STUDENT TEACHER EXPERIENCES OF THE TEACHING PRACTICUM IN AN INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN THE WESTERN CAPE

by

Fanny Nombulelo Agnes Malikebu

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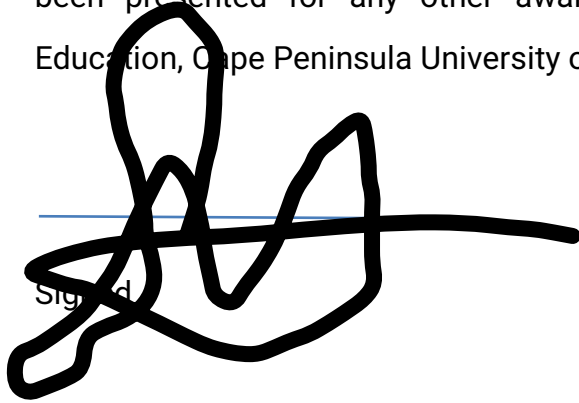
Centre for International Teacher Education

Supervisors/Co-Supervisor: Prof Yusuf Sayed & Dr Zahraa McDonald

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the text of this thesis entitled **Student Teacher' Experiences of Practicum in an Initial Teacher Education Programme** is my own work and has not been presented for any other award at the Centre for International Teacher Education, Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

7th OCTOBER, 2020

Signed

Date

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that they have read and recommended to the Postgraduate Studies and Research Committee and the Senate for acceptance of this thesis entitled **Student Teacher Experiences of practicum in an Initial Teacher Education Programme** submitted by Fanny Nombulelo Agnes Malikebu in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree, Masters of Education (M.Ed.).

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Main Supervisor

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Co Supervisor

DEDICATION

- I dedicate this research work to all higher education institutions which are providers of initial teacher education programmes, entrusted with the responsibility of professional growth and development of future specialist foundation phase teachers.

- I dedicate this to my mother, Mrs. Ellen Namvuwa Malikebu, father Brigadier General Victor Phillip Malikebu (Rtd) and my brothers Benedicto (Thamsanqa), Charles (Mthokozitsi) and Francis (Mduduzi) for their moral support and undying love.

- Finally, I dedicate this to my aunt, Hon. Angie Motshekga, Minister of Basic Education, for her mentorship and encouragement to study initial teacher education, Foundation Phase.

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ABSTRACT

Student teacher experiences of teaching practicum are crucial in attaining the level of readiness necessary to qualify as competent teachers. Practicum is multifaceted and its effectiveness is determined by several factors – adherence to the norms and standards that govern an acceptable school-based mentorship, student teacher assessment, student teacher assignment to teaching schools – as prescribed under the teaching school-university partnership practicum model. The study design, targeting ten student teachers who completed their teaching school-based practicum after a 4-year B Ed foundation phase programme, explored student teacher experiences of school-based mentorship and assessment. To substantiate the findings, qualitative data were collected through biographical forms, semi-structured interviews, the evaluation of teaching practicum portfolios and the Teaching Practicum Manual for Sessions 1 and 2 as implemented by a selected university offering an ITE programme with practicum mentorship. Content and thematic analysis were used to identify themes, with a series of common themes identified based on empirical, theoretical and policy findings to determine the impact of the existing practicum approach, school-based mentorship model and assessment model on student teacher levels of readiness to teach. The findings to this research work are a true reflection that student teacher experiences of the teaching practicum are determined by the nature of school-based mentorship and its teaching school support and that such experiences are the most significant and influential moments in shaping their development as a teacher. Student teachers established that the assessment of practicum was either conducted inappropriately or the number of visits were inadequate to determine the actual performance of the student teachers, classifying the whole process as full of bias, unreliability and inconsistencies. The study contributes to the ongoing research in programme development and curriculum delivery assessment in relationship to teaching practicum experiences of student teachers in initial teacher education programmes.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACU	Australian Catholic University
B Ed	Bachelor of Education
CAPs	Curriculum Assessment Policy
CDE	Centre for Development and Enterprise
DoE	Department of Education
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
FET	Further Education & Training
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HEQF	Higher Education Qualifications Framework
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
IPET	Initial Professional Education for Teachers
LP	Lesson plan
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NQT	Newly qualified teacher
NQF	National Qualification Framework
QDA	Qualitative data analysis
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
SBM	School-based mentors
SP	School placement
ST	Student teacher
TE	Teacher educators
TEI	Teacher Education Institution

TP	Teaching practicum
TS	Teaching schools
WIL	Work Integrated Learning

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the historical background regarding practicum in initial teacher education programmes globally and specifically in the South African context. In so doing, the chapter establishes the problem statement and main research question. In addition, relevant concepts are defined and the research objectives and significance of the study are articulated. Finally, the chapter provides an overview of the research.

Literature regarding the significance of practicum within initial teacher education programmes abounds worldwide. The term *practicum* is defined broadly based on the way it is structured and programmed, the nature of the institutions running it, and the way it is applied in the development of skills and knowledge of student teachers. *Teaching practicum* refers to the continuous periods of practice in an effective school setting whereby student teachers conduct classroom lessons and performs the duties of a teacher (Gower & Walters, 1983:188). Teaching practicum is an opportunity for student teachers to practice theories in teaching and learning and to develop individual teaching and learning theories (Cohen, Hozb & Kaplan, 2012:2). These practices lead to the development of professional competencies of student teachers in becoming professional teachers. Beck and Kosnik (2000) and Goodnough, Osmond, Dibbon, Glassman and Stevens (2009) realise that practicum varies across programmes and institutions in terms of length, structure and place in the overall programme and may be aligned with course work in different ways. They have contextualised practicum as a forum in which student teachers are given the opportunity to grow as future members of the profession, to practise their skills and reflect on what it means to be a teacher. Practicum allows student teachers to develop research skills and experiment with different approaches to teaching within the actual classroom setting (Wallance, 1990:13). Despite the variation in

terminology describing this component in a programme, many student teachers across the globe view it as the most critical factor of their development in the teaching profession (Cohen et al., 2012:1).

