3.88 (77.6)	.662
I perceive myself as being effective	3.82 (76.4)	.699
I can appropriately cater for lower ability learners	3.81 (76.2)	.789
I provide students with meaningful feedback	3.79 (75.8)	.731
I am able to determine students' learning levels	3.79 (75.8)	.563
I use reflection based on classroom evidence to improve my teaching	3.77 (75.4)	.660
I use direct instruction	3.68 (73.6)	.606
I equip students to learn independently	3.40 (68.0)	.789
I give students choices in their learning	3.36 (67.2)	.699
I consider the cultural background of my students when planning my lesson	2.90 (58.0)	.934

Based on the responses in table 4, it can be argued that the majority of these beginning teachers see themselves as using classroom time to focus on teaching learning, and in particular focus on engaging students' in their learning. They see themselves as involving students in their learning, and as actively using the contributions students bring to the classroom. Subsequently, they are confident that they are able to challenge learners, in particular more able learners. Whilst these responses may be idealised and do not necessarily reflect reality, they do provide an idea of what these teachers felt they were doing.

The three least rated items were: (i) I consider the cultural background of my students when planning my lesson (54.6%); (ii) I equip students to learn independently (68.0%), and (iii) I give students choices in their learning (67.2%). Both the issue of empowering students' to work independently and maximising students' contribution conveyed aspects of learning that are student-centred.

### **Support for Successful Transition and Practices**

This dimension considers the support or facilitating factors that have influenced the work of these early career teachers. It utilized a five point satisfactory rating scale

ranging from (1) not at all important to (5) extremely important. Perceived students' engagement in their learning (49.6%), and their behaviour (42.4%) received the lowest ratings, in addition to teachers' views of choices in resources (45.4%) as shown in table 5.

Table 5:  
Teachers' ratings of influencing factors in their early career years

<i>Item matrix</i>	<i>Mean (%)</i>	<i>S.D.</i>
Option to use Creole with low achieving students	3.54 (70.8)	.894
Opportunities to be mentored by a colleague from the department other than the HOD	3.30 (66.4)	.769
Experienced a general school induction	3.29 (65.8)	.780
Experienced a subject specific induction	3.20 (64.0)	.749
Manageable teaching load	3.21 (64.2)	.948
Opportunities to be mentored by the HOD	2.85 (57.0)	.929
Adequate level of supportive classroom visit	2.57 (51.5)	.785
Students' eagerness to engage in learning	2.48 (49.6)	.789
Choices in variety of teaching resources	2.27 (45.4)	.963
Appropriate students' behaviour	2.12 (42.4)	.955

A closer look of the “students’ engagement” item revealed a low rating across the three years, but with a much lower rating by the second year teachers (Figure 7).

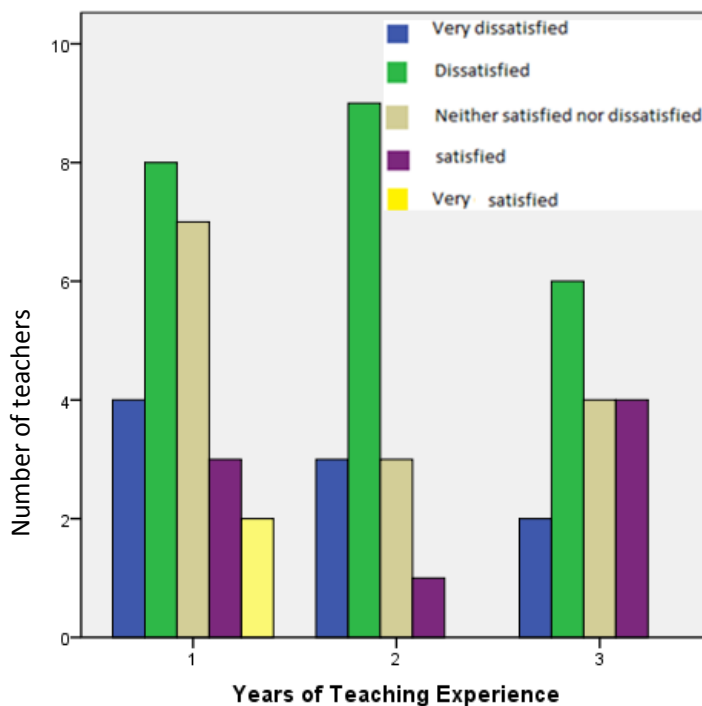


Figure 7: Teachers’ rating of “students’ eagerness to engage in their learning”.

Ratings by the third year teachers improved to be at par with the low ratings of the first year teachers (1<sup>st</sup> year = 52.5%, 2<sup>nd</sup> year = 42.5%, and 3<sup>rd</sup> year = 52.5%). A number of factors could be contributing to this pattern. It could be an indication that these teachers are adjusting their expectations and getting better at involving students in their learning, as they gain more experience by their third year.

The respondents' rating of their class allocation, as indicated by Figure 8 below, revealed a greater satisfaction with the third year cohort.

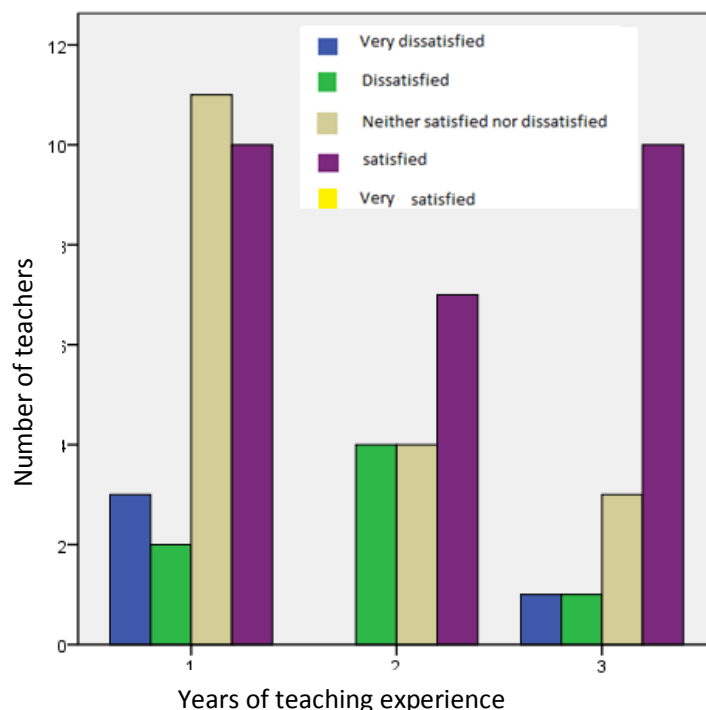


Figure 8: Teachers' rating of "Manageable teaching load".

Although in general the third year cohort showed an overall satisfaction with their teaching load, this differed with the first year's rating. Figure 8 shows that responses from first year indicated a near balance between those who were satisfied and those who chose the "neither satisfied nor dissatisfied" options. This could be connected to the allocation of some classes to first year teachers, in particular less able senior secondary classes and other low achieving classes. A typical response from the qualitative aspect of the question by a first year french teacher assigned to senior classes revealed, "talking from experience, they should consider that new teachers take time to adapt, so therefore giving us difficult S4/S5 classes are not to our advantage, this discourages us".

A breakdown of responses to items of induction, mentoring, and classroom visits in table 6, revealed a broad distribution of those who expressed a satisfaction with these supportive components to those expressing dissatisfaction or uncertainty.

<i>Item matrix</i>	<i>Satisfied or very satisfied (%)</i>	<i>Dissatisfied/neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (%)</i>
Opportunities to be mentored by a colleague from the department other than the HOD	58.4	41.6
Opportunities to be mentored by the HOD	51.4	42.6
Adequate level of supportive classroom visit	43.0	57.0
Experienced a general school induction	39.3	60.7
Experienced a subject specific induction	37.5	62.5

Table 6: Rated items on induction, mentoring, and classroom visit

Overall, these beginning teachers are experiencing dissatisfaction in all these areas, but in particular subject and general school induction. Nearly half (44.6%) of these early career teachers expressed dissatisfaction or uncertainty at the level of mentorship from their HOD. This could either mean that mentoring (if any) was not targeting their teaching needs or that it could be being carried out haphazardly. Mentorship coming from colleagues skewed slightly more toward the positive perception. But mentorship predominantly comes in the form of feedback from lesson observation, so given that only 43% of respondents were satisfied with the “supportive classroom visits,” this could indicate that these beginning teachers were not getting adequate feedback on their teaching. Crucial data regarding improvement needs were being missed out. The last two items relating to a general and specific induction received the lowest rating, an indication of the lack of clear policy for, and resulting discrepancies in induction in the public schools.

### **Factors Pertinent to Effective Practices**

Within this dimension respondents were asked to rate a series of factors to indicate their importance to the effectiveness of their practices. The rating scale ranged from extremely important (5) to not at all important (1). The percentage means ranged from 76.8 % to 94.2 %. (See table 7)



<i>Item matrix</i>	<i>Mean (%)</i>	<i>S.D.</i>
Students' motivation	4.71 (94.2)	.556
Opportunities for professional growth	4.43 (88.6)	.599
Preparation time at school	4.34 (86.8)	.611
Classroom discipline	4.82 (96.4)	.686
Dealing with individual differences among students	3.74 (74.9)	.626
Ability to involve students in their learning	4.48 (89.6)	.504
Maintaining a relationship with parents	3.87 (77.4)	.634
Manageable teaching load	4.39 (87.8)	.705
Ability to teach struggling learners	4.11 (82.2)	.679
Resources to implement curriculum	4.60 (92.0)	.657
The emotional satisfaction of working in a school	4.41 (88.2)	.626

Table 7: Rating of factors linked to the expectation for effective practices

In general the standard deviation indicated that the data points were relatively close to the mean, with the highest importance given to classroom discipline (96.4%) followed by students' motivation (94.2%). This indicated the high regard that these teachers placed in the qualities of their students, and perhaps their expectations that students and their learning behaviour had a large role to play in supporting teachers to be effective (e.g., see students' motivation and classroom discipline scores). Therefore, it was clear that teachers attached great importance to students' good behaviour and motivation. Participants gave equal weighing to the issue of resources (92%), and feedback on teaching and students' progress (92%), the two items that received the third highest rating. The presence of continual feedback on teachers' instructional practices, students' progress, and the necessary resources for curriculum implementation was seen by teachers to be crucial to effective practices. In contrast, the three cohorts of beginning teachers rated the item "dealing with individual differences among students" lower in comparison to other items (76.8%). However, as indicated by figure 9, this tendency skewed towards the positive when rated by the third year beginning teachers.



Figure 9: Trends in response to the item “Dealing with individual differences among students”.

This could be linked to early career teachers’ tendency to concern themselves more with differences amongst individual students as they gained experience, a divergent concern from the early stage of class treatment as a unit as indicated by literature, (1<sup>st</sup> year mean = 3.36, 2<sup>nd</sup> year mean = 3.78 and 3<sup>rd</sup> year mean = 4.10). The cohort did place importance on the issue of providing for struggling students (82.2%). The concern teachers felt could be around the challenges involved in using individualised instructions to provide for individualized differences (76.8%). Given that doing so entails knowledge of individual students’ learning styles, it is more likely to that experience and improved expertise would ease this process.

### **Elements that make up Effective Teaching and Elements in Teaching that Required Improvement**

Respondents were asked, “With reference to your own teaching, what are some elements that make up effective teaching?” They were given opportunities to mention elements of effective teaching in consideration of their practices and context. These elements were compared to responses addressing the question, “What are some of those elements in your teaching that you feel need improvement to make your teaching more effective, if any? (See table 8). The responses from the former question are first addressed.

Within these groupings, the components are listed with frequencies. The components also mirrored the previous ratings of factors that beginning teachers deemed pertinent to the effectiveness of their practices. As shown in Table 8, students had one of the highest group ratings. For these teachers, engaging and motivated students within a disciplined classroom enabled effective teaching. The concept of “motivated students” reflected the cohorts’ context, where as their comments explained “appropriate students’ attitude,” “greater students’ involvement in their learning” were called for. Essentially, the data shows that teachers believed that efficacious practices require having “cooperative students” who share similar goals with their teachers with respect to their learning. It should be noted that there was a tendency for some teachers to phrase these qualities as prerequisite for students to bring to class. There was a limited focus on teachers’ input in developing these qualities with students, as exemplified by the following two responses: “teachers need to work with engaging and motivated students” and “classroom management is key to effective teaching [in order] to gain students’ full attention and facilitate their learning”.

Another critical grouping identified by teachers was availability and access to “resources”. This was linked to the teachers’ school context as resources were described in relation to three pertinent categories: “Relevant”; “Adequate”, and “Available”.

<i>Elements that make up effective teaching</i>	<i>Improvement needs for effective teaching in current contexts</i>
<i>Students</i>	
Motivated and engaging (42) Well-behaved (25) Right attitude to learning and cooperative (22)	Working with less able students (23) Students' willingness to take responsibility for their own learning (24) More frequent feedback from students (12) Students' greater involvement in their learning (16)
<i>Resources</i>	
Availability and relevance (41)	More resources connected to curriculum implementation (30) Resources to plan for differentiated instructions (28) Provision of more resources (18) Resources for the learning of less able students (16)
<i>Teacher</i>	
Motivated (15) Well-trained (14) Use effective classroom management (31) Competency in subject area (19) Learning from experience (11)	Ongoing development of teaching skills (16) Further formal training (18) In-depth knowledge of content (20)
<i>Instructions</i>	
Well prepared and planned for (30) Differentiated to provide for varied students' needs, interest and abilities (15) Student-centred (16) Appropriate to topic and level of learners (10)	Varied teaching approaches (09) Clearer explanation of concepts (13) Approaches to provide for different students' needs (14) Approaches to provide for less able students (12) Approaches to provide individual students' needs (7) Use of differentiated instructions (16)
<i>Curriculum</i>	
Tailored for students' needs and interest (11) Relevant to students (9) Less loaded and rigid (5)	<i>Assignment</i> Reduced teaching load (12) Less or no difficult classes to new teachers (6) Ample time at school for preparation (13)
<i>School</i>	
Conducive working and learning environment (21)	<i>Classroom management</i> Varied and effective classroom management skills (32) Managing extremely misbehaving students (27) Managing misbehaving classes (18) Managing low ability classes (17)
<i>The management, MoE, and parents</i>	
Competent, cooperative and supportive management (19)	Greater support from ministry (18) Increase parental involvement (14) Increased effectiveness of central policies (16) Greater support from school management (24)
<i>Communication</i>	
Shared vision and goals between: Student-student (10) Teacher-student (23) Parents-student (23) Teachers-parents (11)	

Table 8: A comparison between beginning teachers' notion of what makes up effective teaching with what they felt needed redressed in their context.

One teacher elaborated by noting, “I have an issue with the department of education maintaining and replacing of [sic] equipment, and even access to chalk is a problem”. Resources that targeted students’ learning needs, such as visual resources or visual aids, and technology resources, were mentioned by the teachers but did not feature markedly across the group (n=6).

A third group involved “the teacher”. Competency in subject area and the possession of effective classroom management strategies were the two most highly prioritised qualities of an effective teacher. Surveyed teachers situated an effective practitioner as someone who was well trained with well-developed effective classroom management practices. Equally, an effective teacher possessed an in-depth knowledge of their subject matter. The affective characteristics of a teacher also received some mention, specifically the contentment and motivation of a teacher, as this response from a third year French teacher exemplified, “an enthusiasm for teaching and encouragement to continue the good job”.

The fourth group of responses was “instructions”. The planning and subsequent implementation of effective practices was described as (i) differentiated to provide for varied students’ needs, interest, and abilities. A number of respondents used the term (ii) student-centred to describe the types of instruction, “student-centred teaching that includes their voices”. Whilst a few explained the importance of good planning, they also recognised that it is but part of the process, with one respondent commenting that, “good planning is connected to the potential for effective delivery”. The notion of planning was taken further by one third year English beginning teacher, who explained, “good planning and understanding the students you are teaching because even though you are teaching a class they are each unique individuals”. This response was not, however, pervasive and, as is evidenced below, respondents frequently emphasized this as an area they needed to develop because of the difficulties in providing for varied students’ needs. The appropriateness and variety of strategies were in a few cases exemplified by this response from one respondent: “teachers’ strategies in teaching play a great role in students’ interest and learning”. A second year advanced diploma geography teacher explained that the use of strategies that were interesting and relevant could be limited by the rigid curriculum, whilst a second year science teacher suggested, “sometimes a strategy that seems good on paper can be changed either because of student behaviour and management interference because of a little noise”.

Another group, “curriculum”, was seen as vital when tailored for students’ needs and as teachers pointed out, in terms of its connectivity to context, as may be reflected by students’ interest and level of involvement. The remaining three groups were: (vi) school, (vii) the management, MoE, and parents and, (ix) communication. These three groups reflected the respondents’ concept of effective practices as dependent on external factors that ultimately impact on learning and teaching. A work place that is conducive for both students’ learning and teachers’ work depends on its physical state, and on availability of resources. These resources in addition to material relating to the curriculum encompass items for students’ daily use such as chairs, tables, and exercise books. Lesser mention was made of a professional working place for teachers, but the support of management was described as important to these respondents.

Such support is also linked to the eighth group of responses, in that in order to achieve effectiveness in practices, management articulation and support of a shared vision and goals was seen as crucial. These common goals and vision with respect to effective teaching practices was described as the business of all stakeholders and its advancement was dependent on their participation, “parents need to talk to their children and play a role in their learning,” one respondent explained. Another respondent reflected on the importance of teacher-student communication, recommending that teachers “value what students’ say, allow them to share their personal experiences, get [sic] to know them better will connect you to your students”. These response groups and excerpts from teachers reflected the attributes of effective teaching practices as being multipronged and interconnected with numerous factors. Nonetheless, there was also a tendency to frame effective teaching practices from a technicist perspective and less as a reflective pursuit, and this is further reflected below.

Teachers’ responses to the semi-structured question, “What are some of those elements in your teaching that you feel need improvement to make you more effective, if any?” were grouped into eight groups. The frequencies in responses were identified. It was interesting that the participants did not provide detailed aspects of their classroom practices, or focus on instructions, but instead framed teaching as an endeavour connected to elements within and outside the classroom. Teachers viewed the parents, management and MoE as potential collaborators to their teaching in three main ways: (i) student attitude and behaviour; (ii) school-based resources; (iii) professional formal training, in particular degree training. Responses from some

participants indicated a focus on students' motivation, as one teacher explained, "a lot of improvements are required, especially when it comes to students' involvement in their own learning as the majority of them have no motivation to learn on their own". Cultivating a sense of collaboration in their learning with their teacher was the crux of these teachers' vision and was seen as pertinent to encouraging their teaching practices. The MoE's "soft" policies, management confinement to such policies and parents' disconnection were seen as hindrances to improvement efforts. This was exemplified from the response of a 2<sup>nd</sup> year English teacher, who wrote that "parents should be accountable for what their children bring to the school, the ministry should have a policy making it compulsory for parents to know what their kids are doing at the school, in the classroom". Another response from a 3<sup>rd</sup> year Geography teacher expressed similar concerns: "I met one [parent] outside the school recently praising her kid ... what an inspiring child he was, I wanted to tell her that he was one of the worst students at the school". This cohort of beginning teachers wanted a greater role for parents in their children's education. This role was viewed as educating students on the value of their studies and the importance of a positive attitude in the classroom. They wanted a shared vision of collaboration which could be undertaken at home and through better networking with schools, a few respondents pointed to this as exemplified by this response, "if parents are on board, mindful of their children's behaviour and progress, things will work better for all stakeholders".

