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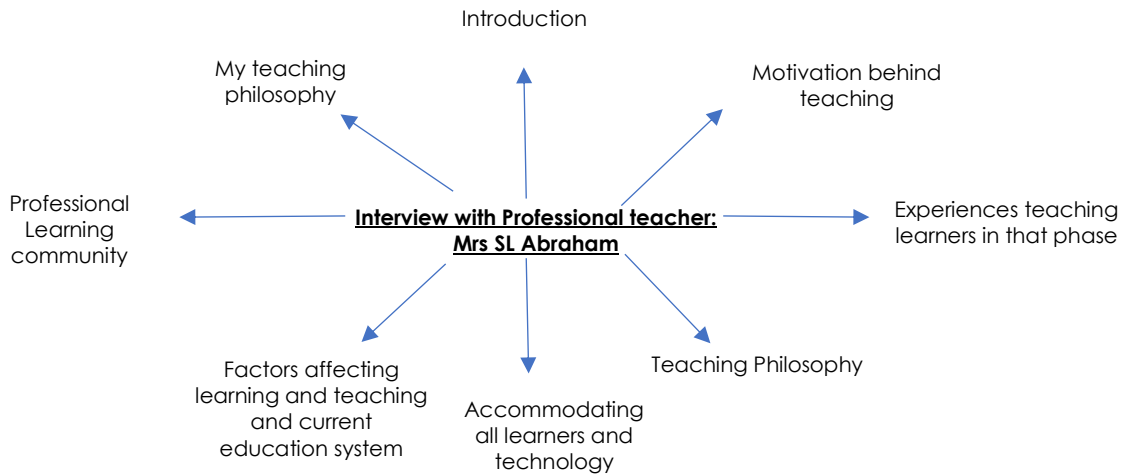
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1. Mind Map



Introduction

"A man without education is like a building without foundation." – Anonymous

If you had to ask anyone in the construction business they will most likely tell you that to build a strong home, we first need to ensure the foundation is strong. Likewise, the same can be said about a child's education. The Foundation phase sets up the building blocks of a child's educational career.

I was granted the opportunity to interview an Educator in the Foundation phase. The purpose of the interview was to gain insight and in some way, understand the struggles that educators face daily. I had chosen an educator from the Foundation phase level as I believe this is the phase that can make or break a child. If the foundation is weak this follows on to the other phases and it is the child who ultimately suffers.

Questions

1. How long have you been in the teaching profession?
2. What motivated you to become a teacher?
3. Do you enjoy teaching? If so, how would I know if I observed your class?
4. What type of learners do you teach?
5. Can you tell me some of your experiences of working with learners at this age level?
6. What is your teaching philosophy?
7. How do you accommodate learners of various backgrounds in your class?
8. What are your views on the use of technology in the classroom?
9. What do you believe are some of the factors impacting learning and teaching at school?
10. What are your views on the standard of education today?
11. If you could change one thing about the education system, what would it be and why?
12. How would you best describe your relationship with the teaching community?
13. Are you affiliated with any professional body? E.g. SADTU
14. What advice would you give a student that has an interest in teaching?
15. What are some of the qualities you believe makes an outstanding teacher?

Interview/Report

Mrs SL Abraham has been teaching at Stanger Manor Primary school for the past 33 years. The first thing you notice about her, is her professional attire. She is immaculately dressed, soft spoken and exudes a calm and peaceful demeanour. She relates her past experiences of teaching with such fondness it is apparent that she has a passion for what she does and this comes across in the way she carries herself.

Mrs Abraham teaches children ranging from Grade R to Grade 3. The school adopts the method "Looping", moving up with your learners to the next level. This essentially means if you taught Grade 1 in the previous year you would now teach Grade 2 this year. This bodes well for both teacher and learner. For the teacher, you already know a lot about your learners and their capabilities. You know how they act and what works for them and what doesn't. For the learner to have the same teacher is beneficial. Especially those with learning issues. A sense of trust is also formed between teacher and learner. While looping presents more positive outcomes, with every positive there are negatives. This may present itself in behavioural issues and disinterested learners.

Mrs Abrahams teaching philosophy is a simple one - creating a warm and nurturing environment conducive to learning. A place where the child can feel safe. Adopting a more Essentialism approach with a mix of Perennialism the aim is to arm her learners with "essentials" of academic knowledge, while maintaining a level of discipline in the classroom. She believes that the child should first be taught to "look" and "listen". Children learn to focus and think for themselves.

