



**Newly qualified teachers perceptions of Teaching Practicum
as a component of initial teacher education at a Western Cape
institution**

By

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Declaration

I, CHARMAINE IWU, declare that the contents of this thesis represent my own unaided work, and that the thesis has not previously been submitted for academic examination towards any qualification. Furthermore, it represents my own opinions and not necessarily those of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT).

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Abstract

Simply put, Teaching Practicum refers to learning through experience. The learning opportunity is provided to trainees who have successfully completed teacher education. It is considered an important moment for newly qualified teachers because he or she is exposed to real classroom dynamics. Owing to the value placed in Teaching Practicum, specifically its necessity as a transformative step to building teaching and learning capacity for newly qualified teachers, it is important to continuously evaluate the extent to which the programme facilitates the important objective of sustaining the interest of newly qualified teachers' interest in the profession of teaching. More so, foundation phase has been highlighted by researchers as challenging for newly qualified teachers. In this respect, researchers have noted a dearth of research about whether the initial teacher education programme, particularly Teaching Practicum at foundation phase transfers to actual classroom practice. This study therefore seeks to understand how newly qualified teachers perceive Teaching Practicum. Essentially, the main objective is to establish whether newly qualified teachers found Teaching Practicum beneficial in their first year of teaching. Teaching Practicum plays an integral role in the preparation of prospective teachers, to ensure that the practical aspect of teaching is sufficiently conveyed in relation to the content learnt at university. With the aim of obtaining in-depth information about the knowledge and skills gained during Teaching Practicum, this research employed a qualitative method within an interpretivist paradigm with the participation of newly qualified teachers in 2017. Data were collected through the use of focus group interviews to obtain in-depth data about the knowledge and skills acquired during Teaching Practicum.

With this goal in mind, the researcher posed the following question: (1) How do NQTs perceive Teaching Practicum? To meaningfully obtain the perceptions of Teaching Practicum required the researcher to ask the newly qualified teachers whether Teaching Practicum was beneficial or not. This meant that the participants' experiences during Teaching Practicum had to be explored. As indicated, data collected in 2017 served as the primary database for this study. The use of themes through content analysis enabled better analytical approach so as to clearly present meaning to the data. The findings indicate an overall positive perception of Teaching Practicum among the participants despite the views of some of the participants who were discontented with what they were exposed to during Teaching Practicum. Basically, while majority of the participants viewed Teaching Practicum positively there were few who felt they did not gain as much as they hoped. With the notion that South Africa education system is in a

crisis requiring concrete solutions of which Teaching Practicum is seen as one of the possible solutions, this study breaks new ground in identifying such areas of concern and the value of the research resides chiefly in this location of weak spots, which deserve urgent attention. A major implication therefore of this finding is that even though Teaching Practicum has a value-add potential, the weak areas of Teaching Practicum training implies that universities need to examine the quality, value and efficacy as well as duration of their Teaching Practicum programmes. To provide quality teachers, the necessity of quality Teaching Practicum is vital.

Keywords: Teaching Practicum, education and training, initial teacher education, Foundation Phase, trainees, NQTs

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
BEd	Bachelor of Education
C2005	Curriculum 2005
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement 2011
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DoE	Department of Education
EL	Experiential learning
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
ISPFTEDSA	Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
MDG	Millennium Development Programme
MRTEQ 2011	Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications 2011
MRTEQ 2015	Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications 2015
NCHE	National Commission on Higher Education
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NDoE	National Department of Education
NEPI	National Education Policy Investigation
NP	National Party
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
NEPA	National Education Policy Act
NPFTEDSA	National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa
NSE	Norms and Standards for Educators
NTEA	National Teacher Education Audit
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PFET	Policy Framework for Education and Training

RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SASA	South African's School Act of 1996
TP	Teaching Practicum
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
WCED	Western Cape Education Department
WIL	Work-integrated learning
WPoET	White Paper on Education and Training

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Chapter 1: Introduction

It has been commonly reported that South Africa's basic education is in crisis. Foundation phase teaching is seen as a critical supply chain that can reduce some of the problems that have been reported, which include poor pass rates, high dropout rate among learners and unpreparedness of those who access institutions of higher learning. Several solutions have however been suggested for these problems. Among them is an increase in the number of qualified teachers. Interestingly, there is a low uptake of teaching as a career. This is even more worrying when one considers the rate at which teachers exit the profession in search of greener pastures. A seemingly more viable option is to try and provide adequate (quality) training to those who are studying towards becoming teachers. Quality training goes beyond classroom teaching in institutions of higher learning.

Teaching Practicum is one of the approaches that has been recognised as a way of enriching the learning experience of future teachers. Teaching Practicum is considered a vital component of the initial teacher education (ITE) programme, which has a huge effect in influencing future teachers to teach. This component provides prospective teachers with the necessary competencies to deal with teaching in the classroom and with the relevant knowledge and experiences to teach.

In line with understanding how those in training to become teachers, specifically foundation phase teachers, are sufficiently interested and enticed to remain in the profession of teaching, this study sought the views of newly qualified foundation phase teachers with regard to the Teaching Practicum, a component of initial teacher education (ITE).

A foundation phase teacher is expected to promote a learner's social, emotional and intellectual development. If this is not done during the early stages of a child's learning experience, according to Robinson (2016), the learner is bound to experience serious developmental challenges. Robinson goes further to advise universities to strengthen its teacher education programmes in order for those who end up teaching foundation phase learners to be well-equipped for the task. This call by Robinson was made by Kiggundu and Nayimuli in 2009 when they suggested a review of ITE programmes for the benefit of those on Teaching Practicum. Therefore, it is important to ensure meaningful Teaching Practicum experiences in South African ITE programmes is paramount for the overall education system. If those in training are not sufficiently exposed to positive experience during Teaching Practicum, interest in the teaching profession will continue to dwindle (Korthagen, 2016).

1.1 Background

Teaching Practicum (TP) as a component of the ITE programme plays a significant role in developing the competencies of teachers. The Teaching Practicum allows first-hand classroom experience in the presence of mentors and under the supervision of university lecturers. Rogers, Phillips and Walters (2005: VI) argue that Teaching Practicum sets out to:

- increase awareness of the many dimensions of the Teaching Practicum situation;
- provide opportunities for trainees to practise their teaching;
- develop some skills and techniques that teachers need; and
- provide activities that help to improve what they presently know and can do.

The Teaching Practicum prepares trainees to: (i) manage various classroom situations, (ii) interact appropriately with diverse pupils from diverse backgrounds, and (iii) develop the skills and methods required for their future work. The quality of Teaching Practicum depends to a degree upon infrastructure and services that are available in the schools that trainees enter. In schools where learners struggle to achieve academically, researchers often point to such issues as: geographical location, different kinds of available educator expertise, the lack of resources, issues with discipline (Kiggundu & Nayimuli 2009), dilapidated buildings (Agenor, 2012), ineffective teaching pedagogies (Meintjies & Grosser, 2010), inadequate or poorly qualified teachers (Maeresera, 2016), and low learner self-esteem.

Teaching Practicum in ITE programmes develop the necessary competencies of teachers. Practical engagement with learners and the support of experienced mentors may well assist NQTs. Positive Teaching Practicum experiences may lead to greater teacher retention, improved pedagogies and greater learner achievement. This research focuses on Teaching Practicum that influences aspects of all subjects. If NQTs are not properly prepared for this phase, they can only add to the learner deficits.

An uninspiring Teaching Practicum experience may possibly discourage prospective teachers from taking up teaching as a career; resulting in reduced number of teachers to teach certain subjects. This thesis focused upon the perception of Teaching Practicum by FP NQTs. This thesis examines what they expressed about Teaching Practicum while they were part of the ITE programme.

1.2 Problem statement

Although the academic performance of students is monitored during Teaching Practicum, there is a dearth of research about whether Teaching Practicum training transfers to actual classroom practice. Learner achievement is still weak: it is not certain whether Teaching Practicum effectively contributes to teacher performance. Teaching Practicum is a vital component of the ITE programme and is a way to put what is learnt into practice (Kiggundu et al., 2009): to apply content knowledge and pedagogical skills from ITE programmes to professional performance. If NQTs (i) are not able to apply what they were taught at tertiary level to their daily teaching as young professionals or if (ii) the training they received was not of use or transferable/applicable to the challenges of the classroom, then such trainees flounder and contribute to an already struggling education system (Spaull, 2013: 3).

This study's objectives are as follows:

- (i) to collect and analyse data about the Teaching Practicum from NQTs in the first year of professional teaching
- (ii) to shed more light on the advantages and disadvantages of Teaching Practicum as articulated by NQTs

1.3 Research aim

The aim of the study is to understand the perception of Teaching Practicum as articulated by NQTs. Specifically, to identify the benefits and disadvantages of TP as identified by NQTs, how it hews and shapes their future practice as teachers. To realise this aim, data were collected from NQTs in 2017 using qualitative method.

The study's main research question is:

What are the perceptions of Teaching Practicum as articulated by NQTS?

In furtherance of the main objective, the sub-questions were

- a) What are the benefits of TP as identified by NQTs?
- b) What are the disadvantages of TP as identified by NQTs?

In order to gain a better understanding of the perspectives of NQTs Teaching Practicum experiences during the ITE programme, it was useful to search for evidence of 'learning

moments'; when NQTs were able to make use of Teaching Practicum training that they found particularly helpful for their current practices. Information was gathered and collected from focus group interviews conducted with NQTs in 2017 about Teaching Practicum and analysed.

1.4 Overview of thesis

The study primarily employed a qualitative method employing an interpretivist paradigm as the aim was to interpret data presented in the focus group interviews that were collected from NQTs in 2017 as they embark on their professional teaching careers. Two focus group interview sessions were conducted among NQTs.

Overview of structure

Chapter 1

In this chapter, the central problem is stated. The aim of the study is presented: to determine whether the Teaching Practicum segment of an ITE programme aids NQTs to teach at foundation phase. A summary of the Teaching Practicum is provided to achieve the aim of the study was provided.

Chapter 2

This chapter establishes the context of relevant national and international research about the area of study selected for this thesis. This chapter provides a historical background to education and training policies during the apartheid and post-apartheid eras; with special reference to (i) ITE programmes (ii) Teaching Practicum and (iii) how policies guided and structured ITE programmes.

Chapter 3

This chapter reviews literature relevant to this study and is divided into three sections: the ITE programme; TP (Teaching Practicum) and a framework suitable for this research.

Chapter 4

In this chapter, the research methodology and processes used in this study are discussed. The research design for this study was delineated as a qualitative study. The research plan is presented; describing the data collection methods used for this study.

Chapter 5

In this chapter, the findings, analysis and discussion are presented. The data gleaned from focus group interviews are analysed and interpreted. Themes are identified in the data; in terms of the research question pertaining to the perception of Teaching Practicum (TP) of NQTs articulating their experiences in preparation for the actual classroom. This is to understand whether NQTs benefit from Teaching Practicum as well as whether they experience any shortcomings of the programme as well.

Chapter 6

This chapter concludes the study and makes recommendations for future study in related areas.

Chapter 2: Context of the study

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a history of policies relating to the education and training on ITE programmes particularly, the Teaching Practicum. The writings reviewed in this chapter will add to the contextual issues by examining various policy documents relevant to this study. The chapter is organised in sections as follows: Firstly, the study will outline the history of education in apartheid South Africa focusing on education and training policy pre-1994; Secondly, focus on education and training policies in post-apartheid government as well as restructuring and developing new policy on Teaching Practicum; Thirdly, Teaching Practicum in post-apartheid South Africa and conclude with a summary of the key points of the chapter.

2.2 ITE in pre 1994: Apartheid education

South Africa was one of the last African countries to be liberated, in 1994, and one of the first to be colonised. Most African countries were freed after 1948 but the fact that South Africa laboured for another fifty years under white rule suggests that colonisation, segregation and exploitation had been so entrenched in the land for so long that it was much more difficult to break free. Dutch and British colonisation metamorphosed into one of the worst periods of systematic racial oppression; from 1948-1994. Quality education was largely denied black people under apartheid as a way of keeping them in effective serfdom: to meet the goals of a fascist state, which openly believed whites were born rulers and blacks born servants (Jansen, 1990; Fiske & Ladd, 2004). The apartheid government endured under the Nationalist Party in South Africa until 1994.

Apartheid impacted the South African education system in terms of “segregation, fragmentation, authoritarian and bureaucratic control of the curriculum, institutions and governance, inefficiency and inequity” (Adler & Reed, 2002). Educational policies were introduced to ensure that black people were disadvantaged: Christie (1992: 37) quotes Sir George Grey:

If we leave the natives beyond our border [as] ignorant barbarians, they will remain a race of troublesome marauders. We should try to make them a part of ourselves, with a common faith and common interest, useful servants, consumers of our goods, contributors to our revenue. Therefore, I propose that we make unremitting efforts to

raise the natives in Christianity and civilisation, by establishing among them missions connected with industrial school.

Jansen (1998) argues that the fundamental reasoning of Apartheid Education was “to handicap African children with an introduction of inferior syllabus”. Jansen quotes Verwoerd, the architect of apartheid’s statement: ‘What is the use of teaching a Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice?...That is absurd’ (1998: 200). These Acts ensured that the highest quality education was reserved for whites. Government created two types of institutions: universities and technikons. Cloete et al. (2006:36) asserts in 1985, higher education institutions amounted to a total of 19 authorised as being ‘for the exclusive use of whites’; two were ‘for the exclusive use of coloureds’; two ‘for the exclusive use of Indians’, and six were ‘for the exclusive use of Africans’. White students had entrance to quality institutions of higher education. However, black students were reduced to institutions with mediocre amenities, lecturers, and educational programmes.

Schools were generously funded for white students (Fiske & Ladd, 2004). Government did not allow students to enrol outside the bounds set for their skin colour; unless the DoE permitted them to do so when a programme was unavailable at an institution of the student’s ethnic grouping (Cloete et al., 2006: 37). Teachers by the early 1970s were posted to racially and ethnically segregated schools. The training they received at separate colleges and universities were tailored to meet the racially defined needs of schools (Sayed, 2002). The apartheid system provided few opportunities in education for black people. This deprivation led to many blacks not completing secondary education. The black population was often steered away from higher learning subjects such as science and mathematics, which were regarded as the intellectual preserve of the whites. History and religious instruction allowed blacks in many cases to do little more than ‘teach or preach’ (Sayed, 2002).

2.2.1 Initial teacher education pre-1994

Before 1994 initial teacher education was bound by the nationalist frameworks of the apartheid government and took place in ethnically and racially separated teachers’ colleges and universities (Baxen & Botha, 2016: 1). The apartheid system made certain that education was unevenly distributed along racial lines and sanctioned by policy implementation. Education was mandatory for whites only because whites were being trained to rule over blacks. Education for Blacks were devised to keep blacks down and prevent them from rising above basic levels of manual labour (Fiske & Ladd, 2004). According to The National Education

Amendment Act, (1991: 6) “the education in schools maintained, managed and controlled by the Department (including provincial education departments) shall have a Christian character.” There is a bitter irony in this statement since it is unchristian to separate people and educate one group for serfdom and another for privilege. Blacks were educated through a skewed version of Christian values. Government took control of many church-run schools where blacks were trained as workers in one of the most racist systems invented and with some of the lowest human rights records.

Teacher education post matriculation was provided to Whites in colleges or universities for an extended period; with higher entry levels set than for blacks. Institutions for white higher education were better resourced (Cross & Chisholm, 1990: 52). It is further noted that the black system made provision for a small number of secondary teachers in universities Cross and Chisholm (1990). Black students were permitted to attend Fort Hare as the only university for blacks at the time (Baxen & Botha, 2016: 1). they go on to say that “those aspiring to teach in primary schools for ‘African’ and ‘coloured’ children could enrol in colleges of education for a two-year certificate after completing Grade Eight or Ten schooling (Baxen and Botha (2016: 1).”

One of the guiding principles of white supremacist government from 1948-1994 was to keep racial groups separate. Education and training colleges multiplied in order to fulfil the mandate of separate development. By the late 1980s, the number of colleges had risen to 111 (CHE, 2011: 8). According to Wolhuter (2006: 128) “teacher training was one of the few avenues of higher education and upward social mobility available to Blacks, which led to a high individual demand for teacher training education.” This demand created an upsurge in the number of training colleges. There were 37 training colleges for black teachers by 1981; by 1994, the number had escalated to 120 training colleges. There was an oversupply of teachers, which led to a high number of unemployed teachers (Wolhuter, 2006).

The NTEA was established in 1995 to examine the disparity between teacher supply and demand, which had been caused by the oversupply of teachers and high numbers of untrained and insufficiently qualified teachers (DoE, 2006: 6). The Audit indicated that in South Africa in 1995 there were 281 various institutions providing teacher education: a significant percentage (36%) of them had staff that were under- or unqualified (Onwu & Schoole, 2015: 122-3). The high percentage of unqualified teachers generated a significant obstacle: the teacher education sector was confronted by poorly qualified teachers and weak teacher

education programmes (Onwu & Schoole, 2015: 123). Onwu and Schoole (2015: 123) conclude that the alarmingly widespread breakdown of the education sector rendered it essential for a reformation of the teacher education system to be initiated.