The MoE was viewed as the policy maker and resource provider in facilitating improvement towards these teachers' effectiveness. Respondents felt that the MoE was better placed to provide basic and adequate resources. A number of respondents aspired for digital technology in teaching, but felt this was viewed as unachievable because of the scarcity of basic resources, with one respondent writing, "resources need to be provided it is currently scarce in schools, how can we talk about IT?" Teachers' feedback suggested that either the MoE did not listen to teachers or, if aware of a problematic situation, would ignore the evidence. As one 2<sup>nd</sup> year science teacher elaborated, "when the photocopiers were introduced in the school, it was a big event on TV but the previous few years we had none, so people think everything is okay but resources is still a problem". Whilst one participant explained, "the ministry really need to have a clear policy about resources in schools, like a minimum standard of what schools should be given". Finally a number of participant (n=18) also viewed formal teacher training as lacking. The delay in starting the local B.Ed. programme by

the MoE since 2008 was viewed by teachers as impacting on teacher motivation and retention.

With respect to instruction, teachers felt that they could be better empowered in: (i) differentiated strategies; (ii) classroom management, and (iii) motivating and engaging students. The use of differentiated instruction in classrooms was identified as a challenge, especially in lower achieving classes because of poor student behaviour and performance. A few participants explained their need to be equipped with certain strategies, and this was viewed as having potential to engage students, with one responded writing, “students might be more interesting [sic] if I have a variety of strategies to make learning interesting”. A lesser number of responses (n=7) pointed to “how to be more attentive to students’ individual needs”. On the other hand, several teachers identified classroom management as an issue for them, and felt the need to improve their ability to deal with both difficult individuals and the class as a whole.

### Management Contribution to Practice

<i>Item matrix</i>	<i>Mean (%)</i>	<i>S.D.</i>
I am required to complete my post-lesson evaluation and act upon any concerns identified	4.34 (86.8)	.880
My scheme is regularly checked	4.09 (81.8)	.920
Expectation for teaching and learning is made clear by the management	4.00 (80.0)	.934
A number of daily tasks performed by the management focuses on teaching and learning	3.98 (79.6)	.990
The management expects that we follow the teaching and learning policies	3.41 (68.2)	.890
The management has encouraged me to focus on improving students’ attainment	3.02 (60.4)	.646
My class is frequently being observed by the management	2.46 (49.2)	.865
My supervisor discusses my students achievement with me	2.48 (49.6)	.660
I receive critical feedback on the potential effectiveness of my plan	2.77 (55.4)	.809
I am given frequent feedback on my teaching by the management	2.71 (54.2)	.930
	2.41 (48.2)	.708

Table 9: Teachers’ ratings of the management contribution to their support and practices.



This dimension considered the perceived management involvement in teaching and support of these beginning teachers. Individual items in this dimension received the lowest ratings in comparison to other dimensions. An analysis of the dimension (table 9) showed that the expectation for teaching and learning were generally viewed as being well articulated by the management (80%). As part of the monitoring process regarding teachers' plan of work, teachers reported that they were regularly checked (81.8%), and that they were required by management to reflect on their teaching, write post-lessons evaluations, and act on shortcomings (86.8%). However, the receipt of feedback on the potential effectiveness of these plans (54.2%) did not align strongly with the view that management articulated its expectations well. This could indicate that written feedback on the lesson plans was minimal or not forthcoming, or that pursuant to checking the scheme no arrangements existed for verbal feedback.

The participating teachers recognised part of management work as focussing on teaching and learning (79.6%). This focus did not connect strongly to feedback the beginning teachers received about their teaching (49.6%). This could be partly explained by the low level of classroom observations carried out by the management (48.2%). Management encouragement of teachers' focus on improving student attainment received a rating of 60.4%. However, this encouragement could be viewed as management setting of expectations, which differs to actual discussion of students' performances. This is further exemplified by the item "My supervisor discusses my students' achievement with me," this was given a lower rating of 55.4%.

## Workplace Features Encouraging Effective Teaching Practices

This section examines the responses of teachers, to the question, “What aspects of your school facilitate or encourage you to teach effectively?” The greatest number of responses highlighted the relationships beginning teachers experienced with staff as being the most encouraging aspect of their work.

Facilitating aspect of schools culture	Frequency
Working relationship with colleagues	22
Approaching teachers in department for individual help	19
Relationship with teachers in other departments	18
Professional discussions and activities on curriculum implementation	14
Encouragement and praise from management	13
Management visibility	12
Management dealing with misbehaving student	12
The positive attitude of some students towards learning	10
Management regular check scheme of work and emphasis on planning	10
Satisfaction from students’ performance	8

Table 10: Facilitating aspects of school cultures

A greater number of teachers pointed at the opportunities for informal discussion with members of their department, or cited a positive working relationship (n=22, see table 10). This was viewed as giving them a sense of belonging and a realisation that others were facing similar challenges. The nature of some relationships allowed beginning teachers to approach colleagues for support relating to teaching (n=19). However, comments around the forms of support did not specify the type of support these teachers received, and were more general in nature, making such claims as, “the support from colleague is frequent and effective,” or stating that beginning teachers received “guidance and cooperation from other teachers in the department” without specification.

Another form of relationship identified by participating teachers was within networks that existed with teachers from other departments (n=18). This type of relationship included social activities, professional sharing during whole school presentations and discussions and support from friends, or informal talks with colleagues. Similarly, a fourth aspect that was seen as encouraging or facilitating effective teaching practices was the professional discussions and activities around

curriculum implementation (n=14). Excerpts of comments from teachers relating to this included: “discussions on means and ways to better implement the curriculum”; “approach to carry out an experiment”, and “most suitable diagram to explain concept”.

A number of other issues identified as encouraging effective teaching practices stemmed from management actions, such as their visible presence around the school which mitigated poor students’ behaviour, with one respondent commenting that, “current monitoring from senior management and HODs, their authority tends to make students more involved and participate in the subject(s) taught”. The frequent checking of lesson plans (n=10), and the praise the school management gave to beginning teachers (n=14) were also valued. A few teachers (n=8) pointed to the motivation and satisfaction they got from students’ achievement, or as one respondent put it, “when my students excel in what I have taught them”.

### **Workplace Features Requiring Improvements for Effective Teaching Practices**

This section examines the responses of teachers, to the question, “Describe any aspect of your current school that could be improved to further support your effectiveness as a teacher?”

Areas of school needing improvement	Frequency
Improving students’ behaviour and involvement	26
Provision of appropriate, recent resources	25
Increased frequency of classroom observations from HOD and senior management	17
Parental involvement in students’ attitude towards their learning	16
More encouragement and help from colleagues and senior management	12
Professional development that connects to context	12
Reduced paper work and teaching load	11
Increased feedback on teacher performance	10
Improving communication amongst teachers and other staff	10
Teachers working as a team on teaching related activities	9
Improving physical classrooms’ condition	9
Introducing value based school	8

Table 11: Areas of school needing improvement

A majority of these responses reflected the need for schools to work towards tackling the issue of students’ engagement and attitude in their learning (n=26, see table 11). The comments revealed low performance in assessments and participation, and a typical response was, “students’ do not value their learning and their

participation is minimal, something needs to be done about this”. Around this issue, respondents cited the inappropriate behaviour of individual students or whole classes, which some teachers believed prevented them from supporting student learning in general, with one respondent writing that, “in order for teaching and learning to be effective lot of work needs to be done about students’ misbehaviour”. This work was viewed by respondents as a communal endeavour: “parents’ involvement in their students work, support from stakeholders in ensuring a safe and suitable environment for effective teaching and learning”. Comments around resources (n=25) ranked this issue second in prominence.

Respondents also sought more opportunities of supportive feedback on their learning and teaching. For instance they welcomed an increased in-classroom observation from their immediate supervisors. Comments in this vein included: “I need to receive objective view of my current progress to help with improvement in my teaching”, and “support visit is supposed to happen but management is not doing it well, perhaps they should encourage other teachers to do that”.

Comments regarding observation feedback have a clear link to responses that sought greater support from colleagues in general. One respondent wrote that, “new teachers need help from more experience colleagues”, and the forms of help requested ranged from greater sharing of experiences, to active listening. Comments included: “they have been around for a while and could help new teachers by telling us about their journey”, and “part of the department meeting could be used to allow new teachers to talk about their difficulties and how we can sort it [sic] out”.

Desired support from management was also tied to their role in encouraging student-centred teaching, some respondents pointing to the issued of conflicting messages from management: “I think it is okay for students to make some noise when they are working in pairs, groups or when they present work but this is not accepted, you can be reprimanded”. Whilst management seemed to encourage student-centred strategies, the issue for teachers was that they were required to strike a balance between students’ activities and good classroom management, and often without much targeted training. Responses suggest that teachers are often required to focus on behaviour rather than pedagogy or student learning.

Teachers identified the opportunities that existed for plenary, and whole school professional development sessions. Some aspects of this format included allowing teachers to address prevailing concerns linked to whole school improvement

endeavours. Nonetheless, surveyed beginning teachers favoured more of a workshop format involving smaller targeted groups of teachers facing common difficulties. One 2<sup>nd</sup> year mathematics teacher explained, “we do not have enough maths sessions for teachers about teaching, we need to find out what we can do about the poor performance”. This is similar to other teachers’ responses that favoured subject specific professional development sessions, with a focus on improving teaching practices. Other less mentioned areas for improvements centred around the issue of feedback on teacher performance and the introduction of value-based schooling. The latter was linked to developing a change in students’ attitude towards their learning.

### **Summary of Findings**

Surveyed beginning teachers viewed students’ attitude toward their learning as exemplified by their engagement, and choices in resources as two of the factors that most impeded their teaching, based on a rated list of items. In contrast, they found their use of the local language with low achievers for instruction purposes as one of the most supportive elements in their transition period. Their induction at both whole school and department level was rated low. On the other hand mentoring support that they received from colleagues during this period was rated higher in comparison to what they received from their HOD.

On the question of the characteristics of effective practices these beginning teachers pointed to the following main aspects: students’ behaviour, attitude and engagement; teacher subject matter knowledge; student-centred instructions, and copious quality resources. These were linked to the respondents’ current contexts. The most valued qualities associated with an effective teacher were strong subject matter knowledge and competency in classroom management. There was a focus on qualities viewed as prerequisites for students to bring to the classroom, with a lesser number of respondents viewing these as nurtured and developed in the classrooms. The issue of achievement was not frequently mentioned when citing students’ characteristics, or teachers’ characteristics for effective teaching practices. Surveyed teachers’ perspectives did not focus on students’ achievement as an issue of teacher accountability. Instead, they focussed on a technicist view of teaching; teachers were expected to be in charge of their class, and students were expected to be engaged in their work with minimal disruption, and there was a lesser focus on data generation and reflective practices.

For surveyed teachers, improving effective teaching practices were seen as a societal and communal endeavour involving teachers, students, parents, management, and the MoE. This is evident through responses that indicated the need for improved parental awareness of their children's work and conduct, and greater support from the MoE as resource provider and policy maker. Management was viewed as being able to provide more feedback on their teaching, and to provide data crucial to improving their teaching and learning. Teachers' responses revealed that these stakeholders' contributions were vital in collaborating to make teaching more effective.

The majority of respondents placed high value on student-centeredness in instruction. Their teaching practices were portrayed as entailing features of student-centred strategies. These teachers were of the view that this consideration served to impact on students' engagement and interest in their learning. Even so, a number of respondents pointed to the difficulties and challenges they faced in attempting, if not enacting, student-centred approaches. This, they reported, was further stymied by students' misbehaviour and disengagement, and to lesser extent conflicting messages from the management. Conflict with management was based on the need for beginning teachers to strike a balance between student-centred teaching activities and student management.

The availability and appropriateness of teaching resources also limited teachers in their quest for student-centred practices. Surveyed teachers recognised the value that digital technology could bring to advanced and diversified learning and teaching. However, given the difficulty in meeting the basic resource needs for teaching, such as core textbooks and photocopying access, some respondents were pessimistic about the possibility of greater access to digital technology in their teaching.

These beginning teachers pointed to several aspects of their school-based contexts that were supportive of their teaching, learning, and transition to expert status, alongside aspects that needed improvements. Their adaptation was facilitated through the relationships established with colleagues within and between departments. These served as avenues to share their challenges with colleagues or friends facing the same experiences. The responses from teachers indicated that they viewed management's role in establishing teaching expectations as encouraging, although support from the management in helping them to meet these expectations was inadequate. For instance, teachers' planning and preparation schemes were regularly

checked, and the beginning teachers valued this input. However, they found that this was more a formality than a form of support, and this was evident in the lack of feedback from management on the potential effectiveness or shortcomings of their plans. However, management visibility on school grounds and in the classroom served as a sign of involvement. In addition, teachers believed such visibility deterred students from inappropriate behaviour, as it conveyed the message that the school's management team were seeking greater accountability across the school.

Responses on the support needs of beginning teachers, and views on effective teaching practices can be grouped under the following themes to be addressed in the analysis section.

- Inconsistency between beliefs and reality;
- Student-related factors;
- Management-related factors;
- Parent-related factors;
- Resource-related factors;
- Ministry of Education-related factors.

### **Survey Analysis**

Under the aforementioned themes, different factors are considered in terms of their importance to surveyed beginning teachers. The focus of analysis is on the manner that these factors are impeding or facilitating overall support for beginning teachers, and in particular, how these are influencing their effective teaching practices.

#### **Inconsistency between beliefs and reality**

These beginning teachers perceived themselves as focussing the bulk of their time on teaching and learning in the class. They saw themselves as practitioners who valued what their students said, and who set high expectations for learners in their classrooms. However there was a disparity between how they viewed their practices and how they operated in reality. In fact these teachers rated their personal attributes and practices from a somewhat idealistic perspective. Nonetheless, written responses about teaching practices took a more behavioural focus in both planning to delivery.

That is, there were fewer responses that focussed on student empowerment, and on evidence-based practices and maximization of feedback from their teaching.

The contributions of stakeholders, which were framed as important to facilitating teaching effectiveness, were rated unfavourably, and student learning was seen as lacking because of this. For instance the designated supervisors and mentors in secondary schools, the HODs, were viewed less favourably as mentors. However, teachers' colleagues served as possible sources for mentorship, and they were rated more favourably.

In part, impediments to improvement were due to scant access to data about beginning teachers' individual teaching practices, and lack of support that would have enabled them to use and maximize such data to improve their teaching. In addition the improvements in their practices were seen as complex. This was because teaching was seen as an endeavour connected to and influence by stakeholders, and teachers saw themselves as having a limited influence. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, the majority of teachers were unable to articulate (and possibly unable to implement) a sophisticated concept of teaching. As I will argue, this could be due to a need to focus on establishing consistent, basic requirements for teaching across secondary schools in the Seychelles, that is: ensuring the attention of learners; sorting the appropriate teaching methodologies; anticipating support that provides for current concerns; and anticipating the participation of stakeholders.

### **Student-related factors**

Being effective practitioners was important to surveyed beginning teachers and responses revealed that students were the most important determining factor in facilitating effective teaching practices. Effective practice was defined as reliant on: (i) motivated and engaging students who were (ii) well-behaved and (iii) displayed the right attitude to learning for instance through cooperation with teachers and other students in the class. It can be reasoned that the required qualities teachers saw in learners were influenced by their context.

Given the above, it was interesting to note that factors concerning students were fundamental to further improving teacher effectiveness in their current contexts. Teachers consistently rated student engagement as the most important factor for improvement. This need stemmed from a view of students as not having the right attitude towards their learning, which teachers felt was culminating in poor achievement on their part. In addition, teachers felt that students were not displaying



appropriate behaviour in class and in consequence were disrupting the teaching and learning process. Accordingly, responses revealed a heightened need for improvement in areas around their ability to work with less able students. There was a call for strategies that would augment their pedagogical repertoire to work with these students, to improve their learning and achievement.

A change of students' attitude was seen as key to increasing students' engagement in their learning. This change of attitude was not solely seen as a requirement for low achievers, since in general it was felt that most students were not achieving to aspired expectations. Whilst surveyed teachers called for improvement to equip themselves to deal with student management, the majority of teachers expected their students to be in class with the right attitude, and saw themselves as being able to contribute more towards students' academic achievement and less towards their affective qualities. Surveyed teachers overwhelmingly believed that parents, school management, the MoE, and the community had a greater responsibility than they did in transforming these students' attitude and behaviour.

### **Management-related factors**

There was little disagreement that management expected the best from these teachers, as exemplified by surveyed teachers' responses. However, responses depicted management actions and expectation of teaching as unconcerned with teaching as a reflective endeavour, noting that management expectations of teachers often required that they maintain discipline and control the level of noise in their classrooms. Again, whilst there would probably have been minimal contention around some students' expectation responses around these features were infrequent. For instance, progress in their achievement, experience learning that empowered them, experience learning that connected to their life experience and participate in the co-construction of knowledge in classroom. Gauging these beginning teachers' responses indicated that their teaching was in part circumscribed by management expectations, and that these (in addition to other factors) encouraged a reductionist and behaviour focussed form of teaching.

Survey responses indicated that management support, in both form and degree, was inadequate, and frequently countervailing to the notions of effective teaching, as detailed above. The most appreciated form of support from management was their high visibility, that is, their physical presence on school grounds or momentary presence in classrooms. This served to reassure teachers that management was there

for them and to create awareness amongst students that management had first-hand knowledge of classrooms. However, support for teachers did not move to a level that would have encouraged effective teaching practices. For instance, there were several potential sources for feedback, such as from lesson plans, or mentoring stemming from lesson observation, but whilst lesson plans were checked, responses did not feature critical comments. It is possible that lesson observations were not being systematically carried out. In fact comments from teachers indicated that they wanted improvement in these forms of support, to further transform their workplaces into settings for them to sort out their professional concerns.

### **Parent-related factors**

As stakeholders, parents were seen as participants in enabling beginning teachers to progress in their practices. No responses pointed to contribution in the form of monetary, resource or pedagogical support, or for parents to have a physical presence in the school ground or classrooms. Rather, responses pointed to concern over student attitude, poor achievement and behaviour, and the prevailing perception among teachers was that parents were not doing enough to instil in their children a sense of responsibility towards their learning, and respect of others' learning. Part of this perception was also based on a view of parents as not having the right information about their children's conduct in schools alongside knowledge of their academic progress.

One teacher expressed her dismay about a parent who perceived her child as being an ideal student, whilst the said participant held evidence to the contrary, and this experience was fairly typical. Therefore respondents wanted first and foremost to build a network that would enable parents to be privy to the status of their children's profiles at school and in the classrooms. Respondents felt that informed parents would set the tone for acceptable behaviour, as well as contributing directly or indirectly to their children's learning. This would then pave the way for beginning teachers to spend even more time on teaching and learning.