1.2. Historical background to teaching practicum

Historically, the issue of practicum is associated with the establishment of the Dewey Lab School in 1884 and the Lincoln Lab School at Teachers College at Columbia University in 1917 (Harms & De Pencier, 1996 in Henning, Petker & Petersen, 2015:2). Such schools shaped student teachers' research skills and reflective practice as they were regarded as protected learning spaces where students of education were mentored and coached and experimented with teaching practices. These were achieved through the integration of teaching practice periods to theoretical studies that correlated with the focus of that practice period (Kansanen, 2014). Further to this, Henning et al. (2015:2) noted that these student teachers were exposed to classroom environments under the roof of the experienced mentors; university lecturers assumed the role of monitoring the activities through which new ideas were tried and skills tested systematically. Various scholars affiliated with education research have attempted to rework models of teaching practicum. Korthagen (2001) as well as Ramsay (2000) (in Vick, 2006) have come with two potential models to be applied: the *realistic teacher education* and *professional experience* models. The models, allowing student teachers to engage in systematic reflection, contribute to the development of their abilities to take charge of their professional development during their practicum. Similarly, in South Africa (Henning, Petker & Petersen, 2015:1), there are notable shifts from the perspective of school-based experiences as only work integrated learning (WIL) to a recognition of teaching schools for integrated work learning and research sites. The expectation is that such schools are teaching laboratories, allowing student teachers to experiment in teaching methods as well as research topics to be taught in classrooms.

1.3.   Context of the research study

The National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa (2006:6), denotes that teachers cover the largest portion of occupational groups and professions in South Africa estimated at 390 thousand in both public and private schools. Although this is the case, the quality of the experienced serving pipeline of educators leaves a lot to be desired considering that their professional education and deployment into the system was then centrally influenced by the apartheid project and organized in racially and ethnically divided sub-systems rather than specialist and qualifications (Department of the Presidency of the Republic of South Africa, National Development Plan 2030: 310 - 312)

Recently graduating educators form a generation of new non-racial democratic transformation of the education system (Parker, 2001 in Robinson, 2003:19). In South Africa, teacher education is concentrated on initial teacher training and continuous professional development. The component of induction is neglected, which is a concern to the researchers. Teachers enter the education system without undergoing the induction program that will be of assistance for their survival in their new role as teachers.

Before the year 1994, the political logic of the apartheid system took control over the system of teacher education which led to the provision of unequal forms of education driven by racial and ethnic groupings as foreseen in the lack of coherence in the system and a multiplicity of curricula and qualifications as a result of duplication and fragmentation of teacher education institutions (Parker, 2001). Until 1998, there was no national system of registration for teacher education programmes in South Africa and, by implication, no quality assurance of programmes (Parker, 2001). The process of establishing a regulatory framework for teacher education programmes began in 1995. It was published for discussion in 1998 and was gazetted as the Norms and Standards for Educators in 2000. Major policy reforms affecting the structure and processes of education and training were

introduced. Legislation, including the White Paper on Education and Training (DOE, 1995), the South African Qualifications Act (DOE, 1995) and the National Education Policy Act (DOE, 1996), gave legal effect to the new policies (Naidoo,2005:23). Crucial to this study amongst the new policy created for the first time was a framework and a procedure for the approval of teacher education programmes and an outline of the kinds of qualifications that the Department of Education would consider for funding and for employment. The policy provided an outline of the knowledge, skills and values that are the hall marks of a professional and competent educator. Teacher educators in a post-apartheid South Africa are being asked to re-conceptualize and re-design Initial Teacher Education programmes to respond to new national policies on teacher education (Robinson,2003:2). It is intended as a flexible instrument that can provide a basis for the generation of qualifications and learning programmes (Parker, 2001). Hence the B Ed programme was made a standard Initial Professional Education of Teachers qualification with several routes to achieve it (The National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa, 2006:14). According to CDE (2015) through initial teacher education (ITE) programs offered at higher education institutions (HEIs) student teachers obtain either a four-year Bachelor of Education (B Ed) degree or a one-year Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) after a three-year undergraduate degree.

The draft policy on the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications selected from the Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF) (2010:6) shows that the quality and standards of initial teacher education programmes are questionable as a substantial proportion do not meet the programme organization, design, coordination and work based learning. The quality of the programme staff has been less than optimum in a number of areas, including their involvement in curriculum design. The Policy on the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications as revised (2014:10) encourages teacher educators to become engaged in curriculum design, policy implementation and research. In many

faculties, however, as many as 50% of staff are employed on temporary contracts. The low subsidy level of initial teacher education programmes does not provide enough incentive for HEIs to give more weight to their responsibilities for teacher education. Student teachers are often not exposed to adequate opportunities for engaging in practical learning, a serious problem compounded by weak institutional-school relationship, poor communication between the two institutions during practicum, inadequate supervision and mentorship arrangements, and at times, no deliberate placement policies.

