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# Using Photographs and Memory-Work to Engage Novice Teachers in Collaborative Learning About Their Influence on Learner Behaviour<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

This article offers an account of using photographs and memory-work as a visual participative method in research conducted by a deputy principal with novice teachers in a South African primary school. The study was prompted by observations of how novice teachers struggled to manage learner behaviour in socially just and compassionate ways. It aimed to help novice teachers express the uncertainties and challenges they encounter, and prompt candid discussions on learner behaviour. The article shows how visual participative methods can facilitate collaborative learning with novice teachers. Additionally, it illustrates how the novice teachers came to see their critical role in influencing learner behaviour and the value of positive teacher-learner relationships in supporting learner behaviour. This work will be valuable to educational researchers in diverse contexts interested in growing their participative research methods repertoire. Furthermore, it illustrates how working with photographs and memory-work can facilitate the expression of participants' viewpoints and understandings and intensify educational researchers' learning from and with others in the interests of social change.

**Keywords:** learner behaviour, photographs, memory-work, novice teachers, visual methods

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### Introduction

I am a deputy principal and seasoned teacher in a multicultural urban primary school that accommodates learners and teachers from diverse backgrounds. I started working as a professional teacher in a primary school in 1994, and was promoted to deputy principal in 2013. Over the years, I have observed with compassion the many challenges that novice teachers encounter. I aspire to

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stimulate a positive, socially just school culture by putting into practice my belief in the value of every novice teacher. Thus, I was inspired to learn more about working with novice teachers to enhance their understanding of, and responsiveness to, learner behaviour<sup>2</sup> (Luthuli, 2020).

An observation that haunted me was that novice teachers in my school battled to maintain discipline and manage learner behaviour. Field (2005) confirmed that discipline and classroom management are the two most pressing concerns that novice teachers face. Many novice teachers feel that it becomes difficult to teach if positive learner behaviour and classroom management are not supported; novice teachers can feel incapacitated and helpless about dealing with learner misbehaviour in their classrooms (Dicke et al., 2015; Field, 2005). Against this background, I aimed to work with novice teachers to help them express their uncertainties and challenges and prompt candid discussions on learner behaviour in- and outside the classroom.

During apartheid, corporal punishment was widely used in the South African education system to maintain school discipline. However, in 1996 the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996) abolished corporal punishment. Payet and Franchi (2008) affirmed that the prohibition of corporal punishment was a sign of the political break with the former apartheid system, which had rewarded dictatorial educational practices.

Learner behaviour support is the approach advised by the Department of Education (2000) to enhance the teaching and learning milieu. The term “learner behaviour support” implies developing and managing positive relationships among learners and between learners and teachers (Department of Education, 2000). Furthermore, learner behaviour support is based on mutual respect, caring, knowledge of others’ feelings, and willingness to take responsibility for one’s actions and deeds (Western Cape Education Department, 2007). Additionally, Venter (2010) noted that learner behaviour support can help novice teachers and learners develop positive social recognition, increasing social involvement and constructive communication.

Nevertheless, as Oosthuizen et al. (2003) attested, corporal punishment remains the preferred approach to discipline in many schools, even though prohibited; these authors argue that, despite the policy changes, many teachers lack alternative strategies for positive behaviour support. Govender and Sookrajh (2014) also observed that corporal punishment remains a regular part of the school experience for many South African learners. When corporal punishment was outlawed, my school struggled to devise a comprehensive behaviour management alternative for novice and seasoned teachers. In addition, teachers, parents, and learners seemed uncertain about what was permitted or forbidden by the new legislative framework for schools.

Hence, I set out to work with novice teachers to communicate their doubts and challenges and hold forthright deliberations on learner behaviour. Furthermore, by engaging intensively with novice teachers, I intended to work collaboratively to stimulate and encourage novice teachers to view learner behaviour from different perspectives. This article offers an account of using photographs and memory-work (Mitchell et al., 2019a) as a visual participative arts-based method with novice teachers. It focuses on using photographs and memory stories to help novice teachers express their apprehensions and insights and prompt frank discussions on learner behaviour. The article demonstrates how working with photographs and memories can elicit participants’ perspectives and reflections and deepen educational research learning for social change.

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<sup>2</sup> This article is developed from my doctoral thesis (Luthuli, 2020).