### **Resource-related factors**

Surveyed beginning teachers were cognisant of the complexities involved in getting the kind of resources to facilitate the type of teaching they envisioned. They recognised access to resources as facilitating less direct teacher and more student-centred instruction. The view was that quality and quantity in relevant resources

would diversify their strategies, and engage and motivate students in their learning. This was also seen as having a potential to improve students' attitudes towards their learning. Some teachers went as far as envisioning the use of digital technologies in teaching to connect more with learners' context and experience.

However, for these respondents, the implementation of effective teaching strategies was dependent on the availability and relevance of resources. It was the second highest rated component required to advance the effectiveness of their teaching practices in their current contexts. A close examination of their responses revealed a pessimistic view of an improvement in accessing quality resources. They viewed themselves as improvising more with what they had, and perceived this continued improvisation as limiting the engagement of their students, and teachers' ability to use of student-centred learning approaches. Responses consistently revealed a requirement for resources that connected to curriculum implementation, and that allowed for more differentiated instructions, especially regarding the kind of teaching that could provide for low achievers. As it were, the situation reflected a struggle for the provision of basic resources such as chalk, chairs and exercise-books. Nonetheless it should be pointed out that whilst such basic resources are crucial, the tendency of respondents was to view reliance on direct instruction as stemming from scarcity and limited variety of resources. Student-centred learning was viewed less as an issue of pedagogy over which these teachers could have influence, and more of a resource issue over which they could not.

### **Ministry of Education-related factors**

The role of the MoE was seen as important for these teachers as resource provider, policy maker and the body that provided access to formal training. These areas were of paramount importance to these beginning teachers. Survey responses revealed shortcomings on the part of the MoE in meeting their expectations in these areas. The trend in responses showed that teachers were seeking effective policies that would create improvements in areas that teachers perceived as impeding the effectiveness of their practices. The introduction of an effective code of conduct that would curb misbehaviour was frequently mentioned. Specific to this policy, teachers requested that more authority be given to school management, which would allow them to act decisively and strictly on unruly behaviour. As it were, the MoE was seen as blocking some of the decision schools made in relation to students misconduct.

Another avenue through which respondents favoured MoE cooperation was in creating a greater parental awareness in their children's learning and conduct. A few responses went as far as suggesting a policy that would mandate parental accountability for their children's unruly actions at school, whilst others pointed to MoE involvement in creating greater parental awareness of their children's learning and behaviour at school level. Ultimately, such interventions were seen as having the potential to increase students' attention to their learning. However, it would appear, overall that these beginning teachers were finding it difficult to use teaching strategies and behaviour management skills to make the necessary changes in some of their classes. It can be reasoned here that given this focus, attention at least in some classes was somewhat removed from building on quality learning and teaching.

The MoE was seen as the greatest impediment to access of both basic and quality resources available to beginning teachers. As previously indicated, responses revealed that teachers looked less to themselves and available school expertise to make the best of what they had through improvisation. Nonetheless, the fluctuation in available basic resources such as chalk and chairs did not convince these teachers that in the near future they would be able to teach the kind of teaching indicative of improved effectiveness.

## **Summary**

This chapter has reported the second phase of the study, a quantitative survey distributed among beginning teachers across the Seychelles. Findings from the quantitative phase have highlighted the prevailing notion of effective teaching practices and the style of support to that teachers see as necessary to facilitate the former. Surveyed beginning teachers recognised the importance of effective teaching practices and rightly identified some of the elements that constituted effective teaching practices. Notwithstanding their perception of the use of student-centred teaching their responses did not strongly articulate the kind of teaching marked by student-centred teaching. Rather than looking to themselves, teachers focussed on what stakeholders could contribute to improved teaching practices. In part, this tendency was due to a perceived lack of expertise to build nurturing relationship with their students, or to alter their attitude towards their learning.

Survey responses describe the kind of support beginning teachers wanted, and also reveal the status quo of support in their context. Responses overwhelmingly identified students, parents, the MoE, and school management as vital in mitigating

impediments to greater teaching effectiveness, and subsequently held these factors as key to improvement of their teaching practices. Analysis of the data from survey responses can now be compared and contrasted with findings from the case studies. This will provide more in-depth explanation for apparent impeding and facilitating factors to the effectiveness of, and support for, beginning teachers in Seychelles secondary schools. The next chapter will undertake this analysis.

## Chapter 7

### Discussion

The previous two chapters have highlighted the importance of recognizing the “beginning” status and associated learning needs of beginning teachers in the Seychelles. A consistent finding is that these teachers’ challenges were not commensurated with the support required to enable the kind of effective teaching envisioned by their context. This chapter explores more fully the complex issues around the support and challenges experienced by beginning teachers in their endeavour to improve their pedagogical practices. The key findings of the study are analysed in relation to previous research and to the current research questions. Through a sociocultural lens, it is feasible to demonstrate how the contextualised challenges, learning, and support of beginning teachers affect their early career in teaching.

The chapter starts by exploring the concept of induction, what the process meant for these schools, how it was implemented, and the ways that it impacted on beginning teachers’ support. The chapter then examines the professional learning and development (PLD) opportunities for beginning teachers, and explores the notion of effective teaching practices in these contexts, and the features of beginning teachers’ classroom teaching. Finally, a direction for improving beginning teachers’ support, learning, and teaching practices is foregrounded.

#### **Induction: the Context**

Effective contemporary induction recognises that beginning teachers have ongoing professional learning and development needs. Such recognition means that effective induction consists of strategies aimed at providing for the PLD of beginning teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Grossman et al., 1999; Grossman & Loeb, 2008; Langdon, 2011; Yusko & Feiman-Nemser, 2008). This view of effective induction does not imply inadequate preparation from teacher education (Feiman-Nemser, 2001) but rather posits that induction be seen as connected to teacher education, in that it adds to the continuous contextual study and development of pedagogical practice (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). A developmental approach to induction, in contrast to short-term personally affirming or individually directed support, has been argued to decrease the gap between induction meant for beginning teachers and ongoing

learning for all teachers (Langdon, 2011; Yusko & Feiman-Nemser, 2008). Given this approach, Yusko and Feiman-Nemser (2008) contend that professional communities are enhanced as teachers with different level of experience attempt to improve their teaching practices and student learning.

The findings from this study revealed a need for the case study participating schools (that may reflect comparative issues within other schools in the Seychelles), the participating teachers across the Seychelles, and the Seychelles' MoE to re-examine and reconceptualise the current form of support for beginning teachers. As shown in this study, teachers with a degree (e.g., B.Ed.) had the least support because the view of management was that these teachers were fully equipped professionals. Degree teachers had spent a year as diploma teachers in schools before their degree training, which also contributed to management views of their support requirement.

In his research around B.Ed. teachers in the Seychelles, Leste (1998) recommended that the MoE, along with schools, look into the development of an induction programme for degree teachers. The recommendation was for the provision of support to meet the professional needs of B.Ed. teachers at different levels, namely with: “administrative support; collegial support; and specialized support” (Leste, 1998, pp. 19–20). Similarly, this research has revealed that the current level of support requirements from the MoE in the Seychelles does not go far enough. Whilst schools are required to put in place a support package for teachers new to the school, as well as for beginning teachers generally, the MoE policy does not make it clear what this support package should constitute, nor the level of support these teachers should receive. In addition, this research shows that the view of school leaders that the most qualified teachers (B.Ed. as opposed to diploma holders) do not require induction support might be misguided. It has been reasoned that teachers' development as professionals does not end when they complete teacher-training programmes (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Morberg & Eisenschmidt, 2009).

Evidence from this research indicates that it was a B.Ed. teacher who was contemplating discontinuing his teaching career, citing ineffective and limited teacher support as one of the reasons. Likewise, surveyed and other case study beginning teachers sought more support than they were receiving towards their teaching practices. These findings justify a need for teachers with all qualifications to experience comprehensive induction programmes. Consistent with earlier studies (e.g., Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Morberg & Eisenschmidt, 2009), irrespective of qualification when entering into the teaching profession, beginning teachers require

in-depth and structured induction support. Morberg and Eisenschmidt (2009) argued that it is either on-the-job training through induction programmes or other external training that facilitates the experience and expertise of beginning teachers.

Diploma teachers, during the first three-month induction period, were either observed or had the opportunity to observe other teachers within a classroom teaching context, even if this was inconsistent and infrequent. There were occasions where beginning teachers were observed by HODs during their classroom teaching sessions, and some beginning teachers observed an experienced teacher teaching for a few days. Beyond the first three-months, they were occasionally and informally advised on challenges they encountered such as classroom management. Through integrating these supportive elements (e.g., observations of lessons, informal discussions, identification of challenges) these beginning teachers experienced more immediate support connected to their teaching, which is consistent with the findings of Gold's (1996) description of certain induction programmes as providing immediate assistance to facilitate beginning teachers' transition into long-term, established practices. The support from these programmes can range from giving information and guidance, to psychological support (Gold, 1996).

Whilst the current Seychelles induction programme was introduced to strengthen the experiences of teacher induction, and was aimed at buttressing the temporary probation period of beginning teachers, this research has indicated that it did not appear to go far enough. The requirement of schools by the MoE to put in place induction packages for new staff, including beginning teachers within the probationary three-month period, implies temporary support for beginning teachers. Gold (1996) explained that at their core temporary induction programmes are designed to increase retention. However, improvements in retention are not indicative of positive changes in either effectiveness of beginning teachers' practices, or the learning of their students (Stronge, 2007). As shown in the current research during the three-month period, the primary focus of schools was to *ascertain the readiness* of beginning teachers for qualified teachers' status, rather than to put in place both effective support and assessment mechanism. Given this focus, the induction programme was not sufficiently mediating the challenges of beginning teachers. Yusko and Feiman-Nemser (2008) advocated for the inclusion of induction in settings that combined teacher PLD with support and evaluation in order to help beginning teachers build expertise to become accomplished professionals. Re-orienting induction as a tool for improving quality teaching and students' learning aligns well



with stakeholders' vision in the Seychelles education system. This vision is evident in concerns over quality teacher and student learning which drove the 2009 education reform (MoE, 2009a; Nolan, 2008). As shown in this research, it would benefit all stakeholders to embrace the notion of induction programmes as a means of enabling beginning teachers to aspire to models of teacher expertise (Langdon, 2011). This means going beyond a view of induction as a mere tool of temporary and targeted support, confined within a three-month period.

It is relevant that a key issue for teachers was that induction support was not situated within collaborative cultures around teaching and learning for the participating beginning teachers. This meant that these beginning teachers had limited intentional, targeted support, and were compelled to informally seek support within their schools' culture. The latter was found to be marked by conservatism around teaching. Other studies have revealed the importance of a healthy, caring, and conducive working environment for beginning teachers (Le Maistre & Paré, 2010; Scherff, 2008). These studies contend that in such situations, the ability for beginning teachers to access help was unhindered. Indeed, it was expected by management teams within participating case study schools in this research that the beginning teachers sought help as their need arose. However, the uncollaborative context around teaching experienced by beginning teachers in this study hindered that possibility, and its scope.

Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000) explained that individual career choice is influenced by the extent of match between the expectations an individual has about their profession and what the profession can offer in reality. Likewise, individuals who take up teaching as a job have specific expectations about what "the profession" will give, and how they can contribute to their school community. Other research has shown that when the practicality of beginning teachers' experience from their training is challenged, they alter their expectations to match with the level of workplace support (Kyriacou & Coulthard 2000). Seeking informal support was heavily reliant on participating beginning teachers' ability to forge special relationships with colleagues, which was not articulated as a requirement from the onset of their training. Given that the establishment of special relationships by beginning teachers with colleagues was a prerequisite, it acted as a barrier to overcome in accessing support. Situating support for beginning teachers within a collaborative context where their challenging experiences can be better understood, supported, and rectified is therefore vital in allowing beginning teachers to access support. Smethem (2007)

noted similar findings where positive experiences of induction are likely to stem from collaborative contexts that provide collegiality amongst other form of support. For example, Smethem (2007) argued that constructive experiences augment resilience when challenging situations arise, and when intricate dilemmas present themselves as components of beginning teachers' work in the future. The notion of a collaborative context in facilitating a mix of informal and intentional support is therefore pertinent.

The disconnect experienced by beginning teachers in terms of their expectations from formal training with those of their workplace was a key finding of this study. Beginning teachers across the phases of this research attributed gaps in their teacher training to the shortcomings they experienced in tackling some of their challenges. They also pointed to, in their view, the unsupportive role of the MoE.

Beginning teachers pointed to two main areas where the MoE could be more supportive, first, by providing more curriculum resources, and second by creating measures that would facilitate better student engagement. In this latter area, beginning teachers believed the MoE needed to be more "punitive" in dealing with student discipline issues, rather than recognising that they required an improvement and access to effective pedagogical strategies to better engage students. Possibly, schools, the MoE, and the teacher training establishments had fallen short in understanding and articulating the beginning phase in the teaching profession and the importance of their supportive role. To establish a clearer picture of the support needs of these teachers, a first step is for these stakeholders to agree on a shared understanding of the beginning phase in the teaching profession.

An unclear understanding of the beginning phase of teaching implies a shortcoming to connect the gap between being a student in a professional training organisation to being a functional practitioner in the real context of teaching (Wanzare, 2007). This shortcoming tends to exacerbate the challenges typically faced by beginning teachers (Wanzare 2007). For instance, an example that deprived beginning teachers with continued support was a perception by senior management that the acquisition of qualified teachers' status following the mandated induction period could enable beginning teachers to tackle the challenges similar to an experienced expert teacher. This perception by senior management does not distinguish the individual support requirement of beginning teachers. As noted by Menon (2012) it is both the absence of an effective induction programme, and problems with teacher preparation programmes that inhibit the beginning teachers'

ability to seek the help they needed. Given this perception, the MoE needs to go beyond indicating to schools that they should put in place a support mechanism for newly appointed teachers. Instead, the MoE should provide the specifics of this support mechanism, in addition to making allowance for specific school contexts. It is also evident that in the current structures in the Seychelles, the MoE, the teaching training institutions, and schools, must together conceptualise and define “induction” and the general “induction period” and develop an outline of the types of practices that would contribute to effective support for beginning teachers.

### **Mentorship: its role in induction**

As a component of induction, mentoring has been acknowledged as a pertinent and effective type of support for the professional learning and development of beginning teachers (Marable & Raimondi, 2007). Hobson et al. (2009) define mentoring as:

The one-to-one support of a novice or less experienced practitioner by a more experienced practitioner designed to primarily assist the development of the mentee’s expertise and to facilitate their induction into the culture of the profession and into the specific local context. (p. 1)

The prevalence of informal and formal mentorship is judged effective when it is situated in contexts that encourage support for all staff (Moyles et al., 1999). Effective mentorship can lead to an increase in beginning teachers’ confidence, professional development and learning, problem-solving abilities, and improved self-reflection and a lessening of isolation (Carter & Francis, 2001; Marable & Raimondi, 2007).

The findings from this study illustrate how crucial it is to re-look at the nature and use of mentorship in secondary schools in the Seychelles. In these schools, lesson observations for all teachers were carried out by the HODs as the designated mentor and leader of their department, along with members of the senior management. Whilst classroom teaching was observed for feedback, given that only school leaders carried it out, a sense of formality was attached to it. There was also a tendency for school leaders to use feedback information primarily for evaluative purposes. This meant the use of lesson observation as a tool served to ascertain and report whether beginning teachers had met Qualified Teachers’ Status (QTS) requirement and to evaluate them at the end of the year. The word “mentorship” was used to depict the feedback process. However, there was a surface approach to verbal feedback given to beginning

teachers stemming from lesson observation. Foster (1999) and Schmidt (2008) identified effective mentorship that was highly valued by teachers as involving (1) lesson observations that were continuous and (2) ongoing discussions of joint exploration of issues. These two elements were not evident in the case study schools, suggesting that the lesson observations did not serve to meet the dual function of mentorship and evaluation. The information gathered by school leaders was used primarily to meet an evaluative requirement.

The approaches to mentorship make a difference to the degree to which teachers find the process useful. An alternative and arguably more effective approach to mentorship is to extend the role of mentors to other teachers and for school leaders to reconceptualise and re-define the use of “mentorship” beyond an evaluative tool. Within effective mentorship cultures, issues under discussion are isolated, depending on their impact on teachers’ observed actions, and the manner that ideas can be developed to equip mentees to surmount challenges (Foster, 1999; Schmidt, 2008). In order to create and develop emerging cultures of effective mentorship, the mentorship “process” needs to be experienced by teachers as natural and ongoing.

Hobson et al. (2009) contend that school leaders are less effective as mentors given that they are seen less as colleagues and more as supervisors, therefore beginning teachers are less prone to reveal their difficulties. Whilst in this study about half (49.6%) of surveyed teachers did not perceive the frequency of observations carried out by management as adequate, they nonetheless valued any constructive feedback, and anticipated more of the same from their leaders. The inclusion of experienced teachers in the mentorship is more likely to contribute to the natural aspect of this process, and more adequately meet the demands of beginning teachers in a manner that would improve the frequency and quality of feedback on their work.

Some examples of paired support were shown through the studied schools’ system of allocating colleagues to specifically support beginning teachers, however, the criteria for assigning colleagues was not clearly defined. In one school, the HOD had assigned an experienced teacher to each beginning teacher. This approach was in its beginning stage, and was driven by the HOD’s challenge as the sole mentor of 14 teachers in her department. Felicity, a second year teacher was assigned as the sole mentor to a first year beginning teacher.

A specific and targeted approach to determining who would support individual beginning teachers is key to effective mentoring. The foundation of effective

mentorship does not rest merely on *pairing* a mentee with an immediate colleague, rather it is critical that the mentor be able to model effective professional practice, display subject specialism, be experienced, and have ample pedagogical content knowledge (Abell, et al., 1995; Roehrig, et al., 2008). Therefore assigning immediate colleagues without a consideration of the strength of mentors and needs of those they are supporting is unlikely to facilitate beginning teachers to access effective feedback that could potentially improve their practices. It is important that schools move beyond a random assignment of colleagues as mentors. Indeed, Johnson (2004) and Schmidt (2008) argued that effective and experienced colleagues are a necessary but not adequate requirement for a good mentor, given that not all teachers make good mentors, and that a good mentor may not be effective for all beginning teachers.

The implication for this study is to envision an outcome to beginning teachers' effectiveness and to match this with targeted support. A step in this direction is to ascertain mentors' qualities and to provide ongoing training to mentors in meeting the needs of mentees. In the case schools, mentors did not receive training or support for their role. Some mentorship activities upon which training for mentors could be based are exemplified by Feiman-Nemser (2001). Feiman-Nemser pointed to the development of skills by professional engagement in examining samples of students' work, analysing curricular materials, questioning students to expose their thinking, illuminating the impact teachers' instructions have on their students' learning, and studying the ways by which different teachers arrive at analogous aims. Furthermore, Feiman-Nemser contended that when these activities are undertaken in the company of others, they can facilitate the expectations for professional discourse including respect for evidence, receptiveness to questions, consideration to alternative views, a pursuit of shared understanding, and agreed standards.