2.3 Post-apartheid government's stance on education

Apartheid ended in 1994 when South Africans democratically elected the African National Congress (ANC) into power. The new government inherited a dysfunctional education system and transformation was essential. Post-apartheid reform of education in South Africa sought equity and fairness, which were considered fundamental for the land to emerge as a modern, functional democracy.

education and training system and the opening of access to lifelong learning for all South Africans. We need to walk this path together in confidence and hope. —African National Congress, 1994 (In Fiske & Ladd, 2004: 61)

Government acknowledged that education and teacher training were in need of transformation. The Minister of education at the time, Professor Bengu, considered education and training to be a central activity in our society and the national economy (WPoET, 1995). Education and training are considered part of life's evolution; human resource development is essential (WPoET, 1995). The first White Paper was concerned with amendment of the education system: White Paper on Education and Training (NDoE, 1995). The Department of Education made it compulsory for the provision of education for learners from five years old for their first ten years as from 1995 and as planned by the Department of Education, White Paper 1 (HSRC, 2013). The National Education Policy Act (Act 27 of 1996) states that the Minister shall determine national policy; including the curricular framework for teacher training programmes (NEPA, 1996). Soon after the provision of the Higher Education Act (1997) shaped a cohesive and nationally designed system of higher education, a statutory Council on Higher Education (CHE) advising the Minister and ensuring accountability for quality assurance and promotion (DoE, 2001).

The post-apartheid years saw changes in the national education policy; as well as the introduction of the new Norms and Standards for Educators (NSE) (2000) and framed by wider legislation. However, prior to the NSE, the formation of the Higher Education Act and Education White Paper 3 on Higher Education (1999) transformed the higher education sector via an institutional planning and budgeting framework (DoE, 2001). By 1997, key elements of

the South African teacher education terrain had been shaped, which comprised the introduction of Outcomes-based Education (OBE) and a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) (Parker & Deacon, 2017: 6).

Norms and standards for teacher training were subsequently declared in 1998 and revised in 2000 (NSE, 2000). In accordance with the guidelines that were propagated in this policy, all new teacher education programmes had to be designed accordingly (Robinson, 2003: 19). Robinson asserts in 1995 that teacher training programmes began the process of a regulatory framework, published for debate in 1998 and gazetted as the Norms and Standards for Educators in 2000. A framework for the process of approving teacher training programmes, outlining the types of qualifications offered by the Department of Education, was considered for funding. Employment was created for the first time by this new policy (2003: 19).

The Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development (ISPFTED) developed by government in 2011 was initiated with its main influence “to improve the quality of teacher education and development in order to improve the quality of teachers and teaching” (Bernstein, 2015: 1). The policy on Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ) (DHET, 2011) was created with a prospect for universities to restructure their curricula for prevailing qualifications and/or plan for new qualifications (Rousseau, 2014: 170). The National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development (NPFTEd) followed in 2007 (DoE, 2007: 1). The Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ) policy of 2011 replaced the NSE by the (Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET, 2011): teacher education programmes were linked to the Higher Education Qualification Framework (DHET, 2011: 9). In 2015, the 2011 MRTEQ (DHET, 2011), was updated to the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications 2015 (DHET, 2015), and readjusted with the amended 2008 National Qualifications Framework subsequent to reviewing (DHET, 2013).

All ITE programmes are required to be redesigned; highlighting “subject content knowledge, how to teach that content knowledge, and the practice teaching component” (Bernstein, 2015: 2). The ITE programmes received 73 per cent by DHET along with additional funding that had been distributed to public HEIs, to strengthen their ITE programmes as well as co-funded new research investigating the quality and relevance of ITE programmes at five public HEIs (CDE 2015: 2).

2.4 Teaching Practicum as a component of ITE

Teaching Practicum (TP) remains a vital component of South African ITE programmes after 1994 offered at tertiary level: trainees are expected to participate in the classroom at schools to acquire practical experience. They are based at schools for specified periods of time to be part of the school environment to teach. Teaching Practicum is considered the basis of teacher education. trainees engage in classroom experience and are allowed to observe experienced teachers teach (Okeke, Abongdia, OlusolaAdu, van Wyk & Wolhuter, 2016).

2.4.1 Teaching Practicum in post-apartheid South Africa

According to the National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa (NPFTEDSA) (2006: 23), new recruits entering the teaching profession could qualify for a B.Ed degree with a practical component, which would lead to registration as an educator by SACE. The NPFTEDSA (2006) added that “the practical component may be undertaken in short periods during the programme, comprise an extended period of service during the final year with a structured mentorship programme, or be undertaken by trainees or serving teachers in schools under supervision by a mentor.” The latter options were to be considered by the provider and guaranteed with proper supervision and appropriate school placement. These steps by NPFTEDSA indicate what is available for trainees and what the practical component entails.

Government addressed issues of consistency in standards in 2011; by implementing the policy on The Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ); and requiring the re-design of all ITE programmes with specific attention to subject content knowledge, how to teach that content knowledge, and the practice teaching component (CDE, 2015: 2). The Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (DHET, 2011) replaces the Norms and Standards for Educators (NSE), published in February 2000 (DoE, 2000a). The Minimum Requirements carefully considered the various types of knowledge that reinforced teachers’ practice for Teacher Education Qualifications; capturing all elements within the range of integrated and applied knowledge (DHET, 2011).

According to the DHET (2011: 7): “integrated and applied knowledge should be understood as being both the condition for, and the effect of scrutinising, fusing together and expressing different types of knowing in the moment of practise.” DHET (2011) argues that knowledgeable learning is at all times a synthesis of the theoretical and the practical:

“competent learning in effect, represents the acquisition, integration and application of different types of knowledge.” Each type of knowledge suggests the mastering of particular related skills and the kind of learning related (DHET, 2011: 11): the Department of Education believes the “acquisition, integration and application of knowledge for teaching purposes are; disciplinary learning; pedagogical Learning; practical Learning; fundamental Learning.” Teaching Practicum comprises all these features where learning is developed in a particular setting; the skills and knowledge that are acquired has to be applied and integrated for the purpose of teaching in the classroom.

DHET (2011: 11) posits that: “Practical Learning involves learning in and from practice.” From practice comes learning that comprises the study of practice; with the use of discursive means to examine diverse practices; through a range of contexts, from case studies, video records, lesson observations, as well as the ability to hypothesise practice and create a foundation for learning in practice, which contains teaching in authentic and simulated classroom settings (DHET, 2011).

2.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter refers to Teaching Practicum in South Africa during the Apartheid years, from 1948 until the present day. Teacher education and training experienced a variety of barriers, which had an impact on the education system. The apartheid government sanctioned white supremacy through the provision of policies that legalised apartheid and controlled black people through education. The barriers to free and egalitarian education for all have not been completely broken.

South Africa has reformed policies to ensure inclusivity for everyone; according to the Constitution. Yet there are indications from the DHET where it was suggested that policies, such as MRTEQ (2011) and (2015), should be revisited in order to redesign the ITE programmes, in terms of subject content knowledge, teaching content knowledge and the Teaching Practicum component. If there are lecturers in charge of ITE, teachers who sustain habits of teacher-centred, textbook learning associated with pre-1994 programmes, these programmes will be contrary to ANC policy. This could possibly affect Teaching Practicum negatively, since such staff members may be resistant to change and might not allow trainees the opportunity to apply pedagogies other than what they are familiar with. Such narrow-

mindedness could possibly stifle the implementation of NQTs knowledge and skills acquired during Teaching Practicum.

Teachers can synthesise the different knowledge they possess with the NQTs entering the teaching profession, to successfully teach. Newly qualified teachers should be granted the prospect to practice what they were taught during Teaching Practicum in the classroom. Chapter 3 presents the literature and framework for this study to get a sense how far South Africa has come in terms of improving Teaching Practicum, with the framework providing the advantages and disadvantages of Teaching Practicum.

Chapter 3: Literature review

3.1 Introduction

Teaching Practicum (TP) prepares prospective teachers for the teaching profession by developing necessary knowledge and skills for the classroom. This chapter examines literature pertinent to Teaching Practicum. The literature review includes texts from both national and international research to provide insight into the chosen research questions. The purpose of the literature review is to know what already exists about a field of concern (Bryman & Bell 2014: 92). This chapter specifically provides a review of the conceptual framework and literature relevant to this study: benefits of Teaching Practicum; international perspectives and the teaching experience of NQTs. South Africa urgently needs to produce quality teachers for the diverse classroom by improving teaching in practice.

3.2 Delineating TP

3.2.1 Teaching Practice

Teaching Practicum, according to Schoeman and Mabunda, (2012) who refer to policy documents such as the Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa (ISPFTEDSA), 2011-2025, and The Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications, (MRTEQ, 2011) characterise the Teaching Practicum experience as a time when trainees interact with the realities of classroom teaching. Teaching Practicum is sometimes termed teacher practicum, induction or internship. Kiggundu et al. (2009: 347) describe Teaching Practicum as a type of work-integrated learning or a time when students gain on-the-job experience of implementing theory.

3.2.2 Work-integrated learning (WIL)

The Teaching Practicum is also referred to as work-integrated learning. Okeke et al. (2016, p. 192) declare that **work-integrated learning (WIL)** takes place in the different academic and school contexts and is spread out across an academic programme.” Teaching Practicum is thus about when students are posted to schools in the form of work integrated learning for a certain time during their initial teacher education programme to obtain relevant experience and skills in schools for the purpose of future teaching. Thus, this study aims to find out the perceptions of Teaching Practicum as narrated by NQTs and whether any benefits and disadvantages have been identified.

3.3 Benefits of Teaching Practicum as a component of ITE that shape teacher practices

Teaching Practicum is beneficial since it is an opportunity for NQTs to appreciate the role and process of how the business of schooling is conducted (Aglazor, 2017). There is an old proverb, “practice makes perfect” which is appropriate to teaching. Mohammed (2019) suggests that traditional teaching integrated practice where the student or graduate teacher has to remember or adopt ideas. She says, practice can be described as the application of a concept to acquire knowledge and skill, and is still considered significant in teaching. This discipline of experience offers a challenging yet gratifying experience of working with individuals in real classrooms and attaining and enhancing professional competency (Aglazor, 2017). NQTs benefit from practice since they are capable of utilising knowledge through interaction. They relate with the information when working with texts and concepts consistently over time. When students or NQTs practice employing the knowledge through application, they relate with information in a meaningful way. For example, when being taught about writing text, they have to write and have to “hone the voice, tone and style of their writing” (Mohammed, 2019). This can only take place through revision, the use of examples and learning to develop their own individual work. She further adds that work cannot be conveyed without practical application (Mohammed, 2019).

3.3.1 Practical knowledge

Teachers are the essential variable in the classroom thus Teaching Practicum is a vital component in providing appropriate pedagogical knowledge to teachers. Thus, according to DHET, (2011:7-8) Teaching Practicum underpins various practical knowledge and works hand in hand with the theory acquired at university, which includes the acquisition, integration and application of knowledge. DHET (2011) further asserts that pedagogical learning integrates common pedagogical knowledge, which comprises “knowledge of learners, learning, curriculum and general instructional strategies, being able to represent the concepts, methods and rules of a discipline in order to create appropriate learning opportunities for diverse learners.” The practical pedagogical knowledge mentioned above, are acquired during Teaching Practicum whilst as trainees and are further developed as newly qualified teachers while interacting with learners in the classroom.

Bird and Hudson (2015:3) state that “practical pedagogical knowledge translates into Teaching Practicums that can demonstrate skill levels.” Signifying that NQTs entering the teaching profession would have to demonstrate what pedagogical knowledge and skills were acquired

during Teaching Practicum and which skills need further developing. The level of pedagogical skills acquired would determine the effectiveness of the NQTs in the classroom. The quality of Teaching Practicum is paramount in order to provide good quality teachers. The quality of Teaching Practicum involves the knowledge of pedagogical knowledge in sync with content knowledge.

Content knowledge is one of the essential elements among others (PCK and GCK) of teacher competency that influences learner progress and this is acquired during Teaching Practicum. Shulman (1986:9) is of the view that the obtaining and development of content knowledge (CK) are differentiated into three categories namely, (a) subject matter content knowledge, (b) pedagogical content knowledge, and (c) curricular knowledge." He considers all three significant, which indicates that all are integrated since during Teaching Practicum content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge are acquired with the prospect of aligning it with curricular knowledge, applied in the classroom. He went on to say that the discussion of the content structure of knowledge in the different subject matter areas, vary and goes further than the knowledge of the specifics or ideas of a discipline which should allow content knowledge to be thoroughly thought through (Shulman 1986). Content knowledge signifies the teachers' perception of the content being taught. Mavhunga (2014) concurs and is firmly drawn to teachers' capacity to convert the content of particular subjects into teachable method.

According to Shulman (1986), "the teacher need not only understand that something is so, the teacher must further understand why it is so." Thus, Teaching Practicum provides the understanding and the reason it has to be taught the way it should, though the acquisition of content knowledge would differ depending on the institute of study and where it is practiced. Proper content knowledge requires an alignment with the specifications of the curriculum and the needs of learners (Hudson et al, 2015:135). In light of aligning content to curricula, Mavhunga's (2014:2) model for content knowledge comprises five elements "students' prior knowledge including misconceptions, curricular saliency, what makes a topic easy or difficult to understand, representations including analogies, and conceptual teaching strategies." NQTs should essentially be experienced in terms of the school curriculum and be capable of unpacking its specific content and utilising resources that are available correctly, in order to plan and design appropriate learning syllabi (DHET, 2011).

Teaching Practicum provides the experience to trainees and NQTS with content knowledge and skills to be utilised and appropriately unpacked in the classroom. Moreover, Cross,

Mungadi and Rouhani (2002:182) argue that the teacher should know more than the learner for instruction to be effective, possess sufficient content knowledge, recognise the conceptual destination of the learning, and thus decisively direct the learner towards a predetermined goal or outcome. Muller (2000:12) contends, there is therefore a necessity to repossess the pedagogical and reasoning facets of schooling lost due to undue emphasis on outcomes, to restore the role of the teacher, undervalued in progressivism, not only in shaping the flux of experience acquired “through ‘immersion’ but by supplying the ‘baggage’, the facts, the raw material to be shaped and ordered, i.e. the subject matter or content knowledge.” Teaching Practicum could therefore be conducive in a way that trainees are trained and explicitly prepared to transmit the content as precise as possible in the classroom.

It is also possible that not all trainees and NQTs experience the same challenges since it depends on the school they are sent to do their practical and teach as teachers with the support of mentors. Many researchers consider Teaching Practicum to be one of the most significant components of an ITE programme and is referred to as “the core and the central element of teachers professional training programmes” (Sayed, Carrim, Badroodien, McDonald & Singh, 2018). Teaching Practicum in ITE differ not only in respect of location in the various programmes based on international literature but also on its duration, philosophy, aims and assessment methods thus, there is potential to detect diverse practices in the ITE programme (Flores, 2017). ITE programmes are globally geared towards providing prospective teachers opportunities to “develop knowledge and skills in traditional coursework” (Hodges & Hodge, 2015: 102). Sayed et al. (2018) contend that classroom practice offers NQTs with the chance to observe practice, to practice their classroom management and teaching skills and to implement what they have learnt in real setting (school) as well as reflecting on and evaluating their own skills and knowledge by examining the applicability and relevance of the theoretical preparation in their ITE programme for practice.

Another aspect of Teaching Practicum is microteaching in providing teaching skills. Microteaching is believed to furnish teachers with an advantage to enhance their teaching skills by developing the different easy tasks termed ‘teaching skills’, a Teaching Practicum method presently practiced globally by teacher trainees and has been proven to improve the instructional experiences (Ramesh, 2012). These are universal practices; not peculiar to South Africa. Grudnoff, Haigh, Hill, Cochrane-Smith, Ell and Ludlow (2016) observe in New Zealand that ITE programmes are about providing enriching experiences that build trust and

encourage engagement in the learning process; preparing prospective teachers to teach with the knowledge and skills required and to perform the duties of an effective teacher (Pryor, Akyeampong, Westbrook & Lussier, 2012: 10). Kolb (2015: XVIII) contends that knowledge is considered an on-going inquisition into the nature of experience and the process of learning from it. Teaching Practicum as the component of ITE is the starting point of acquiring experience in the field of teaching and does not end subsequent to the completion of the programme. Learning to teach is an on-going process, which leads to the experiential learning over time. Through the ITE programme, prospective teachers acquire essential knowledge and skills, which is a continuous process of learning through experience.

Teacher education is important and teachers are the driving force behind learner achievement. Musset (2010: 3) agrees, “It is now acknowledged that teachers are the school variable that influences the most student achievement.” Quality Teaching Practicum is the driver to successful teachers who can influence student achievement. South Africa’s education system has undergone many changes since colonialism and apartheid. However, there are many challenges in order to provide a better quality education. Musset (2009: 4) argues, “initial teacher education represents the entry point into the profession, and the way it is organised plays a key role in determining both the quality and the quantity of teachers.” A key challenge for ITE programmes is that teachers are often not adequately equipped with the necessary content knowledge, or adequate understanding of their subjects, to be able to fulfil their responsibilities meaningfully (Pryor et al., 2012). Teaching Practicum, as a key component of the ITE programme, requires government attention to revisit the policies guiding these teacher education programmes; to improve the quality of teaching in the schools.

3.3.2 Application of Teaching Practicum

Teaching Practicum has been internationally accepted as a key element of any teacher education programme, and the primary objective of Teaching Practicum is “to help turn students into teachers” (Taole, 2015). Teaching Practicum is the practical component and it is required by NQTs to participate during this phase. Taole mentions that the purpose of Teaching Practicum is to sharpen acumen and hands-on teaching experience through observation, planning and practice under the direction of a knowledgeable teacher/mentor (Taole, 2015). Hands-on experience is vital; the knowledge and skills they acquire during this time is essential for teachers. Kolb and Fry (1975: 33-34) argue that “learning, change and growth is facilitated by an integrated process that begins with (i) here and now experience followed by (ii) collection

of data and observation of that experience. The data are then (iii) analysed and the conclusions of this analysis are fed back to the actors for their use in the (iv) modification of their behaviour and new experiences.” This outlines the process of the learning cycle and is the way NQTs should view Teaching Practicum during this phase where concrete experience is acquired through observation and reflection where the teacher theorises and acts on the experience gained to develop new experiences.