I begin by explaining why I adopted a sociocultural theoretical perspective. Next, I clarify my choice of methods. I continue by describing my position as a researcher and a research participant. I also indicate how the study participants were chosen and invited to participate. Then I consider issues of ethics and trustworthiness. This is followed by explaining how the novice teachers and I worked with photographs and memory-work as a visual participative method. After that, I show how I learnt by listening to and reading about novice teachers' experiences in their classrooms and their own school days. I illustrate how novice teachers shared and reflected on their memories of unruly learner behaviour by referring to pertinent photographs they had taken. I then reflect on what I discovered through discussions with the novice teachers. To end, I consider implications for what my study can offer to other school leaders and educational researchers.

## **Theoretical Perspective**

Employing a sociocultural perspective allows individual teachers to understand their learning as embedded in personal and social experiences. As Gerhard and Mayer-Smith (2008) maintained, a sociocultural perspective is grounded in the belief that learning is not an individual activity but a social experience. Similarly, Samaras et al. (2014) asserted that learning is active and social and that interchange shapes individuals' mental capacity. Likewise, McMurtry (2015) observed that social interaction can help teachers adjust and restructure their understanding of the context in which they function; he further pointed out that a sociocultural perspective on learning concentrates mainly on how learning occurs when people interact—it is concerned with both cultural and social surroundings. Therefore, I anticipated that taking a sociocultural approach when engaging with novice teachers would facilitate interesting and valuable interactions based on personal experiences and social and cultural relationships. Furthermore, I expected to learn as a deputy principal by getting to know and understanding novice teachers' backgrounds, beliefs, and experiences. Thus, communication channels between and among us could be unblocked.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Participants**

Because this was a participative research project that I was leading, I must introduce myself. I am Khulekani Luthuli. I was born in Durban 52 years ago. I am a Zulu, and I speak isiZulu as my home language. I attended primary and high school near the village where I grew up as a child. I also went to a teacher training college. I have been teaching for 27 years. I have had the privilege of teaching in three different schools located in three socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. The first school where I taught was located in an impoverished area for black people. The second school was in a township for middle-class residents. Finally, my current school is in the heart of Durban's central business district.

My study aimed to acknowledge and embrace novice teachers' experiences and viewpoints. Four Post Level 1 novice teachers were employed at my school and I decided to invite all four to participate in the study. They represented the junior, intermediate, and senior phases of schooling in a primary school in the South African context. A Post Level 1 teacher is employed at the base of the professional teacher hierarchy. The Junior Phase in the school covers Grades R–3, the Intermediate Phase, Grades 4–6, and the Senior Phase in a primary school covers only Grade 7.

For this study, a novice teacher was defined as a teacher employed by the Department of Basic Education for up to 5 years. All four novice teacher participants had been at the school for less than

five years. They all happened to be female teachers. Ms Mashobane,<sup>3</sup> an African teacher, taught isiZulu in Grades 5 and 6. She was 27 years old, had one year of professional experience, and had taught isiZulu for one year in the Intermediate Phase. She held a Bachelor of Education (BEd) degree. Ms Mthethwa was 29 years old. She held a BEd degree and had two years of teaching experience in the Foundation Phase. She taught isiZulu in Grades 1 to 3. Ms Zwide was also 28 years old and taught Grade 3 in the Foundation Phase. She held a BEd degree. Finally, Ms Mabunda was 32 years old. She held a BEd degree and taught isiZulu in Grades 6 and 7.

## Methods

### *Photographs and Memory-Work*

I chose to use photographs and memory-work to engage novice teachers in reflective discussions on learner behaviour. I anticipated that a creative and participative approach would prompt novice teachers' perspectives and experiences. Additionally, as Samaras (2011) explained, such methods can be used to stimulate self-reflection.

Mitchell et al. (2019a) stated that taking photographs allows participants to comprehend incidents and issues, and attribute importance to these events. Thus, I expected that taking photographs and reflecting on their meaning would enable novice teachers to open new doors for discussion and come to meaningful conclusions about what the images could mean. Furthermore, Mitchell et al. (2019a) noted that looking at photographs can elicit emotions as well as understandings.

I invited the novice teachers to take photographs by asking, "Can you identify and take photographs of areas where learner misbehaviour occurs in our school?" I explained that it was essential not to photograph anyone without consent (Wiles et al., 2008). Individually, the novice teachers wandered around the school. Using their cellular phones, they took photographs of areas that they felt were "hot spots" for learner misbehaviour such as the learners' toilets, the school parking area, and the back of the school hall; these were areas where many misbehaviours had occurred. They then explained in writing why they felt those were hot spots. The photographs and written explanations were used to prompt oral discussions. To maintain anonymity, when using the images, I ensured that learners, teachers, and the school name were not visible. All photographs are reproduced with the permission of the novice teachers.