Feasibly, while it should be possible for the classroom practices of the beginning teachers to be accessed by all colleagues and for mentorship to be both formal and informal, as previously noted, only the school leaders in these participating schools completed these observations, and these tended to be "formal" in nature. This meant they were the ones who had access to data from the beginning teachers' classroom teaching which served as the premise for mentorship. However, as Hobson et al. (2009) argued, school leaders tended to be less effective as mentors partly due to insufficient time for mentoring. This issue of time is reflective of the contexts researched in my case studies, where inadequate time was available to

leaders for mentoring. However, beyond the time factor, there is a requirement for a shared knowledge and understanding of what constitutes effective mentorship.

Future approaches to mentorship could be premised on the ability of beginning teachers to access colleagues' expertise both informally and intentionally, rather than mentorship being heavily dependent on mentees approaching mentors; a view supported by the study of Moyles et al. (1999). In contrast, to the experience of the participating teachers in this study, Moyles et al. found mentoring to be effective when the overall school ethos embraced and used a support system for all teachers. There was a greater benefit of informal mentoring by beginning teachers in these schools, which in turn was marked by a collaborative ethos with a greater number of staff involved in informal mentoring (Moyles et al., 1999).

With respect to the Seychelles context, this study has forwarded the argument for an increase in both the quality and frequency of mentorship for beginning teachers, without a heavy reliance on a few individuals in mentoring beginning teachers. The inclusion of other forms of ongoing support would enable teachers to reflect on their work, collect samples of evidence of their pedagogical practice, and have an opportunity to seriously engage with complex professional issues. These other forms of support may include the use of group teaching, co-teaching, and learning from a particular pedagogical strategy of an expert teacher. Portfolios or electronic portfolios that reflect successes, incidents, and milestones may allow beginning teachers to manage their learning and professional development (Moran, Abbott, & Clarke, 2009; McNair & Marshall, 2007). Portfolios may also be considered as part of appraisal practice to certify beginning teachers. Portfolios or electronic portfolios, and other aforementioned supportive features were not evident in the researched schools.

### **Professional Learning and Development**

From a sociocultural perspective, knowledge is recognised as bounded and embedded in specific settings of social practice and shared within a community (Vygotsky, 1986). Similarly, Rogoff (2003) argued that it is not possible to understand learning and development in isolation to the context that it occurs. A comprehensive understanding of learning entails discovering the setting and cultural factors that are pertinent for each participant involved. This contextualised view of knowledge means that when beginning teachers enter a teaching community, they are still learning, and doing so *with* others. As learners accessing the embedded

knowledge in their setting, beginning teachers' learning, inherent in their teaching, needs to be identified and supported. Professional learning and development opportunities can serve as mechanisms towards this endeavour.

In this study, beginning teachers' school-based professional learning and development experience did not adequately support their specific professional learning needs. Consistent with Purvis' (2007) findings, this study showed a "one size fits all" approach to school based professional development sessions was dominant in all the schools. Beginning teachers experienced whole-school or departmental professional development sessions aimed at equipping teachers to meet the three-year improvement targets of the school, rather than directly addressing individual teacher needs. Similarly, evidence from the MoE external evaluation reports revealed shortcomings in the implementation of plans intended to address teachers' needs. The reports indicated that there were examples of thorough planning by the participating schools in targeting teachers' areas of professional needs. To improve issues around implementation, the reports called for the involvement of stakeholders in the planning process in order for them to develop a greater sense of commitment and ownership of the plan and its priorities. It is more likely for ownership of the schools' improvement targets to occur if teachers felt that their professional needs were being met. Purvis' (2007) research highlighted a negative perception by teachers to the mandatory professional development opportunities by teachers in the Seychelles' schools, which adversely affected their commitment. The findings from this research highlighted that the beginning teachers were not concerned with the mandatory nature of professional development but rather its content. Schools should therefore endeavour to focus on the content of professional development and learning that supports the specific professional learning needs of teachers, whilst achieving the school improvement targets. Using this approach, teacher professional development and school improvement could become as one and the same effort.

The school improvement programme introduced in the Seychelles schools in 1995 was aimed at removing the conservatism that prevailed around teaching at that time. Not surprisingly then, the inclusion of mandatory professional learning and development in the schools soon followed, because PLD was considered a key mechanism by which collaborative work and school improvement efforts could be promoted. The PLD model introduced was intended to encourage collaborative work ethics. However, Hargreaves (1991) reasoned that imposed collaborative arrangement might impinge on teacher individuality. Therefore, rather than supporting learning,

“contrived collegiality” is viewed as having the potential to impede teachers’ professional growth (Hargreaves, 1991). Nonetheless, for beginning teachers, a collaborative, collegial context that encourages continuous professional learning and development satisfies the dual role of furthering their own learning and meeting the immediate demands of the teaching context.

As part of their professional learning and development, an alternative to the current professional development format identified by surveyed beginning teachers is that professional development and collaborative opportunities be effective and targeted. In order for schools to better address the learning and professional needs of beginning teachers, the findings from this research suggest that more opportunities need to be created within schools in order to better identify and understand the evolving needs of these beginning teachers.

This study showed that management and school leadership teams believed beginning teachers could automatically or rapidly implement the curriculum, because of the perception that they already had the knowledge required for teaching. Given this perception, feedback from school leaders from case study schools was restricted to a surface description of beginning teachers’ weaknesses and strengths. An application of knowledge view of training meant that beginning teachers could not adequately access contextual knowledge of practice. Therefore, to better meet the professional development and learning needs of beginning teachers, their schools could facilitate their access to contextual knowledge of practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). As Bianchini and Cavazos (2006) reasoned, the learning inherent in acquiring practical knowledge of their context would allow these teachers to access the skills, language and habits of mind necessary to become members of a community of practice. This would also mean that from an early stage in their teaching career, beginning teachers would also start to develop deep understanding of how their pedagogical practice influences student learning. Accessing and developing this knowledge could occur within the restraint and opportunities of accepted professional practice in their context.

A school culture that promotes teacher learning makes it acceptable for teachers to question the status quo and improve their practice by doing so. It has been argued that the knowledge of practice teachers require to teach effectively is produced when teachers regard their own classrooms and schools as contexts for deliberate inquiry at the same time that they treat the knowledge and theory generated by others



as material created for interrogation and interpretation (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). In this study, Meg and Felicity shared their challenges and gauged those of others in their department. In doing so, they benefitted from encouragement and psychological support.

The value of psychological and emotional support for beginning teachers has been framed as pertinent in enabling challenging experiences to be put into perspective and consequently augment their morale (Bullough, 2005; Lindgren, 2005; Marable & Raimondi, 2007). However, as Resnick (1991) argued, the learning process must extend beyond the encouragement for individuals. In this study, opportunities that could include more intimate discussions around teaching practices were limited, with collaboration primarily confined to socially oriented tasks where less disagreement thrived. Similarly, Purvis (2007) revealed personalised work relationships and conservatism in the Seychelles school context, which encouraged teachers to adhere to the status quo. Complacency is more likely to prevail when conflicts and confrontations are seen as deterrents to the embrace of professional discourse. Reports from beginning teachers in this research, then, indicate that while teachers will continue to benefit from some psychological and emotional types of support that contribute to their survival, they could also augment their professional expertise with improved professional discourse.

As previously noted, beginning teachers' access to local knowledge of practice is pertinent to facilitating effective practices in their settings. What is taken as knowledge and how we think and express ideas has been described as the product of interactions of groups of people over time (Putnam & Borko, 1997; Resnick, 1991). Therefore, these beginning teachers' interactions with colleagues and their participation in numerous discourse communities (Putnam & Borko, 1997; Uhlenbeck et al., 2002) can augment their understanding of what underlies the practices of others and self, and also provide a means of altering beliefs and gaining knowledge of other instructional practices (Uhlenbeck et al., 2002). A change in the nature of interactions between teachers needs to take place in the settings studied in this research. This is crucial in order to challenge and erode the conservatism in work relationships and to facilitate all teachers to access local knowledge of practice. In doing so, teachers have a greater potential to experience, and to implement, multiple models of practice.

In some cases, the practices of the school leaders did not serve to encourage beginning teachers to disseminate their innovative ideas within a professional learning

community. In school A, the DHT reported that experienced teachers questioned a beginning teacher for practising from a new pedagogical perspective. This contributed to the DHT's view of these experienced teachers as being resistant to contemporary pedagogical practices. Subsequently the beginning teacher was asked by the DHT to directly approach her for approval in order to implement innovative practices within her classroom. Rather than convincing other experienced teachers to embrace new practices, in this instance the management through the DHT confined rather than encouraged the spread of innovative and collaborative practice across the school.

Given this teaching culture, it is less likely for the beginning teacher to contribute to the knowledge of practice with colleagues, which increases the chances that exemplary practices be confined to classrooms. When beginning teachers are working alongside colleagues who discourage the inclusion of contemporary pedagogical practices, it is unlikely for constructive and ongoing discussion to occur.

The discouragement of inclusion of such ideas can lead to another situation: in the example given above, experienced teachers may see themselves as the custodians of the most appropriate contextual teaching practices. Therefore, as Feiman-Nemser (2003) argued, it is less likely that the early years of teaching become a period of constructive learning for beginning teachers, and more likely that they will become a period of coping, adjustment, and survival. This scenario unfolded at school A, and revealed a weak aspect of the teaching and learning culture for beginning teachers, as demonstrated by the interplay between a power base and subsequent teacher dynamics. Consistent with the work of Cooper and Alvarado (2006), a weak culture is evidenced by few collaborative and participatory work ethics, that impinged on rather than encouraged beginning teachers' socialization. Whilst it is true that the idealistic expectations of beginning teachers cannot be fully achieved, a difficult environment can hinder the reconciliation between ideals and reality (Kyriacou and Coulthard, 2000). Clearly, experienced teachers can contribute towards an environment that can lessen beginning teachers' struggle, in this instance by moving away from a custodial attitude to teaching, and towards contribution to a strong support mechanism that socializes beginning teachers into teaching. Rather than merely dismissing the ideas of these beginning teachers, through rigorous evidenced-based discussions experienced teachers and beginning teachers can together justify the prevalence, introduction, and modification of any teaching practices.

Another leader in school C, the HOD, recognised beginning teachers as holders of contemporary ideas and reform-based principles. However, the opportunities for them to share ideas were not maximised. A hindrance to this possibility was that HOD viewed the more experienced teachers as having out-dated ideas. In addition, the HOD cited her fewer years of experience relative to most other teachers in her department as a barrier to effectively leading the department. The two scenarios cited above from school A and school C resemble elements of “veteran-oriented” professional culture within the school or department (Kardos & Johnson 2007), which poses challenges for school leaders in integrating or positioning beginning teachers. In Kardos and Johnson’s (2007) study, some beginning teachers perceived the more experienced teachers as experts who were efficient in their work. However, a high proportion of these experienced teachers usually work within well-established patterns of professional practice, therefore their concerns and habits decided the level of professional interactions (Kardos & Johnson, 2007). In their study, typically this meant an approach by experienced teachers to get the job done with minimal or no interactions with beginning teachers to discuss their work in depth (Kardos & Johnson, 2007). This is reflected in the two examples cited from this study above. As revealed by Kardos and Johnson (2007, p. 261) it is more likely for beginning teachers to benefit from an “integrated professional culture” where they learn to master their practice under expert guidance. As with a professional learning community, in an integrated professional culture, all teachers are recognised as capable professionals, with varied perspectives to share (Bianchini & Cavazos, 2006).

The potential of an integrated professional culture can only be realised when all expertise is considered. Additionally, this will require embracing the notion that all individuals in the school contexts are lifelong, intentional learners, and that their learning is a natural, and ongoing process (EC, 2009). As Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) explained, teachers’ learning in a community is a process which involves the creation of knowledge of practice during their professional lifespan. The corollary therefore is that even the most experienced teacher is learning. Consequently, as highlighted in school C, there is a need to use rather than neglect the experiential learning of some experienced teachers who were described as using traditional practices. Some experienced teachers may intuitively or instinctively exhibit qualities that are aligned with contemporary view of teaching. Learning these contemporary principles within an “integrated professional culture” could validate their experience

and establish a rationale for their practices. At the same time, it should allow their experiential learning to be accessed by all members.

In these researched schools beginning teachers were overwhelmed by some of their responsibilities (e.g., challenging classes) yet the genuine expertise of accomplished, experienced colleagues were mainly unidentified and underused. A support network made possible through an integrated professional culture could nurture purposefulness to what teachers do, strengthen what they are doing well, and allow all teachers—beginning and experienced—to share and receive ideas. In addition, when learning for all is embraced in an integrated professional culture, the concept of learning for all can influence a positive view of the support requirement of beginning teachers (Kardos & Johnson 2007; Langdon, 2011; Yusko & Feiman-Nemser, 2008).

When the expertise of all teachers is accessed and maximised, it benefits *both* beginning teachers and experienced teachers, and therefore students. As Sarason (1990) explained, a positive experience for beginning teachers in a context that provides for their professional needs seems to have a cumulative effect. That is, such a context serves as catalyst that enables beginning teachers to help establish a positive learning atmosphere for all students' learning (Sarason, 1990). This is a view also supported by Buysee et al. (2003), who contend that a professional learning community can facilitate the incorporation and enhancement of professional knowledge that augments students' learning. Another possible benefit of a context that allows access to the expertise of all teachers is that it can reveal all competencies, and allow weaknesses to be rectified through rigorous debate.

Given the benefits of a professional learning community, it is pertinent that beginning teachers enter into a supportive learning environment to learn from and with their colleagues, thus enabling them to become active members of the teaching professional community. Findings from this study have revealed the need to establish collaborative environments, where there is a clear expectation that the purpose of a learning environment is to enable all teachers to understand and utilise each other's strengths, share practices, and in doing so create a community of practice within schools in the Seychelles.

### **Effective Teaching Practices**

Teachers sought a greater involvement of parents, students, MoE, and the community in order for improvement to occur in their pedagogical practices. Indeed, stakeholders,

parents, students, and MoE all have a contribution to make in resolving issues that would facilitate improvement in effective teaching practices. However, there is a requirement for school leaders and teachers to relook at some of the existing practices in order to allow improvements and access to effective teaching practices. This section considers the notion and practices of effective teaching, the role of teachers as professionals, and schools as organisational structures.

### **Definitions and expectations**

Consistent with Blanton et al.'s (2006) argument that there is an absence of a single definition of effectiveness with regards to teaching, the schools and teachers in this research did not articulate a common definition of effective teaching practices. This issue arises from the different views of teachers, principals, and government agencies pointing to various and diverse features of effectiveness (Blanton et al., 2006). For the participating teachers in this study, the expectations and definitions of effective teaching practices were informed by different demands across different schools (e.g., a commonly held view was that effective teachers maximized students' engagement, incorporated effective classroom management, and used pedagogical practices that provided for a range of abilities). The prevailing view of what constituted effective teaching influenced how teachers taught, and these view and expectations were frequently driven by teachers' and school leaders' concerns over students' disengagement and misbehaviour. Therefore, teachers and school leaders saw effective classroom management and differentiation in teaching as important to improving students' engagement.

According to Eisner (1998), in determining quality teaching, it is essential to make allowances for both the situation in which teaching occurs and the goals teachers embrace, without abandoning ideals that are set for these teachers. What constituted effective teaching practices in these contexts was a matter of interpretation, however it is more likely for the schools to defend and justify their interpretation of effectiveness when they had a greater knowledge of the attributes of their contexts (Eisner, 1998).

Studied schools' external evaluations reported on the quality of teaching, where and when weaknesses were highlighted, and encouraged the schools to rectify the limitations identified. Therefore, the systemic evaluation of quality teaching at these schools served a supportive role rather than laying out stringent requirements for the schools and teachers to attain. This is consistent with the views of Wechsler et al.

(2007) who discouraged a fixation on standards and accountability arguing that this fixation can give rise to a narrow definition of teacher effectiveness. As Wechsler et al. argue, focus on standards and accountability tends to create contexts that place a priority on students' achievement data. Interestingly, in this research a focus was not placed on students' achievement data as a way of ascertaining teachers' effectiveness, possibly because a high accountability and standard environment did not prevail.

Williams et al. (2010) explained that one of the risks of narrowly focussing on academic achievement moves teacher practice away from collaboration, which ironically is crucial to support teacher effectiveness. A narrow focus on academic achievement to define teacher effectiveness can also impinge on the professional judgement and creativity of teachers (Williams et al., 2010). However, in this study there was no indication of students' achievement data being used as a means of improving practices within collaborative settings. Whilst these schools and beginning teachers had concerns over students' underachievement, this was attributed to student disengagement and poor attitudes towards learning. The onus was generally placed on students, the MoE, parents, and the community rather than on the effectiveness of pedagogical practices. This could be attributed to the limited opportunities for reflection on pedagogical practices. Some students' continued disengagement in learning was ascribed by teachers to their difficult social background, hence the reported poor performance of students by teachers. However, it is likely that poor student engagement and achievement resulted from beginning teachers not accessing the best pedagogical and assessment practices. Access to effective, evidence-based practice is more likely to occur in a supportive environment. As argued by Kardos et al. (2001), limited and ineffective support for teachers can impinge on both students' achievements and teacher retention.

In my researched contexts, isolated classroom practices were evident. So although the schools had the flexibility to decide on the expectations for teaching effectiveness, examples of what constituted best, evidence-based, practices were not easily shared among teachers. A collaborative context as a pertinent component in supporting teacher effectiveness has been argued by multiple researchers (Flores, 2004; Uhlenbeck et al., 2002; Williams et al., 2010), and in this study, beginning teachers did not enter collaborative contexts with colleagues where examples of effective pedagogical practice could be discussed. Given a collaborative context, the expectations for effective teaching practices could better be aligned with what

constituted exemplary pedagogical practices, effective ways of nurturing relationships with students, and engaging them in their learning.

Limitations were evident in the monitoring process that was in place in these secondary schools, which impacted on management ability to efficiently identify and evaluate teachers' effectiveness. A focus on data generation by management to allow teachers to account for their performances did not feature strongly as a component of the monitoring and evaluation process. For example, the feedback teachers received from management tended to be superficial, in that it allowed beginning teachers to articulate a general picture of their teaching, but meant that school leaders did not facilitate critical discussion or debate with beginning teachers around the specific components they believed represented effective practice.

Another limitation in identifying teachers' effectiveness was due to the broad expectations set in the teacher evaluation form (appendix C) and used by school leaders to evaluate teachers, and therefore identify effectiveness. The specifics of effective teaching need to be better articulated by school leaders, and made known to all teachers in order to allow all to aspire to such teaching effectiveness. In addition, a relatively full range of indicators for teacher performance could become available for evaluation. As Campbell et al. (2004) reasoned, the fuller the range of expected teacher-sampled effective behaviour the more robust the evaluation would be. This fuller range would also give teachers valuable data for self-reflection, and serve as a basis for improving their practices.

