

# The learning experiences of learners transitioning from rural and township schools to ex-Model C schools<sup>1</sup>

**Theresa Joakim Kanyopa, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa**  
**Dipane Joseph Hlalele, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa<sup>2</sup>**

## ABSTRACT

Soon after attaining democracy in 1994, the South African government introduced the Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996), which came to act as an instrument for the elimination of all segregation from the exclusionary education system of the apartheid era. The Schools Act proclaimed the right to education for all learners and provided the Department of Education with guidelines on removing all segregation features in the education system. The aim of this study was to examine the learning experiences of learners in an ex-Model C school who have transitioned from rural and township schools. The study was conceptualised within the theoretical framework of Purkey and Siegel's invitational education theory. The participants and research site were selected using purposive and convenience sampling. Data were generated through art-based and focus group discussion methods. Findings from this study suggest that learners in ex-Model C schools experience both inviting and uninviting elements in the learning environment. Learners identified as inviting factors security, resources and small numbers of learners in the classroom, while as disinventing factors they mention language barriers, culturally oriented programmes and a lack of orientation. This paper argues that practices advised by invitational education theory should apply in every ex-Model C school environment in order to enhance the learning experiences of learners transitioning from rural and township schools.

**Keywords:** ex-Model C schools, township school, learning experience, learners, transitioning

## BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Studies by Goldstone (2017), Slabbert and Naude (2018), Canham (2019), and Slabbert and Naude (2020) have interrogated the changes implemented by the South African government in the wake of democracy after 1994. The major change in South African education soon after the end of apartheid that is reported in these studies was the removal of inequalities and desegregation of schools. These changes were aimed at addressing the colonial injustices and discrimination that were further institutionalised through the apartheid segregation policy. The South African Schools Act (SASA no. 84 of 1996) was seen as a mechanism to redress all forms of institutionalised discrimination against learners based on their

1 Date of submission: 23 June 2020  
 Date of review outcome: 20 September 2020  
 Date of acceptance: 15 February 2021

2 ORCID: 0000-0003-4455-4876

background, race and socioeconomic status. Hence, SASA has been viewed as an attempt to remove all forms of discrimination and prejudice in the South African education system and inculcate respect for and appreciation of diversity. With regard to the political shift of 1994 in South Africa, one of the major education transformations introduced was that of school choice, whereby learners were allowed to attend any school of their choice (Stuurman, 2013). To this end, Canham (2019) affirms that the preamble of the new education system insisted that the country is no longer under a segregated education system, and it thus proclaimed the right to education for all learners by achieving racial equity and equal access to education opportunities. De Kadt et al. (2014) and Zoch (2017) stress the significance of the new system, which involved establishing inclusive and fair school governing bodies (SGBs).

The new context enabled parents and families to take advantage of the freedom of school choice by transferring their children to schools with quality education. As Tabane (2010) and Chisholm (2015) report, most parents perceive the public rural and township schools as dysfunctional and poorly resourced. This results in the translocation of learners from these schools to ex-Model C schools, which is mainly influenced by factors such as quality of the school, qualified teachers, safety, and well-resourced learning environments, which were perceived to offer better education. These learners would have to actualise themselves within two different social situations, the one representing their home and the other the school. This major movement raises many questions. For instance, what is the role of SGBs, teachers, and other staff, as well as learners at ex-Model C schools in supporting the transitional learners' learning experiences?

Existing research affirms that learners in this transition are faced with diverse challenges as they try to adapt to the new school environment (Coetzee, 2013; Banks, 2014; Machard, 2015). Jacoby (2016) reveals that learners become self-conscious, lack self-esteem, and lack confidence in their learning abilities as they transition to a new school environment. Yet most of the studies done on learning diversity in ex-Model C schools failed to explore ways of enhancing the learning experience of learners in the transitioning from township and rural schools. This prompted the authors of this study to examine learners' experiences after their transition from rural and township schools to ex-Model C schools and to propose ways in which ex-Model C schools can enhance the learning experiences of such learners. Hence, the following research questions were used to discover to what extent this school demonstrates respect, optimism, trust and care towards these learners:

1. What is the current situation of learners transitioning from rural and township to ex-Model C schools?
2. What are the learning experiences of the learners transitioning from rural and township to ex-Model C schools?
3. How can the learning experiences of the learners be enhanced transitioning from rural and township to ex-Model C schools?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This section unpacks literature related to the learning experiences of learners making this transition, and overviews existing literature on the trends, relationships and different qualities of learning experiences in South African schools. On the whole, in reviewing the literature, the authors identified the gap and inconsistency in learning experiences for learners transitioning from rural and township to ex-Model C schools.

Essentially, it becomes evident from the limited body of relevant literature that the issue of learners transitioning to ex-Model C schools has been under-researched. For instance, Canham (2019: 155) asserts that 'the quality of the learning experience of the learners transitioning from rural and township to their destination schools (ex-Model C schools) remains largely under-researched and little understood'.

However, a recurrent theme in the literature on desegregation and multicultural learning in ex-Model C schools is that this is mostly a one-way process for the learners from rural and township schools moving to suburban schools (Monageng, 2012; Chisholm, 2015). Similarly, Bartlett (2016) and Kanyopa (2019) report that most parents perceive public rural and township schools as dysfunctional and poorly resourced, while ex-Model C schools are perceived to offer better education.

Moreover, the literature reveals the challenges and influencing factors that hinder the desegregation process within the education system (Slabbert & Naude, 2018). In essence, work by such scholars as Alexander and Mpisi (2014) and Christie and McKinney (2017) reveals that the desegregation process in ex-Model C schools seems not to result in improved racial relations. Instead, most learners transitioning into these schools are being 'converted and invited to be assimilated into white culture that operates in schools' environment' (Christie & McKinney, 2017: 18). Thus, the assimilationist culture of these schools makes learners of other races feel inferior as they always feel inadequate when compared to white learners.

Slabbert and Naude (2020) further affirm that learners from rural and township schools are confronted with racial tension which results in one racial group undermining the other. In the same vein, Stuurman (2013: 22) argues that 'in most cases race has remained the dominant factor in the marking of social privilege in ex-Model C schools'. Consequently, learners transitioning from rural and township to ex-Model C schools tend to experience some ambiguity regarding their identities within the learning environment. Goldstone (2017) similarly argues that learners transitioning into the ex-Model C school find this process ambiguous and troubling. Additionally, Slabbert and Naude (2020: 11) demonstrate that 'some of white learners in ex-Model C schools do not see themselves as Africans, rather they see themselves as Europeans'. As a result, learners of other races – such as Blacks, Indians and Coloureds – find difficulty in constructing their identities in the environment of these schools (Slabbert, 2015; Bartlett, 2016). Thus Bartlett (2016: 44) argues that 'it is impossible to escape the tensions and struggles of racism and whiteness prejudices in the ex-Model C schools'. The result is continued stereotyping of the learners from 'other races', especially of those who are transitioning from rural and township schools. These learners constantly encounter negative stereotypes about themselves: they are labelled as inferior in relation to the white learners at these schools.