Teaching Practicum provides this space for NQTs to go through this process and it is up to them to open themselves to this experience and continue the process of learning. This can also be achieved with the help of mentors and peers. Grossman, Compton, Igra, Ronfeldt, Shahan and Williamson (2009) believe that the teacher requires the cooperation of the trainee just as support is needed from the teacher for trainees to bridge the gap between theory and practice (Busher, Gündüz, Cakmak & Lawson, 2015). It is expected that the teacher and student teacher work together; to make the transition from student to teacher easier and smoother; effective Teaching Practicum experience prepares prospective teachers to integrate theory and practice.

Theoretical training that NQTs acquire at university is applied during Teaching Practicum but only to a limited degree: it is not entrenched fully in Teaching Practicum and not cemented in their activities as students (Hennissen, Beckers & Moerkerke, 2017). NQTs are not able to apply everything that they have learnt, in practice. Researchers show that there is a gap between theory and practice; due to a crisis in teacher education. Hennissen et al. (2017) show that during Teaching Practicum, NQTs are not always provided with knowledge that is relevant to their later professional situations as NQTs in the classroom. The gap between theory and practice may undermine NQTs experience of Teaching Practicum. Marais and Meier (2004: 222) agree: “University lecturers value practice as the bridge between theory and practice but research findings indicate that student teachers sometimes find it difficult to relate course content to everyday classroom practice.” However, Kolb (1984) argues that individuals learn from direct association with an object or phenomenon of their interest and that exposure to Teaching Practicum facilitates the acquisition of particular additional skills and experience.

If NQTs are faced with the challenge of bridging the gap between theory and practice, even though they are exposed to practice, where they have the ability to incorporate what they have learnt at university into practice in the classroom, it could impede on their development as professional teachers. This disjunction could pose a problem for effective teaching of prospective teachers if they are not able to relate content to practice in the classroom. Hennissen

et al. (2017) state that the knowledge that NQTs obtained as students in theory could not be conveyed in practice due to inadequate experience. This is an indication that the experiences acquired during Teaching Practicum may be flawed in some instances and could compromise effective teaching.

Mattsson, Johansson and Sandström (2008) argue that NQTs undergoing Teaching Practicum as students in diverse school situations, ought to acquire the interpretation of their setting in a professional manner. The writers are indicating that NQTs should be able to interpret what they have learnt during Teaching Practicum in a skilled way. Mattsson et al. (2008) advise that NQTs should be able to: distinguish the rudiments of a given situation; determine the correct assistance for learners; generate official and straightforward accounts of the situation; self-reflect, reflect upon their daily teaching and engage in long-term scientific investigation. NQTs are situated in a particular environment of experiential learning that is reliant on their own agency as the teacher. “Learning is a holistic process of adaptation. It is not just the result of cognition but involves the integrated functioning of the total person—thinking, feeling, perceiving and behaving. It encompasses other specialized models of adaptation from the scientific method to problem solving, decision making and creativity (Kolb & Kolb, 2008: 4).” It is a continuous back and forth transaction between the teacher and the environment in the process of gaining knowledge and creating new experiences. As such, NQTs should be able to acquire a number of concepts from their Teaching Practicum experience, which they can reflect on and incorporate as teachers.

The classroom experiences do not impede the positive perceptions of the practicum as discovered in a comparative study conducted among Turkish and English trainees by Busher et al. (2015) which showed that trainees were treated in a dismissive way by schools which lacked confidence in them as prospective teachers; treating them as subordinates, only able to copy their mentor teachers. Busher et al. further argue that student teacher independence was not encouraged (Busher et al., 2015). This dismissive and negative attitude towards trainees can undermine their development as NQTs at a crucial stage in their progress of unique and authentic teaching styles.

Busher et al. (2015) indicate that when they questioned the trainees about how they felt during Teaching Practicum, a few indicated a preference for observing experienced teachers first; whilst others preferred to be engaged in their own practical experience. In the case mentioned by Busher et al, some preferred learning from concrete experience whilst the others learn from

abstract conceptualisation. Either way, they will acquire the knowledge and skills but in their own unique way. Interestingly, what they discovered in their research between the British and Turkish trainees experience was that they strongly believed Teaching Practicum to be beneficial and vital to their development as teachers: the trainees were significantly pleased with their Teaching Practicum experiences as it met their expectations (Busher et al., 2015). In South Africa, Teaching Practicum is widely assumed to be beneficial and crucial to the development of NQTs for the teaching profession. But is it?

Pryor et al. (2012) cite instances in Ghana and Kenya where concerns were raised about (i) trainees' knowledge of the primary curriculum, and (ii) trainees' lack of knowledge of basic mathematics at primary school level. Pryor et al. (2012) argue that Teaching Practicum should fundamentally be about preparing trainees for the classroom: they assert that where trainees do not have the appropriate skills, subject matter knowledge or experience in teaching in the classroom to enter the teaching profession, developing these should be the main goals of all ITE programmes. Education is about stimulating inquiry and skill and in process gaining knowledge (Kolb, 1984) which appears to be absent in these instances since prospective teachers should have an inquiring mind in order to transfer their experiences in the classroom.

In Tanzania there are colleges that have “demonstration primary schools”; where trainees perform single or double lesson Teaching Practicum but struggle with the sporadic and inconsistent nature of this provision (Pryor et al., 2012: 14). In Turkey, trainees struggle to practise their teaching because many employed school teachers do not themselves have the requisite skills and knowledge to support them. In Gaza, at the Faculty of Education, a study was conducted on issues faced by students during Teaching Practicum. The following issues emerged: (i) the distance between students' homes and their assigned schools; (ii) school principals failed to explain school structures, guidelines and involvement in school events; and (iii) the disrespect shown by cooperating teachers concerning trainees (Yassin, 2004). These issues are similar to challenges faced at many South African schools.

3.4 Shortcomings of Teaching Practicum as a component of ITE that shape teacher practices

Although Teaching Practicum is beneficial to the development of professional teachers, it does come with shortcomings in preparing them adequately. The anticipations of prospective teachers and realities in the classroom are diverse and according to Mahmood and Iqbal (2018) who infer that the teaching profession is more intricate than prospective teachers believe it to be. They further add that the established school environment does not allow trainee teachers

the liberty to practice as expected; learners do not conduct themselves in the manner that they expect; the resources required for interactive practices are barely accessible; the rigid structure during studies creating inflexibility for trainee teachers to practice pedagogies (Mahmood & Iqbal, 2018). It has been emphasised that teacher training should concentrate on teaching, “to make practice the core of the curriculum of teacher education requires a shift from a focus on what teachers know and believe to a greater focus on what teachers do” (Ball & Forzani, 2009:503).

3.4.1 Inadequate classroom management

It has been discovered that classroom management is a widespread concern of NQTs. That inadequate classroom management skills and unruly learners are the major obstacles to becoming an effective teacher and frequently criticise the lack of proper Teaching Practicum in not preparing them the adequate classroom management (Eisenman, Edwards & Cushman, 2015). Trainee teachers find it difficult to learn to effectively manage a classroom caused by the absence of interest of the profession, most teachers in the field lacking formal reparation, and the dearth of classroom-based pedagogy during practicum in the classroom. Learning how to effectively manage a classroom is problematic for trainee teachers. Teaching Practicum focusing on the theoretical side of classroom management result in NQTs experiencing reality shock in the classroom (Eisenman, Edwards & Cushman, 2015).

Mahmood and Iqbal (2018) concur and provide some of the reasons NQTs face challenges (a) teacher training programmes do not groom them for accomplish the actual task; (b) too much attention is given to theory by the teacher training programmes at the expense of practical skills; (c) incorrect theories are instructed in teacher training programmes; (d) they are frequently posted in “hard-to-staff-schools” with inadequate resources; (e) they are often provided with the most difficult tasks and perform under circumstances that barely encourage their achievement; (f) their colleagues do not include them, receive minimum mentoring and guidance, and essentially not receiving feedback that is beneficial developing their competencies and abilities; and (g) unlike various professions where novices take minimal responsibilities, NQTs proceeds by taking complete responsibility in their functions as soon as they enter the classroom. These disadvantages of Teaching Practicum as a component of ITE could hamper the development of teachers and not shape teacher practices the way they should.

3.4.2 Poor support during Teaching Practicum

Poor support at school during Teaching Practicum is a global problem. In Kenya, similar issues were experienced (Koross, 2016); where trainees felt that, although Teaching Practicum was beneficial; teaching staff did not offer sufficient professional advice; that they were overloaded with work by teachers; that they lacked instructional materials; that supervisors were harsh and unfriendly; that learners were disrespectful; and that there were financial challenges. Koross (2016) points out that as trainees they are posted to schools and expected to teach thirteen to fourteen weeks during Teaching Practicum with the cooperation of teachers and school management. Koross (2016) states that practice instils certain skills; such as hunting, singing, reciting, carving and drawing which are considered a tradition of the African people. The issues mentioned above could discourage trainees.

Haciomerglu (2013: 135) finds that in Turkey “approximately 40% of the cooperating teachers did not have well-designed activities for the students, did not utilize effective classroom management and failed to assist trainees to reflect on improving their Teaching Practicums.” This statement begs the question of whether education training programmes are effective when teachers are not adequately prepared for the teaching profession. Trainees could not, in Haciomerglu’s experience, practise what they had been taught during Teaching Practicum, and thus could not hone their skills adequately for their future employment as NQTs. This predicament was particularly problematic for teaching because, as noted before, if learners are not taught well in foundation phase, this weakens the entire education system.

It is mentioned by de Vries, Jansen, Helms-Lorenz and van de Grift (2015: 462-3) that trainees work in schools while learning through their activities at schools and teacher education institutions. This mixture of theory and Teaching Practicum gives the impression that trainees receive adequate Teaching Practicum since they are exposed to diverse school settings. It is presumed too readily that NQTs are acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills; rendering them ready to teach in practice. Experiential learning is a process that takes place during Teaching Practicum and Kolb believes that learning is grounded in experience. If various obstacles and challenges obstruct the learning process during Teaching Practicum, the cycle of poor learner performance will be perpetuated. When trainees do not meet the required standards of performance expected in schools, they are not able to successfully reflect and implement what they should be teaching, which would perpetuate the cycle of inferior education of learners

3.4.3 The sub-standard quality of Teaching Practicum

In South Africa, Teaching Practicum is vital for prospective teachers to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills required for the teaching profession. However, South Africa is still experiencing the after-effects of apartheid: behaviourist traditions and teacher-centred priorities still control much of the profession. Baxen and Botha (2016: 1) observe that part of the problem in South Africa is that ITE programmes in the past were built around “separatist frameworks”; where educational institutions were separated according to skin pigmentation. To address this inequity, all teacher training education institutions and colleges were precipitately incorporated into universities after 1994. Although the intention behind this sudden incorporation was admirable, the implementation of it was too drastic, without proper regard for the effects upon teachers and students (Jansen, 2004).

This transition is exacerbated by the absence of structured, formal induction programmes to assist NQTs make their transition from student to professional. “The new teachers entering into the teaching profession for the first time are often not given adequate orientation as to their working environment; consequently, this raises frustrations amongst them and increases their feelings of insecurity. In addition, new teachers feel unprepared to execute their duties as stipulated by the curriculum and therefore invites failure” (Nghaamwa, 2017:2). Robinson (2016) claims that “the most significant policy revisions over the last twenty years have been the incorporation of colleges of education into higher education” but this change created particular challenges for the development of foundation phase teachers. Universities had little or no experience in preparing teachers for Early Childhood Education.

Because of the deeply ingrained injustices of colonialism and apartheid, a multitude of guidelines have been formulated and initiatives launched to address the inequalities in educational success through the various segments of society and enhance the quality of education (Robinson, 2016). There is remarkably little research on teaching and initial teacher education, particularly Teaching Practicum relating to the foundation phase; nor is there much information about the specific supply and demand issues related to foundation phase teachers, (Baxen & Botha, 2016: 1).

To add to the specific challenges that confront foundation phase, Kiggundu and Nayimuli (2009) note that the nature of the specific tertiary establishments for ITE programmes often determines the types and kinds of Teaching Practicum experiences that they encounter. The

quality of teacher practicum programmes varies from institution to institution, and is often tied to the resources and skills associated with tertiary education providers under apartheid.

In recent years, work-integrated learning (WIL) has acquired growing attention as a way to connect theory to practice. WIL viewpoint deems higher education as a place of professional growth rather than consign such development solely to the prospective encounter between graduates and the job context (Bruno & Dell'Aversana, 2018). WIL is a particularly career-centred method that comprises “classroom-based and workplace-based learning, in many forms: action-learning, apprenticeships, cooperative education, experiential learning, inquiry learning, inter-professional learning, practicum placements, problem-based learning, project-based learning, scenario learning, service-learning, team-based learning, virtual or simulated WIL learning, work-based learning, workplace learning (South African Council on Higher Education, 2011:4).” WIL is all-encompassing that involves learning from the day the student starts the education process and well into the workplace as professional teachers.

WIL is thus an ongoing lifelong learning process where information, skills and knowledge are gathered, acquired and constantly reflected on by professionals. In this instance, the NQTs have gone through this process of learning through experience and experiential learning and utilises reflective practice in their implementation in the classroom. Amidst various terminologies used for the programmes and practices, there is a common understanding of the significance to allow students to integrate content knowledge acquired via formal study, through immersion in a work or professional context where practice-based knowledge is gained (South African Council on Higher Education, 2011). WIL has an influence in the preparation of prospective teachers to join and contribute to the South African society and the world of work (CHE, 2011) by providing them with the necessary skills to create employability.

Teaching Practicum is a type of WIL, which was considered an obsolete form of learning experience as it was confronted with issues during teaching training, “the selection of schools, the placement of students, mentoring during the WIL period, the assessment of students’ competence, and feedback to the university (Du Plessis, 2010, 207).” These challenges are real in the South African context when we consider the conditions and environments that are not conducive for some trainees to practice in. She further adds the less-fortunate trainees are another issue that cannot be overlooked, who may lack access to work placements where the WIL programmes should continue to accommodate them, as they gain substantial benefits from involvement (Du Plessis, 2010). These are the realities that are faced in the South African

society where trainees lack access due to their socio-economic situation and it influences them negatively in terms of receiving quality hands-on practice.

Jackson, (2015:208) echoes this and reiterates the numerous issues coupled with a successful WIL experience, comprising “difficulties in locating placements and cessation of ongoing arrangements due to the demise of host businesses, particularly problematic in the recent global recession; inadequate environment and design for effective learning during the work placement; and students not meeting required performance standards expected by the host employer.” These difficulties could hinder the process of trainees acquiring quality practical experiences and gaining the necessary knowledge and skills to be successfully employable.

In many cases, NQTs are insufficiently prepared to plan well for their classes, or are posted by the ITE institution to areas where established teachers have lacklustre attitudes to their work and their profession. Many trainees lack suitable accommodation and finance to benefit fully from Teaching Practicum; or they encounter poor levels of infrastructure and overall discipline in the schools they visit. Robinson (2014:115) contends that since there is an upsurge in immigration, there is a concern in developing teachers’ capacities to teach diverse learners. Robinson further argues that in South Africa many learners are unfairly receiving poor quality education and that quality teachers need to be provided urgently to compensate for inequalities; especially at quintile 1, 2 and 3 schools, which are often overcrowded, understaffed, and lack basic amenities such as playing fields. These logistical problems often result in some trainees receiving considerably inferior Teaching Practicum than others do, something which is exacerbated, as Bechuke et al. (2013) note, when mentors do not assist them to adequately prepare, or properly inform them of their responsibilities.

3.4.4 Inadequate mentorship during Teaching Practicum

Bechuke et al. (2013) note that, if mentors lack training to prepare prospective teachers and if they do not pay regular visits to them during Teaching Practicum, this jeopardises beneficial relations between trainees and mentors. Mudzielwana and Maphosa (2014: 394) describe situations where trainees experienced high levels of anxiety and concern during Teaching Practicum because they were unsure about lesson planning, classroom management, and what would happen when their supervisors evaluated them. Furthermore, Deacon (2012) is of the opinion that many teachers in South Africa lack content knowledge to teach and do not know how to go about teaching it. Deacon (2012: 19) further states that not only is school teaching inadequate, there is a shortage of adequate comprehension of the subject being taught; which

in our context is a widespread weakness in teaching. This weakness could have its roots in individuals drawing on prior experience (Girvan, Connelly & Tangney, 2016) before they enter the teaching profession since many NQTs come with preconceived ideas.

However, they are in control of acquiring the experiences through their Teaching Practicum activities in the classroom and Kolb (2015) is of the view that direct life experience is controlled by the individual and in this case the graduate teacher is in control of learning through the experiences gained during Teaching Practicum. Kolb (2015) asserts “classroom experiential learning exercises add a direct experience component to their traditional academic studies.” Content knowledge is obtained at the university during Teaching Practicum, and trainees put it into practice as students. If they do not understand the basic content, it could pose a challenge to transmit the right knowledge to learners. It is noted that current teachers are weak since they have not been adequately immersed or appropriately trained during Teaching Practicum (Parker & Deacon, 2017: 60). It is reasonable therefore to claim that the lack of adequate training of NQTs perpetuates the already ailing education system. When existing teachers are weak, it is important that trainees entering the teaching profession for the first time have the necessary knowledge and skills to bring about change and improve learners’ academic performance.