The school is a public school with a variety of learners from various nationalities and socioeconomic backgrounds. The language barrier can present problems for a teacher. The staff and management try their best to accommodate such learners in one of 3 ways:

1. By means of intervention classes twice a week. This takes place with both the parents and child. However, this sometimes presents a problem with regards to transport etc.
2. Spending more time with the learner. This can be in the form of lunch breaks.
3. By labelling the classroom surroundings in the child's native tongue as well as the English equivalent. E.g. Door – Isichaba, Teacher – Mfundisi etc.

Many countries have introduced the use of technology in the classroom in one form or the other. Some of the pros of such an initiative, when used in conjunction with lessons taught by the teacher, technology is an effective tool. Learners learn life skills through technology and have instant access to information.

The cons, technology can be a distraction, possible disconnect of social interaction and can foster more cheating in class and on assignments. As much as Mrs Abraham would like to introduce the use of technology in the classroom, she is not very skilled in technology herself and would require the necessary training before implementing such measures in the classroom. This however would require extra funding.

There are numerous factors that impact learning and teaching today. The most common being large classes. Currently the ratio is one teacher to 43 learners. Teachers are finding it increasingly difficult to effectively manage and teach the volume of learners as well as keep up with their various learning capabilities. Providing teaching aids or teaching assistants to assist the teacher with the day to day tasks is one solution but this leads to a second factor, Lack of Finances/Funding. Lack of funding is a major concern in most public schools. With the current economic state, it is becoming difficult for parents to afford school fees. To maintain school infrastructure, teacher aid etc. Schools now rely heavily on fundraising initiatives, donations and school facility hire (Sports grounds etc). "If we expect our children to thrive at our colleges and universities, and succeed in our economy once they graduate - first we must make quality, affordable early childhood education accessible to all" (Kirsten Gillibrand U.D). Another worrisome factor, children coming to school hungry. This is detrimental not only to the child's health but also to their level of concentration. Schools have combated this however by providing meals to the less fortunate learners. Parental engagement is also a factor that affects the teaching process. Educators are often faced with disinterested parents that have no regard for their child's education.

The standard of education has dropped at an alarming level. By lowering the pass requirements, we indirectly create learners who are not committed and most likely do not show any interest. You are still required to pass the learner regardless if they are ready or not. When asked what they would change in today's system the first thing that came to mind, go "back to basics". From OBE to the latest CAPS. Educators want to go back to the basics. Marina Goetze the Head of Special Education Department at IES believes there are five reasons why CAPS are harming your children:

1. Too content heavy
2. There is no time for consolidation
3. It is too rigid
4. Children are over assessed
5. We are not producing thinkers. (Goetze, 2016)

Being a part of the education sector, we need to be continually evolving and developing with the ages. Being a part of a Professional Learning community provides just that. An opportunity for educators to gather, exchange ideas, share their experiences, and attend workshops not only for their professional development but personal growth. It also helps educators identify possible problem areas in the community and creating possible collaborations between schools for the betterment of the children. Mrs Abraham is registered with SACE and is a member of SADTU. She strongly believes it is important for all educators to be registered with the above. In this modern age and with the advent of social media, teachers now find themselves in precarious positions. Bodies such as SADTU are there to support and advise the educator on the correct course to take.

Teaching is not an easy task and it is one that should never be taken lightly. As with any job, it is filled with its fair share of challenges, responsibilities, and most often frustration. We must remember the good that comes of such a noble profession. We are given the chance to mould and shape young minds into future leaders.

My teaching philosophy is to not only motivate, but challenge learners to reach their full potential. Teaching is a career that requires compassion, patience, kindness, and most of all passion. These are qualities I believe I possess. All children are unique and have something special that they bring into the class. They require a stimulating educational environment where they can grow physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially. Teaching should be fun but at the same time maintaining the level of discipline in the classroom. I would present a curriculum that incorporates different learning styles to accommodate the varying range of learners in my class. Creating fun educational themes and hands on activities to encourage enthusiasm for learning.

References:

Goetze M (2016) Five Reasons Why CAPS is Harming Our Children

Accessed from: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/five-reasons-why-caps-harming-our-children-marina-goetze?articleId=6142991208361840640#comments-6142991208361840640&trk=prof-post> on 13/03/2018