Mitchell et al. (2019a) pointed out that looking at photographs can encourage recalling memories that have lain dormant. I thus saw that photographs could be meaningful tools for memory-work. Samaras (2011) explained that memory-work as an educational research method can serve to unearth events that established the foundations of who we are today as teachers. Likewise, Pithouse-Morgan et al. (2019) emphasised that memories play a pivotal role in teachers' thoughts and actions; they argued that recalling and reflecting on memories can help teachers become alert to, and intervene creatively in, their own behaviour patterns.

To prompt memory-work, I asked the novice teachers if their photographs reminded them of similar areas where they had displayed unruly behaviour when they were school learners themselves. This questioning was inspired by the work of Cole (2011), who claimed that sharing memories as a group of teachers can stimulate recall of unremembered experiences, contributing to a more self-aware understanding of pedagogical experiences, beliefs, and practices.

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<sup>3</sup> Pseudonyms have been used for all the novice teachers.

### *Audio-Recorded Discussions*

The novice teachers and I met to engage in deliberations promoted by the photographs. Audio recordings of the discussions with the participants helped me capture and store relevant data. Additionally, as Masinga (2012) pointed out, I found that one could gain further insight into the data generation process using an audio recorder. For example, one can listen to how one engaged with others and how one responded to situations that arose during data generation. The audio recording of the session to discuss the photographs allowed me to listen attentively to every participant's input. It also helped me to generate more questions or to ask for clarity in future sessions. I then transcribed the recording of each interactive discussion. I reproduced spoken words, sounds, laughter, giggling, and body language. In this article, quotation marks and block quotations are used to indicate the direct words of the participants.

### *Reflective Journal Writing*

Additionally, I kept a journal throughout the research process. Masinga (2012) explained that a reflective journal allows deep reflection and can enhance the interpretation of all aspects of the experience gained from each data generation session. As Meyer and Willis (2019) suggested, "reflection entails looking back on experiences to make meaning of the past" (p. 579). I used reflective journal writing to capture my research's critical moments and document my learning in progress.

### **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

I used thematic analysis to construct themes from selected data (Braun & Clark, 2006). Braun and Clark (2006) clarified that a theme captures a vital aspect of the data regarding the research question and constitutes some level of outlined response or meaning from the data set. I familiarised myself with the data by listening attentively to the audio data, rereading the transcribed conversations and participants' written memory stories, and revisiting the photographs and my journal entries. I created codes to identify and provide labels for [feature] of the data that [were] potentially relevant to the research question (Braun & Clark, 2019). The coding process led to the sifting of relevant extracts and images that elicited meaning about the data. I developed themes by gathering codes that seemed to share the same merging features so that they reflected and described a consistent meaning pattern in the data in response to my research question. Braun and Clark (2019) explained that "this form of thematic analysis is data-driven" (p. 83); nevertheless, as these authors pointed out, "data are not coded in an epistemological vacuum" (p. 84). Therefore, I was aware that my sociocultural theoretical perspective strongly influenced this data-driven meaning-making process.

### **Ethical Considerations and Trustworthiness**

The novice teachers were not expected to consent to participate in the study before knowing what they were agreeing to. My focus was on protecting the participants and ensuring that they would not be exploited or harmed in any way. I initially called an information-sharing meeting with the novice teachers to explain the reasons for the research and the procedures to be followed. According to Locke et al. (2013), the researcher must be transparent regarding the assumptions they bring to the research, focusing on the topic and all aspects of the research design. Thus, my participants were assured that their contributions could contribute to their professional growth and benefit the entire school community.

Considering the potential power dynamics in the relationship between me as deputy principal, and the novice teachers, as participants, I was careful to reassure them that they were under no obligation to participate in the research. I also assured them that their decision to participate or not would not affect my relationship with them. I informed the participants of their right to withdraw from the study at any

time. I adhered to what Locke et al. (2013) described as the theory of straight talking in that I communicated with the participants in a way that would be easily understood.

Etherington (2007) cautioned that the researcher needs to be aware of gender sensitivities when engaging with participants. I was conscious that these female participants might have been conscientised that they were inferior to their male counterparts given that women's voices are still given less regard than those of men in most communities. As a man, I, therefore, needed to create an environment in which the novice teachers would speak to me willingly and openly and know I would hear them (Mitchell et al., 2019b). I assured the novice teachers that we were partners in this project and that everyone's voice was important.

It was also essential to attend to issues of trustworthiness. Feldman (2003, p. 27) advised: "We can increase the trustworthiness . . . by paying attention to and making public the way that we construct our representations of our research." In my study, this was done by providing a comprehensive and detailed narrative of how the data were generated, of my understandings of the data, and giving evidence of the potential value of the study for the teaching community.