All of the above issues are exacerbated in situations where foundation phase learners themselves have low level pass rates. This is often the case as a direct result of the privations of apartheid, which kept the parents and grandparents of today’s learners away from quality education. Such learners often grow up in homes, which lack a culture of reading and learning because parents were trained to be subservient, useful and ignorant within a white supremacist model of national government. Fleisch (2008: 4) notes an instance that at the end of 2001 as many as 51000 Grade Three learners had a poor understanding of basic mathematics. He argued that this lack of primary skills compromised the foundation phase and every grade thereafter. If trainees are poorly prepared or do not have adequate training to teach effectively, they are unable to benefit fully from Teaching Practicum or construct knowledge effectively in the modern interactive, democratic classroom.

Ensuring meaningful Teaching Practicum experiences in South African ITE programmes is paramount for the overall education system. If trainees do not acquire the necessary practical skills and intimate knowledge of the teaching profession, or receive good first-hand experience of teaching in practice, or are unable to reflect on what they have learnt for implementation as teachers (Korthagen, 2016: 6), teaching as a whole in South Africa will be undermined.

Inadequate Teaching Practicum experiences make or mar prospective teachers. Exploring key challenges that contribute to such experiences is vital.

The foregoing discussion on Teaching Practicum alludes to a number of issues, which are concerned with newly qualified Foundation Phase teachers' perceptions of learning through experience during Teaching Practicum and teaching experiences. Therefore, a more in-depth understanding of the experiences acquired during Teaching Practicum could be gleaned from the relevant literature dealing with conceptual perspectives of Teaching Practicum.

3.5 Teaching Practicum's influence on the teaching of NQTs

NQTs enter the teaching profession with fresh, new ideas obtained during Teaching Practicum, such as technological experiences, often have the potential to bring about positive influences in learner performance. Teaching Practicum provides the new teacher to exchange new ideas with the more experienced teacher; to acquire added skills and knowledge. The 21st century provides NQTs with technological abilities that would interest and entice learners. The young learners of today are prone to be technologically agile and this is an effective tool for teaching and learning. However, there are challenges facing teachers as the learner performance is still poor. The Centre for Development Enterprise (CDE) (2015: 1) notes that the creation of enough qualified, knowledgeable teachers, capable of providing quality teaching for all school subject matter and levels is one of the critical challenges facing the South African education system.

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) (n.d.), expects that novice teachers or NQTs are prepared at university to deal with "classroom management, lesson planning, uplifting the motivation of learners, dealing with individual differences among learners, assessing learners' work, developing good relations with parents, and overcoming the disparity between their idealistic expectations and classroom realities". The CDE (2015: 8) cautions in this regard, that if the above challenges are not addressed, teacher education provision will merely reproduce unqualified teachers with ill-equipped subject and pedagogical knowledge, with partial teaching experience; leaving them ill-prepared for the what they will encounter during classroom teaching.

Teaching Practicum study by the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) in 2007 noted that teachers generally did not see much value in theory-based courses at university and tended to prefer the practical components of their programmes (HSRC, 2007: 12). Yet, Kolb (1984) insists that the interaction between theory and experience results in knowledge. The HSRC

recorded that “teacher training programmes which received the lowest positive ratings from beginner teachers were: ‘Education Theory’, ‘Assessment theories and practice’, and ‘Interpersonal and public relations/skills’, and that approximately 20 per cent or more of beginner teachers did not perceive these three programmes to have any impact on Teaching Practicum at all”. The HSRC further noted that the inference of this finding is that a large percentage of novice teachers considered the hands-on element of their teacher education programme as advantageous; compared with the theoretical sections (HSRC, 2007: 12).

Korthagen (2011:33) notes that previous knowledge plays an essential function in trainees learning during a Teaching Practicum and that trainees often resist changing their preconceived notions. Kolb (1984) agrees that the learning process of individuals is influenced by various environmental and social factors, and alleges it is due to our genetic makeup, prior specific life experiences, and the current pressures of our environment, that the majority of people develop learning styles emphasising learning capabilities over others. This essentially implies that NQTs, who are influenced by positive environmental and social factors, are capable of developing and augmenting their learning abilities better than others, which would contribute to their practicum experience and their development as teachers. However, the first year of teaching as NQTs is usually not a smooth transition.

Gorard (2017: 4) argues that in the United Kingdom (UK), every NQT is inclined to be focussed on classroom issues in their first job placement: some felt that certain aspects of classroom practice, they could have been better prepared. Korthagen (2011) concurs that the nature of teaching requires “holistic judgement about what, when and how”: teachers barely have time to think in their first year of professional employment. NQTs must be knowledgeable about the content they are teaching and demonstrate the necessary pedagogical knowledge to create a constructivist, collaborative learning environment in the classroom.

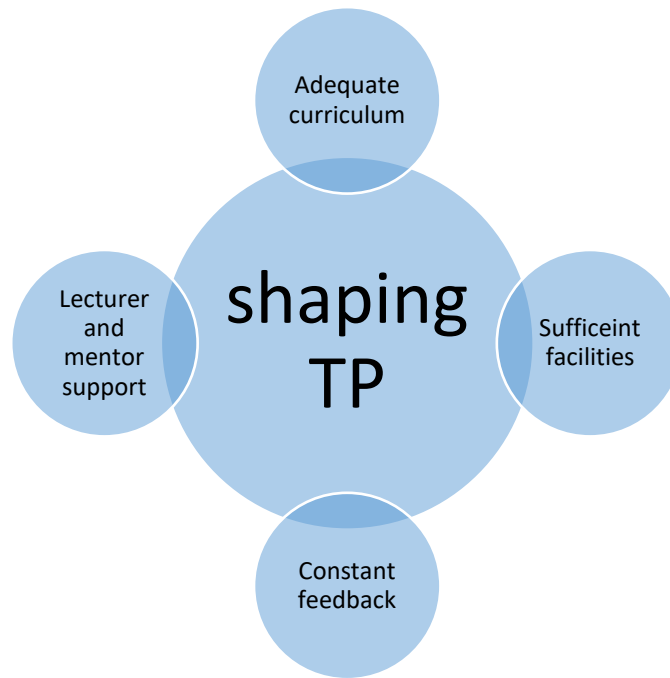
Gorard (2017: 4) adds that in the UK there is a tendency among NQTs at primary school to be well prepared for dealing with literacy and numeracy, yet “less prepared for planning, administrative aspects, assessment practices, handling parents, equal opportunities in the classroom, support for pupils with behavioural and emotional difficulties and handling bullying/harassment”. Gorard (2017: 5) argues that this is partly due to the different routes that NQTs take in preparation: he claims that there is a slightly higher satisfaction rate among those who undergo the School-Centred Initial Teacher Training Programmes (SCITTs) that are run by a consortium of schools; which is school-based and considered more valuable.

The challenge is how to achieve a balance in an ITE programme; where NQTs have to be properly prepared to “uplift the motivation of learners, deal with individual differences among learners, assess learners’ work meaningfully, and develop good relations with parents” (DBE, n.d.). If trainees are inclined towards the practical parts of the Teaching Practicum experience, and do not have an interest in learning how to apply theories in their daily practices (Korthagen, 2016), key parts of their teaching preparation will surely be lost. This observation has significant implications for the development and growth of NQTs. Experience, is understanding a situation and taking action, which comprises perceptual actions and the expectation of concepts and encompasses the understanding and assessment of events, objects, and situations (Kolb, 2015).

Kolb and Kolb (2017: 13) adds “a classroom lecture may be an abstract experience but it is also a concrete one, when, for example, a learner admires and imitates the lecturer.” The university provides the theory and lecturers are imitated and Teaching Practicum provides NQTs with the prospect to develop these skills, to put into practice as teachers. The bifurcation between Teaching Practicum and theoretical training of teachers is the focus of this study. Kolb (2015) defines “experiential learning as a particular form of learning from life experience; often contrasted it with lecture and classroom learning.” In as much as experiential learning is learning through life experiences, what NQTs learn at university and during Teaching Practicum are and forms part of their life experiences, which is learnt in a different social setting. The experiences acquired during Teaching Practicum contributes in terms of developing pedagogical and content knowledge, with the guidance of mentors who could also possibly make the classroom realities easier.

3.6 Conceptual framework

This study considers the role Teaching Practicum plays to prepare prospective teachers in the South African context. In this regard and drawing from literature, four conceptual elements are considered significant.



Conceptual model: Figure 1

3.6.1 Adequate curriculum

Since 1994, the curriculum for teacher education and training programme has been transformed, advanced and improved to suit the needs of the learner to redress the past. Govender (2018:S1) argues that the curriculum for educators is fundamental to the success of society and thereby consistently experiences reform and change. The DHET (2017:10) defines “curriculum as a statement of intended outcomes to be achieved, what knowledge content is to be acquired, which competencies and skills are to be developed, and the levels of performance that are expected from students. It defines what is to be taught, what students must learn and what is to be assessed.” This definition captures the essence of the teacher education programme that trainees are subjected to during their training in becoming a teacher. The curriculum currently being implemented comprises the CAPS that replaces the OBE, which is being put into practice in primary schools. Maddock and Maroun (2018:194) aver that the OBE was replaced by the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) and centres on quality and content knowledge and calls for a higher standard of performance from learners. In line with this, the study finds it is necessary to ascertain the quality of curriculum being implemented by trainees during their school-based Teaching Practicum and whether they perceive it to be beneficial or not.

To begin with, it is noteworthy to mention that according to a Professor from Stellenbosch University, “many trainee teachers were the weakest performers at school” and trainees come from an ailing school system and see their way to university by obtaining a degree in education and where admission requirements are lower (DGMT, 2018:10). This in itself poses a challenge to teacher training and could have an influence on trainees Teaching Practicum. How does the current curriculum deal and cope with trainees who are ill-prepared? One way of possibly dealing with this is by ensuring that the teacher training programme is able to assist in reforming the curriculum of the school (Botman, 2016:50). Interestingly, argues Govender (2018), ordinarily, educators do not have an influence in curriculum change, neither are their roles, challenges, personal experiences and perspectives as these are often ignored in South Africa. Govender further adds that instead of enforcing transformation on educators, they should be made part of the process so as to experience a better outcome in developing and implementing an adequate curriculum for Teaching Practicum. So how does this influence Teaching Practicum?

The quality of current teachers and existing Teaching Practicum cannot be improved through teacher training and teaching cannot be improved, save by improving the quality of current teachers and teacher practices (Maserow, 2015:125). In other words, the current teachers should be developed to improve their practices in the classroom in order for new teachers entering the teaching profession to already be in possession of quality education. Therefore, for this to be realised, teachers should be involved in the process of curriculum change and reform and have the ability to transform the way they teach in practice thus, influencing Teaching Practicum positively. Botman (2016) is of the view that to become a teacher there is a need to be involved in studying, teaching, learning, knowing and entertainment and it is critical that trainee teachers take their Teaching Practicum seriously thus it is essential they study and understand what they are required to do.

Another facet of providing adequate curriculum during Teaching Practicum is considering multi-cultural classrooms that necessitate effective communication competency. Multi-cultural intolerance is common in South Africa and Foundation Phase trainees are challenged with teaching in diverse classrooms (koen & Ebrahim, 2013:3). Multi-cultural education as a field of research can be understood as the studies that cut across factors of race, gender, class, sexuality, culture, ethnicity, ability, and language, advancing from a strong obligation to equity and social justice (koen & Ebrahim, 2013:3). Realising the difference among learners is significant for Foundation Phase trainees, since their personal cultural orientations are present

in every social interaction and these include attributes such as backgrounds, language, communication, social values, beliefs and is essential to understanding that not all people are the same so as to allow trainees to embrace and value the things that distinguish each person, or group, from another (Koen & Ebrahim, 2013:3). Teaching Practicum comprises a range of exposure to trainees and it hinges on their receptiveness to learn, communicate and develop the necessary competencies, experiences, skills and knowledge and to be the driving force in making a difference in the classroom. For the aforementioned to be successfully implemented during Teaching Practicum, the availability of resources and facilities are to be determined.

3.6.2 Sufficient facilities and resources

According to DHET (2015a), work-integrated learning (or teaching practice) necessitates 'functional schools', these are not schools with a particular minimum level of resources and facilities; they do not require, for example, to hold high pass rates, let alone water or electricity. Adequate resources are a requirement in order to successfully apply the new curriculum during Teaching Practicum. Poorly funded or ill-equipped schools may distract from the objectives of gaining meaningful experience during Teaching Practicum. For instance, inadequate environment including equipment, facilities and structures make it impossible or difficult for schools to perform their functions (Sedibe 2011:130). Sedibe adds that resources such as textbooks, furniture, laboratories, and classrooms are important teaching and learning requirements which, because of their severe lack in developing countries, is a major reason for poor education outcomes in those countries. Essentially, because of inadequate and poor facilities, shaping Teaching Practicum becomes much more challenging.

In spite of the common notion that trainees ought to be assigned to schools in diverse contexts, insufficient infrastructure and capacity at numerous schools could likewise be deemed an inhibiting mechanism or instrument (Robinson, 2016). She further articulates that a “shortage of facilities like libraries, laboratories, books or desks undermines student teachers’ abilities to function in optimal ways, as does a disorganised internal management system that lacks clear systems and procedures (Robinson, 2016:19).” Trainees ought to be assigned to schools that are functional in terms of available facilities so that they can acquire the best quality training from their Teaching Practicum. The practical aspect of their training allows them to prove their ability to progress as teachers and not accessing these facilities is a detriment to their professional development. The quality of teachers depends on making suitable facilities available during Teaching Practicum to prepare prospective teachers with knowledge and skills

to implement curriculum effectively. The Teaching Practicum process requires all stakeholders involved to make the provision of quality education a priority with the assistance from mentors and lecturers to give trainees constructive and productive feedback.

3.6.3 Constant feedback

Overall, there is necessity for constant feedback so that the trainees are aware of how they are performing. Deacon (2016:13) argues that feedback is an essential learning instrument, especially since trainee teachers are expected to obtain a minimal level of appropriately supervised work-integrated learning. Constant feedback should be in the form of constructive criticism. And feedback can be provided in the form of structured meetings between trainees and the mentors or heads of the departments which oftentimes are the mentors or even the lecturers during their visits. Deacon (2016:13) also adds that “feedback needs to be informed by and specific to the actual content of the particular subject matter being taught.” Receiving feedback in this case could be as Mpofo and Maphalala (2018) view as classroom observations, that continue to be the most favourable means of helping trainee teachers get regular, honest feedback on their Teaching Practicum in order to develop in the classroom. This seems to be the beneficial way of providing constructive feedback since the trainee is receiving criticism on real honest classroom advice. Mpofo and Maphalala (2018) continue by articulating that an observation carried out by the mentor teacher will be mainly informal, formative and developmental in nature and will be intended at supporting the trainee teacher with feedback on his or her learning progress.

Cilliers, Fleisch, Prinsloo and Taylor (2018:2) assert that feedback could reassure proper implementation of techniques and there is encouraging evidence that this method can be successful at changing Teaching Practicum and developing trainee knowledge. Espousing and implementing the techniques could be feasible, for instance, Kiggundu and Nayimuli (2009:348-349) aver that, throughout the school visits, lecturers provide the trainee teachers with written and verbal feedback where progress was applauded, drawbacks emphasised and recommendations presented on how to surmount apprehension, usage of non-verbal language to improve their teaching and learning activities, and in what ways to implement a range of strategies to develop their teaching. By the same token, it is also required by mentors to obtain the ability in guiding mentoring as a channel of communication that is thought-provoking but helpful, and to discover ways in which to provide fruitful feedback and feed-forward (Gravett, Petersen and Ramsaroop 2019:4). Generally, mentor teachers have the tendency to provide the

type of feedback that is “narrow, particularistic, and technical” (Clarke, Triggs & Nielsen (2014:175) when they should essentially give feedback that fosters “deep and substantive reflection on practice” (Clarke et al., 2014:175). The type of feedback mentors provide trainees during Teaching Practicum have the influence to produce effective and efficient prospective teachers. Mentors have a significant role to play in the development of trainee teacher’s teaching career. Trainees need all the support, guidance, constructive and productive feedback during their Teaching Practicum as a way of developing the essential knowledge and skills as professional teachers. Lecturers and mentors play a meaningful role during this time for trainees to become effective teachers.

3.6.4 Lecturer and mentor support

Teaching Practicum is perceived to assist prospective teachers to improve competences linked to identification of problems, making decisions and the adoption of methods to surmount obstacles in classroom situations, and considered incredibly noteworthy in cultivating their self-assurance (Khalid, 2014:1921). Achieving the competences are at times not possible without the help and support of lecturers and mentors who guide trainee teachers through the Teaching Practicum process. The author further adds that Teaching Practicum aids prospective teachers with experience in sound dialogues with mentors and lecturers, resulting in their ability to ascertain which methods to use and their implications in teaching (Khalid, 2014). The development of knowledge and practice in the workplace for trainees will no doubt be effective and essential if guidance from mentors is provided (Mena, Hennissen, Loughran, 2017:47). Therefore, because school level mentoring is so fundamental to ITE programmes, the mentoring dialogues included in the process of becoming a teacher are significant in shaping trainees learning about teaching (Mena, Hennissen, Loughran, 2017). The back and forth dialogues between mentors and mentees allow interaction through ideas, discussions and support while they are learning.

As hinted earlier, lecturer support can be in the form of mentorships whereby lecturers visit schools where trainees are in training to see how they fare and also be in tune with the challenges they may be facing. Mentoring have been described by McKimm, Jollie and Hatter (2007) as being complex and determined by the situation and from one person to another. The term ‘mentor’ is also defined as a well-informed, skilled, and highly skilful teacher who works with and together with a novice teacher or less experienced co-worker according to the Department of Education and Training of the state of Victoria (2014:6). DeMarco (1993:1243)

“appeals to the paradigm of mentoring based on ‘reciprocity, empowerment and solidarity.” Mentoring brings about cohesion between the parties involved however, Colley (2002:4) is of the view that mentors are thought to portray a dual role of self-importance and interfering with the mentee-mentor relationship.