A further challenging experience is the lack of academic support for learners in this transition. At present, only a few supporting services exist in the ex-Model C schools, and these services are not 'compatible with the diverse needs of economic and environment historically backgrounds deprived by each learner at school' (Machard, 2015: 22). Soupen (2017) further reports that learners transitioning to ex-Model C schools experience psychological and emotional problems that become evident in dysfunctional relationships between themselves and other learners at school or between them and some teachers of other races.

Though ways are needed to enhance the learning experiences of the learners making this transition, the findings from the relevant literature above reveals that most ex-Model C schools lack the qualified employees and suitable support structures that could provide these learners with meaningful learning experiences. The authors of this study argue that effective learning is built from the flow of learners' experiences and that enhancement of the learning experience is the central consideration for the successful achievement and improved academic performance of the learners making this transition.

## INVITATIONAL EDUCATION THEORY

Invitational education theory is a theory of practices in educational settings that overcome tough psychosocial challenges (Purkey & Aspy, 2003). It was introduced in late 1970s by American psychologists William Purkey and Betty Siegel. Although this theory originated in the United States of America (USA), the theory

is popular throughout the world as it focuses on how to create and maintain a safe and inviting educational setting 'that summons people to realise their full potential' (Purkey & Novak, 2008: 11). The theory was developed after it was realised that we needed a greater understanding of what influences human failure and success in educational settings (Purkey & Siegel, 2003; Haigh, 2011). As a result, this theory came to highlight that a vital component in any educational organisation is people; therefore, schools and other educational institutions should view them as valuable, able and responsible (Haigh, 2011; Cain, 2013). In addition, this theory advocates for the creation of an inclusive and integrative learning environment by schools to cultivate respect, optimism and trust for diverse learners to allow everyone to grow and develop.

Ford (2015) affirms that invitational education theory is a new lens in educational psychology research and a critical paradigm as the theory constructs itself on addressing the challenges in the educational settings. Furthermore, research by Steyn (2016) maintains that, unlike other theories that have been introduced in the educational field, invitational education theory 'provides a critical framework that intentionally address the entire nature of human existence and opportunities in the educational organisation that makes life more exciting, satisfying while enriching the peoples' experiences' (Steyn, 2016: 59). This is aligned with the purpose of this study, which is to propose ways in which ex-Model C schools can enhance the learning experiences for the learners transitioning from rural and township schools.

The authors chose this lens because it emphasises the concrete schools' practices, safety and successful transformation of the problems that are likely to harm or demolish learners' ability in a school environment. Research by Shaw, Siegel and Schoenlein (2013: 24) reveals that 'the invitational education theory is transformative in nature' and is thus aligned with the critical paradigm that guides this study, which is itself based on a 'transformation agenda by placing more emphasis on the issues like reconstruction and restructuring of social and political power' (Creswell & Poth, 2018: 224) to empower and emancipate the marginalised.

On the whole, the transformative tendency of both the critical paradigm and the invitational education theory emerged as a countertheme to this study: being able to acknowledge the social reconstruction of ex-Model C schools' practices and programmes into a more multicultural and supportive manner which results in the enhancement of the learning experiences of the learners transitioning from rural and township schools.

## METHODOLOGY

This article emerged from a qualitative study which was conducted in an ex-Model C school in the largest city of KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa. The study was grounded in the Participatory Action Research (PAR) design and embraces the values of the critical paradigm as its worldview. Generally, qualitative research is a methodology that is concerned with developing explanations of social phenomena as they occur naturally in the research context (Ritchie et al., 2013). It is useful in describing participants' behaviour, feelings, experiences and perspectives; thus, the qualitative research approach is appropriate to this study because of its focus on the learning experiences of these learners in transition.

PAR, specifically, is a qualitative research design that focuses on solving certain problems in research contexts with the full participation of research participants (Scotland, 2012; Wahyuni, 2012). The authors chose the PAR design because the main aim of this study is to propose ways in which ex-Model C schools can enhance the learning experiences of these learners. In essence, the worldviews and assumptions of the critical paradigm intend to emancipate or transform society (Cohen, Manion & Marrison, 2018). Its historical realist perspective recognises that many realities in society have been shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic and gender values that intentionally favour one group over others (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006; Scotland, 2012). It is also known as a transformative paradigm because its main agenda

is to change social and political views and evaluate all forms of inequalities that exist in a society, while seeking the empowerment and emancipation of people in that society (Atkins & Wallace, 2012).

These commitments were thus reflected in the study, which aimed to transform some of the practices and programmes in this ex-Model C school on the basis of invitational education theory, which aims to create safe and inviting learning environment that will help learners grow and develop, which, in this case, were all learners transitioning from rural and township schools. Again, the transformative nature of this theory seems to concur with both the critical paradigm and PAR design, as these three concepts aim to liberate people by 'promoting full engagement of all people in the research process especially those who are oppressed and marginalised so as to act towards their deprived freedom' (Kanyopa, 2018: 47).

### SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

The research context and participants (the co-researchers) were selected using a purposive and convenient sampling method. The researchers deliberately selected the research site (location of the study) and eight participants because they were easily accessible and convenient to the researchers. The selected school is located in a suburban area known as the Upper Highway area or the Outer West region of Durban City (King, 2013) in the Pinetown education district. The school Peace primary school (pseudonym) is an ex-Model C school located in a predominantly white area, followed by Indians, Coloureds and a small number of Blacks. It was established in 1970 and is also known as one of the most popular primary schools. It is a co-educational public school that offers quality education from grades 1 to 7. Peace primary school is also known as one of the educational forerunners in Durban with an enrolment of over 400 learners and 150 staff members, which include teachers, administrative staff, interns, groundskeepers, and aftercare staff. Every year, the school has a record of about thirty learners who transit from rural and township schools to it.

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) report that a purposive sample is a non-probability sample, whereby selection of the participants and research site is based on the characteristics and the objective of the study. It is also known as judgmental, selective or subjective sampling, whilst convenience (or availability) sampling is a non-probability sampling method, whereby the participants are selected because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researchers (Flick, 2014). In particular, the sample of this study comprised two female and two male grade-6 learners (pseudonyms: L1, L2, L3 and L4) who for four years have transitioned from rural and township to ex-Model C school and were between the ages of 12 and 15 years; two grade-6 teachers: a female (T1) and male (T2); and two female parents of the learners (P1 and P2). The reason for selecting only two learners' parents and not all four was because they were on the School Government Board (SGB) and are also family friends of one of the researchers. This was convenient; they were easily accessible to the researcher. All the participants are beneficial to this study as they were able to share their ideas and explain how schools can enhance the learning experiences of the transitioning learners.