With reference to the Initial Professional Education of Teachers (IPET) as cited in the National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa (2006:14), student teachers here in South Africa are given opportunities to take different options and routes to qualify as teachers. Amongst the options is a 4-year B Ed degree which includes the equivalent of one full-time year of supervised practical teaching experience in schools. This was designated the standard qualification for students wishing to teach in any learning area, subject and phase. In order to capacitate student teachers with abilities for successful entry into the profession, the programme offers a specific depth and specialisation of knowledge, practical skills and workplace experience to enable successful students to apply their learning as beginner teachers in schools in varying contexts (Department of Higher Education & Training(2010:24-25) The National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa (2006:23) and DoE (2007a: 14), states that the expectation is that the practical component is to be undertaken in short periods during the programme, comprising an extended period of service during the final year with a structured mentorship programme, or be undertaken by student teachers or serving teachers in schools under supervision by a mentor. The Department of Basic and Higher Education and Training's (2011:17) Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa (2011-2025) proposes that teachers at teaching schools will be developed as mentors for student teachers and will be able to teach subject methodology

(pedagogy for specific learning areas) courses at the teacher education institution.

According to the DHET (2011, revised 2015), student teacher preparedness to teach is guided by the policy by which all universities within the South African education system adhere: the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications. The National Education Policy on Recognition and Evaluation of Qualifications for Employment in Education (DBE, 2017) is similar: student teachers should be prepared to enter the teaching profession. The provider may consider the latter option only where there is a guarantee of proper supervision and a suitable school placement. The expectation is that those qualifying for the B Ed degree should complete 480 credits at the NQF level 7, including the teaching practicum component of 120 credits

In a broad sense, the context of teaching practice in South Africa is best defined by the South African education policy. This policy stipulates that all students should be placed in functional schools for their IPET teaching practice experiences (Department of Higher Education and Training (2014:18). Based on the framework, the expectation is that establishment of teaching schools and professional practice schools could strengthen school-based practicum experiences of the student teachers in the programmes. The perspective is that such schools will expose student teachers to best practices through observation and participation as these also serve as centres for research of teacher education. The cornerstone underlying the policy is that the student teachers graduating from these programmes will be specialists in teaching and learning; will be specialists in assessment; will be curriculum developers, interpreters and designers of learning programmes and materials, will be leaders, administrators and managers; will be scholars and lifelong learners; and will be professionals who play community, citizenship and pastoral roles. In combination with these seven roles, a set of associated competencies guides the design of teacher education programmes. Divided into practical, foundational and reflexive competencies, these and are aimed at removing the dichotomy between theory and practice (Department of Education

2000:15-16. Teacher education programme assessment is crucial to see if student teachers have acquired the stipulated competencies and are able to implement these within the classroom (Department of Higher Education and Training (2015:15 - 16).

1.4. Problem statement

Although practicum is a key point of formative and summative assessment of student teachers' developed competencies as it is implemented by school-based mentors and teacher educators within the initial teacher education programmes, it is complex and multi-faceted, determined by multiple institutional, interpersonal and intrapersonal variables (Aspden, 2014; Cohen, Hozb & Kaplana, 2012). As school-based mentors and teacher educators are key participants in practicum, their effectiveness greatly impacts the success or failure of student teacher practicum experiences (Al-Mekhlafi, 2010:6). The effectiveness of practicum supervisors depends on the nature of the roles and responsibilities they play (Adey & Speedy, 1993; Kettle & Sellars, 1996; Hawkey, 1997, 1998; Sandholtz & Shannon, 2000; Baniabdelrahman, 2004). Other issues include the ill-defined responsibilities and expectations for all individuals involved in the triad relationship (Silva and Dana, 2001; Gimbert and Nolan, 2003; Alger and Kopcha, 2009), as well as, the lack of effective communication among them (Alger and Kopcha, 2009). Hence, the relationship between the school-based mentors, teacher educators, student teachers and universities needs to be conceptualised beyond the triadic structure, taking into account the ways in which these relationships are shaped by teacher education policies, teaching schools and universities (Aspden, 2014:309). The purpose of this study is to understand student teacher experiences of teaching practicum in an initial teacher education programme. The phenomenological case study, as part of exploring student teacher experiences of teaching practicum, will use a reflective and 8P model of teaching practicum to discover how student teachers are supported by experienced classroom mentors during their teaching

practicum and to examine student teacher perspectives on teacher educator assessment during practicum.

1.5. Rationale for the research study

Practicum is the opportunity for university students to be successful teachers, if well implemented (Masadeh, 2017:1060), because teacher educators and school-based mentors, working as supervisors, assessors, mentors, observers, model teachers and supporters (Masadeh, 2017:1060) are the most important sources of practical experience for student teachers. Despite the centrality of the teaching practicum in initial teacher education programmes, challenges have been encountered (Harms & De Pencier, 1996, in Henning, Petker & Petersen, 2015:2). The challenges encountered in initial teacher education programmes in regard to teaching practicum are due to the (in)effectiveness of the triad relationship: with the teacher educators who are charged with responsibility of assessment; the school-based mentors who are to support and guide; and the student teachers who are assigned to the teaching schools and expected to perform by set guidelines and regulations to be assessed for grading purposes based on what is expected of a competent teacher (Aspen, 2017:133-140). Thus, this research study explores student teacher experiences of teaching practicum based on their perceptions of school-based mentorship and teacher educator assessment of their performance during teaching practicum.

1.6. Significance of the study

The study contributes to the ongoing research in programme development and curriculum delivery assessment in relationship to teaching practicum experiences of student teachers in initial teacher education programmes. It bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practice.

The study contributes to the analysis of the effectiveness of the existing teacher

practicum model in supporting student teacher competence development, with a focus on how the school-based mentorship model and assessment model are implemented in the delivery of the initial teacher education programme curriculum. Variations in the use of study models offers opportunities to identify specific, relevant and effective teacher practicum models which may bridge the theoretical knowledge to practice based learning of student teachers in the South African context.

1.7. Definitions of concepts in relation to the study

Assessment: refers to strategies designed to confirm what students know and demonstrate, whether they have met curriculum outcomes of their individualised programmes, or to certify proficiency and make decisions about students' future programmes or placements (Mattsson, Eilertsen & Rorrison, 2011).