Mentoring is believed to be an essential element of trainees’ practical experiences such as learner teaching and should be focussed and planned with its outcomes not left to chance (Bird & Hudson, 2015). However, Harrison, Lawson, and Wortley (2005:290) aver, “mentors seem to need exposure to a variety of models of mentoring in their training as well as practice in the observation and analysis of interactions between mentor and mentee.” Bird (2015) refers to ‘personal attributes, system requirements, pedagogical knowledge, modelling, and feedback’ as core elements for properly harnessing mentor-mentee relationships.. From the time trainees start Teaching Practicum they work with mentors and develop personal and interpersonal skills which is an effective way for mentors to engage with their mentees and to sustain a solid and trusting relationship. The relationship between mentors and mentees extend beyond Teaching Practicum as they enter the teaching profession as teachers, they need all the help and assistance from mentors to make the transition smooth.

New qualified teachers require practice teaching fused with successful mentoring with the intent on assisting them to comprehend whatever would be essential in their new position. Educational policy-makers in the USA, the UK and elsewhere, have equally urged in some instances the requirement of mentoring provisions, for various reasons (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez & Tomlinson, 2009:208). One such reason they add related to the encouragement of retaining newly qualified teachers in the profession, particularly by way of mitigating the experience of ‘reality shock’ experienced by a number of new teachers (Hobson et al., 2009).

3.7 Chapter summary

This chapter examined literature pertinent to Teaching Practicum. The literature review included texts from both national and international research to provide insight into the chosen research questions. Drawing from both international and local texts, it emerged that newly qualified teachers perceive a host of factors as either complementary or supportive of a future engagement in teaching. These relate to how effective Teaching Practicum programmes may create successful teachers. On this basis, a conceptual framework that depicts the necessary components for successful on-boarding of a newly qualified teacher is presented. These components include adequate curriculum, lecturer and mentor support, sufficient facilities and resource and constant feedback. Full engagement during Teaching Practicum requires the assistance of lecturers and most importantly their mentors who provide supervision, guidance and direction about being an effective teacher in practice. They especially require the support of the mentors when entering the teaching profession to help them cope with the realities of the classroom, which they are not prepared for in most cases.

Trainees as well as novice teachers find themselves in a learning environment where there is a community involved in the same practice. Within this environment, relevant experiences are made through participation that will ultimately lead to a novice teacher becoming an expert in the field of teaching. This learning cycle allows ‘new timers’ and ‘old timers’ to work together; integrating the ‘new’ technological ideas, with the ‘old’ who possess the expert knowledge and experience; to develop novice teachers and keep experienced teachers up to date with new technologies and initiatives. Essentially, South Africa urgently needs to produce quality teachers for the diverse classroom by improving teaching in practice.

In chapter 4, the researcher presents the methodological framework for this study, to indicate how the research was conducted to ascertain whether the literature would corroborate the evidence found in the focus group interviews and questionnaires.

Chapter 4: Research methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research design and methodology of this study including strategies, instruments, and data gathering and analysis methods, while explaining the stages and processes involved in the study. NQTs who completed the ITE programme in the Western Cape at a particular university were selected to collect data in 2017, to ascertain the perception of Teaching Practicum as articulated by them. The study aimed to ascertain how the Teaching Practicum has prepared these individuals for their new role.

The main assumption of the study is that the quality and practices of NQTs are linked to the kinds of preparation they received during their university training (Darling-Hammond, 2012). The study contributes to deeper understandings of the experiences of NQTs in South Africa (Sayed, Carrim, Badroodien, McDonald & Singh, 2018). When NQTs, in the study reflected on their situations as professional teachers, they were able to assess the quality and usefulness of the preparation they received, especially during Teaching Practicum experiences.

This study draws on selected findings from qualitative data (focus groups). Qualitative research methodologies assist in the holistic gathering of information, in this case about how NQTs perceive Teaching Practicum. These NQTs were asked about the advantages and disadvantages of Teaching Practicum in order to understand what they identified as useful in teaching. Such data were gathered with a view to improving ITE programmes. The responses to the questions enabled the identification of themes from which the analysis was carried out.

Main research question

What are the perceptions of Teaching Practicum as articulated by NQTS?

Sub-questions

What are the benefits of TP as identified by NQTs?

What are the disadvantages of TP as identified by NQTs?

4.2 Research design

Research design is a measure for gathering, examining, translating, and narrating facts in research studies (Creswell, Vicki & Clark, 2011). Flick (2015: 94) argue that, in order to make it possible for the researcher to answer any research question, the research design should be

considered as a plan for gathering and analysing evidence. For this study, the research design was planned with the intent of collecting and studying the evidence pertinent to the study in order to answer the research questions. Neuman (2014: 279) asserts that, “research design, measurement, sampling, and specific research techniques are interdependent and in practice, we need to think about data collection as we design research and develop measures”.

4.2.1 Interpretivist paradigm

This section sets out the qualitative method, which was employed in this study from the data collected and to be interpreted. Interpretive research is more subjective than objective. Willis (2007: 110) argues that the purpose of interpretivism is the significance of subjectivity: interpretivists shun the notion of objective research on human behaviour. Human behaviour cannot be justified by statistics but interpreted through their feelings and experiences, which are subjective. Objective or specific data are not preferred methods for interpretivists in the Social Sciences (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). This study is primarily subjective since the research sought to interpret the meaning of participants’ experiences and the perception of their experiences. In this way, the researcher attempts to make meaning of their experiences in order to estimate the contribution of Teaching Practicum to their development as teachers. According to McQueen (2002:16), interpretivists perceive the world through the eyes of people where participants are selected, who portray their own unique understanding of reality.

The researcher in this case viewed the world through the eyes of the participants. The researcher interpreted the participants’ understanding of their Teaching Practicum experiences. McQueen (2002:17) states that interpretivist researchers pursue approaches that allow them to comprehend in-depth rapport of people to their contexts and the role each of them plays in fashioning the social fabric of which they form a part. In this study, the approach allowed for in-depth knowledge about NQT experiences acquired during Teaching Practicum and its contribution in developing the practice.

An interpretivist approach is sought by researchers who seek answers to studies based on real-life situations from people who make individual experiences within a particular context. This study was conducted of the perception of NQTs about their Teaching Practicum. This study is situated in an interpretivist paradigm, which seeks to comprehend the subjective world of human experience. Thanh and Thanh (2015: 24) postulate that “the world of human experience” is what interpretivist researchers understand, through the discovery of the reality about participants’ understandings, their experiences and backgrounds. Using this approach

allows the researcher to uncover what goes through the minds of NQTs to comprehend and interpret their experience and the sense they made of Teaching Practicum. All attempts were made to extract the views of the NQTs; not the views of the researcher. An interpretivist paradigm was used to make sense of the reality of what NQTs experience. Interpretivists consider comprehension of the context as significant to the interpretation of data collected. Interpretivists typically strive to understand a specific context: that reality is socially constructed which is the central belief of the interpretive paradigm (Thanh & Thanh, 2015).

Thanh and Thanh (2015: 25) stipulate, “interpretivism includes accepting and seeking multiple perspectives, being open to change, practicing iterative and emergent data collection techniques, promoting participatory and holistic research, and going beyond the inductive and deductive approach.” The data that was collected through focus group interviews to sought multiple views to gain an understanding of the effectiveness of the ITE programme of NQTs in securing quality experiences during Teaching Practicum. This could only be obtained through gauging the various views of participants over a period of time, to make meaning of their experiences.

4.2.2 Site and sampling

This study took place at one of the four universities in the Western Cape and is identified as a tertiary institution in this research. This site was selected since it is the largest provider of teacher education and was also considered appropriate because various teaching programmes are offered to students. The NQTs completed the B.Ed programme at this site in 2016 and their views about the Teaching Practicum were sought in 2017. A population of graduates of the programme were contacted via email and telephone calls to request their participation in this study in focus group interviews, thus the participants were conveniently selected as only those who agreed took part in the study. This method was chosen since their contact details were on file from the previous year. Prior to planning a research, researchers must take sampling decisions about how to factor in such issues as cost, time and practicality of acquiring information from the entire population (Cohen et al., 2007: 100).

Purposeful sampling is an “information-rich” non-random method of sampling in-depth research selected by the researcher: it occurs when the researcher chooses a sample to gain the most knowledge from rich information and is the most commonly used approach in qualitative research about matters essential to the purpose of the study (Thomas, 2010: 313). A sample of six NQTs volunteered to participate in 2017 in the four focus group interview sessions which

were conducted on site for convenience. This study was conducted of a sample group of participants as NQTs in their first year of teaching; to reflect on their experiences of Teaching Practicum whilst they were student teachers. These were from the cohort who had graduated in 2016 and agreed to participate in this study to give insight into the advantages and disadvantages of Teaching Practicum.

4.2.3 Qualitative research study

Qualitative research is considered naturalistic because it endeavours to research the daily lives of a diverse group of individuals, in their natural situation. Qualitative techniques in the Social Sciences are particularly helpful in researching educational contexts and practices. Qualitative research comprises an interpretive, naturalistic approach to a selected research phenomenon and strives to make sense of, or to interpret, such a phenomenon in terms of the meaning people generate (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). The researcher chose this qualitative method to gain a sense and understanding of the perceptions of the benefits and drawbacks of the Teaching Practicum component as articulated by NQTs. A quantitative approach on its own may not capture the subtleties gleaned by a qualitative methodology owing to its restrictive nature (Creswell, 2009). Creswell (2009: 4) further asserts that qualitative research involves exploring and adumbrating the meanings and shades of meaning that individuals or groups attach to a social or individual issue. Qualitative methods of research are therefore the most suitable methods in educational research, to capture, in this case, the quality, value and efficacy of Teaching Practicum (Thanh & Thanh, 2015).

This research sought the views of NQTs about their views of Teaching Practicum. This study aimed to understand the benefits and disadvantages of Teaching Practicum in developing Foundation Phase teachers. This study focused on in-depth, qualitative data gleaned from focus group interviews. The researcher aimed to re-create and represent their educational trajectory by allowing them to reflect upon and create meaning from, and interpret their experience. Participants could articulate their thoughts with the use of open-ended questions that allowed for open discussions in order to record the social and political/cultural milieu in which they find themselves (Creswell, 2003: 9). Daymon and Holloway (2005) consider the qualitative method as helpful for grasping and making meaning of participants' experiences.

Creswell reiterates that the qualitative research process or its approach is considered an inductive, emergent discipline, which is influenced by the researcher's experience in gathering and examining the data (Creswell 2006: 19). Since this research is qualitative in nature,

conclusions were drawn from what emerged in the data gathered by the researcher. The researcher needed to reflect critically upon her own attitudes, assumptions and even blind-spots before examining the data. Creswell (2006: 19) therefore asserts that: “The logic that the qualitative researcher follows is inductive; from the ground up, rather than handed down entirely from a theory or from the perspectives of the inquirer.” The researcher interpreted the data as they were collected from the participants; as far as possible in terms of the participants’ realities, and not from the researcher’s perspective. Thomas (2010: 303) agrees by articulating that to commence research in qualitative research, a hypothesis is not desirable because such *a priori* assumptions or frameworks inevitably lead or tilt the evidence to suit the hypothesis. In this study, inductive data analysis was employed to deliver a sounder insight into the interaction of “mutually shaping influences”, and to explicate the interacting realities and experiences of researcher and participant NQTs.

Information received from the participants may answer some questions and introduce new problems once new data is analysed. Creswell (2006:18) adds, “In a qualitative study, the inquirers admit the value-laden nature of the study and actively report their values and biases as well as the value-laden nature of information gathered from the field.” This researcher acknowledged that information gathered in this study bears differing values; together with the bias of the researcher. Thomas (2010: 302) states that “when the understanding of an event is a function of personal interaction and perception of those in that event, and the description of the processes that characterise the event, qualitative approaches are more appropriate than quantitative designs to provide the insight necessary to understand the participants’ role in the event, and their perceptions of the experience.” The researcher appreciated that quantitative data are interpreted differently from qualitative data, and that it is in some ways more difficult to conduct a qualitative study but this methodology allowed the researcher to reflect the nuances of the participants’ voices with peculiar subtlety.

4.3 Techniques

This study primarily utilised a qualitative method. Focus group interviews were conducted. The focus group interviews provided in-depth and nuanced data and allowed the researcher to probe for more details. The focus group interviews deepened the researcher’s knowledge of how the perception of Teaching Practicum were advantageous or disadvantages as articulated by NQTs.

4.4 Data collection

Focus group interviews were used to collect data. Group interaction during focus group interviews remove some of the tension when discussing a topic. Therefore, for example, when NQTs were asked “were they able to teach a mathematics lesson using different teaching techniques?” there was an array of responses. Silverman (2016:180) agrees: “Focus group interactions also allow respondents to react to and build upon the responses of other group members', creating a 'synergistic effect'.” Focus group interviews are a strategy that is valuable when certain kinds of responses are required. So, again, for example, when NQTs were asked whether Teaching Practicum prepared them for teaching, there was synergy among group members and the provision of more in-depth details on specific finer points of the interview, pertaining to Teaching Practicum.

Focus group interviews with the NQTs were conducted in two sessions, to be divided and conducted at two different times to accommodate the participants’ availability, in groups of four and two respectively. The first group of two in early October 2017; and the second group of four in mid October 2017. The researcher allocated one hour for each focus group interview; conducted during these periods. Audio recordings were made and transcribed, and converted into text; which made it easier to make sense of verbal submissions and identify patterns or themes.

The purpose of the focus group interviews was to capture in-depth data on the experiences of NQTs during Teaching Practicum; to ascertain which elements of their training can help them become professional teachers. Focus group interviews are beneficial in terms of obtaining more information more quickly from a number of people; rather than from one-on-one interviews. According to Silverman (2016: 181) a focus group is considered more 'naturalistic' and is a quicker way of collecting data from a number of participants and is closer to daily dialogue where communication characteristically occurs through storytelling of various kinds: humorous, quarrelling, boastful, bantering, encouraging, confrontational and contentious. Focus groups allowed for a robust engagement with key issues; where NQTs leveraged ideas and thoughts from interactions with one another. Burnham et al. (2008: 129) assert that the ideas and comments of others influence the responses of each group member. (see appendix C attached)

Silverman (2016:181) claims that focus group interviews allow focus group members the relative free flow of conversation; by observing the unique language patterns of each

participant. During the focus group interviews, the interviewer allowed the conversation to flow between participants in the way they felt comfortable with; allowing them to use their own distinctive language resources. Silverman went on to say that paying attention to their group discussions allows participants to become familiar with group dynamics and become accustomed to the way participants speak in terms of expressions, jargon and language used (Silverman 2016: 181). While the interviewer poses questions, the interaction between group members is observed which allows the interviewer into their world as they respond to questions. The researcher infers that within community contexts interaction is a key indicator of relevant behaviour patterns. When a professional researcher is working with harshly underprivileged individuals, it is predictable that levels of resistance and even animosity may arise. Difficult to access social groups, and individuals who may be ill at ease with one-on-one interviews, are often content to converse with others and feel safe with those they feel share a common story in the context of focus group interviews (Silverman 2016: 181).

Social context plays a role in research and individuals may not feel comfortable to open up or disclose information during one-on-one interviews. They may feel more at ease relating and sharing with others within their group to convey their narratives. These are group dynamics that the researcher observed: it was important to note their interactions with one another in terms of allowing certain people into their personal space. The focus group interviews were informal; to allow participants to feel comfortable. The focus group interviews were semi-structured; where pre-determined questions were prepared to probe and clarify the important lines of inquiry that gradually emerged. This study made use of open-ended focus group interviews, which were semi-structured; producing data without prescribing the course of the interview (Barbour, 2014:120). The researcher was able to prompt or probe participants for further details or clarification.

4.5 Data analysis

Cohen et al. (2007: 184-5) argue that: “data analysis involves organizing, accounting for, and explaining the data; in short, making sense of data in terms of participants’ definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities.” Two common methods of analysing data gleaned from focus group interviews are: (i) by means of themes in thematic analysis and (ii) by direct narratives of participants in content analysis. The researcher adopted both methods of analysis because the thematic analysis method assists in the identification of

themes from the responses of the participants (Ezzy, 2002) while content analysis validates results obtained from verbal responses (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Elo & Kyngas, 2007).

This study adopted a qualitative data analysis method since in-depth knowledge of the experiences of NQTs were obtained as the primary data, which originated from the focus group interviews. The purpose of the analysis of qualitative data were to discover themes, trends, patterns, concepts and meanings. According to Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules (2017: 1) thematic analysis is a fitting qualitative approach that can be applied when operating in research groups and analysing large qualitative data sets. Taking into account the nature of this study, data were organised in such a way as to ascertain emerging themes.

The researcher focused on the entire range of data first, then tried to separate and re-construct it all over again to make meaning. This approach assisted in the development of themes for proper content analysis, which in the view of Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas (2013: 399), are the two reliable and thus frequently used approaches by many researchers who are focused on qualitative descriptive studies. Even though Elo and Kyngas (2008:107) are of the view that the content analysis method could be utilised for both qualitative or quantitative data, and in an inductive or deductive approach, Flick (2015: 97) suggests counsels that its utility is enhanced in a qualitative study owing to its capacity to interpret constructs in order to generate significance and substance of events. Since this study is qualitative in nature, it was used to make sense of the views of the NQTs that emerged from the data in order to generate meaning. Moreover, since this study is primarily qualitative, an inductive approach was deemed suitable. The researcher studied the content transcripts of the focus group interview for the purpose of analysis. Once the focus group interview data were transcribed, the researcher undertook content analysis of the transcripts to determine emerging themes. The researcher's purpose was to generate knowledge during this stage of content analysis; to discover any significant differences in the experiences of NQTs, to establish any trends and or patterns. Analysing the data using this approach facilitated insights into whether Teaching Practicum was (i) adequate (ii) required improvement and (iii) if so, in what respects. Drawing from Bloomberg and Volpe (2008), answers to these inquiries will help to infer and support decision-making.