### DATA GENERATION METHOD

This study used a focus group discussion and a drawing art-based method to generate data. The two parents and the two teachers, who are the class teachers for these learners, were engaged in the focus group discussion. Scholars affirm that focus group discussion is a method of generating data that is cheaper and quicker (Krueger & Casey, 2014; Yin, 2015). In the same vein, Creswell and Creswell (2018: 103) affirm that 'focus group is a quicker and cheaper data generation method, whereby the process of generating data is done by the social gathering, conversation and discussion between the researcher and participants'. Further, Cohen et al. (2013) and Padgett (2016) postulate that focus group discussion is a method of data generation that enables a researcher to explore the participant's feelings, thoughts and behaviours.

The discussion and debates in the focus group provided this study with rich data as it enabled full engagement with the participants in discussions through open-ended questions. Participants were able to reflect, discuss and argue with each other to produce in-depth information on the relevant learning experiences. Additionally, this method enabled participants to critically discuss issues and suggest solutions to how learning experiences could be enhanced. The focus group discussion was divided into four phases, as influenced by PAR design. The first phase was **planning**, whereby the participants as co-researchers and the researchers started by discussing the ex-Model C school's programmes, policies and practices that seem to influence the learning experiences of the learners transitioning from rural and township schools. The second phase was **action** in which co-researchers were asked to reconstruct or restructure those programmes, policies and practices in their daily routines. The modification inclines them to be more inclusive, to accommodate learner diversity and to enhance their learning experiences, regardless of their background, ethnic group or culture. In the third phase, both the researchers and co-researchers **observed** the daily schedules at the school to determine if the adjustment and restructuring of programmes and practices brought any significant change to the learning experiences of learners transitioning from rural and township schools. In the fourth phase, co-researchers and researchers **reflected** on whether there is a need for more reconstruction or adjustment of anything in the school environment which they think could enhance the learning experiences of these learners.

The study further used an art-based data generation method to explore the learning experiences of the learners transitioning from rural and township to ex-Model C schools. Rule and John (2011: 70) affirm: 'Drawing is a method that creates opportunity for the participants to generate data that is not contingent on the language skills'. This method also provides access to unconscious views and beliefs. Furthermore, this method entails participants' thoughts by drawing and talking or drawing and writing about the meaning rooted in their drawings (Khanare, 2012). Therefore, the drawing process in this study was undertaken in four sessions that lasted one hour. The first session was to explain to the participants (four grade-6 learners, two boys and two girls) how to do the drawings. The researchers showed them examples of how to use metaphors in drawings; thus, the first session corresponds to the **planning** phase of PAR, which guides the researcher and co-researchers on the research preparations. The second session was the drawing session in which pencils, rubbers and white A4 papers were issued to the participants. They were advised to think deeply about themselves for ten minutes. Then, they were also asked what ways they think the ex-Model C school can use to enhance their learning experiences and why they think they need enhancements. Again, the second session corresponds to the second phase of PAR, which is **action**. Furthermore, in the third session, participants were asked to draw a picture using a metaphor to describe 'who they are and explain what the picture means to them'. The participants were given 20 minutes to draw and add a caption to the drawing. This session corresponds to the third phase of PAR, which leads the co-researchers to **observe** things that influence the enhancement of learning experiences. Lastly, during the fourth session, which lasted twenty minutes, each of the participants was given three minutes to share or talk about their drawings and questions were asked by other group members, as well as by the researchers. This session corresponds to the fourth phase of PAR, which allows co-researchers to **reflect** on the things that they discovered and those that represent their experiences, knowledge and understandings in their drawings. Furthermore, the researchers probed the participants with more questions to gain a deeper understanding of the issues investigated. This session was audio-recorded with the consent from the participants. Thus, the use of this interactive art-based method enabled the learners to speak out and to interact with one another through dialogue.

## DATA ANALYSIS

The data generated from the drawings and transcribed focus group discussions were analysed by using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA is a problem-oriented approach that is transdisciplinary and consists of sets of theories and methods that are used in education research (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997).



In the same vein, Van Dijk (2015) and Gee (2014) argue that CDA is a multidisciplinary approach that focuses on understanding the social problems that seriously threaten the lives and well-being of people in a society. Moreover, the primary aim of CDA is to provide the tools for addressing the challenges in educational sites, systems and practices by using its moves from description and interpretation to explaining how discourse constructs itself in the school's social world (Van Dijk, 2015).

Therefore, this study utilised CDA to analyse the transcribed textual and visual data retrieved from the drawing and focus group discussion processes. Kanyopa (2018) argues that the critical paradigm and CDA are both socially committed models that address different challenges in educational sites through a range of theoretical perspectives. Data analysis in this study took place under three levels of CDA. Fairclough (2003) and Wodak and Meyer (2015) assert that, to accomplish analysis by means of CDA, data has to go through (i) textual analysis, (ii) discursive practices analysis, and (iii) sociocultural analysis. Consequently, on the first level, which is textual data analysis, the raw data from the focus group discussion and the drawing sessions were processed to see if there were any similar data to inform the themes and codes. On the second level of CDA, which aims to interpret the configuration of discourse practices in an organisation, the researchers were mostly concerned with how the participants interpret their drawings and transform their texts into meaningful data. On the third level of CDA, which is sociocultural analysis, both data descriptions and interpretations were analysed to suggest a meaningful explanation of why and how social practices should be constituted to enhance the learning experiences of the learners transitioning from rural and township schools.

### ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The ethical considerations in research involve what is proper or improper and right or wrong when undertaking a research project (Gajjar, 2013). Therefore, the authors of this study sought the permission from the principal of the school, and the selected teachers, parents and learners by issuing them with an informed consent letter with a declaration to be signed. For learners, because they are minors, permission was sought from their parents or guardians and they signed assent forms, which were written in simple English for their better understanding of the aims and objectives of the study. This was done prior to inclusion in the study. The explanation of all ethical issues and their rights to participate in the study, including voluntary participation, was clearly given before data collection. The anonymity of all the participants and the relevant school was protected by using pseudonyms.