Experiences: refers to knowledge and skills which develop over long periods as a result of practice.

Foundation Phase: refers to the teaching phase that encompasses the developmental needs of children grade R-Grade 3 (Curriculum for Wales; Foundation Phase Framework, Revised 2015:5).

Mentorship: refers, in education, to a complex and multi-dimensional process of guiding, teaching, influencing and supporting a beginning teacher through a democratic process where thoughts, reflections and knowledge are made deeper (Hultman & Sobel, 2013; Lauvås & Handal, 2015; Lindgren & Morberg, 2012).

School-based mentor: refers to a qualified and experienced teacher who formally provides educational and personal support to a student teacher during placement in that unit. The support, according to Quinn (2001:427), includes supervision, guidance, counselling, assessment and evaluation.

Student teachers: refers to those studying to acquiring a teaching certification and who undergo a teacher training programme offered by teacher education providers

(Aspden, 2014:9).

Teaching practicum: refers to an actual school-based attachment where student teachers are to observe other teachers and are given an opportunity to learn whilst being observed and assessed by practicing teachers and university teacher educators (Na, Abida, Munir & Saddiqi, 2010).

Teacher educator: refers to someone who teaches at a teacher education institution, supports student fieldwork in schools, or contributes substantially to the development of students towards becoming competent teachers (Koster, 2002:7).

1.8. Objectives and research questions

This study, to explore student teacher experiences of teaching practicum (TP) in an initial teacher education programme, has two primary objectives:

- to understand how student teachers' perceive the support and guidance provided by school-based mentors during their teaching practicum; and

- to explore student teacher perceptions of teacher educator assessment of their teaching practicum.

The main question that guides this study is: *What are student teacher experiences of teaching practicum (TP) in an initial teacher education programme?*

The main research question is answered through the following two sub-questions:

- *How do student teachers perceive the support provided by school-based mentors during teaching practicum?*

- *How do student teachers perceive the teacher educator assessment of their teaching practicum?*

1.9. Chapter outline

Chapter 1 provides the rationale and background to the study, with its research problem, the purpose to the study and research objectives and questions.

Chapter 2 discusses the research context, central themes to the topic of study and the research problem and the theoretical framework of the study. The literature gap is identified by describing the areas of theory and practicum in education, analysing initial teacher education programme delivery, and other related constructs relevant to the research study.

Chapter 3 provides the details of the research methodology, including the data collection and analysis procedures.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the research study and the themes emerging from the analysed data.

Chapter 5 discusses and interprets the findings and presents recommendations emerging from the study, with suggestions for further research.

1.10. Chapter summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the research study. The next chapter reviews the literature relating to the study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1.   Introduction

This chapter discusses a set of literature themes in relation to the practicum component of the initial teacher education programme, in particular, clarifying thematic issues which surround school-based support, guidance, advice and assessment of student teachers as done by school-based mentors and teacher educators in qualifying them to teach. The chapter further analyses the concepts of practicum, school-based supervision and mentorship as executed within the teaching school environment leading to student teacher experiences. It also discusses several practicum models, standards and norms that guide practicum, structures of practicum, conceptual and theoretical frameworks that underpin the study, the gap in the literature and the link to the teaching practicum component.

2.2.   Concept of practicum

Teaching practicum is a qualifying compulsory school-based experience, a requirement for student teachers in an initial teacher education programme in South Africa (DHET, 2015:28). The practicum, as field experience for student teachers, constitutes the longest and most intensive exposure to the teaching profession as experienced by prospective teachers. However, the term *practicum* is used interchangeably with cooperative learning, fieldwork, internships, clinical placement and work integrated learning (WIL) depending on the discipline (Ralph, Walker & Wimmer, 2007:1) *Cooperative learning* refers to an educational approach whereby student teachers work in groups to complete tasks collectively toward academic goals through capitalization on one another's resources and skills to achieve academic and social learning experiences (Ross & Smyth,1995). *Fieldwork* is defined as a portion of a job or educational programme that occurs at a remote work site, rather than at the worker's usual lab or office and involves researching a specific area of specialisation with an intention to compile needed information.

According to the Higher Education Practicum Handbook for Students and Site Supervisors (EDL 696: Higher Education Practicum), an *internship* is an opportunity a potential employer offer to student teachers interested in gaining work experience in specific areas of specialisation as an important step to building their teaching career. According to Mellish et al. (2000:209), *clinical placement* refers to a practical instruction programme aimed at guiding student teachers towards clinical competence, enabling student teachers to apply knowledge and skills within a school setting. *WIL* refers to the workplace component of the initial teacher education programme whereby student teachers learn on practice through observation of lessons taught by others and by preparing, teaching and reflecting on their own lessons taught (Department of Higher Education and Training (2015:10),

These terms suggest the need for student teachers to practice as part of their initial training in a formal teaching school setting in order to become professional teachers (Smigel & Harris 2008:20). Ramsay (2000), in Vick, (2006) proposes the term *professional experience* to better reflect the professional work of teaching as part of teacher education and to develop that experience through teaching careers. The whole idea is to develop in the teachers the capacity for decision-making and judgments on what, when and why certain teaching strategies are employed in an increasingly complex and unpredictable classroom environment (Al-Momani, 2016:46). Here in South Africa, *practicum* is defined as an activity where student teachers are placed in schools in order to gain teaching experience (Department of Basic Education and Training, 2011; Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011). During this period, student teachers act relatively independently under the guidance of a mentor and teacher educators from the teaching schools and institution of higher learning offering the programmes. Here, the student teacher spends time in an educational setting for the purpose of developing skills as a teacher, applying the knowledge gained in coursework to the everyday context of teaching and learning (Haigh & Ell, 2014; McGee, Ferrier-Kerr & Miller, 2001), and is socialised into the teaching profession (Roberts & Graham, 2008).

