

## **TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEW FOR Mr. Abs Shihepo (Teacher A1: TA1)**

### **Interviewer HA**

Good morning. Mr. Shihepo, my name is Hilma Amakutuwa. I am a student at Rhodes University doing my master in English, in Education English language teaching. I'm also your colleague because I work for the Ministry of Education just like you. And I am responsible for coordinating and supporting CPD for English language teachers. This research that I'm doing is in line with my work and it is focused on exploring the self-directed CPD needs for ESL teachers in Namibian secondary schools. To define the topic once again, I know we were in the focus group discussion, but just to refresh your memory, CPD is those activities that teachers engaged in to enable them to remain current and maintain certain level of competencies in their areas of specialization. In other words, these are the activities that you do, be it workshops, be it discussions with other teachers for you to be able to upgrade your knowledge in ESL. Self-directed is a new type of CPD that you determine as a teacher but not determined by someone outside to come and tell you what to teach but you yourself. So welcome, Mr. Absalom, and thank you for being part of this.

### **Teacher A1**

Thank you so much for having me, It's such an honor to engage with you on the issue of CPD.

### **Interviewer HA**

**Thank you. So the first question that I want us to talk about is to tell me about your experience as a English teacher. How many years have you been teaching English?**

### **Teacher A1**

I have been teaching English for approximately 5 years now and if I'm to look into that journey I will not really tell you as in how much the education sector in itself has been involved in acquainting us with the necessary skills that we need. Let's say in those five years, the only time I recall being at the workshop was only on one occasion, which was pretty much recent. And that was last year.

### **Interviewer HA**

OK.

### **Teacher A1**

There were so many challenges, especially even just with attending the workshop. I don't think it was well coordinated and maybe not. It was not properly coordinated because we were misinformed on the venue, we were misinformed on the time just for it to take place the following

day. So those are some of my experiences with regards to CPD. But I'm not sure who now to give the blame to, who can take the blame. But I believe as a government, maybe we should do better in that area, yeah.

**Interviewer HA**

**I want to know who prepared the CPD workshop that you have attended, was it? Were you involved in preparing this or you were just called to go and attend? Did you know what it was about?**

**Teacher A1**

I wasn't actually. I was not even part of the whole preparing of the of the whole lecture and so forth, and I was just informed by a former colleague of ours who works at NUST now that they will be conducting an English workshop, at the Teachers Resources Center and she just reached out to me because she knew me as a teacher and she knows me as a teacher here, at Dawid (school name) and because she was teaching here, and she felt it was important of me to be part of the workshop. I chose to attend because I also wanted to be part of it and just, you know, be acquainted with a few skills. And UM. I remember the the workshop itself was very informative actually, yeah.

**Interviewer HA**

**OK. And do you remember the topics that were covered?**

**Teacher A1**

I do remember, because it navigated around things such as Ice Breakers. OK, yeah, not just getting into the lesson, but that without having an icebreaker, it unpacked the entire concept of being just not to say dull, but inactive teacher who just focuses on the subject of discussion but doesn't necessarily engage with the learners. The workshop navigated around the aspect of humanity first before teaching because you cannot really make someone understand if you cannot engage on a human level. So, it worked around understanding that we are all humans, and we should also understand that we are now from different backgrounds and so forth and how to deal with situations in which we have learners in a class for example, and how do you accommodate all of them if this one came to school, and didn't have breakfast? Yeah. How do you accommodate the one that is going through things such as abuse at home, you know, it dealt with the whole aspect of just understanding human beings for who they are, they are different backgrounds and how to sort of accommodate all of them. I think it was very informative and I loved that it spoke so much about

understanding the learner and putting yourself in their shoes. Because now what it taught me was that in as much as we want to just focus on delivering,

**Interviewer HA**

The lesson?

**Teacher A1**

Yeah, delivering the lesson. Some of the factors that contribute to things such as learners not performing well are not really that they can't perform, but there are so many factors that contribute to that, that taught me that it's not only for me as a teacher to deliver my lesson, but also to sort of understand my audience, the people I'm dealing with, the environment they are in and then maybe some of these factors can be factors from home and as a teacher must be able to, not to say relate, but sort of understand the different learners I have, and also just beyond my lesson to be able to still engage with them and then just instill in them a spirit of being able to just get over whatever they're going through, motivate them, support them and yeah, that's basically it.