## Using Photographs To Learn With the Novice Teachers

### Discussing Photographs of Areas in the School Where Misbehaviour Was Likely To Occur

We held the session to discuss the photographs in a novice teacher's classroom. I started the session by asking them to discuss the photographs and describe regular learner misbehaviour incidents they had witnessed or experienced.

Without hesitation, Ms Mabunda produced a photograph (Figure 1) and, with a sad smile, shared the following:

*This photograph is of the area where I usually take my learners for PE [Physical Education] periods. Because our school does not have a playground, we take them to the tarred parking lot for PE. Unfortunately, there is not much a teacher can do on a tarred surface regarding learners' physical training, as it often requires doing exercises on the ground. Therefore, you often find learners getting out of control when they play soccer or netball.*

**Figure 1**

### The Tarred Surface Used for Physical Education Lessons



I then asked Ms Mabunda to describe the misbehaviour patterns that the learners displayed during the PE period. She said:

*They get over-excited to such an extent that they often kick the ball hard towards teachers' cars. If not that, the boys play a chasing game that leads them to the toilets. It is hard for me to take charge of the whole class because I have to concentrate on one particular group of learners at a time. No matter how hard I try to give other learners some activities to do unmonitored, learners are reluctant to follow instructions. I do not know whether it is because I am a new teacher or that these learners misbehave because this is the only opportunity to play, apart from recess at lunchtime. Lunchtime is also not enough time for them to play because it is short—it only lasts 30 minutes.*

Ms Mashobane nodded in agreement. Then, she gave her views of why learner misbehaviour occurred:

*Whenever I have to change classrooms between lesson periods, misbehaviour erupts. I have noticed that the few minutes teachers take to move from one class to another also gives learners a chance to be unruly. There is this tendency among teachers [sighing] to spend a few minutes chatting with another teacher between classes. To be honest, I have done this . . . I have observed that this sometimes leads to learners making a lot of noise, resulting in extra time being wasted before everybody gets back to the regular learning routine.*

Ms Zwide cut in with a question:

*If that is so, Miss, what is stopping you from doing the right thing, which is being in class and starting to teach as soon as possible without entertaining your colleague?*

Before Ms Mashobane could say anything, Ms Mthethwa was quick to answer. From her facial expression, I could tell that she was perturbed by the question. She said:

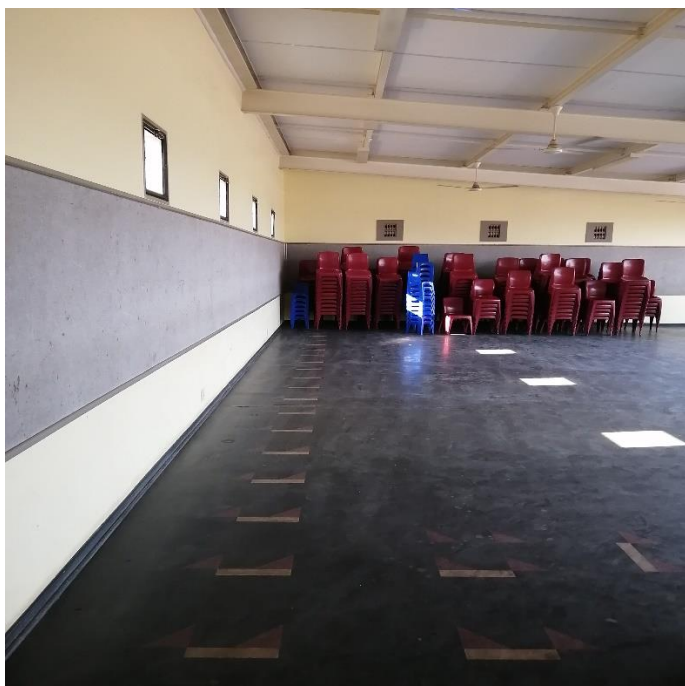
*You know very well, Miss, that we are newly appointed teachers here in the school. Do you think it would be easy for us to just ignore a seasoned teacher when they talk to you? No. Even if you see that they are the ones who initiate these annoying conversations in between the lesson periods, there is nothing you can do because you do not want to be labelled after all. At times, you try to be early in class to avoid learner misbehaviour, only to find a seasoned teacher still engaged with learners during your lesson period, and you have to wait outside for that teacher to come out. This is a dilemma we find ourselves in as novice teachers.*

Ms Mthethwa also verbalised her concern about learner misbehaviour when she said:

*As far as I am concerned, the unwarranted behaviour of our learners begins way before the first period. For example, have you ever noticed the chaos that happens when we have combined assemblies on Fridays?*

**Figure 2****The Assembly Area for the Foundation Phase Learners**

The Foundation Phase usually had an assembly on Mondays and Wednesdays (Figure 2). The Intermediate and Senior Phases had theirs on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The whole school would then have an assembly in the school hall on Fridays (Figure 3).