Higher education institutions offering teacher education programmes in South Africa are required by education policies to ensure that their students are placed in schools where they can interact with the realities of classroom teaching and the broader school environment (Practicum varies across programmes and institutions, in terms of length, structure and place in the overall programme and may be aligned with coursework in different ways (Beck & Kosnik, 2000; Goodnough, Osmond, Dibbon, Glassman & Stevens, 2009). But no matter how it is structured or placed within the programme, there is ready agreement from key stakeholders that practicum is one of the most critical components of effective initial teacher education programmes (Brown & Danaher, 2008; Doxey, 1996; Goodnough et al., 2009; Rivers, 2006).

2.3. Benefits of school-based teacher practicum in initial teacher education programmes

The benefits of school-based practicum have been noted by several scholars (Murtiana, 2013:2). For instance, Hobson et al. (2006) point out that school-based practicum allows student teachers access to authentic classrooms and helps student teachers learn how to respond to a wide variety of situations. Further to this, the school placement of student teachers enables them to enact the concepts learned through their engagement with specific strategies in initial teacher education (Rosaen & Florio-Ruane, 2008, cited in Grossman, 2009).

How student teachers experience their transformation into serving teachers in the liminal social spaces of the school-based practicum is of key importance to them, their future students and their educators. In the study of Busher, Gündüz, Cakmak and Lawson (2015:445-466), participants generally thought the practicum developed skills in student and classroom management, in meeting students' diverse learning needs, in recognising multiple student perspectives and in grounding their understanding of what it meant to be a teacher in a real context. Haigh and Tuck (1999) insist that teacher educators, believing that practicum

attachment is an essential and integral part of teacher education, give it key priority in teacher preparation programmes. Likewise, student teachers consider field experience as a pivotal component of their initial teacher education programmes. Many scholars (Alexander & Galbraith, 1997; Daresh, 1990; Price, 1987; Wilson, Floden & Ferrini-Mundy, 2002) through research on the practicum, highlight its many benefits for preparing student teachers for the realities of real teaching in a real school. The range of experiences they gain while being attached to classrooms includes those involving 'practice teaching' and school-based experiences occurring as part of the pre-service teacher education courses.

Hammond (2001:42) agrees, stating that student teachers are required to have the experience of physical exposure in a classroom of an expert teacher. Expert teachers are required to mentor beginning teachers as student teachers gradually assume responsibility of independent practice by co-planning and co-teaching, observing lessons and seeing how various problems are handled.

2.4. Models of a practicum

Research studies have used different lenses for describing and understanding the practicum, leading to various models of practicum. Studies on practicum in teacher education programmes have highlighted a host of unresolved and often suppressed problems with many models failing to provide coherent practice components (Buchberger, Campos, Kallos & Stephenson, 2000:52). Atputhasamy (2005) identifies eight models of teaching practicum: the apprenticeship model; the professional model; the cell of experience model; the integrative model; the partnership model; the community of teachers model; the 4K-model Buchberger; and context, input, product, process (CIPP) model.

The *apprenticeship model,* also known as observational learning, historically refers to the working communities where the apprentice receives continuous mentoring. The master demonstrates the correct way of completing a task, and afterwards the

apprentice attempted to imitate the master's skills, while being corrected for any mistakes (Cameron &Wilson, 1993; Keogh, Dole & Hudson, 2006; Zeichner, 1992). The master, knowing how the work should be done, models the work for the novice, who in turn tries to follow the master's example. Apprenticeships can also enable practitioners to gain a license to practice in a regulated profession after they have achieved measurable competencies. The apprenticeship model has a particularly strong foothold within vocational pedagogy (Skagen, 2004:118). Like a traditional teacher-student relationship, this model is based on one-way communication. Scholars like Skagen (2004:125-126) have criticized this mentoring approach as being one-sided. The reflective conversation is dominant. Nowadays, the new teacher is quickly provided full responsibilities for teaching, with little opportunity to observe other teachers. Within the apprenticeship model, one could alternatively picture a situation where the student teacher is responsible for part of the teaching, until the final certification.

The *professional experience model,* or clinical teaching model, focuses on meeting each student teacher's learning differences by moving away from the traditional teacher education programme through the connection of university theory, professional knowledge and classroom experience. Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden (2005:37) have noted that the traditional teacher preparation has been criticised for being overly theoretical, having little connection to practice, offering fragmented and incoherent courses, and lacking in a clear, shared conception of teaching among the faculty. Unlike the unguided and supported traditional models of practicum, this model involves a student teacher working under the supervision of the experienced school-based mentor. The professional experience model, a critical aspect of initial teacher education designed to support the in-school experiences of student teachers, provides an opportunity for initial teacher education providers and schools to work together to share knowledge, expertise and passion for teaching in order to prepare the next generation of teachers (Alpha Crucis College, 2019:6). The professional experience model

exposes teacher education students to a range of schools and make them aware of the challenges and realities of classrooms and diversity that exist in our school student population. According to Egeberg, McConney, and Price (2016, in Page & Jones, 2018:85) it is expected that the student teachers be skilled in classroom management, control of student behaviour, master the pedagogy, and develop insights into how students learn. Consequently, the student teachers are sent out for a professional experience to engage in the critiquing of their own practice, planning, teaching, assessing, evaluating and reflecting under the support and guidance of the school-based mentors.