Trustworthiness

Evaluating the precision of qualitative results is not straightforward. It is contended that reliance upon excerpts is essential to indicate the trustworthiness of results (Elo et al., 2014: 6). Four criteria were adopted, namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and

confirmability to acquire trustworthy data. These criteria are analogous to quantitative principles of internal and external validity, reliability and neutrality. Each strategy used criteria such as reflexivity, triangulation and dense descriptions. Although only focus group interviews were used in this study, triangulation was achieved. Triangulation through focus group interviews was justified as Caillaud and Flick (2017) contend that focus groups in some cases are used as a stand-alone method. However, they are also often joined with other methods. The use of focus groups with a view to triangulation achieves more than merely make the data more complete; it also gives a better sense of a phenomenon being researched (Caillaud & Flick, 2017).

Credibility: Questions that helped the researcher in clarifying the issue of credibility include: Can the responses be relied upon? If so, how? Establishing contact with the proposed participants earlier in this research project helped in developing a rapport and gaining the trust of the participants in order to acquire rich and honest data. In this study, the researcher had already delineated subjects who were in their first year as teachers: the researcher gave them the opportunity to decide whether they wanted to be part of this project to ensure information was provided from willing participants. Consent was obtained while a pilot study was being conducted. Credibility can loosely be characterised as the process of making sure that the data collected is believable. Credibility is similar to internal validity, that is, how research findings complement reality. Shenton (2004: 64) refers to writers such as Lincoln and Guba who contend that safeguarding credibility is one of the most significant features in ascertaining trustworthiness.

Transferability: The methodology of this study is primarily qualitative and the study aims to determine the quality, value and efficacy of Teaching Practicum during ITE. Posing different questions to the subjects might thwart this objective. The study administered similar questions to all the participants in the belief that if the same approach is applied with a different set of respondents, there is the likelihood of obtaining similar results. Within the context of the current study, transferability refers to the degree to which the study can be conducted elsewhere using the same instruments. Elo, Kääriäinen, Kanste, Pölkki, Utriainen and Kyngäs (2014: 6) argue, “transferability refers to the extent to which the findings can be transferred to other settings or groups.”

With respect to **dependability**, the researcher provided a detailed report of the processes, entire research design/methodology that were applied in obtaining data. This report will inform

anyone wishing to carry out a similar project on how to repeat the research. In quantitative research, this undertaking is referred to as reliability. Shenton (2004: 71) is of the view that “in order to address the dependability issue more directly, the processes within the study should be reported in detail, thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work, if not necessarily to gain the same results.”

Confirmability. Research processes are by their very nature never free of bias. This is because of the presence of the researcher in virtually all aspects of the study. In this project, the researcher ensured the narratives obtained in the findings from the participants were their real experiences and ideas and not those of the researcher. To prevent the possibility of undue influence of the researcher upon participants, the researcher took steps to ensure that data collected were objective representations of the participants’ reality and not “the characteristics and preferences of the researcher”. One of the ways through which the researcher achieved this was to ‘remove’ herself from the study i.e. by being invisibly present; a term coined by Hult, Dahlgren, Hamilton and Soderstrom (2005) to indicate a state where a teacher takes “a stand-by role or being reluctant to intervene” (pg. 9). Basically, the researcher was unable to wield undue influence (Klitzman, 2013). Also, participants freely volunteered to participate (Creswell, 2009). Moreover, there was no dependency issue (University of Alberta, 2012). This means that the researcher did not represent an authority figure. For instance, the researcher presented as a fellow student and did not represent any threat or authority.

4.6 Positionality

The term positionality equally defines a person’s perspective and the stance that person chose to espouse in association with a particular research undertaking (Holmes, 2014). Research is considered a space shared and shaped by both researcher and participant, in essence, the research process has the possibility to be influenced by the identities of researcher and participants (Bourke, 2014). He further adds, identities come through our views in ways in which we expect others will view us, whilst it is believed that our individual prejudices influence the research process, which serves as examinations as we go along (Bourke 2014, p. 1). Positionality is typically recognised by positioning the researcher in relation to three areas: “the subject, the participants and the research context and process” (Savin-Baden and Howell Major 2013 p. 71).

I grew up in a modest home and in a neighbourhood where many people, like my parents had to work to provide for the family not because they chose to but out of necessity. I attended

school in the area and observed the marginalisation of learners in the school in terms of education, constructed on social class and race. Today, things have not changed much in relation to education, which I value as essential for personal growth and self-worth. Learners today are still marginalised and I can identify and relate to their plight as I observe the past being perpetuated even in our democracy. I am the only one in my family to obtain a degree and have come thus far as masters' level, having left school at Grade 10. During my undergraduate studies, I tutored mathematics and language (basic) at university and in a private institution. My positionality as a researcher was the first-hand experience of the many difficulties associated with teaching basic mathematics and language. Students simply do not possess enough knowledge of basic mathematics, which becomes a particular challenge when they find themselves in academic environments for which they are ill-equipped. Many teachers also find it particularly challenging to teach numeracy to pupils from diverse backgrounds. In many cases, not being able to do so impacts in crucial ways on the growth of learners. The researcher has a firm interest in the struggle and the anxiety teachers go through in teaching FP, however as the researcher, it was important that this did not influence the analysis of the study.

4.7 Ethical considerations

All participants were informed about their rights to autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence and justice (Brikci, 2007). The researcher complied fully with the university's research ethics protocols. These included obtaining approval to conduct interviews. Consent was obtained through ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee of the institution as well as the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) to conduct interviews with NQTs. The focus group participants also gave consent. Participants were informed about the study, what the information will be used for, anonymity and were informed that they may end their participation at any time without prejudice or repercussions. Cohen et al. (2007: 53) state that informed consent necessitates clarification and an account of a number of factors, including, for example:

- the objectives, area under discussion and processes of the study
- any conceivable risks and adverse results, uneasiness or concerns and how they will be managed
- advantages that might originate from the study
- incentives to contribute and rewards from participating

- right to voluntary non-participation, withdrawal and re-joining the project
- obligations and rights to non-disclosure and confidentiality of the study, participants and outcomes
- admission of any other procedures that may be beneficial
- possibilities for participants to pose questions about any phase of the study
- contracts signed for participation.

Not doing so would have compromised the autonomy of participants and jeopardised the credibility of the project. The researcher had a moral obligation to adhere to a code of conduct in terms of integrity and respect, while adhering to confidentiality agreements. Upholding confidentiality necessitates unique safeguarding and emphasis in focus groups therefore, it is frequently desirable to circumvent using the names of the participants' when conducting focus groups. In such cases, one should employ a method to replace the name prior the beginning of the sessions. For instance, one can allot participants with numbers, letters, or aliases (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest & Namey, 2005: 53).

Participants were contacted via telephone and email to request their permission to participate in this study. Some responded telephonically and via email and consented to participate. The participants were given the opportunity to read the form and once they understood what the research was about, the consent form was signed. If participants are going to be exposed to any stress, pain and invasion of privacy, informed consent is considered particularly important (Cohen et al., 2007: 52). They provide a definition of informed consent as “the procedures in which individuals choose whether to participate in an investigation after being informed of facts that would be likely to influence their decisions”. This meant that should any of the participants have decided to decline to participate at any point, their decision was respected. The participants were assured of their right to withdraw without prejudice from this study at any point. Participants provided voluntary consent; with the knowledge that their identity and that of their institution remained anonymous and their privacy protected. It is a requirement that before the interviews were conducted, informed consent forms were completed so that participants were aware of, and agreed to, the risks or benefits involved.

4.8 Limitations

This study, bearing in mind that other teaching programmes exist, was limited to NQTs who had completed the B.Ed programme, and were in their first year of professional teaching.

Another limitation worth mentioning is that only six NQTs took part in the focus group interviews. In the researcher's opinion, this may not be representative of the initial sample of 64. Thus, generalising the results of this study may be done with caution.

4.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter of the study focused on research design and methodological framework. While the researcher employed a qualitative design, data were collected using semi-structured focus group interviews. It was also noted in this chapter that data was collected in 2017 from participants who had recently completed the full schedule of teacher education including Teaching Practicum. Since the study was largely qualitative in nature, thematic analysis and qualitative content analysis were deployed for this study. In the next chapter, the findings are presented.

Chapter 5: Presentation of findings and discussion

5.1 Introduction

Following the detailed theoretical exposition of the research design and methodology outlined in the preceding chapter, this chapter presents the findings of this study. To reiterate, a qualitative design was adopted which provided the impetus for the use of semi-structured focus group interviews with the aim to obtain the perceptions of Teaching Practicum from those who had completed the full schedule of teacher training including Teaching Practicum. In fact, the theoretical and conceptual framework discussed in the previous chapters facilitated the adoption of the research design as well as the data collection instrument. The researcher makes this claim against the backdrop of the necessity of a study such as this, which is to ensure among others that more people are attracted to the teaching profession in South Africa.

The use of themes in the analysis of the content derived from the semi-structured interviews is acknowledged in the findings which are presented in this chapter.

The researcher wishes to point out that the discussions in this chapter are in line with the objectives of this study. Nonetheless, for a nuanced discussion of the benefits and disadvantages of Teaching Practicum, the researcher made use of the responses of the participants which are not directly linked to the themes. This was done in order to clarify certain important points such as the necessity for cordial relations between old teachers and NQTs, and the nature of classroom dynamics or the environment of teaching. Pointing out issues associated with deficiencies of both teacher education including Teaching Practicum offer good opportunity for interventions.

5.2 Research sub-question 1: *What are the benefits of TP identified by NQTs?*

This section will focus on the benefits of Teaching Practicum as narrated by NQTs. The responses they provide gave rise to themes that are discussed to interpret the NQTs perception of Teaching Practicum. A range of responses were articulated that provided this study with rich data to address the research question. The data is presented below where themes and sub-themes are presented:

5.2.1 Theme 1: Teaching Practicum experiences by NQTs

It is acknowledged by researchers that Teaching Practicum is an essential component of the professional development of NQTs. In this study, NQTs indicated that they obtained certain

advantages from participating in Teaching Practicum. In most cases, they found Teaching Practicum prepared them and were ready to face the classroom. There were various responses from the NQTs, about the experiences during Teaching Practicum which are discussed below.

5.2.1.1 Sub-theme 1: Teaching Practicum views by NQTs of classroom and school environment

Teaching Practicum is a process and during that time trainees are exposed to various real life lessons which they learnt while in the ITE programme. The experiences they acquired are now being tested in terms of applying the theory and practical to their learners. The findings suggest they found Teaching Practicum beneficial and these are their accounts:

NQT 3 - I think, like I don't feel uncomfortable in a class, I don't feel like I didn't have enough practice. I feel because when we did our lessons, we did the lessons that we were taught to do.

NQT 3 gave the impression that she was comfortable to teach in the classroom. Teaching Practicum provided her with adequate classroom exposure and would be able to teach since she felt she acquired the necessary experience to prepare her lessons. She also admits to be teaching the lessons they were taught during Teaching Practicum.

NQT 2 - Teaching Practicum is actually a breeze. At the time it didn't seem that way but all that we actually have to do for Teaching Prac is sit with your CAPS, plan 30 lessons and teach it. I was sheltered with Teaching Prac, Teaching Prac painted a very awesome picture.

This NQT felt Teaching Practicum to be easy, yet on the other hand she felt she was not included in planning meetings when practice teaching at school and believed it should be a requirement. She indicated that during her Teaching Practicum they were exposed to preparing the CAPS and prepare 30 lessons to teach. This NQT gave a positive response in terms of Teaching Practicum providing a shielded environment and that Teaching Practicum created an impressive picture. She also mentioned the meetings that would have prepared her more in her first year of teaching, especially in the first term.

NQT 6 - I told them, I'm use to, it's because, it's because of the training that we have, Teaching Practicum in Khayelitsha, there were fifty two, and in other schools forty. So I have to prepare myself for a class on my own, where all these children are going to depend on me. No teacher, no nothing

This NQT seemed prepared since she was sent to a quintile 1 school in an area during Teaching Practicum, where there are many learners in the classrooms. This exposed her to adequately prepare and deal with large classrooms.

NQT 5 - I think the other thing is that er, Teaching Practicum has helped us a lot

This teacher did not indicate how Teaching Practicum helped however, she expressed a positive attitude towards Teaching Practicum and that it influenced her positively. They are aware that it would take time for them to adapt and develop further as teachers as time goes on, yet the optimism is evident.

5.2.1.2 Sub-theme 2: Mentors participation supporting what the NQTs learnt during Teaching Practicum

During Teaching Practicum, trainees are provided with mentors to support and guide them through the process however it does not end there. Mentors are considered important to novice teachers in their first year of teaching as part of the induction process since they have the capacity to make the entry into the school environment easier. This way, NQTs can effectively apply their TP experiences with their help. Likewise, the learners can also make life easier when they have to put their knowledge and skills into practice which they have acquired during Teaching Practicum. NQTs do appreciate this and this is evident in the transcripts below:

NQT 5- And we normally, for me in my teaching experience, my grade three teacher she like, she gave me three rates, I could teach new concepts and things like that, but with my other Teaching Practicum, I would always do the consolidation. In Teaching Practicum I didn't get that exposure because they knew everything.

This NQT is narrating her Teaching Practicum experiences in terms of what she was exposed to in the classroom she was teaching in. What one gathers from this participant is a slight feeling of dissatisfaction. The expression “*In Teaching Practicum I didn't get that exposure because they knew everything*” may be interpreted as though the NDT was not afforded the necessary exposure to explore a range of activities. At the same time, it does sound as though acknowledged the ability to teach new concepts. The NQT was explaining what she could teach.

NQT 4 - Fortunately when I was doing my teaching practices, I came across a concept where the teacher, my mentor, was teaching fractions and even the resources that she used; she came with concrete objects.

This NQT believed Teaching Practicum prepared her and she mentions a concept she happened upon and her mentor was teaching fractions to teach this concept. The mentor used various objects in order for the learners to understand a particular concept and this provided the NQT with the knowledge and skill to teach concepts during lessons. This indicated that Teaching Practicum to be beneficial since the mentor was able to show the NQT, as a trainee that using various resources to teach a lesson is useful to the teacher and the learner.

NQT 2- *Mentoring system at your school. Yes, uhm my Grade Head uhm I mean I get little things in my pigeon hole, a little chocolate, well done you know uhm lovely having you part of our team. Half way through the term you get a thing of sweets, you're on a roll. Half way you know a lot of support, motivation.*

The NQT above was fortunate to do her Teaching Practicum at a school where they provided a mentoring system. She was in a school environment where support and motivation was provided where she was made to feel welcome and part of the team. This was advantageous to her practicum.

NQT 6 - *Basically like, especially with numeracy, everything was given and it's the teacher's way, there is no other way, and children were drilled to do it my way. I mean, coming to university or being with Dr Tambara, he showed you there's not just your way.*

This NQT articulates her experience during their time at university, where a lecturer showed them that there is more than one way of teaching. She said that teachers normally do things their way and the learners have to learn the method the teachers teach and this lecturer indicated otherwise. The lecturer showed them that the teacher's method is not always effective.

NQT 3- *The qualities that I had at university which is my work is done two weeks before the time and I still apply that in my classroom.*

The NQT is saying that whatever she did at university proved to be helpful to her as a teacher. She does not elaborate on her experience at university, on who or what contributed to the qualities mentioned above, however she is positive about the experience. The benefit of the university experience provided her with the practical skill to apply in the classroom. The ensuing section unpacks the disadvantages of Teaching Practicum experienced by the NQTs. The views above from the NQTs indicates that Teaching Practicum is vital to their development as teachers. There was quite a range of positive responses about Teaching Practicum impacting the classroom and school environment. They also believed that they received support from mentors and lecturers that helped shape their Teaching Practicum. Though they perceived the Teaching Practicum beneficial there were instances that were disadvantageous to their development.

NQT 1 - *I think I feel what I'm doing now works better, because they're free to make mistakes and not be like, oh God, my teacher's going to kill me, I got it wrong. I feel they're just more eager to learn now*

The response from NQT 1 suggests an interesting insight that possibly highlights the difference between what was taught at school and what the real life classroom dynamic is all about. Could this mean that this participant is reporting that having passed through Teaching Practicum, one

is able to make better judgement regarding how to deal with learners? The statement “*I think I feel what I’m doing now works better, because they’re free to make mistakes and not be like, oh God, my teacher’s going to kill me...*” is probably evidence that she is able to treat her students differently owing to exposure to Teaching Practicum. Again, noting that learners were free to make mistakes and that she would allow them to do so perhaps allude to the benefit she had derived from participating in Teaching Practicum. The ensuing section unpacks the disadvantages of Teaching Practicum experienced by the NQTs.

5.3 Research sub-question 2: What are the disadvantages of TP as identified by NQTs?

5.3.1 Theme 1: Teaching Practicum impeding on NQTs learning experiences

Teaching Practicum, one can say is considered important, however there are factors that can hinder this process. The practical aspect is vital since NQTs would apply this hands on experience in the classroom and when certain knowledge and skills are not acquired, it can become a daunting exercise when faced with learners whom they have to teach with insufficient practical knowledge.

5.3.1.1 Sub-theme 1: Factors impeding the acquisition of practical knowledge and skills during Teaching Practicum

Teaching Practicum is crucial to become a teacher and should equip NQTs with the necessary experience, skills and knowledge, however it does have its shortcomings. There are quite a number of factors that can hinder this process of gaining the practical knowledge required for the teaching profession and instances shared by the response from the participants are specified.