### **Teaching practices and improvement opportunities**

My research indicated that there were limited possibilities for beginning teachers to access, explore, and embrace diverse pedagogical strategies that would have benefitted all students. Limited formal and informal discussion on teaching practices was one example. Associated with this, a weakness in recognising beginning teachers as still learning has also been revealed in this study. Danielson (1999) and Flores (2006) explained that a perception of beginning teachers as competent, capable professionals with mastery of all the skills and competencies to be effective professionals could discourage them to seek the necessary support, as they would see this as a sign of weakness. Accessing, improving, and sharing expertise were eased when in some instances teachers were valued for their professionalism. An example can be seen in the mutually beneficial working relationship between Ryan and the laboratory technicians, who assisted him when he introduced new ideas around

practical activities with his students. As this study showed, the reluctance Ryan had in accessing expertise from other teachers in his department stemmed from a belief by leaders and other teachers that he could display the qualities of an expert; an issue for beginning teachers also noted by Danielson (1999) and Flores (2006). As Langdon (2011) explained, recognising beginning teachers' professionalism is crucial but it is also possible to support them from this position. It is within a supportive environment that these beginning teachers would have more likely understood the shared expectations for effective teaching practices and been able to access evidence-based practices. In addition, their personal philosophies and ideas around teaching and learning could have been better communicated and justified (Langdon, 2001).

An embrace of teacher-centered teaching was evident in these beginning teachers' classrooms, over and above the inclusion of elements of student-centred practices, and inquiry-based activities. Incorporating more elements of student-centered teaching was seen by the beginning teachers as mismatched with the schools' expectation for teachers to possess effective classroom management skills. In addition, the concerns of these beginning teachers over students' standards of behaviour within the classroom further encouraged them to skew their practices towards a custodial form of teaching. In this way, they felt they were more in "control" of both the students and their teaching. As Wanzare (2007) and Feiman-Nemser (2010) explained a lack of support mechanisms hinders beginning teachers' development of classroom procedural knowledge. They may attempt to tackle their challenges with poor student behaviour by being disciplinarians, authoritarians and custodians in an environment with a non-supporting school culture (Little, 1999; Wanzare, 2007). Given that the depth and range of beginning teachers' classroom procedural knowledge is generally not fully developed (Feiman-Nemser, 2010; Wanzare, 2007), it is not surprising that the beginning teachers in this study were challenged to encourage and facilitate positive behaviour and relationships with their students, and the outcomes were not always to their expectations. Therefore, the teacher-centred approaches that exemplified these teachers' practices were attempts to *control* student learning because these approaches were seen as better aligned with the schools' expectation that they display effective classroom management skills.

The beginning teachers' philosophy of what teaching and learning should entail influenced how they interpreted and then enacted effective teaching principles and practices within their classrooms. In these schools, they had relative flexibility in identifying the curricula they introduced to their students, as there was no requirement



to adhere to a highly scripted curriculum. These beginning teachers saw this as providing them with the flexibility and autonomy to determine what materials they presented to students and how they presented them. However, there was a greater focus by these beginning teachers in understanding their subject than on understanding learners and their learning. This greater focus could stem from these beginning teachers' developing philosophy of teaching and learning. It has been pointed out that in certain circumstances, beginning teachers focussed their efforts on staying in control of the classroom situation, and therefore might plan and enact their lessons in order to reduce behavioural issues (Langdon, 2001; Wanzare, 2007). However, using this approach, whilst there may be evidence of reducing behavioural problems, students' learning may not be encouraged (Wanzare, 2007).

In this study, issues around students' behaviour, disengagement in learning, and to a lesser extent academic underperformance augmented a need for beginning teachers' to tightly control the implementation of curriculum material and to rigidly structure students' learning to "minimize confusion" and disciplinary issues. This situation exemplifies Wanzare (2007) and Langdon's (2001) descriptions of beginning teachers' taking up an anti-intellectual stance rather than a professional one. The former stance is described as beginning teachers' adherence to behavioural and technicist strategy (i.e., the application of a set of specific, identifiable, technical skills to maintain order and to achieve predetermined outcomes) to problem solving encouraged by a stressful environment. For the teachers and schools in this study, there was a dilemma between embracing student-centred learning and experiencing the stressful situation of "behavioural issues in the classroom" that served as a discouragement to its implementation, the implication being that student-centred learning was a risk-taking endeavour. Opportunities for reflective practices is therefore pertinent, and it can be further facilitated when these schools move away from recognising controlled and orderly students as students who are learning (Langdon, 2001). As Arends (2004) explained, when teachers utilise teaching methodology as means of facilitating students' learning rather than as a technical remedy for behaviour, they will be able to recognise the complexity of teaching.

To some degree there was an encouragement from school management for teachers to better involve students' in their learning by connecting teaching to their context and incorporating means of motivating students in their learning. Ironically, though, encouragement advocated by management did not automatically augment beginning teachers' acquisition of skills to further involve and motivate students. As

Uhlenbeck et al. (2002) explained, beginning teachers' practices, beliefs, and assumptions need to be more exposed and shared with others in order for them to develop a better understanding of what effective teaching practices entailed and how these practices could be better applied. Knowledge of what underlies the practices of others' and oneself provides a means for altering beliefs (Uhlenbeck et al., 2002), with the greater feasibility of increasing understanding of effective teaching practices. In the research context, restricted opportunities for the development of teachers' teaching skills with others, and a view of student-centred learning as a risk taking endeavour resulted in limited intellectual challenge for students. If students are to acquire and develop tools to support their learning, then support and opportunities must be provided to these beginning teachers to become ambitious in their learning as well.

Management and colleagues' involvement in augmenting quality feedback to beginning teachers on their work is vital to improving planning and developing professional discourse (Feiman-Nemser, 2010; Langdon, 2001). These beginning teachers recognised feedback on their work as a means of allowing them to improve their practices. Surveyed participants placed great importance on feedback from teaching as a means of improving teaching practices (92% rated it as highly necessary). Cheung (2004) explained that principals must not only convey expectations, but also detect for beginning teachers or highlight aspects of work they see as needing more attention.

Feedback from school leaders on beginning teachers' lesson plans, classroom teaching, and end-of-year teacher evaluation did not provide sufficient data to guide improvement endeavours in beginning teachers' teaching practices. Whilst leadership involvement is important in ensuring that beginning teachers receive quality feedback on their work (Cheng & Cheung, 2004), as previously noted, there was a sense of formality attached to the process of giving feedback in my studied context, as it was used primarily for the purpose of evaluating teachers. It is more likely that beginning teachers will benefit from feedback that is ongoing and based on authentic day-to-day teaching practices. Access to such quality and quantity of feedback can best be improved through professional discourses in their contexts (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Improvement in the quality and frequency of feedback necessitates a greater participation on the part of colleagues.

Of the 56 surveyed teachers, over half (58.4%) expressed satisfaction with guidance they received from colleagues, yet as previously noted, this guidance served mainly to focus on these beginning teachers' psychological support. Resnick (1991) pointed out that beginning teachers' interactions with colleagues in their settings was a key determinant both of what was learnt and how learning occurred. Professional discourse with colleagues therefore could consist of serious conversations around teaching, which, as argued by Feiman-Nemser (2001) are indispensable means for evolving effective (and at times, less effective) practices. The discourses could be seen as enabling beginning teachers not only to receive feedback from colleagues, but to also equip beginning teachers to learn how to elicit and utilise feedback from their own work to improve their practices.

### **Towards a Beginning Teacher Support Model**

Supporting beginning teachers and empowering them to teach effectively within their local context is a complex and challenging endeavour. The beginning teachers in this study felt a responsibility for the learning of their students and had a passion for teaching. However, effective support provided at the school level to mentor these teachers, to induct them into the teaching profession and to improve their teaching practices, was lacking. Beginning teachers who made the most effective use of the support available to them at school level did so by taking the initiative of seeking out these forms of support. A previous connection to the schools created a sense of familiarization and facilitated collegiality. Even so, this connection was not always sufficient in allowing access to the most effective teaching practices and targeted support. Support for beginning teachers has to be seen as part of the general endeavour in augmenting the effectiveness in teaching practices in the Seychelles secondary school system. Such a scenario is more likely to reduce attrition and encourage more teachers into the teaching profession.

This research has revealed that effective support for beginning teachers in the Seychelles is reliant on a concerted and collaborative approach to improving teaching and student learning. This collaborative approach should be encouraged by school leadership through the daily activities of teachers, where learning from colleagues is facilitated in order to share exemplary practices across the staff. It can be argued that Seychelles secondary schools are marked by collaboration through the mandated professional development opportunities. Yet 10 years after the school improvement

project, Purvis (2007) revealed that conservatism still prevailed in and around teaching. Purvis' (2007) findings are supportive of evidence emerging from this research, which also point to conservatism around teaching. Yusko and Feiman-Nemser (2008) explained that an embrace of integrated professional culture is important to a cooperative and shared approach to school improvement. A corollary of an integrated professional culture is the challenge to conservatism and the embrace of an environment that holds a collective view of induction.

The participating beginning teachers tended to favour a punitive approach towards classroom management, and viewed classroom management as a means of altering students' attitude to and engagement in their learning. While this reflected the beginning teachers' enculturation to their context, and to the prevailing practices of their context, it did skew their choice of pedagogical practices. Their reaction to students' disengagement, poor performance, and reported mediocre attitude towards learning was to revert to didactic teaching principles. Given the highlighted flaws in pedagogical and organisational practices supporting low achievers, schools need to be encouraged to consider practices that are inclusive and tolerant of different abilities. Teaching is the obligation that schools have in making certain that students are learning about their diverse and different contexts, one another, themselves and their learning (MacGilchrist, et al., 2004). The intention of teaching then is to embrace practices and encourage a culture that value diverse talents. A focus on pedagogical knowledge and skills, rather than on subject matter, is important to allow teachers to see students as co-creators in their learning (MacGilchrist, et al., 2004) and as learners with ideas that merit attention and consideration.

Recognising the complexity of teaching means a move away from a behavioural stance, which renders teaching as a technical remedy (Kincheloe, 2005). Teaching is a matter of subjective and professional judgement concerning appropriate moments for interventions (Killen, 2006). Taking this view means depicting beginning teachers as professionals, and supporting them from this stance. It has been argued that support for beginning teachers can best occur within communities of practice where inquiry into teaching effectiveness is evidence-based. Situating beginning teachers as part of a professional body is more likely to encourage their development and learning by facilitating their access to the existing body of knowledge. This would mean framing personal learning as part of a beginning teacher's responsibilities, and encouraging them to ensure students' learning. Given the aforementioned, it can be reasoned that school contexts need to adhere to induction policies which recognise the

complexity of teachers and teaching. This would mean advocating learning as a life-long process for both teachers and their students, and facilitating access to support for all teachers. Through such learning community contexts, an environment can be created to facilitate professional learning and development for all teachers, and, in particular, beginning teachers' pursuit of effective teaching practices.

## Chapter 8

### Conclusion

Given the Seychelles MoE's imperative to improve teaching and learning within the school system, combined with the associated educational reforms in the Seychelles, this research set out to examine and understand the challenges and support experienced by beginning teachers in their pursuit of effective teaching practices. Set against the international agenda to reconceptualise teacher support, and to better understand beginning teachers' experiences of teaching (Feiman-Nemser, 2010; Friedman, 2004; Langdon, 2011; Le Maistre & Paré, 2010; Wanzare, 2007), this thesis contributes to the ongoing discourse around augmenting beginning teachers' capacities to effectively learn and improve from their pedagogical practice.

The most recent education reform that took place in 2008, and which was associated with the imperative to improve teaching, coincided with the establishment of the first local University in the Seychelles. An outcome of the MoE's reform was to influence effective teaching and learning in the classrooms. Support for beginning teachers has to be seen as part of the endeavour to augment effectiveness in teaching practices in the Seychelles' secondary school system. This study may contribute to the MoE's reform pursuits and goals by developing an understanding around the nature of teacher induction and the support of beginning teachers into the profession, as well as introducing perspectives on, and experiences of, effective teaching practices.

This research was undertaken to explore the challenges and induction support experienced by a cohort of Seychellois beginning teachers as they endeavoured to learn and improve their teaching practices. Given that research has shown the *contextual* factors associated with the beginning teachers' support, and that the notion of teacher effectiveness is specific to its context (Buchmann, 1993; Eisner, 1998; Grossman & Loeb, 2008; Huntly, 2008), it was essential to understand how the induction process for beginning teachers unfolded in the Seychelles context specifically. This chapter summarises the research findings around existing policies and practices of beginning teachers' work experience, in order to explore how best to support the development of future practice, and educational reform in Seychelles secondary schools.

The beginning teachers in this study entered their workplace with a passion for teaching. They were eager to embrace teaching as a profession and commence their

work in a local school, endeavouring to augment their effectiveness as professionals. Their quest for improved effectiveness in their teaching practices has been framed as a complex one. This complexity is evidenced by the insufficient support they received within their work-based contexts, and in the school-specific contexts where colleagues and management did not fully understand or gauge beginning teachers' continuous professional learning needs. The teaching practices of investigated beginning teachers skewed towards teacher-centeredness (i.e., they focussed primarily on the curriculum, not the students, and they aimed to meet curriculum and assessment targets, not individual student needs), as teachers attempted to meet the school's expectation for effective teaching practices. In contrast, beginning teachers did not often focus on student needs as their starting point for effective teaching practice. The findings from this research indicate that in order to reverse the aforementioned trends, the education system needs to address the challenge of disseminating effective teaching practices, build supportive contexts, and formulate policies for the development and use of teaching practices with the purpose of allowing effective teaching to reach all teachers and students. That is, if these beginning teachers' passion for teaching is to be sustained, then the support system needs to facilitate their development and professional competency so that all students can also benefit.

The notion of effective teaching as one of the most cogent contributors to student learning could serve as an impetus for all teachers to act as agents in the sharing of best or most effective evidence-based teaching practices. This would entail an assortment of appropriate school activities that could emulate the needs of the diverse student population within each school, and assist students to recognise the relevance of their education in relation to their strengths, ambitions, and interests. It is generally acknowledged that the combined knowledge and expertise within is more than the total of its discrete parts. A reflection of this is a requirement by schools to provide the means to increase teacher collaboration, collective inquiry, and learning opportunities to improve pedagogical practices for all.

### **Overview of Main Findings**

This research highlighted an issue around induction for schools in the Seychelles. It revealed that schools' policies and practices around induction were diverse and for the main part, inadequate for beginning teachers. This can be attributed in part to the generality of the central policy guidelines for evaluation and

support of beginning teachers during the probation period and beyond. Just as there was inadequate support in guiding stakeholders in implementing effective support for beginning teachers, there was also inadequate support for these beginning teachers in their local school context.

An understanding that beginning teachers in general have developmental and learning needs was not adequately articulated or shared by participating school leaders or beginning teachers. In combination with the aforementioned broad central policy guidelines, this limited understanding influenced how these beginning teachers experienced their induction into the teaching profession. This inadequate understanding was based on an “application of knowledge” view of training, rather than an acceptance that contextual knowledge of practice was being created and shared as all teachers learned from their ongoing practices. This influenced how beginning teachers learnt from their practices, and how they were supported in their context.

Feedback given to these beginning teachers on their work by experienced colleagues, designated mentors, and school leaders was circumscribed to a narrow description of their weaknesses and strengths in relation to their lesson plans and teaching. Ironically, the limitation in accessing diverse and specific feedback restricted the possibility for these beginning teachers to focus on understanding learners and their learning. Primary focus by these beginning teachers was placed on understanding their subject matter (i.e., the curriculum content). The combination of scant informal and formal guidance, which served primarily as psychological support for these teachers, and the nature of feedback on their work negated the development of deep understandings of how their pedagogical practice influenced student learning.

In the researched schools, whilst collaboration amongst teachers prevailed around socially oriented activities, there was a sense of conservatism around teaching. Therefore, beginning teachers did not enter collaborative contexts with colleagues where examples of effective teaching practice might be discussed, or teaching approaches debated. The opportunity for beginning teachers to access and emulate what constituted effective teaching practice in their context was restricted. This conservatism around teaching was encouraged when access to teachers’ classrooms was restricted to school leaders, who retrieved data primarily for monitoring and evaluative purposes. This constrained the possibility of effective informal and formal opportunities of mentorship from both colleagues and school leadership.



The researched schools had the flexibility to decide on the expectations for effective teaching. Concerns over students' disengagements and misbehaviour in these contexts informed the demands for effective teaching practices across the different schools. These demands included a necessity to incorporate effective classroom management, and pedagogical practices that provided for a range of abilities in order to maximize students' engagement.

The beginning teachers' classroom practices were marked by teacher-centred approaches. Given the conservatism around teaching and the nature of support, the attempts of these beginning teachers to align with their schools' expectation were challenged. Whilst there were elements of student-centred teaching, overall the pattern in their teaching revealed a tendency to closely control the implementation of curriculum material and to rigidly structure students' learning to "minimize confusion" and disciplinary issues.

### **Re-examining Beginning Teacher Support**

As noted earlier, research in Seychelles around beginning teachers' support is only recently emerging. The direction for improving beginning teachers' support involves an understanding that learning is inherent to teaching. Supporting beginning teachers to become accomplished professionals means going beyond helping them to overcome the pressures and stresses associated with their work (Yusko & Feiman-Nemser, 2008). In combination with local policies, the schools, MoE, and experienced teachers can all contribute towards enhancing an understanding of the role of beginning teachers as professionals. Beginning teachers need to be positioned as professionals who require a unique form of support as they are enculturated into their contexts. This support would mean developing ways to augment the effectiveness of induction practices within the context of Seychelles secondary schools, premised on contemporary models of induction, for example, as identified by Langdon (2011), Yusko and Feiman-Nemser (2008) and Little (1999).

Foundational to beginning teachers' support is the requirement to re-examine practices and incorporate research-based principles that inform both the nature of beginning teachers' support and spaces for improvement in effective teaching practices. The implementation of any support model for beginning teachers requires one that makes the process of support the responsibility and concern of all teachers in the school. As shown in this study, all teachers are learners, each continuously adjusting their teaching practices as they develop a better understanding of their own,

and their students' learning. Professional learning and development for all teachers is more likely to open up the dialogue around teaching, by encouraging an exchange of ideas around teaching to be openly shared. In doing so, professional learning communities are more likely to flourish, and it is in such contexts that beginning teachers are better supported.

If beginning teachers are expected to teach as effectively as envisioned by, for instance, policies and management, then they need a well-defined image of effective classroom teaching. As part of the support process, facilitating beginning teachers' access to classroom practices that best exemplify the school's understanding and expectations of effective teaching will enable them to better meet these expectations. Accessing and sharing exemplary teaching practices means opportunities for beginning teachers to build knowledge and skills, and for adapting the strategies used by other effective teachers into their own teaching. Instrumental to this process is the importance of sharing the effective evidence-based practices within a collegial setting.