The *cell of experience model* contends that experience plays a key role in the process of learning to teach (Hansen, 2000:24). Kolb (1984:38) defines *learning* as a human adaptation process. Lewin's formula for learning describes human behaviour as a function of a person and the environment. Learning takes place, according to Lewin, when student teachers interacts with, or is stimulated by, an environment. Different scholars have viewed the model differently, with Jarvis (1987:164) arguing that there is no attached meaning to a scenario unless its acquitted to one's experiences. The model stipulates that student teachers continue to improve in their effectiveness as they gain experience in the teaching profession (Kini & Podolsky, 2016), meaning that student teacher practicum does have preconceptions which serve to define how they teach and what they believe about how young people learn when sent out for the experience (Zeichner & Gore, 1990).

According to Whiting, Whitty, Furlong, Miles and Barton (1996, in Atputhasamy, 2005:67), in the *integrative model* the student teacher experience in the teacher education institution is integrated with the world of the school. The university supervisors play the more dominant role in the teaching, guiding, mentoring and assessment of student teachers, with minimal formal input from school practitioners in the planning and provision of training. In a sense, the schools allow the teacher education institutions to use their classrooms for student. The backbone of the model is the creation of multi-profession teams of students doing

practices that enable students to acquire their skills in multidisciplinary settings and a space of training-mentoring that is jointly spurred by the mentor at the school and the professor-mentor from the faculty at the school.

The *partnership model* refers to the part of the programme whereby the teacher education courses are developed and implemented based on a partnership between the initial teacher programme providers and the teaching schools (Bullough, Hobbs, Kauchak, Crow & Stokes, 1997, cited in Atputhasamy, 2005). In this model, the student teachers are sent out for experiences based on a collaborative approach to assessment. The purpose of the partnership is to ensure that the student teachers are given an opportunity for a fair assessment of their practicum. While the model involves partnerships between universities and schools (Hobbs, Campbell & Jones, 2018), it is evident that in reality the partnership model works only on paper: policies and regulations guiding the teacher education institutions and teaching schools make it difficult to accomplish this and so accommodate the differences through the working partnerships with distinct roles for the schools of teacher educators as assessors representing the universities and school-based mentors representing the teaching schools, and taking the role of guidance and support for the assigned student teachers (Teitel, 1998). With the implementation of this partnership model, the schools were encouraged to accept a greater responsibility for teacher preparation. As it is, appointed school-based mentors are expected to carry out most of the supervision of student teachers during the practicum (Atputhasamy, 2005:3).

The *community of teachers model* (Stein, Silver & Smith, 1998, in Atputhasamy, 2005) creates productive interactions in innovative ways amongst the teacher educators and cohorts of student teachers across the content fields and different years of study programme. In this model, the student teachers are immersed in the school system, proceeding through coursework and school experience together. The underlying premise in this model is that prospective teachers need experience in collaborative learning communities in which they are afforded the freedom to

experiment with alternative approaches and strategies with the support of their peers (Barab, Squire & Dueber, 2000). The intent of the model is to transform the initial teacher education programme context into communities of learners that link the learning of student teachers with the learning of experienced teachers and teacher educators with one-on-one tutoring, coaching, and mentoring of student teachers.

The *4K model* is a model of learning that gives student teachers the opportunity to explore aspects of optimal communication. Masrukan and Roshmad (2014) explain that the 4K learning model includes six phases: *illustration* where school-based mentors are accompanied by student teachers to their lessons for the purpose of modelling the teaching and learning process; *investigation*, *collaborative exploration* and *creative performance* wherein students produce creatively by preparing and presenting the classroom lessons; *communication* that allows students to expose what they have acquired from the mentorship; and *appreciation* whereby teacher educators and school-based mentors grade student teachers based on institutionalized assessment procedures.

The implementation of each phase of the 4K learning model entails aspects of communication to uplift student teacher communication skills. In the illustration of character development phase, students are required to listen to the school-based mentors and any other teachers proving support and explanations. In the investigation phase, student teachers are to ask and argue with the school-based mentors or teachers supporting and guiding them to construct their understanding of the practicum. In the collaborative exploration phase, student teachers are trained to improve their practice. In the phase of creative performance, student teachers can prepare and deliver their lesson without the support of the school-based mentors for grading purposes. The communication phase is for school-based mentors and teacher educators to prepare the student teachers for their own practicum, writing reflection and feedback from the exercise and presenting results for discussions. Upon the completion of the entire exercise

based on this model, the student teachers are either passed, qualifying as competent teacher after approval, or are failed and requested to repeat the whole process (Masrukan et al., 2015:344-345).

One particularly useful approach to practicum is the CIPP model, or context, input, process, product approach, developed by Stufflebeam (1983) as this is a holistic approach to conducting evaluations of education programmes. This model examines the context, goals, resources, implementation and outcomes of the initial teacher education programmes, and is designed to provide comprehensive information for teacher education institutions and teaching schools that direct the partnerships and identify areas of improvement. Using the CIPP model in evaluation requires a step-by-step approach that encompasses the four components – context, input, process, and product – during the teaching practice (Tseng, 1996:2) The major competencies of skill and knowledge for student teachers to qualify to teach include components of education profession, subject teaching profession and foundation phase profession. Then, student teachers experience the 'process' of teaching practice and pass the evaluation of teaching practice to teacher educators representing the institutions of higher learning. In this model of practicum, when the student teacher fails to meet the required competencies following the teacher educator and the school-based mentors' assessment procedures, the whole component must be repeated to re-experience the feedback. Once all model stages are completed, student teachers take the post practice examination to become formally qualified teachers. Naturally, the output will be better competencies than prior to the teaching practice, a stage called 'product'. Further, this model is immersed in a 'context' which includes motivation factors, school resources and school policies all influencing teaching practice. The requirement for this practicum model is that student teachers pass all courses as a pre-examination to become qualified teacher trainees. Thus, they acquire the basic competencies of teaching the foundation phase classroom before their teaching practice (Tseng, 1996:3).