NQT 1- So my Teaching Practicum was a waste, I feel, the majority of them. Because it just literally reaffirmed that it’s not about the teacher. And what we learnt here showed us it’s about the entire class. So that’s the only thing I learnt.

This NQT considered her Teaching Practicum not beneficial in preparing her for teaching since Teaching Practicum is not about the teacher but the classroom. What one picks up from this response is two-fold. Firstly, there may be an expectation issue. This respondent may have expected that what was taught during teacher training would serve as valuable material during Teaching Practicum. The second thing about this response is that there may have been insufficient understanding of the purpose of Teaching Practicum leading this respondent to say: *it just literally reaffirmed that it’s not about the teacher.*

NQT 3- They’re in control. Yes, they’re doing their own learning. It’s not my teacher’s just mouthing off all the time. Whereas at Teaching Practicum we have to sit and listen to the teacher, this is how we do it, do it exactly like this. It’s like parrot fashion.

The teacher did not like what she experienced during Teaching Practicum where things had to be learnt verbatim. So she has found what works for her and the class during her classroom lessons to make her learners learn effectively.

5.3.1.2 Sub-theme 2: Teaching Practicum not providing NQTs with adequate classroom exposure to teach

Teaching Practicum ought to provide NQTs with the exposure to teach what is required of them in order to become effective and successful teachers. A number of teachers were discontented with what they were exposed to and did not find Teaching Practicum to be advantageous. There were individuals who felt that Teaching Practicum taught them things they were not supposed to do and these are some of the responses:

NQT 1- No. I feel that the majority of my Teaching Practicums showed me exactly what not to do.

The teacher above felt Teaching Practicum did not influence her teaching positively since what she experienced during that time was not what was happening in reality in the classroom. The following teacher narrates her experience in the classroom during Teaching Practicum.

NQT 2- Uh not really because um during my Teaching Practicum we were mostly given the things that the teacher didn't want to do, so a lesson. So I have never done fractions, um during my Teaching Practicum, so luckily I am in grade one, so I don't teach fractions also

The teacher above was describing her experience during Teaching Practicum where another teacher (an established one) was giving her work that she did not have the ability to teach. Evidently, teacher education at university did not prepare her for that kind of experience. One equally picks up that Teaching Practicum was not a pleasurable experience as senior and established teachers did not seem to show an interest in them beyond offering them those tasks that were either boring or challenging.

NQT 4 - I did have a mentor in my Teaching Prac, I don't think she is still my mentor anymore. They are not really helping.

The NQT felt that although she had a mentor, the mentor was not helpful. She did not elaborate on what the mentor was not helping her with or why she was not helping her. Teaching Practicum provided her with a mentor yet she did not get the help as required during her practical. The mentors are not providing the support and guidance to trainees as is required which impedes on their development as teachers.

NQT 5 - Ja even with some schools they don't want students, and they don't understand the meaning of being a mentor, like being a mentor, is they don't, but the funny thing is they did their teaching practice, their own teaching practice, teaching practice in someone else's classroom, like they don't want someone in their classroom. They only need you for marking or when the other teachers are not around

Teaching Practicum for the NQT above appeared to be challenging. She indicated that though the mentors were available, they do not provide support. The impression is that trainees are not welcome. The trainee indicated that the teacher who was mentoring was not knowledgeable in her role as a mentor. She further says that mentors do not want trainees in their classroom to teach. It is not clear why the mentors do not want them in their classroom. They went on to say that the mentors also experienced being in their position and should know what it means to be a mentor and be able to take the mentor position serious and support them as trainees. They also mentioned that they are only needed to perform certain tasks such as marking and when other teachers are not available, do they allow them to teach.

NQT 2- Uh not really because um during my Teaching Practicum we were mostly given the things that the teacher didn't want to do, so a lesson. So I have never done fractions, um during my Teaching Practicum, so luckily I am in grade one, so I don't teach fractions also

The NQT above was describing her experience during Teaching Practicum where the teacher was giving her work that she did not want to teach. Her Teaching Practicum experience was such that she was not exposed to teaching which was required as part of the practical training. Teaching Practicum provides trainees to be exposed to real classroom setting in preparation to their teaching profession and she was not exposed to teaching a particular lesson. Teaching Practicum did not prepare her for teaching a subject but is happy to be teaching grade one.

NQT 6 - Teaching can be done only when the mentor is not there. That's when you teach, even, sometimes when she's there, when you are busy teaching she's going to interrupt you and say like no we don't do it like that, we do it like this, and in front of the kids, in front of the learners, mmm, while you are busy teaching. She's not going to give you a chance like you do your own thing, and some they even show it to learners that these are students, yes, like don't respect them, you can't take what they say seriously, mmm well teaching practice are not really nice.

This NQT is giving her account of Teaching Practicum not taking place when mentors are not in school. They said they are not given the opportunity to teach unless in the absence of mentor teachers. The NQT further claims the mentor would at times allow her to teach when she is at school, however she would interrupt her while teaching. The mentor would disrupt her teaching by demeaning her in the presence of the learners. The teacher would interfere her lesson by telling her things should be taught and how things are done. They were not given the opportunity

to learn as a trainee since this is supposed to be a learning experience while on Teaching Practicum. Mentors would disrespect trainees in the presence of learners and allow them to disregard them as trainee teachers and not take what they say seriously. Teachers sanctioned learners to show trainees no respect. She indicated that ultimately Teaching Practicum was not a positive experience where she could have received the training required to be an effective teacher.

Another teacher was asked about microteaching during Teaching Practicum and this was her response:

NQT 5 -Like I have given up on microteaching because they haven't trained to do it. So now every time when I want pick a group it's like, this, that and the other, they forever interrupting you, the rest of the class is forever interrupting you, because they don't know the rules

This teacher says that Teaching Practicum did not prepare her for microteaching. She seems exasperated with the learners since there appeared to be a challenge with controlling learners while she was attending to a group of learners whom she was teaching and other learners were not cooperating. The teacher claimed that the learners had not been trained for microteaching and she was having trouble controlling them. Another teacher shared a similar experience. This teacher felt the university prepared her sufficiently and that no extra knowledge would make a difference since the learners were not equipped for the things they were taught to teach. She expressed her experience with her grade three class and said that learners were not used to routine, even though they could easily adapt to microteaching. Even though there are these shortcomings mentioned by NQTs, the benefit outweighs this but should not be disregarded as such. The ensuing section will discuss this in more detail.

Discussion

Primarily, this study aimed to understand how newly qualified teachers perceive Teaching Practicum with the underlying motivation of ascertaining the benefits and advantages of Teaching Practicum. As have been previously indicated, Teaching Practicum is an essential part of the curriculum in the preparation of prospective teachers, to ensure that the practical aspect of teaching is sufficiently conveyed in relation to the content learnt at university.

There was a mix of reactions in terms of how the NQTs perceive Teaching Practicum. Even though the participants related to some benefits of the Teaching Practicum, the researcher noted some disparaging narratives of some of the participants.

Teaching Practicum is about learning through experience and at this stage, they are able to determine whether they learnt from their experience to put into practice. Also by this time, NQTs would have been able to put their experiences to practice since they went through the learning process as trainees. Being a teacher is a noble profession and calls for good quality teachers to make a difference in the lives of learners who will contribute to the socio-economic welfare of the society.

NQTs indicated readiness to teach after four years of tertiary education and Teaching Practicum but the majority found it difficult to express exactly what they had learnt. This specific disjunction mirrored an overall finding of this study that many NQTs showed *readiness* to teach but few proved their full competence and *preparedness* to do so. This suggests that as trainees, they were not prepared through the Teaching Practicum process. There is a disjunction between what they have learnt and being prepared for the classroom. Kolb's (1984) experiential learning posits that individuals learn through experience and allows them to reflect upon, and engage with, their teaching environment, through active experimentation, to develop techniques and strategies to put into practice as teachers.

The findings suggest that NQTs expressed various reasons to teach; since they believed they were prepared to teach. The experiences they acquired during Teaching Practicum were beneficial since they were able to apply what they learnt in the classroom, to some extent. It was evident from the participants' responses that they were exposed to hands on learning experience during Teaching Practicum, providing real-life situations, some of which included knowing when to allow the learners to figure things out for themselves. Evidence of this can be found in the expressions of NQT 4 who said "To me, I'm excited to be a teacher, and the children are also working with me and er they going along with me with everything". Equally, NQT2 noted a somewhat similar experience thus: "I think I feel what I'm doing now works better, because they're free to make mistakes and not be like, oh God, my teacher's going to kill me, I got it wrong. I feel they're just more eager to learn now". These comments indicate specific modes of learning related to real-life experience through classroom learning and lecture.

The majority of the NQTs in this study indicated they were taught effective pedagogical knowledge during TP, which improved their ability to teach. They were able to reflect on their experiences during TP that influenced how they taught in the classroom as teachers. They mentioned their experience with a specific lecturer, who contributed to their teaching

experience by exposing them to practical methods to use in the classroom. The majority of NQTs seemed prepared for teaching and conveyed their teaching experience in a positive way; though there were some challenges. They claimed that the university prepared them for classroom practice. In a report on beginner teacher induction in Manchester, Haggarty, Postlethwaite, Diment and Ellins (2009:3) argue that the transition for NQTs entering teaching after teacher education, can be overwhelming and stressful, and is frequently referred to as 'reality shock' which Teaching Practicum did not prepare them for. For instance, the NQTs had to deal with the absorption of a complicated reality; with ceaseless subjection from its forces. Evidence of this can be read from the expressions of some of the participants. NQT1, 2, and 3 expressed dissatisfaction and confusion about what needed to be done. In one case, one of the NQTs showed dissatisfaction with the treatment she received as well as not quite understanding how to manage class dynamics. The NQTs experience is somewhat consistent with the views of Haggarty et al. (2009: 3) who aver that the NQT has to deal with the intricacies of the profession as well as work with different types of colleagues who may not regard their presence as necessary. Therefore, the NQTs have to try and understand the school environment and how to conduct themselves. Basically, the real-life classroom situation cannot be taught at the university.

In the findings, some teachers displayed enthusiasm to teach; a few however indicated dismal support from their mentors and the lecturers. NQT 2 bemoaned the assignment of tasks that older teachers did not want to do. Therefore, support from mentors or lecturers are crucial in their Teaching Practicum. One teacher explained that older teachers were threatened by them, felt that government was replacing them with new young teachers, upon which this teacher replied that it was not the case as their studies at university and school-based practices offer them current knowledge and skills. They can learn from the more experienced teachers; who can learn new information from new teachers. Kolb (1984) believes that being a teacher is not just for new ideas to be embedded but also to dispose of or improve outdated ones and sometimes resistance to change of new ideas hinges on disputes with inconsistent archaic beliefs. Teaching Practicum provides new ideas, which could improve older ideas and older teachers who are not prepared to help NQTs could jeopardise the growth and retention of good quality teachers who enter the teaching profession with new ideas, since Teaching Practicum does not fully prepare them for everything. They have the ability to help further develop NQTs with their experiences and expertise to enhance what they have learnt during Teaching Practicum.

During Teaching Practicum, trainees are placed with senior experienced teachers who have gone through the process of lifelong learning in the education profession and should share their knowledge with the new teachers. Vikaraman, Mansor, and Hamzah (2017: 158) argues that professional or skilled teachers should provide the necessary mentoring support to NQTs as it will lead to their individual development; through tools, guidance, resources and supervision from mentors as was discussed in chapter three. The experienced teacher have the opportunities to share knowledge and skills with the inexperienced teacher; and can be open to learn new things from them, which ultimately would have a domino effect in producing better performing learners. Too often older teachers are resistant to change and do not want NQTs with new ideas upsetting their school environment. Older teachers can be selfish about sharing their expert knowledge and may also stifle the learning process during Teaching Practicum with the acquisition of knowledge and new experiences.

Microteaching also emerged during the interviews, which was also mentioned in chapter three, that they did not do during Teaching Practicum, yet it could be an important aspect to touch on. Two teachers described their experience in microteaching and the difficulty of controlling other learners while teaching a group of learners. Remesh (2013; Bajaj, Patil & Almale, 2014:84)) argues that: “microteaching is a ‘scaled-down’ teaching encounter designed to develop new skills and refine old ones.” Thus, trainees developed skills during training which they eagerly apply as NQTs. Some NQTs expressed their frustration at old-fashioned teachers who had not trained learners in any new ways since starting school and were not guided by set rules. NQTs do not only develop skills through microteaching; they are also able to compare the differences between one mode of microteaching with another (Remesh, 2013). Microteaching has the capability to improve the skills of resolving issues, ‘critical thinking, questioning, and reflective thinking and improves learning by realistic applications’ (Remesh, 2013).

Teaching learners through new methods such as microteaching allows them to develop skills to enhance learner performance as well as teachers’ improving the skills acquired during Teaching Practicum. NQTs should persevere considering it is an effective teaching technique for personal development and the growth of the learner. The other teacher indicated that it would simply not work to implement microteaching in grade three since it would be of no consequence when reaching grade four where it would not be applied. The findings of this study suggest that despite the enthusiasm and readiness to teach demonstrated by NQTs, few

NQTs were sufficiently well trained during Teaching Practicum to be competent teachers in taxing learning environments.

During the interviews, the researcher made an observation, which was not initially part of the study, that some NQTs had poor communication skills, which Teaching Practicum may not have equipped them with and struggled to convey their views adequately, despite protestations of readiness to teach. If communication is a problem, then it could possibly pose a challenge for NQTs to construct content knowledge with learners; especially at foundation phase. Foundation phase learners require teachers who are competent and equipped with the relevant knowledge and skills. However, it was found that some novice teachers indicated they were ready for the classroom but lacked the confidence to teach certain subjects. The inability to clearly communicate is evident in the manner the NQTs communicated their views. There were those who indicated that they did not benefit from Teaching Practicum but were unable to substantiate their view. In fact, in those instances, it was not clear what the novice teachers learnt, or did not learn during Teaching Practicum so the researcher was obliged to make inferences based on their response.

Korthagen (2011: 33) argues that previous knowledge is an essential function of learning during a teacher education programme and that NQTs are often resistant to change because of their preconceived notions. Kolb (1984) concurs and argues that prior life experience and environmental factors have a bearing on the learning capabilities of some individuals, which could possibly pose a challenge in the acquisition of knowledge and skills. During a focus group interviews conducted in this study a participant indicated that whilst on Teaching Practicum, her past experience had an effect on her progress. Based on the writers and what is found in this study, it is evident that past experiences can have a negative effect on the Teaching Practicum experiences of some individuals as noted by some of the participants in this study. On the other hand, Kolb (1984) also suggests “a holistic integrative perspective on learning that combines experience, perception, cognition, and behaviour” ultimately leading to good Teaching Practicum. This signifies that NQTs undertaking Teaching Practicum have the opportunity to view practicum in a holistic way in order to fully grasp and learn through their experiences to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills for their teaching profession.

NQTs believed the university did its job in equipping them to teach with the use of various teaching techniques while on Teaching Practicum. NQTs were satisfied in particular with a lecturer who provided them with specific content knowledge, and how to teach it, in a creative

and constructivist fashion that involved learners. Tomkins and Ulus (2015: 2) relate with this and offer an array of techniques that are linked with experiential learning, including “role-play, simulations, structured activities, outdoors activities, inquiry-based activities and private reflection.” In chapter three it was established that content knowledge is essential, especially at FP and NQTs should use the experiences they acquired during Teaching Practicum and teach in a creative way to make sure learners are able to grasp certain concepts. Content knowledge cannot be learnt merely through abstract examples in some instances but creativity is required to make learners understand through concrete illustrations. Teaching Practicum provides the opportunity for NQTs to acquire this skill and incorporate it in their teaching.

NQTs often shared experiences of their teaching environment during Teaching Practicum and the reality of their situations in the classroom. Not all NQTs taught in well-disciplined schools and had to contend with teaching in settings where the reality of the classroom was chaotic. Many NQTs had to teach in non-conducive environments and had to deal with teaching in multilingual classrooms where the language of instruction was English while learners spoke it as a second or third language. There are instances where teachers indicated that they had to teach learners from four to five different languages in a single class. They were creative in their teaching strategy; by utilising experiences acquired during TP; by using pictures, games and colours to teach mathematics or language, which suggests active, collaborative learning. Creativity is a skill that NQTs should nurture and utilise as required during teaching and Kolb (1984) argues that individuals learn from direct association with an object or phenomenon of their interest and that exposure to TP facilitates the acquisition of particular additional skills and experience. Some NQTs who were assigned to fee-paying schools encountered resistance from the senior members of their schools: they were occasionally prevented from implementing the CAPS compliant forms of instruction, which they learnt during ITE.

Kolb et al. (2014: 205) argue that in the 21st century learning through experience, learner-centred education expanded extensively and gained approval by a number of educators and curriculumators who were reflecting upon or testing experiential learning exercises such as “service learning, problem-based learning, action learning, adventure education and simulation and gaming.” Schwartz (2012) agrees that learning through experience has seen growth in the classroom and has embraced many practices, such as role playing, games, case studies, simulations, presentations, and various types of group work and suggests “‘active learning’ as one of the seven ‘principles of good practice’ for excellence in undergraduate education in

1987.” Teaching multilingual learners with the use of these elements are not sustainable, however, as learners progress into different grade levels where the emphasis of tuition changes.