**Figure 3****Pandemonium Is Created by Unsupervised Learners When They Enter or Exit the Hall During the Assembly**

Ms Mthethwa further stated:

*I am very distressed about the undisciplined way learners enter the hall without being monitored by us teachers, especially the Senior Phase learners. Some teachers often stay in their classrooms and rely on school prefects to supervise learners independently, which is unfair to everyone. The misbehaviour level increases even when learners are supposed to be led by their teachers to their respective classrooms.*



Ms Mashobane, who was now sitting on the edge of her chair, corroborated this frustration:

*Sometimes assembly will take too long and last into the second period. I feel that we should do away with assemblies. It would be best if the form teachers conduct prayers with their learners in the classroom and then have combined assemblies only on special occasions. Not only are the assemblies the cause of learner misbehaviour, but teachers and learners also miss precious teaching and learning time. The learners tend to deliberately drag their feet on their way to the classrooms, and, at times, a quarter of them divert to the toilets [Figure 4], thus derailing teaching and learning on purpose. If you want to get things started as a teacher, most learners are not in the classroom. In this way, they disrupt the whole class on their way back from the toilets.*

**Figure 4**

**The Toilet Area Where Learners Take Time To Get Back to the Classrooms**



I then asked the participants to go down memory lane and talk about incidents of misbehaviour during their own school days that came to mind when they looked at the photographs they had taken. In my view, memories are an essential part of our daily lives. Therefore, I anticipated that engaging the novice teachers in sharing memories promoted by the photographs would give me insight into their backgrounds and perspectives. I also hoped that it would encourage them to consider how past experiences can form a foundation for behaving and reacting to present situations.

There was a momentary pause until Ms Mashobane broke the silence. Then, smiling awkwardly, she said:

*To be honest with you, Sir, I do not feel comfortable discussing misbehaviour incidents in my mind right now because they are too embarrassing or awful to speak about in front of you. However, is there any other way we can do this without discussing it openly, if possible?*

Ms Zwide cut in, saying:

*You will get some interesting feedback from me because I have just recalled the primary and high school areas where we did all the wrong things as girls and got away with it. I am also ashamed to recall some memories in your presence, but you should also understand that those incidents happened when I was still immature.*

I understood their hesitation and asked if it would be possible for them to write about their memories of misbehaviour anonymously on a piece of paper. Ms Mabunda said, “I do not have a problem writing my name after I have jotted down my memories.” Therefore, the participants agreed to recall and write about their experiences of misbehaviour when they were at school, and to give their writings to me the following day.

After the session, I wrote in my reflective journal:

*This was a very informative and engaging discussion with the participants. They raised various aspects of school life that proved to be stumbling blocks to learner behaviour support. As a teacher and deputy principal, I also learnt that I should try to do the right thing all the time. People will never forget those teachers who did not do justice to them during their days of schooling. From these thought-provoking comments, the participants could also learn from one another as critical points were raised regarding how learner behaviour and discipline are often dependent on teachers' fairness and professionalism.*

### **Recalling Memories Through Photographs**

The next day, all participants handed in their written recollections of misbehaviour when they were at school. The photographs the novice teachers had previously taken of hot spots for learner misbehaviour prompted these memory stories. For example, Ms Mthethwa pointed out that the photograph she had taken (Figure 5) reminded her of an area behind the school hall where she and her friends used to go and be quite mischievous. Her narrative read as follows:

*When I was in Grade 6, we had free periods between contact time on our timetables. No teacher monitored these free periods. We would cause havoc in the classroom during this time by making intolerable noise or aimlessly walk the corridors. I remember that my friends and I saved our lunch money to buy benzine, which we set alight and smoked during these free periods behind the school hall.*

*We would do this at least three times a week until we got caught by one teacher. After that, my friends and I were punished severely, and we decided never to smoke benzine again, at least not on the school premises.*

Reading Ms Mthethwa's story made me realise why the novice teachers were reluctant to talk openly about their own unwarranted behaviour as learners.