**Interviewer HA**

OK. Mr. Absalom. Thank you so much for sharing. I want to find out what in the past five years that you've been working, **what has challenged you as a teacher that you have probably not been trained for when you were being trained to be a teacher, what? What challenges have we encountered in your classes in the past five years?**

**Teacher A1**

I think for me is uh. Last time we had the focus group discussion, I highlighted that some of the challenges include, let's say I am, **I teach English as a second language and I have acquired English as a second language, so English for me is not to** say it's something which is my first language and so forth. So now when I experience learners who acquired English as their first language, there's always a challenge because now. These kids that acquired English as the first language, of course they can eloquently express themselves in the Queen's language and so forth, and that is quite clear, because that's their first language. Then I have learners who acquired English as a second language like me, of course, in terms of pronunciation, in terms of expressing themselves that would be different. Then my learners who acquired English as a second language will feel that they are not so good at it, because maybe sometimes these ones have an accent which they don't have, and they are so scared they, there's so much fear instilled in them to express themselves because of the influence of their mother tongue. **So, I try so much to say: Listen, this language you**

have acquired as a second language, that's not your mother tongue, so if you are going to express yourself and there is going to be a certain influence of your mother tongue, you shouldn't shy away from that. It's basically who you are, that comes out to play and you should never shy away from who you are as an individual and what you and how you express yourself. If you are from Zimbabwe, you have an accent. "I'm from Zimbabwe". You see and if you are from Britain, "I'm from Britain and if you are a Damara for example, you ask me "Must I jump (*yump*) over the wall? That is just the influence of your mother tongue. The challenge is that my learners think that one can only be fluent in a language when you have an accent. That's a challenge I have experienced, and I also feel like, pronunciation is not everything, as long as you meet in the spell. Yeah. So some of these things I try to educate my learners on, sometimes they can be very challenging.

**Interviewer HA**

OK. As an ESL teacher which area do you think you need further CPD?

**Teacher A1**

I think.

**Interviewer HA**

Or is there one you are getting right now? Adequate. Does it address all your professional needs? Or do you think you need more? And in which area?

**Teacher A1**

I think there is less being done in terms of continuous. In terms of continuous professional development, I think as teachers we do that ourselves, you know, without the involvement of the education sector and so forth. OK, I think that that is a challenge we are facing.

**Interviewer HA**

OK. How do teachers do their own CPD at your school?

**Teacher A1**

Just by acquainting myself with what I need know.

**Interviewer HA**

Through reading or through internet?

**Teacher A1**

Internet because nobody really comes to me and say maybe lets let's unpack this. Let's do this to contribute to your professional development. So, you just do it by yourself., you try to be creative, yeah, and find alternatives to suit you and benefit the environment you are in.

**Interviewer HA**

Yeah. How different do you want it to be? Apart from how you do it, how, do you see it as an ideal CPD for teachers at a school or at a circuit or?

**Teacher A1**

I believe in any department out there; this should be prioritized. Not for me to enforce it myself. I believe it should be prioritized, if you're going to be in education, the Education ministry should come up with these programs and make sure they take place successfully, because what about the teachers that are not keen to, you know, develop their professions and so forth. What about those that are not keen? It means they will be stuck in the same area. And what about those teachers who are not disciplined?

**Interviewer HA**

Yeah. To look for their own information

**Teacher A1**

Or resources, as far as continuous professional development is concerned. I believe this should be enforced on the teachers regardless of which profession you find yourself. I think there should be a system like that which enforces professional continuous development and so forth,

**Interviewer HA**

OK.

**Teacher A1**

Because now it shouldn't be, it shouldn't be enforced by me as an individual.

**Interviewer HA**

Yeah. OK. That's awesome. Any other different type of CPD that you see happening in your school apart from teachers looking for their own materials, going to the Internet? Do you see any other way where teachers engage? Do you guys have what you call, is it called lesson study, where you and other teachers prepare lessons together and you watch each other or observe each other teach those lessons that you have prepared together. Anything in that line?

**Teacher A1**

I think our school itself is you from my opinion, our school is very different from so many schools. And I don't know the, the kids we are dealing with here, are kids that are supposed to be, let's say in a mental institution. Because of the how they behave and so forth.

**Interviewer HA**

Yeah.

**Teacher A1**

Imagine if someone is being forced to do what they actually came here to do, if someone is not willing to lend themselves, how would you enforce anything on them? It's very difficult, so that works on a mind of a teacher, it sort of puts so much pressure on the teacher that all I want to do is come here and knock off. Because I'm overwhelmed with so many things that are happening. So even before I teach you, I'm already, you know, overwhelmed with how you are behaving, your attitude towards being taught and stuff like that. **It's overwhelming.** So, for me to even think about Continuous professional development, that's another thing on its own, so. As teachers, we try our best, yes, we try our best. I'm just saying, we try our best, we try to engage other teachers, we try and see who does better in which area, that is there, but now no matter how motivated you were and you are in an environment like this, you will, I don't know, **the environment will work on you to an extent where you have no interest anymore, in just..**

**Interviewer HA**

In teaching,

**Teacher A1**

some of us just started teaching here...