A number of novice teachers stated they had to teach in environments that they claimed to be a ‘reality shock’ or ‘culture shock’. They claimed that no education programme could prepare them for the realities of the classrooms to which they were assigned. NQTs claimed that they were unprepared to contend with heavy administrative workloads that eroded their teaching time. Gorard (2017: 4) argues that there is a tendency by NQTs at primary school to be well prepared for dealing with literacy and numeracy, yet “less prepared for planning, administrative aspects, assessment practices, handling parents, equal opportunities in the classroom, and support for pupils with behavioural and emotional difficulties and handling bullying/harassment”. This is a common issue plaguing new teachers who are weighed down with heavy administrative workloads. Many NQTs in this study criticised the amount of administrative tasks that required their attention too often: they found it overwhelming to cope with teaching, lesson planning, and creating several files for each learner. Administrative tasks have been noted to be the largest challenge for new teachers and a number of them claimed they did not have the support from mentors to help them cope with this workload.

5.5 Chapter summary

This chapter focused on the findings of this study. Key themes emerged representing both the benefits and disadvantages of Teaching Practicum. What is clear from the findings is that there is a mix of perspectives regarding Teaching Practicum. While some NQTs perceived Teaching Practicum to be have been a wholesome rewarding experience, some others felt that some important elements lacked. In some cases, the NQTs were unable to manage some issues arising from classroom dynamics while in another, they felt undermined by the old teachers who threw meaningless tasks at them. It also emerged that certain expectations differed from the real experience of some of the NQTs. A case in point is where some NGTs noted that they were not sufficiently prepared for what they confronted during Teaching Practicum. Basically, data showed that certain aspects of Teaching Practicum did not seem to have prepared the trainees to become confident and effective NQTs. Given the predicament of education in South Africa, this identification of weak areas of Teaching Practicum training implies that universities need to examine the quality, value and efficacy as well as duration of their Teaching Practicum programmes. This research investigation breaks new ground in identifying such areas of

concern. Thus, the value of the research resides chiefly in this location of weak spots, which deserve urgent attention.

The discussions in this chapter relate to the objectives of this study. However, the researcher had to draw from some other responses of the participants to bring home certain important points such as the necessity for cordial relations between old teachers and NQTs, and the nature of classroom dynamics or the environment of teaching. It is the view of the researcher that this served the purpose of achieving a well nuanced discussion of the benefits and disadvantages of Teaching Practicum. Pointing out issues associated with deficiencies of both teacher education including Teaching Practicum will no doubt enhance opportunities for interventions. The next chapter concludes this study.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and recommendations

6.1 Introduction

This study, set in the Western Cape of South Africa sought the perceptions of teaching practice from NQTs. Essentially, the intention was to understand the benefits as well as the disadvantages of Teaching Practicum. The findings will no doubt be responding to the several calls for better ways of on-boarding newly qualified teachers in the teaching profession.

This chapter concludes the report of this study. Overall, the findings indicate a mix of perceptions of newly qualified teachers regarding teaching practice. Nonetheless, the experiences acquired during Teaching Practicum provided teachers with essential skills and knowledge to apply when they qualified as teachers.

In the form of a summary, most NQTs indicated their preparedness to teach and that TP provided them with the pertinent knowledge and skills for the classroom. However, they indicated they found the administrative tasks burdensome which impacted on their teaching time as well as their teaching environment to be non-conducive in terms of the realities in the schools. Some termed the teaching environment as a ‘culture shock’ or ‘reality shock’. Nevertheless, the assistance from mentors in most cases, provided support to some degree, although one or two individuals did mention that their mentors did not have the time to interact with them. One serious challenge is teaching in multilingual classrooms, where NQTs have to teach diverse learners from 4 or 5 different language background other than English as the medium of instruction. This could have serious implications if this challenge is not addressed in schools. As such, the findings indicate an overall acknowledgment of the benefits of Teaching Practicum. For those who did not quite revel in the training opportunity, it suggests a gap which can be filled in future research as well as possible government interventions

6.2 Implications of this study

In chapter two, this study extrapolates the minimum requirements for teacher training. Teacher education policies provide guidelines to the various stakeholders such as universities and schools for proper implementation of the ITE programme. It is up to the interested parties to cooperate and integrate the ITE programme to the benefit of everyone, especially teachers. It has been found that the ITE programme, particularly Teaching Practicum is lacking in a number of instances. There should be standard practice between policies and it should be constantly monitored and evaluated to make sure the ITE programme is on par with current developments.

Education policies at all levels should consider multilingualism's influence and its contribution to the development of NQTs during their Teaching Practicum and its successful implementation as professional teachers.

6.2.1 Improving policy and effective implementation of the ITE programme, particularly TP

The findings presented three particular implications; *Firstly*, the DHET revisiting its policies on education and training in terms the Teaching Practicum that is a challenge in providing practical training consistent with real classroom activities and interactions. The quality of Teaching Practicum should be the focal point since a number of NQTs struggled to see the usefulness of Teaching Practicum to their experience in the classroom. The DHET can also look at the ITE programme that should provide high quality ITE programmes that would positively influence the employment of good quality teachers, and together with education institutions to also ensure proper implementation of induction processes for NQTs in their first year as teachers.

Secondly, the universities should collaborate with schools and align their policies to that of the schools to make Teaching Practicum work successfully. Universities should examine school policies pertaining to Teaching Practicum before trainees are sent for their practicals in order to determine synchronisation. *Thirdly*, the schools where trainees are sent for Teaching Practicum should also align their policies with that of education and training as well as the education institutions in order to provide a holistic experience of Teaching Practicum to future teachers. Their policies cannot operate in isolation. Teaching Practicum is the practical aspect and these three stakeholders can ensure their policies, including the ITE programme, intertwine for effective implementation. Collaboration between them is essential so that NQTs can benefit from these partnerships to improve their Teaching Practicum experience and in turn improve learner performance. Developing this partnership will improve the quality of Teaching Practicum and be considered more valuable to future teachers.

NQTs indicated that the ITE programme, especially Teaching Practicum, was valuable and that they were able to apply what they learnt in practice. Teaching Practicum as it was offered at the selected tertiary institution was found to be imperfect but was an important aspect of the ITE programme to expose prospective teachers to more practical training in school environments and to gain the necessary knowledge and skills. Learning is a continuous process throughout their teaching careers therefore this experience was the basis for their professional careers. Experience is important for teachers and this has to start from the beginning during the

ITE programme. Research has shown that the quality of the ITE programme is questionable since we have not observed improvement in learner performance.

The DHET needs to revisit the ITE programme to ensure the quality of the programme in the context of the South African education crisis.

6.2.2 Readiness to teach Foundation Phase

Many NQTs in this study claimed to be confident to teach and believed that they were capable of relaying theory into practice. However, the data generated from this study countermanded this readiness and enthusiasm. Many NQTs have to teach learners from diverse backgrounds and are not equipped to deal with this in a holistic way. Teaching at foundation phase is regarded as a crucial stage of a learner's school career since it is at this level that learners are required to develop content knowledge to be successful later on as they proceed to intermediate and senior phases. Several quintile 1, 2 and 3 schools are not well resourced and are overcrowded which impedes teaching. Korthagen (2011) argues that the nature of teaching requires "holistic judgement about what, when and how" a specific class should be taught and that it is challenging to prepare teachers for such a holistic purview. Schools to which NQTs are assigned for their first year of teaching need to provide a conducive environment for NQTs; and all stakeholders should be involved in the provision of support. There should be operational induction programmes conducted which the department can monitor to ensure safe passage to the new teaching environment.

The Teaching Practicum assessment manual is another element to look at. It is a general guide for trainees to complete and keep as evidence in their portfolios. This manual outlines the activities of trainees in schools as well as their engagement with mentors for the duration of Teaching Practicum. This is given to trainees at the end of their final year to be utilised as support in their first year of teaching. This manual should be useful in terms of acquiring the necessary knowledge on what experiences they have gained during Teaching Practicum and its' benefit to their development as professional teachers.

6.2.3 Mentorship

Mentors are an important element in the lives of trainees during Teaching Practicum. In this study, the NQTs views of mentors were positive that they provided support and guidance as required during Teaching Practicum. Mentors made Teaching Practicum easier and provided them with the necessary concepts to teach learners in order for them to understand. They

similarly specified that they received support and motivation in some cases from lecturers who offered support during their time at university and provided them with different ways in teaching a lesson with the use of different resources.

NQTs indicated that mentors were too busy to provide them with that guidance and support. Being mentored from the beginning is part of the induction process, which could alleviate some of the reality shock. Mentors need training and workshops: they can make the transition from student to a teacher manageable or they can mar this critical experience. Many teachers are leaving the teaching profession and it is up to the department and the institutions to retain teachers; especially teachers in possession of quality education.

6.3 Suggestion for further research

The researcher concludes with aspects that requires revisiting in relation to school contexts. As mentioned earlier in this chapter Teaching Practicum as a component of the ITE programme necessitates further attention. It has been established that Teaching Practicum is a vital element to the development of prospective teachers. The ITE programme, in particular Teaching Practicum has to be standardised at all schools so that trainees undertaking their practical do not experience any difficulties and challenges at schools. All stakeholders involved should align their policies and practices pertaining to Teaching Practicum to provide prospective teachers with a holistic experience during their time of studies. Collaboration between DHET, educational institutions and schools should be priority to provide quality Teaching Practicum to all trainees.

Another issue worth mentioning is mentoring that require attention as well, to be provided with mentor training and workshops. Teaching Practicum cannot be successful without the support and guidance of mentors. Mentors have the power to mar or make the Teaching Practicum experience successful and an effective support system for trainees. If mentors do not received development, they could be the cause that prospective and NQTs from losing interest in the teaching profession. As such, the DHET, education institutions and schools have a responsibility towards future teachers to receive quality training so that learners can acquire quality education to improve their performance and the pass rates. Finally, teaching multilingual learners at foundation phase poses a particular challenge and requires further research. There is limited research done in terms of this challenge. Several newly qualified teachers in this study were teaching learners in the classroom with four or five different language backgrounds, other than English. It is a challenge for NQTs to embrace teaching in

their first year; let alone teach learners from five different languages in a class of fifty or more learners. Foundation phase is fundamental to the progress of learners and the department of education needs to look at this aspect with urgency. This weakness undermines the teachers' teaching ability and jeopardises the learner in the end. The teacher cannot be effective in preparing an inclusive lesson due to this challenge. Two authors have articulated this challenge. Baxen and Botha (2016: 6) provide recommendations for more effective teacher preparation: (1) to recognise the essential role of language in learning; (2) to face up to the challenges that multilingual contexts present; and (3) to value and use learners' multiple language repertoires as a resource. They further note that not much has been written on this subject of multilingualism (Baxen & Botha, 2016: 6). Multilingualism is a contentious issue in the South African classroom, which requires further research and better policy development around this issue.

6.4 Contribution of this study to practice

This study signifies the significance of Teaching Practicum to the development of prospective teachers. NQTs pointed out their perspective on Teaching Practicum and the importance of the practical aspect to their growth as professional teachers. The Teaching Practicum component of the ITE programme is significant and is a requisite during their studies. Teaching Practicum is particularly required at Foundation Phase where the fundamentals are taught as a process to prepare learners for their schooling career. This study has revealed instances where trainees did not receive the practical training in certain aspects of the Teaching Practicum, and did not feel confident to teach. There were also instances where mentors did not provide the support for trainees during practicum to teach which can stifle the development of future teachers. Prospective teachers cannot learn through theory alone. The practical works hand in hand with theory so they can practice what they are taught at university. Therefore, implementation is important since they are teaching learners who requires their creativity which they will acquire during practicum. The lack of Teaching Practicum can make trainees or NQTs lose interest in the profession

6.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study sought to understand the perceptions of NQTs about the Teaching Practicum. It has been established that Teaching Practicum is an important component of the ITE programme for trainees in becoming professional teachers. Many NQTs indicated they found Teaching Practicum beneficial though there were shortcomings as well which could have a detrimental effect on the development of prospective teachers. They have learnt from their experiences during that phase in the programme. They indicated that Teaching Practicum prepared them, in terms of teaching diverse learners, engaging in classroom activities, displaying confidence to teach and lecturers influencing their readiness to teach.

They also indicated their satisfaction with mentors who supported them through the Teaching Practicum process however, in some cases mentors were not supportive and did not provide guidance as required. The guidance and support from the mentors prepare prospective teachers with the relevant knowledge and skills and when this is lacking from their practicum, they cannot be effective teachers. They equally voiced their concerns of the shortcomings regarding the reality in the classroom in terms of heavy administrative duties that overwhelmed them, non-conducive teaching environments and teaching multilingual classrooms.

The findings suggest that the Teaching Practicum component of the ITE programme to be significant to the development of future teachers and is a requisite element that every NQT has to embark on in preparation of their teaching profession. However, the NQTs indicated their satisfaction with mentors who supported them through the Teaching Practicum process in most cases. For a more productive and enhanced perspective of Teaching Practicum, all stakeholders have a duty to further develop our education system in order to improve learner performance and the pass rates.

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Appendices

Appendix A: WCED Consent letter



Directorate: Research

Audrey.wyngaard@westerncape.gov.za

tel: +27 021 467 9272
Fax: 0865902282
Private Bag x9114, Cape Town, 8000
wced.wcape.gov.za

REFERENCE: 20170719 –3083

ENQUIRIES: Dr A T Wyngaard

Mrs Charmaine Iwu
30 Gougem Road
Southfield
7880

Dear Mrs Charmaine Iwu

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: THE CONTRIBUTION OF TEACHING PRACTICUM TO THE EXPERIENCES OF NEWLY QUALIFIED FOUNDATION PHASE MATHEMATICS TEACHERS IN WESTERN CAPE SCHOOLS

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **24 July 2017 till 29 September 2017**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number?
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

**The Director: Research Services
Western Cape Education Department
Private Bag X9114
CAPE TOWN
8000**

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Dr Audrey T Wyngaard

Directorate: Research

DATE: 20 July 2017

Appendix B: Research ethics clearance certificate



***For office use only	
Date submitted	17 Aug 2017
Meeting date	17 Aug 2017
Approval	P/Y√/N
Ethical Clearance number	EFEC 5-9/2017

**FACULTY OF EDUCATION
RESEARCH ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**


This certificate is issued by the Education Faculty Ethics Committee (EFEC) at Cape Peninsula University of Technology to the applicant/s whose details appear below.

- 1. Applicant and project details (Applicant to complete this section of the certificate and submit with application as a Word document)**

Name(s) of applicant(s):	Charmaine Helena Iwu	
Project/study Title:	The contribution of Teaching Practicum to the experiences of newly qualified Foundation Phase Mathematics teachers in Western Cape schools	
Is this a staff research project, i.e. not for degree purposes?	No	
If for degree purposes the degree is indicated:	M.Ed	
If for degree purposes, the proposal has been approved by the FRC	Yes	
Funding sources:	National Research Fund	

2. Remarks by Education Faculty Ethics Committee:

This Master's research project is granted ethical clearance valid until 12 September 2019.

Approved: √	Referred back:	Approved subject to adaptations:
Chairperson Name: Chiwimbiso Kwenda	Date: 13 September 2017	
Chairperson Signature: 		
Approval Certificate/Reference: EFEC 5-9/2017		

EFEC Form V3_updated 2016

Participant Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a study on *Professional Development of Teachers in South Africa*. This study is being conducted by the Centre for International Teachers Education at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

Purpose and objectives

The purpose of this study is to explore how newly qualified teachers experience their first year of teaching in relation to teaching FP mathematics and what they learnt in that regard during Teaching Practicum.

Importance of this research

This study will allow us to understand the importance of the role of Teaching Practicum to teach.

What is involved?

- Focus group interview that will last 45 to 60 minutes.

Voluntary participation

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. We hope you decide to be part to the project, if so we will respect all confidentiality and anonymity as below will be adhered to.

Anonymity

In any papers or presentations made as a result of data collected in this project, your name will be changed and any description identifying you or people related to you will be changed to protect your and their anonymity - unless you give express permission to be identified and have permission to share the identity of people related to you.

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will always be protected. This will be done by storing all recorded data in a locked filing cabinet. Any typed data will be held in a password protected computer storage device.

Dissemination of Results

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways, (1) Masters thesis, (2) and scholarly papers.

Contact

If you have any further questions you may contact **Prof Yusuf Sayed** at e-mail cite@cput.ac.za

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you agree to participate and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher.

Withdrawal

Even if you decide to participate, you may still withdraw at any time without any consequence or explanation. If so, you will be asked to sign a release form and all the data gathered from you up to that point will be erased.

Please indicate your preference with an [X]

- I volunteer to participate in the study on experiences of newly qualified teachers
 - I wish my identity to be known to the investigators in this study

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Revision to consent form if required:

- [] - I wish my identity to be known to the investigators in this study.
[] - I wish to remove myself from the study and have all/portions of my data destroyed.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the research assistant.

Appendix C: Focus group interviews with NQTs



FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS WITH NEWLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS

Overall research question of the project:

What are the perceptions of Teaching Practicum as articulated by NQTS?

The sub-questions of the project:

- a) What are the benefits of TP identified by NQTs?
- b) What are the disadvantages of TP identified by NQTs?

Interview questions:

1. We would just like to start with if you could tell us a bit more about the benefits of Teaching Practicum to your first few months and last few months of teaching in your current job?
2. Did Teaching Practicum provide adequate training to teach?
3. During your Teaching Practicum, did you ever have an opportunity to address issues, such as fixing errors?
4. Do anyone else share this kind of experience?
5. Were you exposed to lesson plans and filing when you were on Teaching Practicum?
6. Were you aware of daily planning during Teaching Practicum?
7. When all of you were on Teaching Practicum, were you ever aware of daily planning in your classrooms?
8. Did you know that group work is very beneficial for your learning from Teaching Practicum?
9. Microteaching, is that something you were trained to do during Teaching Practicum?
10. Is microteaching something that your school and other teachers in the school do?