### **Figure 5**

**“Puff and Pass”: In Unmonitored Areas Such as This, the Novice Teachers and Their Friends Misbehaved**



Ms Mthethwa also wrote the following:

*Some teachers allowed us to have our lunch in their classrooms on rainy days. I was in Grade 10 and felt that I was mature enough to have a boyfriend. I remember how we used to sit among the boys, having our lunch. Some boys made us feel special by proposing love to us. Sometimes we even kissed in the classroom. The classroom would be a love zone during lunchtime that lasted 45 minutes. We would do this [kissing and touching] knowing that all the teachers were sitting in the staffroom. Even the school prefects were into this game. Being attracted to boys in my class was somewhat disconcerting because I was now afraid to raise my hand to answer a question . . .*

Ms Mthethwa provided thought-provoking insight into how teachers' actions—or lack thereof—could play a significant role in evoking learner misbehaviour. She used a photograph (Figure 6) to illustrate an unmonitored classroom where misconduct could readily occur during her high school years.

**Figure 6**

**An Unmonitored Classroom Can Be a Paradise for Young Love**



Ms Mabunda shared the following:

*I used to express my feelings by writing nasty things on the toilet walls. Although corporal punishment was still rife during my primary school years, it did not stop me from writing what I felt about some of the teachers I hated in my school. I would insult or draw ugly pictures of people, especially teachers who I felt were cruel and unfair towards us learners.*

The photograph in Figure 7 by Ms Mabunda depicts writing on toilet walls as typical of the misbehaviour that she engaged in during her primary school years.

Figure 7

### Walls of Naming and Shaming: This Is Where I Expressed My Feelings About an Individual



Ms Mabunda also wrote:

*I remember that I brought a pornographic magazine to the classroom. That day I asked my friend to be my desk mate. Since the morning, we had been looking at the magazine until one of the boys got a glimpse of it. He then went to inform the teacher. I tried to hide the magazine as soon as we realised that we had been reported, but it was too late. I was sent to the office. After confiscating the magazine, the principal made me choose between him informing my parents or corporal punishment. I chose the latter. After the punishment, my teacher had a field day calling me names and mocking me. She mentioned the incident every time I made a mistake for months. I retaliated by writing abusive things either in the textbook or on the chalkboard when nobody was looking.*

Ms Mashobane shared the following:

*There was this male teacher in Grade 10 who could not hide that he hated me. It was unfortunate that he was also teaching us accounting. I ended up hating him and the subject he taught as well, which prompted me to be disruptive every time he was teaching us. I deliberately passed nasty comments when he was teaching because he would also do the same to me at every opportunity. I remember saying that he had a big butt and that he talked like a woman. One day those who had heard me could not stop laughing, and he wanted to know what was going on. He then went to fetch a cane to punish those who were laughing. One learner told him what I had said about him. I was beaten so severely that day that I was admitted to the hospital for a whole week. On my return to school, I was forced to apologise to this teacher.*

At our next discussion session, I first explained that I felt it would be valuable to discuss what the novice teachers had written about their school memories. They agreed to discuss their written responses, although it was a sensitive issue for them. But putting that aside, they were eager to discuss how we could learn from the memory stories.

With their agreement, I read their responses aloud and then asked, “What do you think aggravated the kind of misbehaviour you had written about?” Ms Mthethwa was the first to respond:

*When I look at it now that I am a teacher, I realise we had so much time to misbehave when teachers were not in the classroom. Teacher-learner engagement was very minimal in my high school life. At times, teachers would not honour their lesson periods, giving us ample time to misbehave.*

Ms Zwide added:

*For me, it was all about the teacher's attitude towards the subject. One teacher would come to class, write notes on the board, and sit on his chair while we copied from the board. I would make sure that I copied the notes fast so I could find time to misbehave. At times, Sir, the teachers were the ones who caused chaos in the classroom because of the methods they employed when teaching the learners. In other instances, I would finish copying work from the board and ask to go to the toilet. Sometimes the teacher would only allow us to leave the room as soon as we had finished copying the work from the board. I would spend as much time as I wanted in the toilet because I would become bored in the classroom with a lack of activities that would keep us on our toes concerning academic excellence.*

Ms Mashobane said:

*I still remember that I would display misbehaviour patterns towards teachers I felt did not like me. When I was in high school, I could quickly notice a teacher who did not like me. I would then reciprocate by being nasty and disrespectful towards him or her. I would simply voice out without any fear of what was bothering me so that the teacher concerned would know my stance about him or her. I remember one teacher who was always on my case about attracting male teachers by wearing a short skirt to school. I ended up responding in a very disrespectful manner by telling her that no one was stopping her from wearing a short skirt herself and that she was jealous of my body. Since then, I would pass remarks, such as she was ugly, every time she entered the classroom. Therefore, sometimes teachers themselves are the cause of learner misbehaviour.*