This study has highlighted that beginning teachers need assistance to make sense of their contextual learning experience to enable them to address the demands of their teaching and students' learning. The outcomes of this research emphasize the need for open dialogue and open-door access to classrooms for teachers and school leaders to meet both support and accountability functions. Beginning teachers' access to colleagues' classrooms can contribute crucially to an understanding of what was happening in the classrooms of others. Open dialogue and open-door access to classrooms were limited in the studied schools, but if implemented, could expedite beginning teachers' understanding and acquisition of skills that suit the diverse and complex roles of teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

Beginning teachers' support needs are best served in contexts that embrace learning for all (Langdon, 2011; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). If all teachers are viewed as learners, then beginning teachers' learning needs and support are more likely to be dignified and addressed. As learners, teachers learn through their teaching, and through reading, reflecting, and collaborating with others. To deepen their understanding of their roles and practices, teachers need access to opportunities to observe, discuss, learn about, and experience successful student-centered teaching. By looking closely at students and their work, and by sharing what they see with other teachers, all teachers can meet schools' expectations for effective teaching practices. The notion of learning for all in a professional learning community renders the

process of support for all as the concern of all teachers (Langdon, 2011; Yusko & Feiman-Nemser, 2008).

It is pertinent that the MoE apply empirical findings in conceptualising and implementing a support model for beginning teachers in the Seychelles state schools. Whilst lessons can be learnt from the induction model of other education systems, there are also risks in borrowing a support model from a larger education system. This was the case with the school improvement model adapted by the Seychelles education system from the United Kingdom in 1995 (SIP, Secretariat, 2004). Purvis (2007) identified issues around acceptance and impact by teachers and school leaders when this model was introduced. She argued for the need to tailor any borrowed model to the characteristics of Seychelles education system, as this can facilitate implementation (Purvis, 2007).

It would be better to re-orient the introduction of any model of induction by first considering the specifics of the Seychelles schools, to which this study makes some contributions. This research provides specific recommendation for the support of beginning teachers and offers suggestions for improvement of effective teaching practices that should be taken into account to facilitate the establishment of any model of induction. School leaders' and teachers' shared acceptance of such a model is crucial. This is important because effective induction does not involve a standalone model that involves only a few, but rather requires a re-examination of practices ranging from an acknowledgement of beginning teachers' professional learning needs, to re-examination of leadership practices and experienced teachers' teaching practices. It also includes the view of students' as co-creators of knowledge, and requires their learning to be facilitated from this position. In addition, inclusive practices need to prevail in contexts where beginning teachers will be enculturated into these practices. An acceptance by all teachers and school leaders of such a model of support requires a shared understanding and clarification of the roles of all stakeholders. In turn, a common purpose must be established around improving support for all, and access to the best practices by all. The research provides the basis for understanding the nuances of current experiences of beginning teachers and their induction into the teaching profession grounded in the lived experiences of beginning teachers and school leaders.

## **Implication for Seychelles Policy and Practice**

This research has also shown that beginning teachers' attempts to improve their pedagogical practices cannot be viewed as an isolated endeavour, but rather should be situated within a professional learning community. As this study demonstrates, beginning teachers learn the profession through being exposed to other teachers' professional expertise developed over years of education, ongoing professional learning and development, and learning through their own pedagogical practice. In light of these findings, policy formulation and implementation around beginning teachers' induction, the pathway to QTS and professional development and learning, all need to be re-examined through the participation of all concerned stakeholders.

This study has revealed that both the yearly evaluation and the pathway to QTS were primarily focussed on ascertaining beginning teachers' readiness rather than serving both an evaluative and supportive role. This dual role is advocated by the MoE as detailed in its induction policy. The *linear* evaluative pathway can be attributed to a lack of comprehensive understanding of the learning and developmental needs of these beginning teachers by school leaders. Consequently, learning and developmental needs were not effectively determined, and addressed. Rather, schools adhere to the evaluative components of QTS to which they are accountable. Therefore, as shown in this study, beginning teachers are not receiving sufficient and ongoing feedback on their pedagogical practices to help them address the teaching demands of their context. This has led to beginning teachers experiencing a sense of isolation and has meant that their ability to create effective learning opportunities for their students is limited, as evidenced by their challenge in embracing student-centred teaching methodologies. As an intentional mechanism for evaluating and addressing beginning teachers' learning and developmental needs, the QTS and yearly evaluation needs re-examination. Beginning teachers, the MoE, and schools can further benefit when both an evaluative and supportive dimension are seen as embedded in the QTS process and yearly evaluation.

Teachers need clear evaluative procedures and specificity in expectations for effective practices to occur. To address this need, a detailed policy initiative that incorporates a teacher accountability requirement may allow beginning teachers to show competency in a concrete and assessable manner. In these researched schools the knowledge, disposition, and performances that a beginning teacher should hold

were not clear, nor were they distinguished from those of an experienced, accomplished teacher. Tangible and distinct assessment criteria could allow the beginning teachers to be clearer about the specifics of the standards against which they are assessed. Such criteria can make the outcome of teacher evaluations clearer by providing a picture of the beginning teacher's areas for development, which, in turn, could serve as the basis for their PLD. As previously noted, beginning teachers' progressing towards achieving QTS and their support requirement could better be assessed through a portfolio or ePortfolio. This should encourage reflective practices, and would allow access by those who would provide support and evaluation of beginning teachers.

Findings from this research have revealed that the professional needs of teachers are primarily addressed through working with colleagues, either across the whole school or in departmental professional development sessions. The purpose of these sessions was aimed at empowering teachers to meet the three-year improvement targets of the school instead of directly addressing individual teacher needs.

But the professional learning and development (PLD) of beginning teachers cannot be viewed solely through the lens of the school development plan, as either an accountability or performativity issue. Linking whole school priorities for improvement with teachers' individual PLD needs risks the introduction of a "one size fits all" model of PLD. Purvis' (2007) findings concerning school development plans and professional development in the Seychelles similarly revealed that the latter had limited impact on teaching and learning. Purvis' findings were consistent with this research, in that both studies suggest that current professional development plans do not take into consideration teachers and their personalised needs.

Given these findings, professional development and learning may *also* be viewed as an integral part of the life and culture of the school. School leaders and teachers in the Seychelles schools need to be convinced that the conservatism that exists around some teaching practices inhibit innovation, and subsequently, teachers' effectiveness and their students' learning. Creating a professional learning community within the school context may provide beginning teachers with more opportunities to better identify and understand their evolving needs alongside colleagues.

The MoE, schools, and University of Seychelles could be involved in designing, developing and implementing an induction policy—collaboratively and collectively. This may be carried out by taking into consideration the small size of the

Seychelles education system. Such an endeavour would be guided by empirical evidence and the voice of implementing agents to comprehend the issues impinging on the provision of current support for beginning teachers. School leaders and all teachers are subsequently more likely to accept and be involved in the implementation of such a policy.

It will be difficult to have any working policy in place if its development does not include individuals who will ensure its implementation and those who will be affected by it. First, beginning teachers themselves need to recognise their learning needs, as it is, respondents tended to partly condemn aspects of their university training. This could in part be due to the complexity of school and classroom life that they did not anticipate, and to which aspects of their training were seen irrelevant or inadequate. Therefore, UNIsey should incorporate into its teaching education program materials that are relevant to state schools' demands. Equally important is for teacher education to convey to student-teachers that their skills and attributes are still developing as they enter their workplace. More importantly, teacher education should empower these student-teachers how to reflect, how to self-assess, how to support their own going professional learning and development needs, and how to ask for help. Together with schools, there should be discussion on possible vehicles for improving professional development for beginning teachers, within an induction programme, for further development of these skills, and with clear roles for schools and UNIsey to play.

It is important to recognise that while beginning teachers are still meeting their learning requirement when they enter their work place, they do have emerging ideas, skills, and expertise to contribute to students' and colleagues' learning. School leaders and all teachers could acknowledge this notion through an induction policy that requires a collective and collaborative approach to beginning teachers' support, an approach that has been shown to be beneficial for all involved (Yusko & Feiman-Nemser, 2008). A collective approach to induction then would increase a shared sense of responsibility for beginning teachers' support and decrease individualism in teaching (Yusko & Feiman-Nemser, 2008). In a related way, a move from conservatism in teaching entails a view of induction as a programme that recognises beginning teachers as having the potential to transform the practices and norms of a school whilst also becoming members of its professional learning community (Lawson, 1992).

Teachers from this research strongly voiced a need to address secondary school students' attitude towards their learning. These teachers pointed to the MoE, parents, and the community as having an important role in this endeavour. However, the findings in this research point towards a need for schools to re-look at some of their practices concerning teacher learning and support as a first step. Teachers had tended to link the cause of students' disengagement to poor parental influence. Therefore, as a follow-up it would be equally useful to gauge the views of parents, and to learn how they need support in influencing their own child's learning, and attitudes towards learning. In this way, a greater collaboration between parents and teachers may influence the students in a more connected and positive way. This is important in order to find ways to actively involve parents and the community to improve positive students' attitude toward school, and to motivate them to achieve their aspirations.

### **Methodology Reflection**

In order to explore beginning teachers' support and pursuit of effective teaching practices in the Seychelles, this research used a mixed method approach positioned in an ethnographic, sociocultural framework. Given this framework, data were collected to understand the day-to-day nuances of beginning teachers' formal and informal support, and teaching practices. An ethnographic framework is consistent with the methods used (observations, interviews and context-specific surveys). The sociocultural theoretical framework is premised on the belief that teachers are influenced by, and learn through their context, and by those within their context. Given the methodological approach, the manner in which learning to improve practices occurred, and support that facilitated such learning, has been highlighted.

The ethnographic questionnaire was devised specifically for this research and the associated research questions, and may present some limitations for others involved in similar research. However, as a starting point some of the questions may be relevant for related research. A limitation of the questionnaire is a risk that the self-reporting nature of the questionnaire may induce response distortion. Rather than emanating from reality, it is feasible that some replies may be reflective of socially desirable responses. In addition, the rating-scale items may not accurately or sufficiently evaluate these participants' views and practices. The inclusion of more items could have allowed the measurement of the construct, and in doing so reduce measurement error. Whilst the nature of closed-ended questions limited the "breadth"

of the participants' responses, the open-ended questions and use of additional space to allow comments have helped enrich some of the data that were collected. As Fetterman (2010) explained questionnaires are appropriate means of dealing with representativeness and a realistic approach to take the pulse of a large sample of participants.

Another limitation of this study is that there is limited student voice. Given that the focus of the research was on beginning teachers, the participants included beginning teachers and management within schools. However, on reflection, incorporating student voices would add a valuable dimension, because questions about the roles of students, parents, and the MoE emerged strongly in this research. Incorporating students' voices in this research would enable the representation of their views of effective teaching practices and the extent to which these practices were inclusive of their needs (Rudduck, & McIntyre, 2007; Thiessen & Cook-Sather, 2007).

In addition, the views from MoE officials around teacher induction, curriculum, teaching, and learning policies would have also shed light on the discrepancies that exist around a lack of policies, as well as policy interpretation and implementation. Given the omission of these participants, the findings relating to the MoE, parents, students, social milieu and workplace were grounded in the school leaders' and beginning teachers' viewpoint. This in itself is a start to better understand issues around induction and to appreciate the professional lives and experience of beginning teachers. The research provides an account of beginning teachers' support and their attempt to improve their teaching in consideration of their schools' expectation. The inclusion of beginning teachers, their schools leaders, and the use of documentation analysis were seen as appropriate means of answering the research questions. However, future research could consider other participants.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This research contributes to the development of a broader vision and understanding about the nature of teacher induction in the Seychelles, and the support available to beginning teachers entering into the profession. As a starting point, this research provides the basis for further Seychelles-based research to heighten the status of beginning teachers' experiences of induction moving into a more collaborative and networked process.



As this study has shown, these beginning teachers entered into professional contexts where conservatism prevailed around teaching approaches and practices. These beginning teachers did not, in general, experience a collegial environment, whereas professionals they could access and contribute to the local knowledge of practice. Sharing of practices is important in a profession, and the confidence teachers gain in their knowledge is revealed by their ease in sharing it. Given the prevailing conservatism around teaching identified in this study, the introduction of professional learning communities as a means of facilitating teachers' success as professionals has been argued. Research into other mechanisms that can serve to challenge the conservatism and encourage teacher learning, support, and improvement in teaching practices could be considered.

This research showed that a concerted focus on classroom management and student disengagement led to a mostly didactic approach to teaching in these contexts, and the tendencies of beginning teachers was to acquiesce to these prevailing practices to varying degrees. In addition, beginning teachers advocated for punitive approaches in addressing students' disengagement and misbehaviour. Beginning teachers' responses indicated a need for improvement and access to effective pedagogical strategies to better engage students, and recognised that their professional learning and development opportunities did not go far enough in addressing these needs. Therefore, given the teacher-centered practices that were prevalent, a better understanding of the dynamics of classroom interaction and the nurture of student-teacher relationships were not at the fore of these beginning teachers' learning. Teacher and student learning are interconnected; this means that improvement in learning for all students cannot occur without improvement in teacher learning (Darling-Hammond, 2006). There is a need for further research into teacher learning around practices that would empower schools and beginning teachers to encourage rather than limit the emotional, intellectual, and social growth of learners.

There was a centrality to professional learning and development for school growth driven by the state secondary schools' three-year development plan. The voices of participants indicated a quandary around professional learning and development for personal growth rather than a "one sized fit all" PLD model of school improvement. My research has indicated a likelihood that professional learning and development is being carried out based on a mandated requirement, which may therefore involve participation based on obligation to external factors, rather than the needs of teachers and learners. This presents an area for research into the promotion

of professional learning and development activities that would encourage teachers' participation. Central to these questions about integrated professional development and learning is whether current models of PLD are impacting positively on teachers' practices. This requisite was raised by surveyed and case study teachers.

### **Experiences of the Researcher**

I began this thesis by recognising and embracing this research journey as a learning process. My motivation was driven by the journey's potential contribution to the professional discourse around improving beginning teachers' teaching and learning in the Seychelles education system. If anything, I've completed this journey with a view that it is a start rather than an end to building my understanding around beginning teachers' transitions, learning, professional development, pedagogical practices, and the influence of school context. I started by reflecting on the importance of placing effective teachers in our classrooms for the benefit of our students. This research has furthered my conviction in the importance of advocating for the improvement of teaching and learning through a greater focus on teacher knowledge and skills development, and further consideration of the contexts in which teachers work, and learn to teach. As a ministry official, it also means recognising the need to improve the broader systemic environment in which all of the above are situated. Through my work, I endeavour to convince colleagues and ministry officials of the importance of rigorous research and research-based knowledge for policy decision making. As a beginning researcher, I aim to further develop my research skills to better contribute to the emerging educational research agenda in Seychelles.

### **Concluding Remarks**

In light of the continued effort to improve the quality of education in the Seychelles, support for beginning teachers could be seen as a vital part of the attempt to improve the effectiveness of teaching practices. The introductory part of this thesis explored research findings within the local context of the Seychelles, which revealed the quality of teaching in the education system in Seychelles was an area of concern. Nolan (2008) argued that unless the standard and quality of teaching in the Seychelles classrooms significantly improved, it was unlikely for the standard of the Seychelles workforce to improve. This thesis has argued that the preponderance of effective teaching practices is dependent on improved teacher learning and support, which

would in turn impact students' learning and achievements. It is pertinent that the education system embraces effective support policies and structures for all teachers.

Given that each beginning teacher has individual professional learning and developmental needs, it is vital to find ways to meet these needs. This research has proposed ways to involve beginning teachers in more collaborative and networked ways, to support their emerging roles as professional educators. Empowering school leaders and teachers to challenge the conservatism around teaching, and placing a concerted effort on allowing teachers to access the most effective evidenced-based practices within their community will ideally create more open dialogue around effective teaching and pedagogical practices across classrooms and schools. When teachers get together within professional learning communities, this creates professional opportunities to explore issues, reflection and observation. In such instances, beginning teachers are more likely to enter contexts where they can join other colleagues to work together, sort out their professional issues, and to serve the common goal of improving students' learning and achievements.

Finally, I leave the last thought to Ryan, the beginning teacher in school B, who in describing his work relationship with the laboratory technicians expressed the desire for a prevalence of collaborative work relationships around teaching between members of his department:

You know, they see my enthusiasm and they appreciate this. I work with them, we discuss, and we learn from each other. This year, one of the laboratory technicians was transferred and he called me about a particular set-up he wanted to share at his new school.

In reading this, I hope that the impact of collaborative work and collegiality are appreciated and encouraged. It may benefit the Seychelles education system to make known and extend these types of work relationships so that it becomes inherent in the professional lives of teachers in the Seychelles school system. This thesis has identified beginning teachers as a specific group of teachers who enter their workplace with particular professional learning and development needs. As argued within this thesis, if these learning needs are neglected or left to chance, it impacts negatively on these teachers' learning, and ultimately is likely to affect the learning experiences of their students. Effective induction, supportive school cultures, and mentorship have been identified as

areas that can be positively addressed to facilitate the professional learning and socialisation of beginning teachers.

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## Appendix A: MoE's Outline of Roles, Skills, and Competencies for Teachers

### Teacher Education and Professional Development

The goals of education will be achieved through a coherent system of pre- and in-service education and training, which empowers the teacher to:

- master his/her subject discipline(s) and demonstrate knowledge of the methodologies and procedures necessary for effective teaching, as well as commitment to the learner and to the profession
- employ a range of teaching strategies appropriate to the age, ability, interests, needs, experiences and attainment level of students, based on a thorough understanding of the psychology of learners, and making judicious use of education technology
- engage in the all-round development of the young person through an active commitment to all forms of learning, including learning that is not based in the activities of the formal curriculum
- initiate and/or participate in classroom-based action-research, and engage in self-appraisal and critical evaluation of his/her work
- contribute to school-based curriculum development; produce and make appropriate use of a range of learning resources
- promote successful learning by having high expectations of both self and students, showing recognition and appreciation of student achievement, and taking an active interest in the personal growth and development of each student
- play an effective role in the development of the school through involvement, as part of a team, in participative planning and decision-making
- acquire the skills needed to assume the non-teaching/leadership roles associated with teacher involvement in processes of whole-school development
- demonstrate openness to change and creativity in experimenting with innovations in teaching, with due regard to students' interests and to the changes brought about by the revolution in information technology
- develop collaborative relationships/partnerships with parents and the community, and meet the expectations of the public with regard to the teacher's role in the community
- develop commitment to life-long learning and to professional development as a continuous and permanent process

Teacher Education will be built on a sound understanding of society in Seychelles and of the evolution of the education system in the context of the changes within that society. Teacher Education and Training will be delivered through a unified system, which promotes life-long learning, with initial and in-service training being viewed as a continuum. Classroom action-research will be actively promoted as one of the most effective ways of ensuring that teachers constantly reflect on their teaching and seek to perfect their practice. The habit of dialogue with peers on professional matters will also be actively promoted.

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Source: Ministry of Education (2000). *Education for a Learning Society: Policy Statement*. Victoria, Seychelles: Author.

## **Appendix B: Central Induction Policy**

### ***5.4. Staff Induction and Monitoring Probation***

All schools must develop induction packages, according to agreed formats, for local beginning teachers, other new teachers and curriculum support as well as for overseas recruited staff and staff promoted to other positions of responsibility. Each package must include monitoring and support procedures and mechanism for staff on probation, the persons directly responsible for these roles must be specified (Ministry of Education, Employment and Human Resources Development, 2010 p.30)

Source: Ministry of Education, Employment, and Human Resources Development (MOEEHRD) (2010). *Improving the governance of schools: A handbook for school leadership and Management*. Seychelles: Author.