### TRUSTWORTHINESS

Leung (2015) affirms that, in order to achieve trustworthiness, a study must use the proper methods of data generation and data analysis. As mentioned earlier, data were generated through the focus group discussion and art-based method. The focus group transcriptions were issued to the participants to read and confirm correctness of interpretation and to verify that no information was omitted or manipulated. Furthermore, **credibility** was ensured by selecting appropriate participants, who were learners transitioning from rural and township to ex-Model C schools, and their teachers and parents in order to obtain useful data. Again, this study ensured **confirmability** by focusing on the reflections of the participants and maintaining a sense of awareness and openness to the study. The issue of **dependability** was made tenable through the discussion by explaining how and why the participants and research site were selected for the study, how the data were generated and for how long. Furthermore, this study ensured **transferability** by providing a dense description of its population, context, sample and sampling procedures, data generation methods, and data analysis. The next section provides direct quotes from the participants' transcribed text in order to add to the richness of the findings presented.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This section presents the findings of the study on the learners transitioning from township and rural school to ex-Model C schools. The findings are presented under three main themes: (i) the influence of learners' behaviour on the environment, (ii) multifaceted learning experiences of learners transitioning from rural and township to ex-Model C school, and (iii) perceptions on strategies for enhancing learning experiences.

### Theme 1: The influence of learners' behaviour on the environment

This theme emerged from the findings that transitioning to the new school environment had implications for the learners' behaviour. While exploring the observation of learners during their first days of transitioning, the comments made by the teachers and parents showed that the learners, like other people, should be viewed as responsible, able and valuable, and, therefore, should be treated accordingly (Hunter, 2015; Ford, 2015; Purkey & Novak, 2008). Thus, the participants' (teachers and parents) responses indicate that, during the transitioning phase, learners are confronted with some challenges in adjusting to the new school environment and this affect their behaviours.

T2 (male educator) elaborated:

... what I observed is normal for every human being not to be sure when facing new environment... new people... new this, new that... so, even these learners in the beginning they were not sure about most of everything in our school environment, even the things that they learned and this affects them negatively...

T1 (female educator) noted that

... for what I saw from these learners during their first days of transitioning was the struggling to cope with our school culture... as we all know how hard is resentment towards a new culture especially our school culture which is mostly based on Britain...

Again, parent participants asked if there were any changes or improvement in learners' behaviour once they transitioned from rural and township schools' behaviours.

P1 (first parent) indicated:

... I have noticed so many positive changes on my son's academic progress... but the amazing thing is that my son became so passionate with sports... and especially rugby... (she smiles) ... he even joined the rugby school team.

In the same vein, P2 (second parent) concurred:

... before my daughter was so lazy with school's work... but since she moved to ex-Model C school she become very committed and responsible for her school works... and yep... she improved her marks so much compared to what she was get in a rural school.

Therefore, this theme reveals that the school environment has a big influence on learners' behaviour. After transitioning to ex-Model C schools, the transitioning learners seemed to be motivated in their new school environment. The co-researchers' responses indicate that learners made significant improvements, which are mainly because of the inviting learning environment created in ex-Model C school. To support this, Goldstone (2017) argues that learners who attend ex-Model C schools experience greater safety, which results in an increase in their self-confidence and self-esteem. Additionally, Kanyopa (2019) affirms that



the ex-Model C school learning environment equips the transitioning learners with the ability to face the development and challenges of today's and tomorrow's worlds.

On the whole, this paper argues that the school environment is both inviting and inclusive, making learners motivated and passionate about their studies. It has also enabled them to develop skills, such as speaking different languages, including English and Afrikaans, and becoming active in extracurricular activities and sport.

## **Theme 2: The multifaceted learning experiences of learners transitioning from rural and township to ex-Model C school**

This theme emerged from the findings: transitioning to the new school environment had a complex impact on the diverse learning experiences of the learners. Both learners and their parents experienced inviting and disinviting factors from the school environment. The participants' responses indicated that all of the participants (learners, teachers and parents) encountered a negative experience during the transitioning phase as follows.

T1 revealed:

I experienced the challenge on getting close with two new learners... only because we are not the same ethnic group... and I think by having rules and expectations visible in our classroom makes them see us as... we are strictly just as those classroom rules and regulations... maybe that is why they do not get so close to us easily...

T2 mentioned:

... ooh... I remember when they were not able to concentrate on multitasks... ooh my God... it was hectic for me as a teacher to spend a lot of time to the one learner... guiding him/her on the one task and make sure the task is successfully... before jump into another one...

On the other hand, parents also had negative experiences during the transitioning phase; for instance, when they faced financial constraints and poor guidance on how to deal with their children's schoolwork. This was evident in their responses.

P2:

... I remember when I transitioning my son to ex-model C school on 2015... few days I was fired from the company where I was working... so I experienced some financial difficulty, then I decided to speak with principal to put my son under the exceptional... but because my son was new at school... my application was declined...

P1 also commented on the insufficient support on understanding their children's' education:

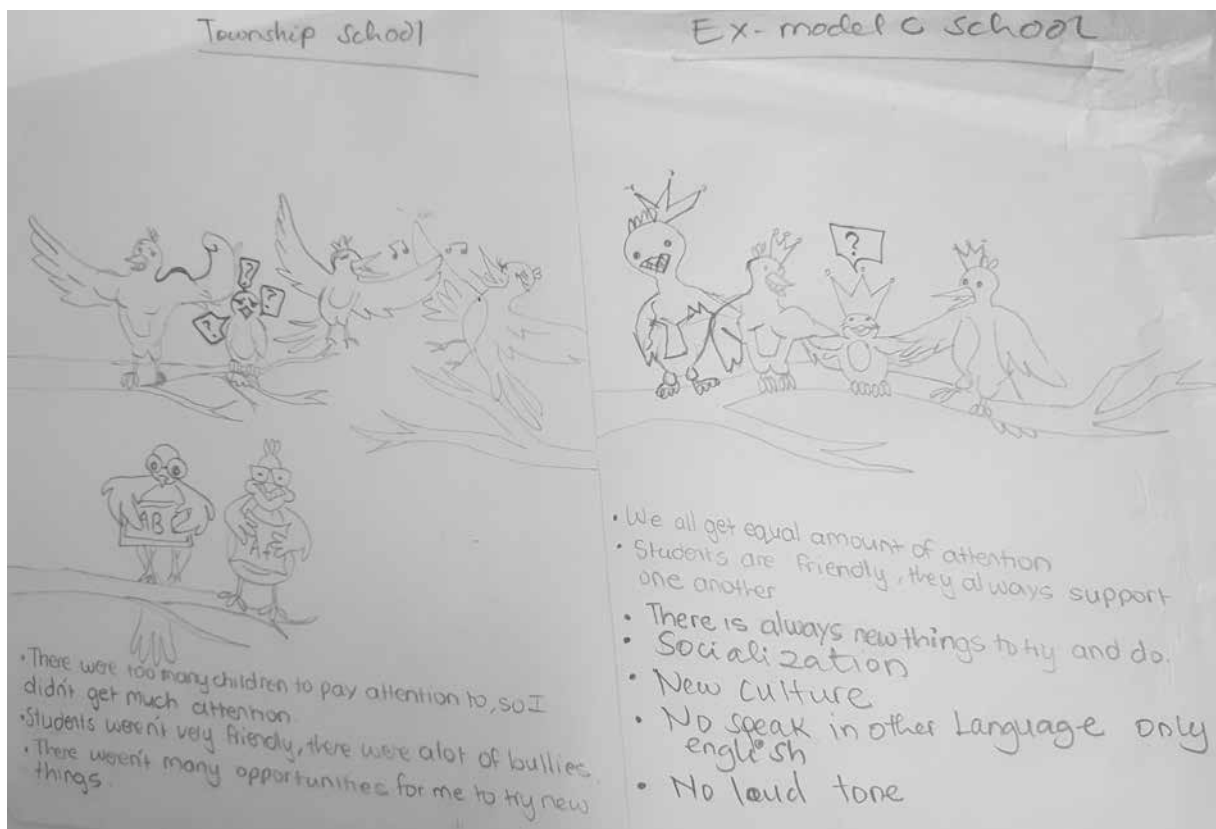
... Hmm... for me it was very frustrating phase... because I total failed to understand my daughter at all... [She laughs] ... I think she was under pressure because every day she was coming with different stories about her new school...