I then asked the participants, "How do you manage learners who display the same kind of behaviour you exhibited during your schooling years?" Ms Zwide was quick to respond:

*Maybe it is a matter of reflecting on our ways of doing things in the classroom. These discussions help because now I can see that we make the same mistakes our teachers made when we were learners ourselves. Unfortunately, in this discussion, the fingers are pointing at teachers as those who contributed to our misbehaviour. My worry right now is that I have learners in my class who are unruly and I wonder if it is because of me that they are behaving this way.*

Ms Mashobane cut in:

*I think Ms Zwide is spot on. One part I have not done is looking at myself and doing proper introspection about why I still experience unwarranted behaviour by the learners in my classroom.*

Ms Mashobane stated:

*I think it boils down to the attitude a teacher has towards his or her learners.*

Ms Zwide continued:

*If we treat these learners as our children, we will not encounter so much misbehaviour in our classrooms. There is a tendency among teachers to send learners outside the classroom every time they start misbehaving. That, to me, does not show any love for a learner—instead, it worsens the situation. We are challenged to understand every learner in our classroom.*

After this session, I reflected in my journal:

*I think this was a critical discussion. It came to light that teachers are often at the centre of misbehaviour as they cause disruption in the classroom. I learnt through our conversation that one becomes a better teacher if one refrains from emulating one's own adverse experiences of the past. Teachers should reflect on their past experiences, heed those lessons, and make a positive change in today's learners' lives. Teachers should be consistent in how they administer and require discipline and how they conduct themselves in the presence of learners.*

## **Discoveries**

### **Visual Participative Methods Can Facilitate Collaborative Learning With Novice Teachers**

As I reflected, several points stood out for me from the conversations and written memory stories prompted by the photographs. First, using photographs and memory-work as a visual participative method opened new doors for discussion with novice teachers. Sharing and discussing photographs taken by novice teachers to elicit their experiences and viewpoints enabled us to learn collaboratively. As Samaras (2011) acknowledged, meaningful teacher learning occurs when it is a collective effort. Interacting and sharing knowledge with novice teachers enabled mutual understanding. Overall, I learnt that the significance of teacher collaborative learning, particularly among novice teachers, should never be underestimated. During the discussion sessions, it emerged that such meetings, where novice teachers feel comfortable sharing even their most shameful experiences, could ultimately elicit valuable support and inputs. Working with novice teachers through photographs became a useful tool to facilitate meaningful interactions with colleagues.

I also learnt firsthand, how working with photographs can be an aid for teachers' collaborative memory-work. Novice teachers and I deliberated on the pictures they had taken to prompt their memories of unwarranted behaviour when they were school learners. I realised that working with photographs could allow novice teachers to share and reflect on past experiences to understand teacher influences on learner behaviour.

Working with photographs as a group also created an opportunity to remember and revisit occurrences that words alone could not explain. Moreover, it enabled us to bring out and witness the emotions that were attached to the specific photographs taken. For instance, Ms Mabunda recalled strong feelings of hatred towards teachers she saw as cruel and unfair. And Ms Zwide relived how her feelings of boredom in uninspiring classes would trigger her misbehaviour. Thus, working collaboratively with photographs intensified the novice teachers' understandings of self and self-acceptance. As Brunke (2018) affirmed, such "memory-work helps us discover what we need to heal" (p. 32).

### **Visual Participative Methods Can Help Novice Teachers See Their Critical Role in Influencing Learner Behaviour**

A participative approach allowed novice teachers and me to use photographs to prompt discussions to increase understanding of the vital role of teachers in learner behaviour support. I observed how recollections of past experiences through visual participative means can contribute to accepting who we are as teachers and what influences us. For example, I saw how our understandings of learner misbehaviour were enhanced when we discussed the novice teachers' memories of their own ill discipline in school. We noticed that it is helpful for novice teachers to reflect on their schooling experiences before giving corrective measures for unruly learners. This was a valuable discussion because the novice teachers could relate their own experiences to those of learners in their classrooms. This was illustrated by Ms Mthethwa, who provided insight into how teachers' actions or lack thereof could play a role in evoking learner misbehaviour. For instance, she explained how a photograph of an unmonitored classroom reminded her of how misconduct readily occurred in such classrooms during her high school years. These discussions allowed the novice teachers to reflect on how their own ways of doing things could be influenced by their former teachers' missteps. As Ms Zwide highlighted, "Now I can see that we make the same mistakes our teachers made." The novice teachers and I learnt through our conversations that one can become a better teacher by acknowledging one's own adverse past schooling experiences and seeing possibilities for disrupting negative patterns from the past.