# Appendix C: Schools Evaluation Review Form for Both QTS and Yearly Evaluation

## MINISTRY OF EDUCATION EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL REVIEW

DIVISION:

PERIOD OF ASSESSMENT: From..... To .....

Employee: ..... Post No:

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Job Title: ..... EP and Salary: .....

Date commenced employment: ..... Date appointed to post: .....

### To be completed by the employee's supervisor

**PLEASE NOTE:** The rating must be sustained by specific comments on observed performance. For each item rate how well the employee has performed against the maximum possible level of performance expected of his/her grade. Rating should be in respect of (a) assignment (b) specific output and should be based on agreed standards.

- RATING:
1. Outstanding performer- best amongst all others in the same or similar position.
  2. Above average performer- exceed position requirements.
  3. Average performer capable- not outstanding but meets position requirements.
  4. Below average performer- barely meets position requirement.
  5. Poor performer- unsatisfactory.
  0. Not applicable.

Factor	1	2	3	4	5	0	Comments/Examples
General Behaviour							
Quantity and Quality of Work Output							
Sense of Responsibility and Reliability							
Initiative and Commitment							
Relations with Colleagues							
Relationships with Students							
Attendance and Timekeeping							
Others (Specify)							
Overall rating							

List of warnings and other disciplinary measures taken against the employee during the period under assessment:-

INCIDENT	RESULT	ACTION TAKEN	OUTCOME-AGREED GOAL FOR IMPROVEMENT
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Supervisor

Name: ..... Signature: .....  
Post Title: ..... Date: .....

---

INTERVIEW REPORT: Date of interview.....

Key issues discussed: .....  
.....  
.....

Target for forthcoming period: .....  
.....

---

Supervisor

On basis of your ratings/interview, what recommendations do you make in respect of this employee?

- (1) Training/Development.....
- (2) Job rotation/Transfer.....
- (3) Potential for promotion.....

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

---

Head of Department/Division

Comments .....  
.....  
.....

Name: ..... Post Title: .....  
Signature: .....

## Appendix D: Letter Seeking Permission from the MoE to Conduct Research

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON  
*Te Whare Wānanga o te Ūpoko o te Ika a Māui*



Steve Confait  
Belonie  
Mahe  
Seychelles

January 2011

Principal Secretary  
Department of Education  
Ministry of Education, Employment and Human Resources  
Development  
Mont Fleuri  
Mahe  
Seychelles

Dear Madam

I will be in Seychelles in mid-november to collect data to inform my research. I am seeking permission to approach three schools to get their consent in order to carry out my research to inform three case studies. In addition I am also seeking permission to administer a questionnaire to teachers with 1 to 3 years of experience across the secondary school system. Approval for this research has been sought and granted by VUW (Victoria University of wellington) Faculty of Education Human Ethics Committee. I have detailed below the aspect of the study.

The research will investigate the factors within the Seychelles secondary schools that are influencing beginning teachers' empowerment for effective teaching. It will examine; personal beginning teacher attributes that influence their teaching effectiveness, elements of effective teaching within the classroom context as well as investigate the general school culture with regards to effective teaching. Three beginning teachers to be involved in the case study aspect

of the research from three different schools, their respective Head of Department as well as their Deputy headteacher.

The research is significant because it will provide a unique perspective on beginning teacher support and empowerment in Seychelles secondary school. The study will inform current practices related to beginning teachers' support and factors that facilitate their teaching effectiveness. It will also complement the knowledge pertaining to beginning teachers' empowerment in the Seychelles as well as presenting a multi-faceted nature of beginning teachers' empowerment and various forms of people's contribution and understanding of it.

As per the Victoria University Faculty of Education Ethics Committee's requirement, the data gathered to inform this research will be accessible and available only to the researcher and supervisors. In addition participating schools and participants will not be identified and their responses acquired will be treated with confidentiality.

I look forward to a response and thank you in advance for your consideration

Sincerely

Steve Confait

## Appendix E: Permission from MoE to Access Schools and Conduct Research

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND HUMAN  
RESOURCES

Department of Education

Mont Fleuri, P.O. Box 48, Republic of Seychelles  
Tel: 283283 Fax 224859 Email ps@eduhq.edu.sc

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Please address all correspondence to the Principal Secretary



Your ref  
Our ref  
Enquiries to  
Telephone Ext: 3131  
Date: 11<sup>th</sup> January 2011

Mr Steve Confait  
School of Educational Psychology and Pedagogy  
Faculty of Education  
Victoria University of Wellington

### **RE: Conducting Research**

Approval is conveyed to Mr. Steve Confait to conduct case study research in three Secondary schools, and to administer questionnaire to beginning teachers in all Secondary schools as part of his Doctoral study.

We thank you for your corporation.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Odile Octave'.

Odile Octave  
Director General-School Division  
For Principal Secretary (Education)



## Appendix F: Letter Seeking Permission from the Head Teachers to Access Schools and Conduct Research

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON  
*Te Whare Wānanga o te Ūpoko o te Ika a Māui*



Steve Confait  
School of Educational  
Psychology and Pedagogy  
Faculty of Education  
Victoria University of Wellington  
January 2010

Headteacher  
X Secondary School  
Mahe  
Seychelles

Dear Sir/Madam

**Request for permission to research the factors that are influencing beginning teachers' empowerment for effective teaching at X Secondary School.**

I wish to seek permission to research the factors within the school that are influencing beginning teachers' empowerment for effective teaching. I am interested in examining; personal beginning teacher attributes that influence their teaching effectiveness, elements of effective teaching within the classroom context as well as investigate the general school culture with regards to effective teaching. A beginning teacher will be involved in the case study aspect of the research as well as his/her respective head of department and deputy headteacher.

My research title is: *Improving the teaching effectiveness of beginning teachers within the context of the Seychelles secondary schools: External and personal factors of empowerment, support and impediments.*

1. The aims of the research are to:
2. Investigate the factors within the school that influence beginning teacher empowerment for effective teaching.
3. Examine beginning teachers' personal attributes that influence their teaching effectiveness.
4. Examine elements of effective teaching within the classroom context of these beginning teachers.
5. Investigate the general school culture in regards to effective teaching.

I will be using a qualitative and quantitative methodology to elucidate the issue of beginning teacher support and empowerment for effective teaching. This, in order to inform current practices related to beginning teachers' support and factors that facilitate their teaching effectiveness. It will also complement the knowledge pertaining to beginning teachers' empowerment in the Seychelles as well as presenting a multi-faceted nature of beginning teachers' empowerment and various forms of people's contribution and understanding of it. The bulk of the data collection will take place over a three weeks period from X to Y. The following research methods will be employed; document analysis, semi-structured in-depth interviews and participant-observation.

Consequently I am seeking permission to:

1. Interview the deputy head, head of department and beginning teacher to gain perspective on the issue of support for empowerment and effective teaching.
2. Observe the delivery of a beginning teacher's lesson to allow for a rich description of the actions of the teacher.
3. Access and analyze school documents that guide the practice of beginning teachers to allow a dissection and view of the extent of beginning teachers' progression towards effective teaching. These documents will include lesson plans, action plans and others.

The research is being carried out as a requirement for Doctor of Philosophy in Education under the supervision of Dr Roseanna Bourke and Dr. Starkey Louise who can be contacted at [roseanna.bourke@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:roseanna.bourke@vuw.ac.nz) or Dr. Starkey Louise at [louise.starkey@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:louise.starkey@vuw.ac.nz). If you have any questions or would like to receive further information about the project. Furthermore if you have any questions regarding the way this research is conducted contact Dr Allison Kirkman, chair of the Ethics Committee, Victoria University Wellington at [Allison.Kirkman@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Allison.Kirkman@vuw.ac.nz).

The research is significant because it will provide a unique perspective on beginning teacher support and empowerment in Seychelles secondary school. The study will inform current practices related to beginning teachers' support and factors that facilitate their teaching effectiveness. It will also complement the knowledge pertaining to beginning teachers' empowerment in the Seychelles as well as presenting a multi-faceted nature of beginning teachers' empowerment and various forms of people's contribution and understanding of it. The VUW Faculty of Education Human Ethics Committee has granted ethics approval. The research may be published.

I look forward to a response and thank you in advance for your consideration

Thanking you

Sincerely

Steve Confait

## Appendix G: Information for Case Study Participants

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON  
*Te Whare Wānanga o te Ūpoko o te Ika a Māui*



### Information sheet for Case study participants (Teachers)

**Researcher:** Steve Confait, School of Educational Psychology and Pedagogy, Victoria University of Wellington (VUW), New Zealand

I am a doctoral student at Victoria University of Wellington (VUW). As part of this PhD I am researching how to support beginning teachers in their quest for effectiveness. This research has been assessed and approved by Victoria University Faculty of Education Ethics Committee.

The aim of the research is to: (i) investigate the factors within the school culture that frame, and encourage beginning teachers' empowerment for effective teaching and (ii) examine how beginning teachers interpret and develop elements of effective teaching within the classroom context.

The results from this research will add to the current knowledge base on beginning teachers' support and empowerment for effective teaching. It will also add to the literature on the issue in small island states. You are invited to participate in this research, your participation is important because it will enable you to provide information which will contribute towards a greater awareness of the issue.

#### **Participants' involvement**

If you choose to participate in this research you will then be involved in a two part formal interview, 6 post-hoc interviews following six classroom observations. There will also be 3 to 6 informal discussions. The interviews will take place in the school setting between January to April over a 3-week period convenient to you. The interviews will be recorded, transcribed verbatim and submitted to you for verification of accuracy. In addition, if there are any aspects of this interview transcript that you do not want to be used in the reporting or wish to clarify, you can identify those segments. Lesson plans corresponding to observed sessions will be used during the document analysis process. Information taken during the classroom observation, informal discussions and document analysis will be checked with you for accuracy at the end of each session.

#### **Sharing of information**

Your head of department and deputy head will be interviewed twice; however their interviews will be on the research focus as opposed to specific individuals. No information gathered from our interactions will be shared with them. Gathered data will be collated and examined. It will become part of a PhD thesis that will be available through Victoria University of Wellington library. At your request you will be sent a summary of the research findings. The results of the research may be presented at academic conferences or published in academic journals. Electronic information will be kept in a password protected file and access will be restricted. In the case of written materials pertaining to the research, this will be kept in a locked file, no other person besides me and my

supervisors will have access to the data..All collected data will be destroyed two years after the end of the project.

### **Confidentiality**

The school's identity and that of yours will remain confidential and pseudonyms will be used. After viewing summaries of the findings any aspects that are identified as misaligned or inaccurate will be changed. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to decline without giving any reason. You may also withdraw from the research at any time during data collection without explanation. The collected data will be destroyed after your withdrawal. Finally your participation in the study will entail that you keep your school's, head of department's and deputy head teacher's participation in this research confidential.

If you have any questions or would like to receive further information about the project, please contact me at [Steve.Confait@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Steve.Confait@vuw.ac.nz) or my supervisors, Dr Roseanna Bourke at [roseanna.bourke@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:roseanna.bourke@vuw.ac.nz) or Dr. Starkey Louise at [louise.starkey@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:louise.starkey@vuw.ac.nz), School of Educational Psychology and Pedagogy, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. If you have any questions regarding the way this research is conducted contact Dr Allison Kirkman, chair of the Ethics Committee, Victoria University Wellington at [Allison.Kirkman@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Allison.Kirkman@vuw.ac.nz).

Thank you for considering this request ; I look forward to working with you.

Steve Confait

Signed:



## **Information sheet for deputy head teacher and Head of department**

**Researcher:** Steve Confait, School of Educational Psychology and Pedagogy, Victoria University of Wellington (VUW), New Zealand

I am a doctoral student at Victoria University of Wellington (VUW). As part of this PhD I am researching how to support beginning teachers in their quest for effectiveness. This research has been assessed and approved by Victoria University Faculty of Education Ethics Committee.

The aim of the research is to: (i) investigate the factors within the school culture that frame, and encourage beginning teachers' empowerment for effective teaching and (ii) examine how beginning teachers interpret and develop elements of effective teaching within the classroom context.

The results from this research will add to the current knowledge base on beginning teachers' support and empowerment for effective teaching. It will also add to the literature on the issue in small island states. You are invited to participate in this research, your participation is important because it will enable you to provide information which will contribute towards a greater awareness of the issue.

### **Participants' involvement**

If you choose to participate in this research you will be involved in a two part interview, one at the beginning and the other at the end of a three week period. The interview will be recorded, transcribed verbatim and submitted to you for verification of accuracy, in addition, if there are any aspects of this interview transcript that you do not want to be used in the reporting or wish to clarify, you can identify those segments. Data recorded will be checked with you for accuracy at the end of each session.

### **Sharing of information**

Gathered data will be collated and examined. It will become part of PhD thesis that will be available through Victoria University of Wellington library. At your request you will be sent a summary of the research findings as well as a link to access the final thesis. Part of the interview transcript maybe introduced during the presentation of the research findings. The results of the research may be presented at academic conferences or published in academic journals. Electronic information will be kept in a password protected file and access will be restricted. In the case of written materials pertaining to the research, this will be kept in a locked file, no other person besides me and my supervisors will have access to the data. All collected data will be destroyed two years after the completion of the project.

**Confidentiality**

The school's identity and that of yours will remain confidential and pseudonyms will be used. After viewing summaries of the findings any aspects that are identified as misaligned or inaccurate will be changed. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to decline without giving any reason. You may also withdraw from the research at any time during data collection without explanation. The collected data will be destroyed after your withdrawal. Finally your participation in the study will entail that you keep your school's, head of department's and deputy head teacher's participation in this research confidential.

If you have any questions or would like to receive further information about the project, please contact me at [Steve.Confait@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Steve.Confait@vuw.ac.nz) or my supervisors, Dr Roseanna Bourke at [roseanna.bourke@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:roseanna.bourke@vuw.ac.nz) or Dr. Starkey Louise at [louise.starkey@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:louise.starkey@vuw.ac.nz), School of Educational Psychology and Pedagogy, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. If you have any questions regarding the way this research is conducted contact Dr Allison Kirkman, chair of the Ethics Committee, Victoria University Wellington at [Allison.Kirkman@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Allison.Kirkman@vuw.ac.nz).

Thank you for considering this request; I look forward to working with you.

Steve Confait

Signed:



## Appendix H: Consent Forms for Case Study Participants

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

*Te Whare Wānanga o te Ūpoko o te Ika a Māui*



### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

#### Case study participants (Teachers)

**Researcher:** Steve Confait, School of Educational Psychology and Pedagogy, Victoria University of Wellington (VUW), New Zealand

Read each of the following points carefully before acknowledging your participation in the research. Tick each individual box to indicate your agreement with each statement.

- I acknowledge that I have been given sufficient information pertaining to the objectives of the research. I fully understand what the information conveyed and I have also been given the opportunity to seek explanation and further clarifications.
- By participating in the interview and allowing my lessons to be observed I understand that my identity will remain confidential.
- I understand that part of the interview transcript might be included in presentations
- I consent to the digital recording of the interviews.
- I understand that the researcher will check with me that the interview transcripts are accurate.
- I consent to the use of my lesson plans for the document analysis process.
- I understand that the researcher will give me access to notes taken as part of the document analysis process so that I can check for accuracy.
- I understand that data from the research will be confidential and all identifying features will be removed.
- I understand that all notes and data will be destroyed two years after the conclusion of the research.
- By participating in this research I will commit myself in keeping the school's, the head of department's and the deputy head teacher's participation in this research confidential.
- I understand that I may withdraw from this study at any time during the data collecting process and before the completion of the data analysis process.
- I understand that once I withdraw from the research any data that I provided will be destroyed.
- I understand that the final thesis will be kept at the Victoria University library and may be used in publications and conferences.

Indicate if you would like a summary of the final research finding and/or access to the thesis if so, provide an e-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Contact Information

Researcher: Steve Confait Victoria University of Wellington, School of Educational Psychology and Pedagogy Tel: (248) 762443 <a href="mailto:Steve.Confait@vuw.ac.nz">Steve.Confait@vuw.ac.nz</a>	Supervisor: Dr Roseanna Bourke Victoria University of Wellington, School of Educational Psychology and Pedagogy <a href="mailto:roseanna.bourke@vuw.ac.nz">roseanna.bourke@vuw.ac.nz</a>
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## CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

### Case study participants (Head of department and Deputy head)

**Researcher:** Steve Confait, School of Educational Psychology and Pedagogy, Victoria University of Wellington (VUW), New Zealand

Read each of the following points carefully before acknowledging your participation in the research. Tick each individual box to indicate your agreement with each statement.

- I acknowledge that I have been given sufficient information pertaining to the objectives of the research. I fully understand what the information conveys and I have also been given the opportunity to seek explanation and further clarifications.
- By participating in the interview I understand that my identity will remain confidential.
- I understand that part of the interview transcript might be included in presentations.
- I consent to the digital recording of the interviews.
- I understand that the researcher will check with me that the transcribed information is accurate.
- I understand that data from the research will be confidential and all identifying features will be removed.
- I understand that all notes and data will be destroyed two years after the conclusion of the research.
- By participating in this research I will commit myself in keeping the school's, the beginning teacher's and the deputy head teacher's participation in this research confidential.
- I understand that I may withdraw from this study at any time during the data collecting process and before the completion of the data analysis process.
- I understand that once I withdraw from the research any data that I have provided will be destroyed.
- I understand that the final thesis will be kept at the Victoria University library and may be used in publications and conferences.

Indicate if you would like a summary of the final research findings and/or access to the thesis; provide an e-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Contact Information

Researcher: Steve Confait Victoria University of Wellington, School of Educational Psychology and Pedagogy Tel: (248) 762443 <a href="mailto:Steve.Confait@vuw.ac.nz">Steve.Confait@vuw.ac.nz</a>	Supervisor: Dr Roseanna Bourke Victoria University of Wellington, School of Educational Psychology and Pedagogy <a href="mailto:roseanna.bourke@vuw.ac.nz">roseanna.bourke@vuw.ac.nz</a>
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## **Information sheet and consent form for questionnaire respondents**

**Researcher:** Steve Confait, School of Educational Psychology and Pedagogy, Victoria University of Wellington (VUW), New Zealand

I am a doctoral student at Victoria University of Wellington (VUW). As part of this PhD I am researching how to support beginning teachers in their quest for effectiveness. This research has been assessed and approved by Victoria University Faculty of Education Ethics Committee.

The aim of the research is to: (i) investigate the factors within the school culture that frame, and encourage beginning teacher empowerment for effective teaching and (ii) examine how beginning teachers interpret and develop elements of effective teaching within the classroom context.

The results from this research will add to the current knowledge base on beginning teachers' support and empowerment for effective teaching. It will also add to the literature on the issue in small island states. You are invited to participate in this research, your participation is important because it will enable you to provide information which will contribute towards a greater awareness of the issue.

### **Participants' involvement**

If you choose to participate in this research you will be asked to complete a questionnaire, which will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. You will be asked to make a series of ratings about your experiences and to write your opinion about your experiences. The questions relate to your perception of effective teaching, the support that you get for it and the school's current culture in relation to effective teaching.