Learners also mentioned a lack of interaction or relationship with their peers. Besides, they experienced a lack of formal orientation to the new school during their transitioning process which resulted in difficulty in accessing their classrooms easily.

L3 (a girl), who described herself as 'a small and confused bird' in her drawing, as shown in Figure 1, explained:

... Mmmm... learners in this school is so difficult to relate with diverse learners... I only managed to talk and communicate after almost three weeks since my transitioning to this school and hmmm! It was so hard to get new friends.

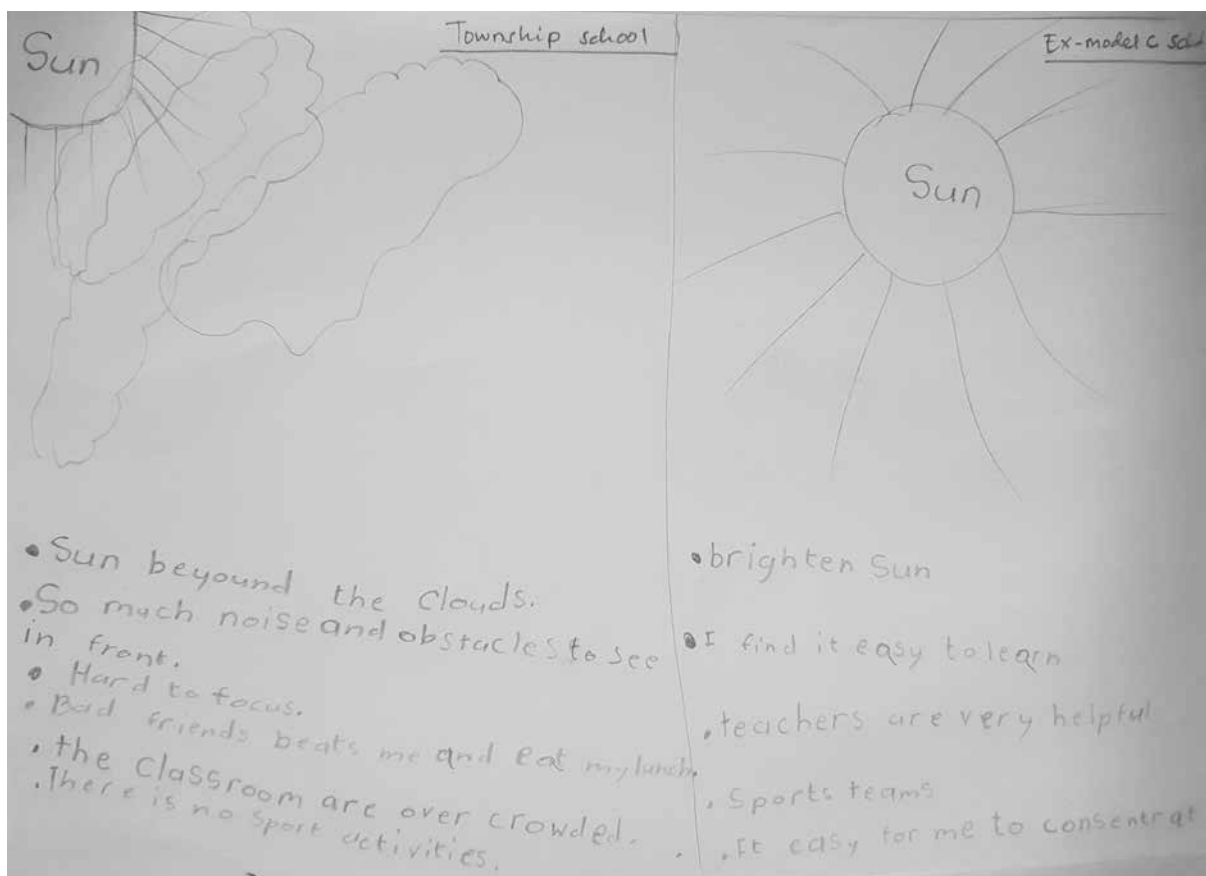
Figure 1:  
L3 who depicts herself as a small and confused bird



In addition, L1 (a boy), who described himself as a sun, and as shown in Figure 2, further indicated:

... this school is big and all the classes are looking the same. I remember I failed to know where my class is. I was late for classes on so many times because I was unable to find my classroom.