According to Wong and Goh (2002:197-206), another significant model of

practicum is the *enhanced partnership model* as prescribed through its collaborative framework of shared values and goals in the interest of teacher learning and education research while recognising the need for mutual respect for each partner's roles, beliefs, perspectives, experiences, expertise and knowledge. The robust partnership between initial teacher education providers, Ministry of Education and schools is a key driver of teacher education programmes. This means that the student teacher practicum is carried out through the HEIs with the guidance and operation of the Ministry of Education and in partnership with the teaching schools. Each of the members of the tripartite plays a significance role in ensuring the recommended guidance, advice and support of the student teachers for assessment. To strengthen the tripartite relationship along the whole continuum and reinforce the theory-practice nexus, initial teacher education programme providers adopts the enhanced partnership model.
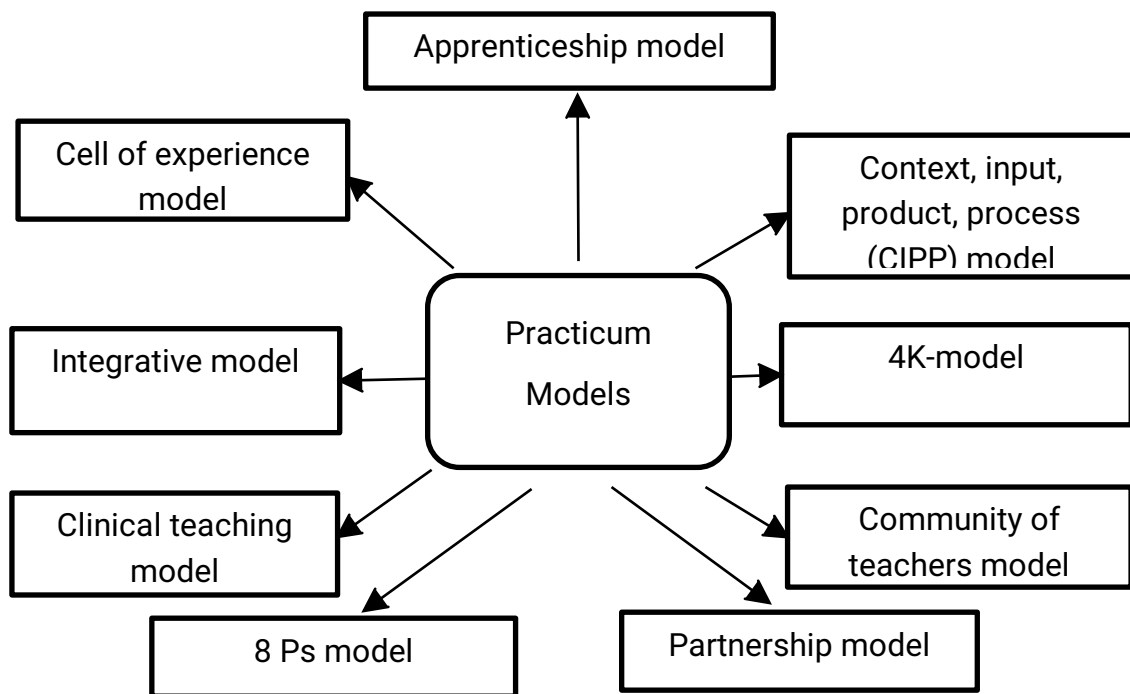
FIGURE 2.0. TEACHING PRACTICUM MODELS

The figure show several approaches to practicum as implemented by different scholars studying practicum and institutions. Evident in these models are interrelationships amongst teacher educators representing the universities,

school-based mentors representing the teaching schools and in a few models, the Ministries of Education responsible for ensuring that policies surrounding the practicum component of initial teacher are implemented in accordance to the norms and standards that govern the programmes.

2.5. Concept of mentorship

Anderson and Sharmon (in Heung-Ling, 2003) view mentoring as a nurturing process in which a more skilled or more experienced person serving as a role model teaches, espouses, encourages, counsels and befriends a less skilled or less experienced person for the purpose of promoting the latter's professional and or personal development. Teacher mentoring is integral to initial teacher education, teacher transition and teacher quality. A strategic and coordinated approach to teacher mentoring is needed to facilitate the development and retention of quality teachers, and to lift student learning outcomes (ACU, 2014:10).

According to Harris and Wiggans (1993), mentoring offers the opportunity to integrate theoretical and practical elements in the experience of the student teacher to development relevant knowledge bases and practical skills. This model assumes that competence cannot be acquired through verbal communication alone as competence is partly situational and improvisational requiring modelling through demonstrations and hands-on experiences for techniques (Nielsen & Kvale 1999:56).

Wang and Odell (2002:16) identify three mentoring models with different characteristic. In their first model, mentors are responsible for imparting knowledge to student teachers. In their second model, mentors assist student teachers to transition and bridge gaps between theoretical knowledge and practical experiences. In the third approach to mentorship, mentors and supervisors collaborate on the investigation and creation of a mentoring model, sharing notes on the progress of the student teachers and reach decision based on negotiations

and discussions between the institutions of higher learning and the teaching schools.

In all the mentorship models, the beliefs are that assigned mentors are veteran teachers who play an advisory role and can coach the student teachers within their schools. This is imperative as mentoring deals with assisting student-teachers to learn how to teach in school-based settings (Tomlison, 1995:369). The mentoring relationship has as its core purpose the professional development of the student teacher through the counsel and guidance of the mentor so a successful mentoring relationship provides positive outcomes for both the mentee and mentor through the expansion of knowledge, skill, energy and creativity.