### **Sharing of information**

All sheets containing your ratings will be coded by number only, not by name, so that confidentiality is assured. When analysed, the results of this study will refer to group data only. Individual results will not be described. It will become part of a PhD thesis that will be available through Victoria University of Wellington library. At your request you will be sent a summary of the research findings, this will entail you providing an e-mail address on the questionnaire. The results of the research may be presented at academic conferences or published in academic journals.

## **Confidentiality**

The school's identity and that of yours will remain confidential and pseudonyms will be used. Your decision to complete and return this questionnaire will be interpreted as an indication of your agreement to participate. You may also withdraw from the research at any time during data collection without explanation; this should be no later than three months after posting the questionnaire. The collected data will be destroyed after your withdrawal. Finally your participation in the study will entail that you keep the involvement of your school, head of department's and deputy head teacher's confidential.

The ethical application has been approved by the VUW Faculty of Education Human Ethics Committee.

If you have any questions or would like to receive further information about the project, please contact me at [Steve.Confait@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Steve.Confait@vuw.ac.nz) or my supervisors, Dr Roseanna Bourke at [roseanna.bourke@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:roseanna.bourke@vuw.ac.nz) or Dr. Starkey Louise at [louise.starkey@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:louise.starkey@vuw.ac.nz), School of Educational Psychology and Pedagogy, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. If you have any questions regarding the way this research is conducted contact Dr Allison Kirkman, chair of the Ethics Committee, Victoria University Wellington at [Allison.Kirkman@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Allison.Kirkman@vuw.ac.nz).

Thank you for considering this request; I look forward to working with you.

Steve Confait

Signed:

## **Appendix I: Interview Schedules for Beginning Teachers**

### Formal interview to cover at beginning and end of three weeks period

#### 1.0. Training and background

- i. Describe your professional training and teaching experience?
- ii. Tell me why you chose teaching as a career?

#### 2.0. Perceived effectiveness

- i. How important is it to you to be an 'effective' teacher of Science? What does being an 'effective' teacher mean to you?
- ii. How confident are you about your effectiveness as a beginning teacher?
- iii. How do you measure this?
- iv. How do 'others' measure this? (i.e., within the school, the system, the students)
- v. What influences your effectiveness as a beginning teacher?
- vi. Do you make a conscious effort in improving your personal effectiveness?
- vii. What steps if any have you taken in improving your performance?
- viii. What standard do you use to judge a teacher to be effective?

#### 3.0. Induction

- i. Did you go through an induction phase when you first came to this school?
- ii. Describe the process.
- iii. Was it up to your expectation?
- iv. If no what was missing?

#### 4.0. School culture

- i. How do you feel about being a teacher of mathematics?
- ii. How do you feel about being a teacher at this school?
- iii. How would you describe the management involvement in contributing towards your become an effective teachers?

- iv. How would you describe the opportunities that you for conversation about your teaching in the school setting, if any?
- v. How would you describe the general school's view of effective teaching?
- vi. What are the attributes of your school that is supportive of a good working, if any?

#### 5.0.Mentoring and Monitoring

- i. Explain how often your lessons are monitored, observed and by whom?
- ii. What happens after the lesson observation?
- iii. Have you been mentored since you came at this school? What does this 'look' like?
- iv. If so under what circumstances and what was the outcome of the process?
- v. Do you have a mentor or exemplary teacher who you can talk to about your professional issues?
- vi. If so what assistance has been provided so far?

#### 6.0.Professional development

- i. What kind of professional support do you get, if any, with regards to your professional development?
- ii. What personal help have you had so far from the school to further develop your teaching?
- iii. What type of support would you like to have in the future in regards to your teaching?
- iv. What changes would you like to see that would make you a more effective teacher and help you improve your teaching?

## Interview schedules for beginning teachers

### Post-hoc interview after classroom observation

- i. What were the main concepts taught in the lesson?
- ii. What were the specific strategies that you used to teach these?
- iii. What indications did you use to determine whether students were learning?
- iv. Have you taught in this way before?
- v. If so how and why?
- vi. If you were to re-teach this lesson, would you do it differently?
- vii. If so how and why?
- viii. What would you identify as the main strength (s) in this lesson?
- ix. What would you identify as the main short-coming (s) in this lesson (if any?)

## **Appendix J: Interview Schedules for Deputy Head Teachers and Head of Departments**

### Part one

#### 1.0 Standard of teaching

- i. <sup>1</sup>How would you describe the standard of teaching in your school?
- ii. In your opinion, what are the main strengths and weaknesses regarding teaching at your school?

#### 2.0 Effective teaching

- i. How do you define an effective teacher in your school?
- ii. What are the school's expectations in regards to effective teaching?
- iii. In your opinion what supports are required to develop an effective teacher?
- iv. What are some of the major concerns impeding effective teaching at your school?

#### 3.0 Monitoring ,Mentoring and Induction

- i. What procedures do you have in place to monitor and evaluate beginning teachers' performance and effectiveness?
- ii. In relation to teaching and learning, describe the type of support being provided to beginning teachers by the management?
- iii. Can you describe the induction process for beginning teachers in your school?
- iv. How would you describe the level of support in your school for beginning teachers?

---

<sup>1</sup> To replace 'school' with 'department' for head of departments

## **Interview schedules for Deputy head teachers and Head of departments**

### **Part two**

#### 1.0.School culture

- i. How would you describe the management involvement in contributing towards improving teaching at the school?
- ii. How would you describe the level of collaboration that exists at the school with regards to improving teaching?
- iii. What changes would they like to see that would foster effective teaching at the school?

#### 2.0.Professional development

- i. What kinds of professional support are available for teachers with regards to their professional development?
- ii. What type of support are you anticipating in the future for teachers with regards to their teaching?

#### 3.0.Empowerment

- i. How would you describe the level of support and respect that teachers get from their colleagues?
- ii. How would you describe the extent to which the school act as a professional working environment for teachers?
- iii. How would you describe the extent to which teachers help their students to become independent learners?







# Appendix M: Questionnaire

## QUESTIONNAIRE

Beginning teacher's perspective of support and challenges in their pursuit of effective teaching practices:  
A Seychelles case

### SECTION 1 DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

1.1. Indicate your response with a tick (✓) in the appropriate space provided

Male	<input type="checkbox"/>
------	--------------------------

Female	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------	--------------------------

1.2. Put a tick in the appropriate box to indicate the number of years of experience you have in the teaching profession:

1 or less       2       3       4

1.3 Put a tick in the appropriate box to indicate your age

20 to 25       26 to 30       31 to 35       above 40

1.4 What is your highest level of qualification?

---

1.5. Indicate your major and minor subject of specialization (if any)

Major: \_\_\_\_\_ Minor: \_\_\_\_\_

1.6. State the subject (s) you are currently teaching

---

**SECTION 2: ELEMENTS OF PERSONAL TEACHING**

The purpose of this section is to obtain your views on the extent to which the following reflects what you do, or the degree to which they describe your qualities.

With reference to your own teaching, rate the extent to which the following reflects your actions or describe you, place a tick (✓) next to the value that best applies.

	<b>1</b> Never	<b>2</b> Rarely	<b>3</b> Sometimes	<b>4</b> Very Often	<b>5</b> Always
6.1. I am able to determine students learning levels					
6.2. I can appropriately cater for lower ability learners					
6.3. I give students choice in their learning					
6.4. I perceive myself as being effective					
6.5. I use direct instruction					
6.6. I equip students to learn independently					
6.7. I am able to challenge high ability students					
6.8. I provide students with meaningful feedback					
6.9. I consider the experiences of my students when planning the lesson.					
6.10. I focus classroom time on teaching and learning.					
6.11. I use reflection based on classroom evidence to improve my teaching.					
6.12. I consider the cultural background of my students when planning teaching or giving feedback on their learning.					
6.13. I value what students say.					
6.14. I set high expectations for all learners in the classroom					

**SECTION 3: SUPPORTING FOR SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION AND TEACHING**

The purpose of this section is to obtain your views on some contributing issues to your support encountered so far in your career.					
Place a tick (✓) next to the value that best applies for each of the following.					
	<b>1</b> <b>Very dissatisfied</b>	<b>2</b> <b>Dissatisfied</b>	<b>3</b> <b>Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied</b>	<b>4</b> <b>Satisfied</b>	<b>5</b> <b>Very satisfied</b>
4.1. Manageable teaching load					
4.2. Opportunities to be mentored by the HOD					
4.3. Adequate level of supportive classroom visit					
4.4 Experienced a subject specific induction					
4.5. Experienced a general school induction					
4.6. Students' eagerness to engage in learning					
4.7. Appropriate students' behaviour					
4.8. School based professional development sessions targeting teaching process					
4.9. Choice in variety of teaching resources					
4.10. Option to use Creole with low achieving students					
4.11. Opportunities to be mentored by a colleague from the same department other than the HOD					

**SECTION 4: FACTORS PERTINENT TO EFFECTIVE PRACTICES**

The purpose of this section is to obtain your perception of factors that you feel is importance for the effectiveness of **your teaching**.

Put a tick (✓) next to the value that best describes the importance of the following to your teaching effectiveness

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
	<b>Not at all important</b>	<b>Low importance</b>	<b>Moderately important</b>	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Extremely important</b>
3.1. Students' motivation					
3.2. Opportunities for professional growth					
3.3. Preparation time at school					
3.4. Classroom discipline					
3.5. Dealing with individual differences among students					
3.6. Ability to involve students in their learning					
3.7. Maintaining a relationship with parents					
3.8. Manageable teaching load					
3.9. Ability to teach struggling learners					
3.10. Resources to implement curriculum					
3.11. The emotional satisfaction of working in a school					
3.12. Receiving feedback on my teaching and my students' progress					

## SECTION 5: MANAGEMENT INVOLVEMENT IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

The purpose of this section is to obtain your perception of your senior management team and HODs' involvement in the teaching and learning process.					
Put a tick (✓) next to the statement that best describes the current situation at your school at the moment					
	<b>1</b> Never	<b>2</b> Rarely	<b>3</b> Sometimes	<b>4</b> Very Often	<b>5</b> Always
2.1. Expectation for teaching and learning is made clear by the management					
2.2. My class is frequently being observed by the management					
2.4. I am given frequent feedback on my teaching by the management					
2.5. My scheme is regularly checked					
2.6. Individual mentoring is carried out by my supervisors					
2.6. The management has encouraged me to focus on improving students' attainment					
2.7. My school has written policies for learning and teaching such as homework policy.					
2.8. The management expects that we follow the teaching and learning policies					
2.9. I am required to complete my post-lesson evaluation and act upon any concerns identified					
2.10. A number of daily tasks performed by management focuses on teaching and learning					
2.11: My supervisor discusses my students' achievement with me					
2.12. I receive critical feedback on the potential effectiveness of my plan					

**SECTION 6: EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND SCHOOL CULTURE**

The purpose of this section is to get your views on what you consider effective teaching to be as well as the extent to which your current school culture is facilitating it.

7.1. With reference to your own teaching, what are some elements that make up effective teaching?

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7.2. What are some of those elements in your teaching that you feel needs improvement to make you teach more effective, if any?

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7.2. What aspects of your school facilitate or encourage you to teach effectively?

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7.3. Describe any aspects of your current school that could encourage your effectiveness as a teacher further

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8.0. Please add any comments that you feel will add to your responses given on this questionnaire

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Thank you for your time and contribution. If you would like a summary of the findings do not hesitate to e-mail me at [Steve.Confait@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Steve.Confait@vuw.ac.nz).



## Appendix N: Comparison of Management Notion of Definition, Standard and Expectation for Effective Teaching

Definition		Standard		Expectation	
<b>School A</b>					
<b>Management Views</b>	<p>Ensure good planning, teaching, and the commitment to teacher responsibilities that extended outside the classroom.</p> <p>Making prior preparation in readiness for class, being consistent in routines, teaching meaningful topics connected to students' everyday experiences. Allowing students to voice their opinions in a democratic setting. Being firm but fair. Seeing humour as important, managing the class, watching out for bullying, and using lots of praise.</p>	<p>Poor students' behaviour stemming from bad planning</p> <p>Students' poor grasps of verbal and written English.</p> <p>Expatriate teachers' inability to code switch or code mix were seen as not facilitating students' understanding and engagement in learning.</p> <p>Some skills to be assessed by summative examinations not being taught well.</p> <p>Variation between teachers in their ability to manage their classrooms.</p> <p>Inadequate use of basic strategies and routines to manage students' behaviour and learning.</p>	<p>Organise the classroom to accommodate learning tasks</p> <p>Teaching meaningful topics delivered through range of approaches.</p> <p>Topics and approaches that engage students and connect to their experience</p> <p>Praise students, be firm but fair, have a good sense of humour and promote good behaviour.</p> <p>Improve students' achievements.</p> <p>Keep the necessary administrative records such as weekly lesson plan.</p> <p>Deliver effective lesson that maximise students' outcome.</p> <p>Commit to students' learning outside normal school time, for instance extra-lesson.</p> <p>Use differentiated instructions.</p>		
<b>School B</b>					
<b>Management Views</b>	<p>An effective teacher is someone who can engage, motivate, and manage classroom.</p> <p>Key to effectiveness is subject knowledge and pedagogy.</p> <p>Someone who appropriately plans for students' learning and provide for all students by executing set learning objectives</p>	<p>Management participants questioned some teachers' expertise given less than stringent central recruitment procedures and the absence of schools' involvement.</p> <p>Staff shortages restricting deployment.</p> <p>Teachers' inability to teach across all subject areas impeding standard</p> <p>Infrequent monitoring for accountability and support purposes</p> <p>External evaluation reported that in about 55% classes' teachers' strengths outweighed weaknesses</p>	<p>Broad, realistic, and flexible expectations.</p> <p>Engage students, keep them on task, and improve their learning.</p> <p>Plan appropriately for diverse learners' needs and abilities.</p> <p>Possess an array of effective of classroom management skills.</p> <p>Get students' attention and use teaching techniques that engage all students.</p> <p>Compromised expectation not based on ideals and due consideration given to a range of external and internal factors.</p>		
<b>School C</b>					
<b>Management Views</b>	<p>Attainment of learning objectives assessed through a review of students' understanding.</p> <p>An effective teacher is someone who acts as a model in the eyes of stakeholders, plan, and teach with student's learning in mind, differentiate instruction, and form good student-teacher relationship inside and outside the classroom</p>	<p>Teachers' reported to students' lack of motivation to learn which impinged on their learning and achievement.</p> <p>Teachers' dissatisfaction stemming from students' reluctance to engage in their learning.</p> <p>A combination of teachers' short-comings in effective classroom management and a view of behaviour policy as not deterring disciplinary issues.</p> <p>Limited resources restricting curriculum implementation and student centred learning</p> <p>Signs of team-work in some departments.</p> <p>Teacher absenteeism, particular by teachers with difficult classes.</p>	<p>A disciplined classroom with students engaged in assigned tasks.</p> <p>Effective classroom management.</p> <p>Assigning research work to students.</p> <p>On time for class and school duties and willing to take up duties outside the confines of the classroom.</p> <p>Ongoing research to augment expertise.</p> <p>Supplementary work on hand to provide for different ability students</p> <p>Prevent disruption and push bright students</p> <p>Provided timely feedback to students on their work.</p> <p>Involve students' in fieldwork.</p> <p>Be mobile in the classroom and engage students</p> <p>Nurture a positive relationship with students and be prepared to listen to their problems.</p> <p>Form network within and across departments, collaborate, and share good practices</p>		

## Appendix O: Comparison of Pertinent Beliefs and Features in Teaching Practices of the Three Beginning Teachers

Teacher, qualification and experience	Teacher motivation	Teaching approaches	Students' participation	Less achieving students	Feedback	View of students learning and performance
<b>Felicity</b> <b>Higher Diploma</b>  <b>2<sup>nd</sup> year</b>	She expressed her motivation and passion for working with learners in areas that extended beyond classroom learning, as exemplified by her pastoral role as HOY.	She had established some routines including collection and distribution of homework and textbooks by students without teacher initiation. Some misconceptions observed in her teaching. A greater focus was placed on direct instruction. Lesson observation and planning revealed missed opportunities for lesson inquiry	She promoted students' participation and allowed students' to challenge presented materials through questioning. Low difficulty level of questions and sparse probing did not sufficiently challenged students.	She had the flexibility to select from curriculum and use such materials to teach less achieving students. She used code switching and mixing. There was a greater focus on classroom management She was still juggling between approaches in classroom management	She was often not prompt in returning students work partly due to her role as head of cycle C. She encouraged students to research further on materials encountered in class.	She perceived social problems of students as impacting on their learning, especially in low achieving classes. She was somewhat satisfied with some students' academic performance.
<b>Meg</b> <b>Higher Diploma</b>  <b>3<sup>rd</sup> year</b>	She reported satisfaction with her work but noted some concerns with students' misbehaviour and poor attitude towards their learning. Meg expressed disappointment with the slow pace taken by Moe to initiate a local B.Ed. programme.	She used a combination of direct teaching and student-centred with more focus on the former. The teacher believed in controlling what students learnt. She sees students' as lacking what she envisioned; there was less focus on co-constructing knowledge. Some use of scaffolding. She believes that effective learning entails strict adherence to order in class.	Her lessons were marked by reasonable level of students' participation.  Students' verbal responses were restricted to one word or short phrases, reflective of recall types of questions from teacher.	She used numerous group and individual activities. Confirmatory practical work meant missed opportunities for students' skills acquisition and development in scientific enquiry. Her lessons were highly structured and "controlled" students' were engaged not challenged. She used code switching and mixing.	She frequently collected and marked students' work with general feedback. In all lessons observed connections were made to previous materials through questioning.	Language barrier and attitude to learning even in some classes with good behaviour was seen as an issue. She saw students as underperforming therefore emphasized on giving them the "right notes" . There was a focussed on getting the "right" answers
<b>Ryan</b> <b>Degree and Diploma</b>  <b>2<sup>nd</sup> year</b>	Ryan reported to the trust and expectation from management for his work, which served to motivate him. He articulated a dissatisfaction with students' misbehaviour. Ryan was contemplating a transfer to teacher education due to a range of factors (poor image of the teaching profession, lack of resources and insufficient remuneration).	He engaged in detailed planning and preparation with hand-outs and worksheets mostly for high achieving students. He did not confine himself to the curriculum, he believed in teaching for learning and not solely assessment. Ryan used mostly direct- teaching. He acknowledged his use of student-centred approaches as restricted due to students' limited participation. He adhered to some routines; like dictating notes with high achieving students. Some misconceptions were identified.	There were infrequent practical and group activities. He focussed mainly on individual exercise on prepared worksheets. Some reluctance of students to challenge materials was partly due to his "sage on stage" attitude . Students' verbal responses were limited to one word or short phrases.	He used code switching and mixing which he reported as facilitating students' understanding and reducing disruption. He had challenges with classroom management and in engaging students.	He frequently corrected and dispensed worksheets and homework, with some specific feedback.	He was generally concerned with the poor performances of students across his classes.