### **Visual Participative Methods Can Help Novice Teachers See the Value of Positive Teacher-Learner Relationships in Supporting Learner Behaviour**

Reflecting on the photographs and memory stories allowed us to draw meaningful conclusions about the critical role of teacher-learner relationships in learner behaviour support. As Hosseini et al. (2017) noted, teachers' constructive relationships with learners can activate development and motivation to learn. In contrast, a negative relationship could stimulate and exacerbate rude and disruptive learner behaviour. For example, suppose a learner notices that a teacher disapproves of, or shows some kind of dislike of, them. In that case, the learner will likely reciprocate and deliver the same hostility towards the teacher. One example of this was when Ms Mashobane expressed the feeling of being hated by the teacher who taught her accounting. Ms Mashobane shared how this resulted in her disruptive behaviour in his classroom. This was further demonstrated by Ms Mabunda concerning the photograph she took that depicted writing on a toilet wall. She described this as typical of misconduct that she engaged in during her primary school years. Ms Mabunda explained that she misbehaved when she felt a disconnection between the teacher and herself, or that the teacher was harsh and unjust towards learners.

Our discussions highlighted that classrooms and schools should be places of emotional security and affirmative relationships to influence learners' attitudes and behaviour positively. Cheon et al. (2019) observed that it builds learners' social abilities and relationships within the school community when teachers display compassionate and courteous behaviour. As Lindo et al. (2014) indicated, "the relationship between teacher and learner is paramount to the academic and socio-emotional success of learners throughout their educational experience" (p. 294). Thus, learners' prosocial behaviour is founded on the positive attributes that teachers transmit and model.

Baker et al. (2016) advised that novice teachers should be supported in creating nourishing classroom environments based on mutual respect and trusting relationships. As a deputy principal, I saw that I should open opportunities for novice teachers to attend as many workshops and seminars as possible to enhance their skills and knowledge in this regard and thus cultivate their professional growth.

Moreover, as a school leader, I saw how I should always emphasise and model the crucial role teachers play when engaging with learners. For example, narratives of the sense of rejection that some participants felt, and which manifested in misbehaviour, showed that we teachers should embrace every learner in our classrooms despite their background or academic capabilities. Engaging novice teachers in professional development activities may help them become experts in nurturing vulnerable learners in their classrooms. This could also address learner misbehaviour because the teachers will put themselves in the learners' shoes. Alber (2017), who stated that showing our compassion as teachers permits us to be human and not just teachers, supported this notion. I thus was reminded that "teaching is a socio-ethical act" (Samaras, 2011, p. 79). This means that teachers should respect moral values such as diversity, dignity, honesty, fairness, and the rights of every member of the school community.

However, constructive teacher-learner relationships are not built in one day. Roffey (2011) cautioned novice teachers that relationships with learners are built over time and that every communication teachers have with individual learners is significant. In this regard, discussion with the novice teachers highlighted that having a parent-like relationship with learners could establish strong bonds. For example, Ms Zwide noted the importance of such a rapport by saying, "If we treat these learners as our children, we will not encounter so much misbehaviour in our classrooms. . . . We are challenged to understand every learner in our classroom."

## Conclusion

In this article, I conveyed how I learnt by listening to novice teachers' experiences in our school and in their own school days. They shared past and present experiences of unruly learner behaviour by referring to pertinent photographs. Using photographs in deliberating with the novice teacher participants on learner behaviour support, a learning curve was created that brought to the fore the crucial role of the teacher in influencing learner behaviour. Dhlula-Moruri et al. (2017) attested that teacher learning occurs when teachers interact and share ideas in their quest for knowledge. By looking at the photographs and listening to the novice teachers, I put myself in their shoes. In this manner, I came to a better understanding of novice teachers' perspectives and how I can support them as a school leader.

Through visual participative methods, the novice teachers and I saw how we need to influence learner behaviour constructively and purposively. I advise my colleagues of all ages that, if they want to find themselves and illuminate what makes them who they are and act the way they do, the use of photographs and memory-work is an approach to consider. Such methods can allow teachers and school leaders to share ideas, deliberate, and discuss their struggles and joys— to become better professionals.

This research provided novice teachers with opportunities to share their perspectives and experiences to garner insights about themselves regarding learner behaviour. I believe that this understanding is essential to improve our educational endeavours in socially just ways. In this context, my study shows how visual participative methods can inspire collaborative dialogue that also recognises novice teachers' voices. Just telling novices what to do is counterproductive.

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