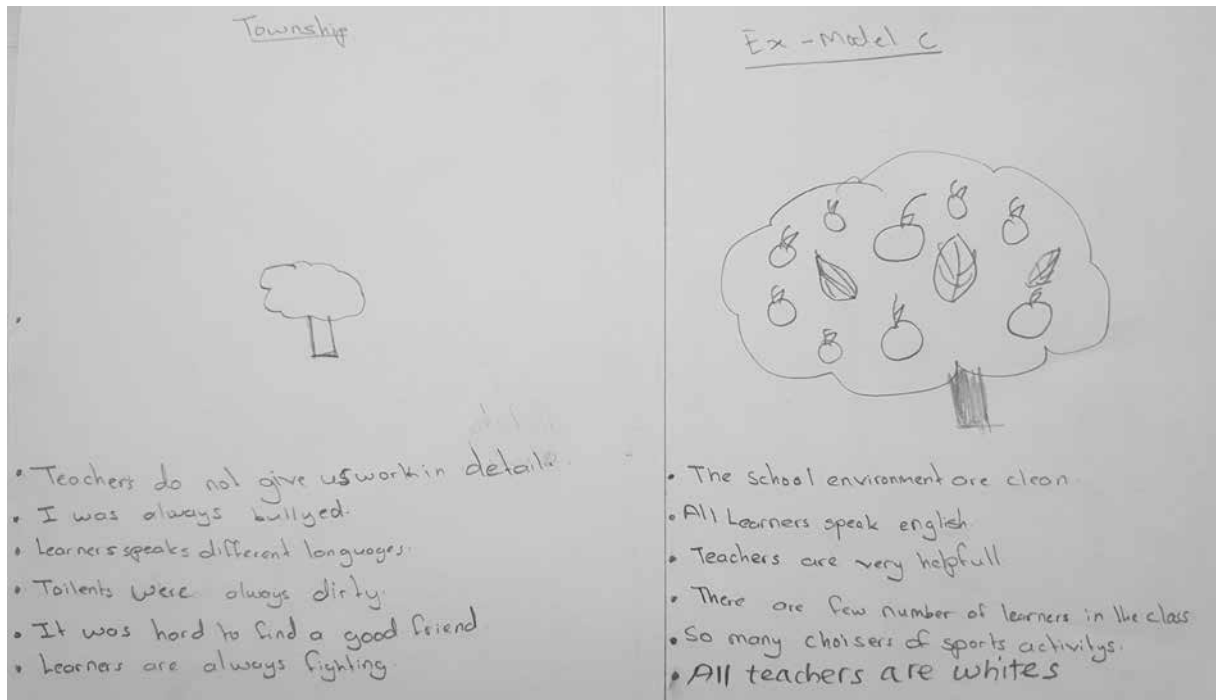
Figure 2:  
L1 who depicts himself as a sun



L4 (a girl) described herself as a tree, as shown in Figure 3:

... ooh it was my first time to be in a school which all teachers are whites... it was not easy for me to understand the way they talk; so quick.

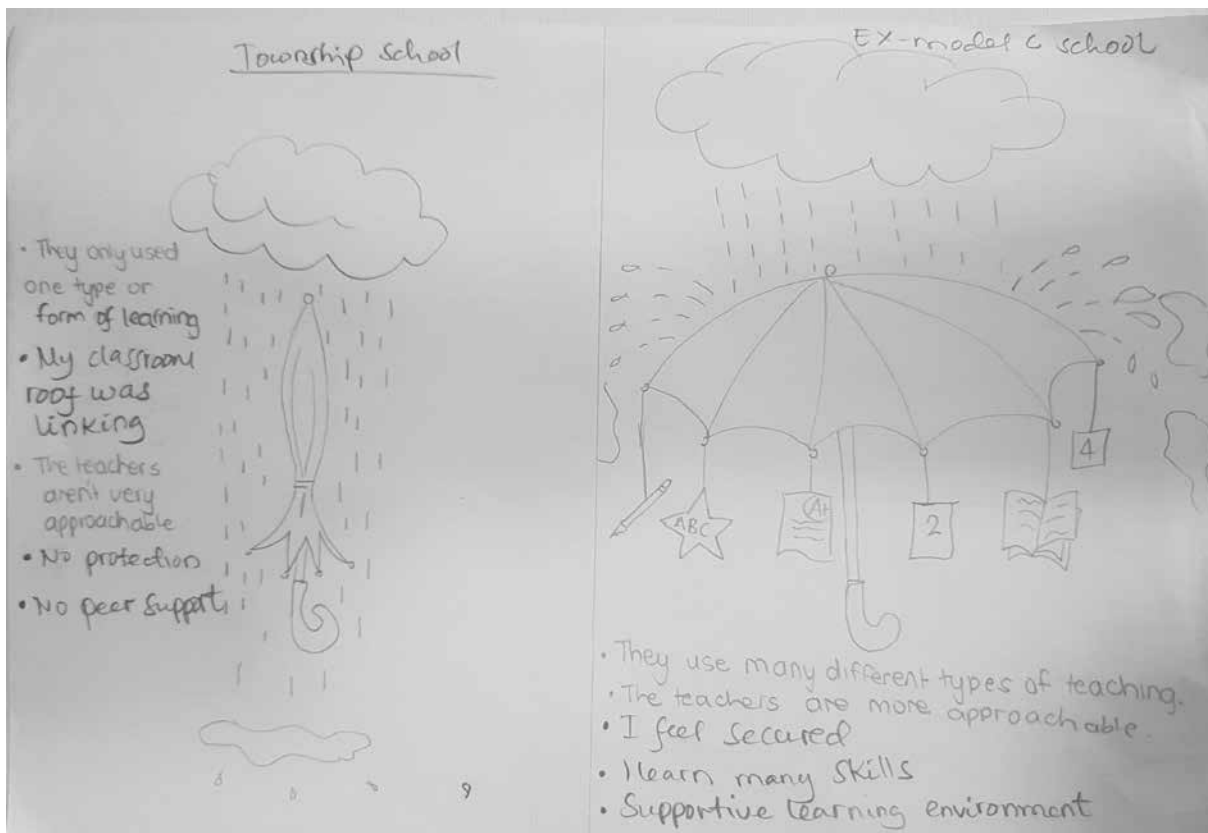
Figure 3:  
L4 who depicts herself as a tree



Despite the negative learning experiences that parents, learners and their teachers faced during the transitioning phase, L2 (a boy), who described himself as an umbrella, and as shown in Figure 4, revealed some positive learning experiences:

.... in this school I feel secured and motivated that is why I become unfolded umbrella... [he smiled] I have five teachers teach me different subjects... my teachers here are helpful... I learn many things like sport, Afrikaans... and children are not naughty like in township school...

Figure 4:  
L2 who depicts himself as an umbrella



Additionally, L3 concurred by saying that

... but here in ex-model C school I found it easy to focus in the classroom, I play netball every week, my class has only 20 children and also my teacher helps me when I don't understand some instructions...

L4 also affirmed that

... now I know to work with computer... I can speak Afrikaans... and I know to play volleyball.

Findings from this theme reveal that learning experiences in this ex-Model C school are complex; during the transitioning phase, both parents and learners experienced both inviting and disinviting factors. As evidenced from Canham (2019), in most cases, learning experiences in predominantly white institutions have contributed to existing stereotypes in the dominant culture of the dominant ethnic group. Therefore, this paper argues that the implementation of invitational education practices in ex-Model C schools will result in an intentionally inviting learning environment, whereby the learners will not only experience the challenges during their transitioning phase but will also experience an intentionally positive learning environment that will help them in their learning progress and development. The findings show, for instance, that transitioning learners received support from people in this school (teachers), developed computer skills, and learned other languages and communication skills. Additionally, the small number of learners in the classroom was regarded as an inviting learning environment in their new school.