**Interviewer HA**

hmmmm... and already.

**Teacher A1**

So, we don't know, **we don't really enjoy teaching.** We never worked anywhere else and for some reason that will motivate me to leave the whole education....

**Interviewer HA**

Yeah, the profession. So, what you're basically saying is that, teachers are not equipped with the skills to deal with the different kinds of learners that you find in different locations, where the schools are located in terms of discipline, in terms of classroom management, there's no, you don't get, receive any type of support or development in that area and hence you feel....

**Teacher A1**

**We don't. We don't get all.** You see, I think so many things have changed, you see? So. I'll give you a very practical scenario, let's say. If I cannot even just go as far as telling the learner to have a proper hairstyle for school, how will I be able to discipline that kid if the **policy is saying I cannot**

even send the kid away even if they are late, **how will I discipline them here at the school**? It's very difficult.

**Interviewer H**

It's a bit challenging, yeah.

**Teacher A1**

I cannot send you away if you are late. If you are having a hairstyle that's even just annoying to the rest of the kids and myself, I cannot do anything. **No corporal punishment** of course, that's out. What is left of me to do? Because **they know he will keep talking, but he can't act, and** they know that. So how do I develop then? I think that's what we should question. How do I develop myself as a teacher, if some of the **policies are working against** me as a teacher. **I think that is the challenge.**

**Interviewer HA**

So what you are saying is you would like to see these type of skills on how to handle this type of situation included when you are doing CPD?.

**Teacher A1**

Absolutely, absolutely.

**Interviewer HA**

So, it's not really more on content because content you have already mastered it.

**Teacher A1**

The content we have mastered is. It's **how I apply it to the type of learners** I have.

**Interviewer HA**

Oh, I see.

**Teacher A1**

It's like I said earlier, if you are not willing to learn yourself as a learner, how will a teacher like me be able to sort of just enforce the content of a certain subject? How will I support you?

**Interviewer HA**

I get it. OK.

**Teacher A1**

I think the learners **here really need therapy**, it's just therapy.

**Interviewer HA**

OK. Or maybe it's more of the school management that needs to sit together and come up with mechanism and how to enforce certain rules.

**Teacher A1**

Sometimes, but management, there's really nothing much they can do if the policies are like that, are designed in that way.

**Interviewer HA**

Yeah, so you're saying the policies of the ministry are designed to let learners do whatever they want?

**Teacher A1**

They give learners so much freedom, more than the actual teachers that are supposed to discipline them. How will I deal with the situation like that? As a ministry, you put up policies that are working more on me as a teacher that has already graduated, by the way. We are supposed to have a policy for learners that are still working, towards building their careers in the future, not working against me. If a learner is late, they said, you cannot send the learner away. How do you discipline that?

**Interviewer HA**

OK. No that was very insightful. Thank you so much. Unless there is something else that you would like to conclude, in conclusion or to add in terms of the topic, exploring the self-directed learning needs for ESL teachers in Namibia.

**Teacher A1**

I think continuous professional development is necessary, by all means, and I'm saying this without any fear of contradiction because. If you are in a specific field, you need to acquaint yourselves, especially with the changing times also, and in terms of behaviour, and also just the attitude people have towards Education. Because our country is transitioning from a country in which education was seen as the only key. Now things such as sports are also coming into play, and now we have you see sports, which can also be another key, to success and things like that.

**Interviewer HA**

Yeah,

**Teacher A1**

I think moving forward, we ought to develop a curriculum that is more, uhm how do I put it? That is more....

**Interviewer HA**

Hmm holistic.



**Teacher A1**

Yeah, and I think it should be an approach in which, an approach which only deals with those that really want to being the education system. If someone wants to pursue something such as sports, let them join sports. If this one want to pursue business, we don't enforce Arts on them. I think maybe if we can come up with such an approach then it will be much easier for the teachers to deal with the learners and are willing. And if I'm dealing with people that are willing, then I can go to an extent just to develop my profession so that I can make sure I'm better for this group that is really, really willing to learn.

**Interviewer HA**

Wow, very powerful. Ohh thank you so much, Mr. Absalom, it was nice to chat with you, and have a good day.

**Teacher A1**

Thank you so much for having me.

**Interviewer HA**

Alright.