### Theme 3: The perceptions on strategies for enhancing learning experiences

During the focus group discussion and the drawing sessions, participants were asked to suggest different strategies that they believe ex-Model C schools can use to enhance their learning experiences. Participants

highlighted several ways in which the school's management could develop inviting programmes and learning activities, such as excursions to museums, group work, the creation of cultural awareness, engaging them in dialogue, and properly orienting learners.

T1 indicated:

Mmmmh... I think it is important for a school to conduct a formal orientations for the new learners... also we as teachers and other staffs and learners should acts as instructors and also by daily contacts with them... inside and outside the classroom we will be able to motivate them to learn.

P2 stated:

It is necessary that all activities in the school environment be collaborative and cooperative through meaningful involvement of all cultures that shape our learners and staff. Although it might be difficult in the beginning... But this will bring a better and good understanding of other cultures... which will turn to be easy for someone to adjust to another culture.

Additionally, participants believed that creating an inviting programme that effectively engages learners in sharing their ideas, thoughts, opinions and perceptions, and using one-on-one teaching approaches, will make a learner feel more invited. Also, using the learners' lived experiences will help develop a sense of belonging, which will enable them to respond to people's reactions and improve on their thinking ability and understanding of one another.

P1 stated:

Mmm! I think teachers should apply one to one consultation methods to the new learners... this will help them to understand and develop the habit to learn early.

L2 stressed that

... also us as learners we learn so many thing in our daily interactions... so I think in order to enhance our learning experiences, we should be given a chance to share, to talk more about our different lives experiences...

L1 mentioned that

Mmmm! For me I really like to learn things from parks, museum, because it is easy to remember and I also like to learn by doing. I like when our teacher gives us a task to do inside or outside the classroom.

L3 also commented on creative learning. She said she learned more when the teacher asked her to create something or to draw a picture:

... like what we did here... with our drawings... this kind of learning is easy, also it help us to be creative and to think... it also easy to remember.

In a specific way, L4 commented on the people and procedures in ex-Model C schools, as sometimes their actions can be perceived as creating a disinventing learning environment for learners transitioning from rural and township to ex-Model C schools. She commented as follows:



Oooh! I think teachers should give us time to choose the groups by our self, because sometimes they group us with learners who are not willing to help or it is better if they assign one peer partner who really wants to help to understand the school environment and other stuffs.

Moreover, excerpts from the participants showed that an intentional learning enhancement process will help learners transitioning from rural and township schools to develop a sense of belonging as well as to overcome the anxieties and fear that seemed to confront them. Christie and McKinney (2017) emphasise the decoloniality of ethos and policies to bring valuable insight to the social relations in ex-Model C schools. Vernon (2014) and Steyn (2016) also assert that, if ex-Model C schools use invitational education theory of practices to enhance the learning experiences of its learners, learners will develop a sense of belonging and will also be helped to feel more accepted and be able to reach their full potential, which will enable greater development of these learners.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The study's findings revealed that learners transitioning from rural and township to ex-Model C schools experienced both negative and positive learning experiences. Hence, the findings revealed that the learners' learning experiences are complex and multifaceted, and that they relate to, for example, language issues; adaptation and adjustment issues; and difficulties in maintaining relationships with their peers and teachers from different races, language groups and ethnicities. On the other hand, the learners also experienced the school as engaging because they developed a sense of belonging and the school was safe and conducive for them to read. However, in order to help these learners enhance their learning experiences, this study suggests that the ex-Model C schools' SGBs provide opportunities and encourage interactions between new learners with their peers and their teachers, and create more conducive school environments as well as policies and programmes for effective learner integration. This also recommended the use of invitational education practices in ex-Model C schools to enhance their learning experiences and to support them in dealing with all the challenges they experience. Therefore, this study concludes by emphasising that learners transitioning from rural and township schools to ex-Model C schools are responsible, able and valuable. Furthermore, their learning experiences are shaped by an inviting learning environment that is conducive, supportive and caring, and that improves their knowledge and academic achievements.

## REFERENCES

- Alexander, G. & Mpisi, A. (2014) Issues influencing black learners' scholastic experiences in ex-model C further education and training schools. *Journal of Sociology and Social Anthropology* 5(3) pp.349-359.
- Atkins, L. & Wallace, S. (2012) *Qualitative research in education*. New York City: Sage.
- Banks, J.A. (2014) Diversity, group identity, and citizenship education in a global age. *Journal of Education* 194(3) pp.1-12.
- Bartlett, H. (2016) *Exploring the educational engagement processes at a former Model C high school in Cape Town*. Doctoral dissertation. Stellenbosch University, South Africa.
- Bradbury, H. (Ed.) (2015) *The Sage handbook of action research*. New York City: Sage.
- Cain, S. (2013) *Quiet: The power of introverts in a world that can't stop talking*. London: Broadway Books.
- Canham, T.M.K. (2019) *Black ex-model-C school learners' experiences of racial micro aggressions*. Doctoral dissertation. University of Cape Town, South Africa.

- Carrim, N. (2003) Race and inclusion in South African education. *South African Journal of Education* 5(3) pp.70-77.
- Chisholm, L. (2015) *Changing class: Education and social change in post-apartheid South Africa*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.
- Christie, P. & McKinney, C. (2017) Decoloniality and 'Model C' schools: Ethos, language and the protests of 2016. *Education as Change* 21(3) pp.1-21.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2013) The ethics of educational and social research. *Research methods in education* 13(1) pp.99-128.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2018) *Research methods in education* (8th ed.) Abingdon, Oxon: Sage.
- Creswell, J.W. & Poth, C.N. (2018) Qualitative inquiry & research design: *Choosing among five approaches* 5 pp.181-223.
- De Kadt, J., Norris, S.A., Fleisch, B., Richter, L. & Alvanides, S. (2014) Children's daily travel to school in Johannesburg-Soweto, South Africa: Geography and school choice in the Birth to Twenty cohort study. *Children's Geographies* 12(2) pp.170-188.
- Fairclough, N. (2003) *Analysing discourse: Textual analysis for social research*. Psychology. New Delhi: Press.
- Ferreira, R., Ebersöhn, L. & Botha, K. (2013) Using participatory action research to develop an HIV and AIDS school plan. *South African Journal of Education* 33(4) pp.41-117.
- Fink, L.D. (2013) *Creating significant learning experiences: An integrated approach to designing college courses*. Jersey City: John Wiley & Sons.
- Flick, U. (Ed.) (2013) *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data analysis*. London: Sage.
- Ford, D.Y. (2015) Culturally responsive gifted classrooms for culturally different students: A focus on invitational learning. *Gifted Child Today* 38(1) pp.67-169.
- Gajjar, D. (2013) Ethical consideration in research. *Education* 2(7) pp.8-15.
- Gee, J.P. (2014) *An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method*. Kansa: Routledge.
- Goldstone, C.G. (2017) *Managing the behavioural rights of teachers and learners: a case study in the north metropolitan district of Cape Town*. Doctoral dissertation. University of South Africa, Cape Town, South Africa.
- Haigh, M. (2011) Invitational education: Theory, research and practice. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* 35(2) pp.299-309.
- Hunter, M. (2015) Schooling choice in South Africa: The limits of qualifications and the politics of race, class and symbolic power. *International Journal of Educational Development* 43 pp.41-50.

- Jacoby, M. (2016) *Shame and the origins of self-esteem: A Jungian approach*. Kansa: Taylor & Francis.
- Kanyopa, T.J. (2018) *Learners transitioning from township to ex-model C schools: An invitational educational perspective*. Unpublished Master's thesis. University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.
- Khanare, F. (2012) Schoolchildren affected by HIV in rural South Africa: Schools as environments that enable or limit coping. *African Journal of AIDS Research* 11(3) pp.251-259.
- Krueger, R.A. & Casey, M.A. (2014) *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied health research*. New York City: Sage.
- Leung, L. (2015) Validity, reliability, and generalizability in qualitative research. *Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care* 4(3) p.324.
- Lombard, B.J.J. (2007) Reasons why educator-parents based at township schools transfer their own children from township schools to former Model C schools. *Education as Change* 11(1) pp.43-57.
- Machaisa, P.R. (2005) *The experiences of learners in former white schools*. Doctoral dissertation. University of Pretoria, South Africa.
- Machard, D. (2015) School choice, school costs: The case of inner-city Johannesburg private schools. *Acta Academica* 47(2) pp.139-162.
- Mackenzie, N. & Knipe, S. (2006) Research dilemmas: Paradigms, methods and methodology. *Issues in Educational Research* 16(2) pp.193-205.
- Meier, C. (2005) Addressing problems in integrated schools: Student teachers' perceptions regarding viable solutions for learners' academic problems. *South African Journal of Education* 25(3) pp.170-177.
- Merriam, S.B. & Tisdell, E.J. (2015) *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. London: John Wiley & Sons.
- Mitchell, C., Theron, L., Stuart, J., Smith, A. & Campbell, Z. (2011) Drawings as a research method. *Picturing Research* 4(2) pp.19-36.
- Monageng, B. (2012) *Language and identity in young indigenous African language speaking middle class adults who attended ex-model C schools*. Doctoral dissertation. University of Western Cape, South Africa).
- Msila, V. (2009) School choice and intra-township migration: Black parents scrambling for quality education in South Africa. *Journal of Education* 46(1) pp.81-98.
- Ntuli, P.P. (1998) Who's afraid of the African renaissance? *Indicator South Africa* 15(2) pp.15-18.
- Padgett, D.K. (2016) *Qualitative methods in social work research*. London: Sage.
- Purkey, W.W. & Aspy, D. (2003) Overcoming tough challenges: An invitational theory of practice for humanistic psychology. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 43(3) pp.146-155.
- Purkey, W.W. & Novak, J.M. (2008) *Fundamentals of invitational education*. London: Sage.

- Purkey, W. & Novak, J. (1996) *Inviting school success: A self-concept approach to teaching and learning* (3rd ed.) Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Purkey, W.W. & Siegel, B. (2003) *Becoming an invitational leader: A new approach to professional and personal success*. Atlanta: Humanist Trade Group.
- Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Nicholls, C.M. & Ormston, R. (Eds.) (2013) *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*. New York City: Sage.
- Rule, P. & John, V. (2011) *Your guide to case study research*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- Scotland, J. (2012) Exploring the philosophical underpinnings of research: Relating ontology and epistemology to the methodology and methods of the scientific, interpretive, and critical research paradigms. *English Language Teaching* 5(9) pp.9-16.
- Shaw, D.E., Siegel, B.L. & Schoenlein, A. (2013) The basic tenets of invitational theory and practice: An invitational glossary. *Journal of Invitational Theory and Practice* 19 pp.30-130.
- Slabbert, C. (2015) *Experiences and perceptions of diversity among teachers and learners in racially-integrated schools*. Doctoral dissertation. University of the Free State, South Africa.
- Slabbert, C. & Naudé, L. (2018) Living in two worlds: experiences and perceptions of diversity among adolescents in racially-integrated schools. *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 39(3) pp.359-375.
- Slabbert, C. & Naudé, L. (2020) School as a 'stage of life': approaches to diversity among teachers in racially-integrated schools. *Educational Studies* 2(1) pp.1-13.
- Soupen, C. (2017) An investigation into the role of school leaders in managing cultural diversity among educators in two ex-model C primary schools in Gauteng, South Africa. *Educator Multidisciplinary Journal* 1(1) pp.206-238.
- Steyn, G.M. (2013) The renewal of invitational education through principal succession in a South African primary school. *Journal of Invitational Theory and Practice* 43(3) pp.246-455.
- Stuurman, N.S. (2013) *The social experiences of learners classified as Blacks in ex-Model 'C' secondary schools in the East London district*. Doctoral dissertation. University of Fort Hare, South Africa.
- Tabane, R.J. (2010) *Integration and learners' feelings of belonging in a desegregated former House of Delegates school*. Doctoral dissertation. University of Pretoria, South Africa.
- Vally, S. & Dalamba, Y. (1999) *Racism, 'racial integration' and desegregation in South African public secondary schools: A report on a study by the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC)*. Pretoria: SAHRC.
- Van der Merwe, H. (2011) Migration patterns in rural schools in South Africa: Moving away from poor quality education. *Education as Change* 15(1) pp.107-120.
- Van Dijk, T.A. (2015) *Racism and the Press*. Pretoria: Routledge.
- Vernon, P.E. (2014) *Intelligence and Cultural Environment (Psychology Revivals)*. London: Routledge.

Wahyuni, D. (2012) The research design maze: Understanding paradigms, cases, methods and methodologies. *Journal of Applied Management Accounting Research* 10(1) pp.69-80.

Wodak, R. & Meyer, M. (Eds.) (2015) *Methods of critical discourse studies*. New York City: Sage.

Yin, R.K. (2015) *Qualitative research from start to finish*. London: Guilford publications.

Zoch, M. (2017) 'It's important for them to know who they are': Teachers' efforts to sustain students' cultural competence in an age of high-stakes testing. *Urban Education* 52(5) pp.610-636.