Feiman-Nemser and Parker (1992) establish the typical nature of the practicum through mentoring programmes which pair novice teachers with more experienced teachers who can ably explain school policies, regulations and procedures; share methods, materials and other resources; help solve problems in teaching and learning; provide personal and professional support; and guide the growth of the new teacher through reflection, collaboration, and shared inquiry. After accompanying these experienced classroom mentors to their lessons, they should be more independent to take on classrooms for themselves with the mentors in the background, giving advice and solutions to problems. School-based mentors responsible for leading, guiding and advising the student teachers work in situation characterized by mutual trust and belief through a complex and multi-dimensional process of teaching, influencing and support (Koki, 2017:2).

Mentor teachers have been cited as the most influential individuals in shaping student teacher practices and beliefs (Killian & Wilkins, 2009). Literature reveals the impact the mentoring plays in transitioning the student teachers into professional teachers in schools (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez & Tomlinson, 2009:47; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004:5; Wang & Odell, 2002). Studies support the careful selection procedures and proper preparation for the roles and responsibilities of mentor

teachers (Alger & Kopcha, 2009; Killian & Wilkins, 2009). Banville's 25-year review (2002) of studies on mentors indicates the problematic nature of the mentor role: despite acknowledging the importance of the mentor role, there are neither clear descriptions of their role nor any standards for functioning or preparation as a preliminary requirement for role approval. On mentoring of beginning teachers, Hobson et al. (2009:139) indicate mentors' lack of time, knowledge and preparation as impeding student teacher success on their journey to become professionals.

McIntyre, Byrd and Foxx (1996), in reviewing the roles of school-based mentors, conclude that cooperating teachers can greatly influence the student teacher teaching context and their behaviour and beliefs, both positively and negatively. So we cannot assume that all teachers have the qualities and temperament to advance student teachers professionally through mentor leadership. In fact, research often depicts the influence of school-based mentors on the student teachers negatively (Guyton & McIntyre, 1990; Winitsky, Stoddart & O'Keefe, 1992). From the literature, two important aspects stand out regarding the school-based mentor role: the behaviors they exhibit or model; and the process and content of feedback to the student teachers. The most effective teachers provide clear specific feedback to student teachers, provide rationales for suggestions, and exhibit self-reflection (Atputhasamy, 2005:2).

2.6. Integrating the reflective model of practicum in school-based mentorship

Schon (1983) has described a reflective model of teaching practicum as a reflective practicum created for the task of learning a practice by linking it to student teachers learning by doing, with the school-based mentor assistance. It is generally accepted that practice without reflection does not make much sense or at least, does not intentionally and efficiently support the processes of learning. Argyris and Schon (1978) determine the levels which yield a reflective practicum as both intentional and functional. A practicum is reflective when it has achieved its intended purposes of rendering student teachers proficient in a type of reflection in action and when it

functions properly and initiates dialogue between the school-based mentors and the student teachers through a form of reciprocal reflection-in-action.

Carr (1995:5) asserts that as mentoring partnerships originate traditionally across cultures and life contexts, in recent years they have been more formally recognized by HEIs as critical in the personal and professional lives of successful teachers. School-based mentors are clearly significant in the development of reflective practitioners for the future (Garcia, 1972:759); mentors facilitate the development of reflective skills by both modelling reflection on their own practice and by direct challenging and affirming the critical thinking process in the student (Moran & Dallart, 1995).

Walkington discovered that reflective practice among student teachers could be modelled by school-based mentors, teacher educators and peers who are well skilled in critical questioning, who are capacitated to transitioning from theory to practice, and who are capable of challenging the assumptions of the beginning teacher. Although professional reflective practice yields to new action and informed affirmation of ones existing actions, it is a complex and intellectually challenging activity which takes time, continuous commitment and skilled support to develop (Moran & Dallart, 1995:22). Boud (2014), Jarvis (2014) and Kolř (2013) realize the need for school-based mentors in designing school-based experiences in a manner where reflection and questioning techniques encourage reflection and sharing in groups. It is ideal for reflection to reach the deepest level, the so-called core qualities, by activating personal characteristics of a teacher such as enthusiasm, curiosity, courage, attitude and flexibility in action (Korthagen, 2014). As a way for student teachers to recognise consonance between their own individual practices and those of successful practitioners, it is recommended that school based mentors facilitates reflective practice in a rigorous and thoughtful process emanating from the students teachers practice into a potential learning situation (Schon, 1996 & Jarvis, 1992; Phelps, 2003:19)

Student teacher experiences of practicum are entrenched in activity and content which involve the community of practice of school-based mentors and student teachers, as well as teacher educators who assist towards the end of the practicum to assess the student teachers (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Schön, 1983, 1987). During teaching practicum, reflection is a result of a coordinated actions of school based mentors, teacher educators and student teachers themselves. These do reflect in practice when the student teachers are delivering their lessons in the classroom as an important tool for improved instructional behaviours which contributes to immediate effects on classroom dynamics. Reflection on action as enacted after the delivery of the lesson as they give feedback on the performance of the student teachers', it allows them to reflect upon their own actions and thoughts after an action is completed. And for action as a consequential remedy to the future actions, involving proactive thinking to enable the student teachers' to cope with what may happen in the future (Eraut, 1995; Schon 1983, 1987; Milrood, 1999).

During practicum, School-based mentors work with the student teachers throughout their learning process: "they share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and they allow student teachers to deepen their knowledge and expertise in their areas of specialties by interaction on an ongoing basis" (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002:4). Student teachers are taken through a cyclical process of learning which defines their learning experiences, aims at continuous improvement and develops personal theories of action (Gilbert & Trudel, 1999). The role of the school-based mentors is to assist the student teacher shift from knowledge acquired through theoretical training to an actual classroom where they discover the actual framework of teaching and become aware of the different classroom situations. Thus, they think about their performance during teaching practice, see how experienced teachers deal with situations, and see how they themselves could manage them (Schön, 1983, 1987).
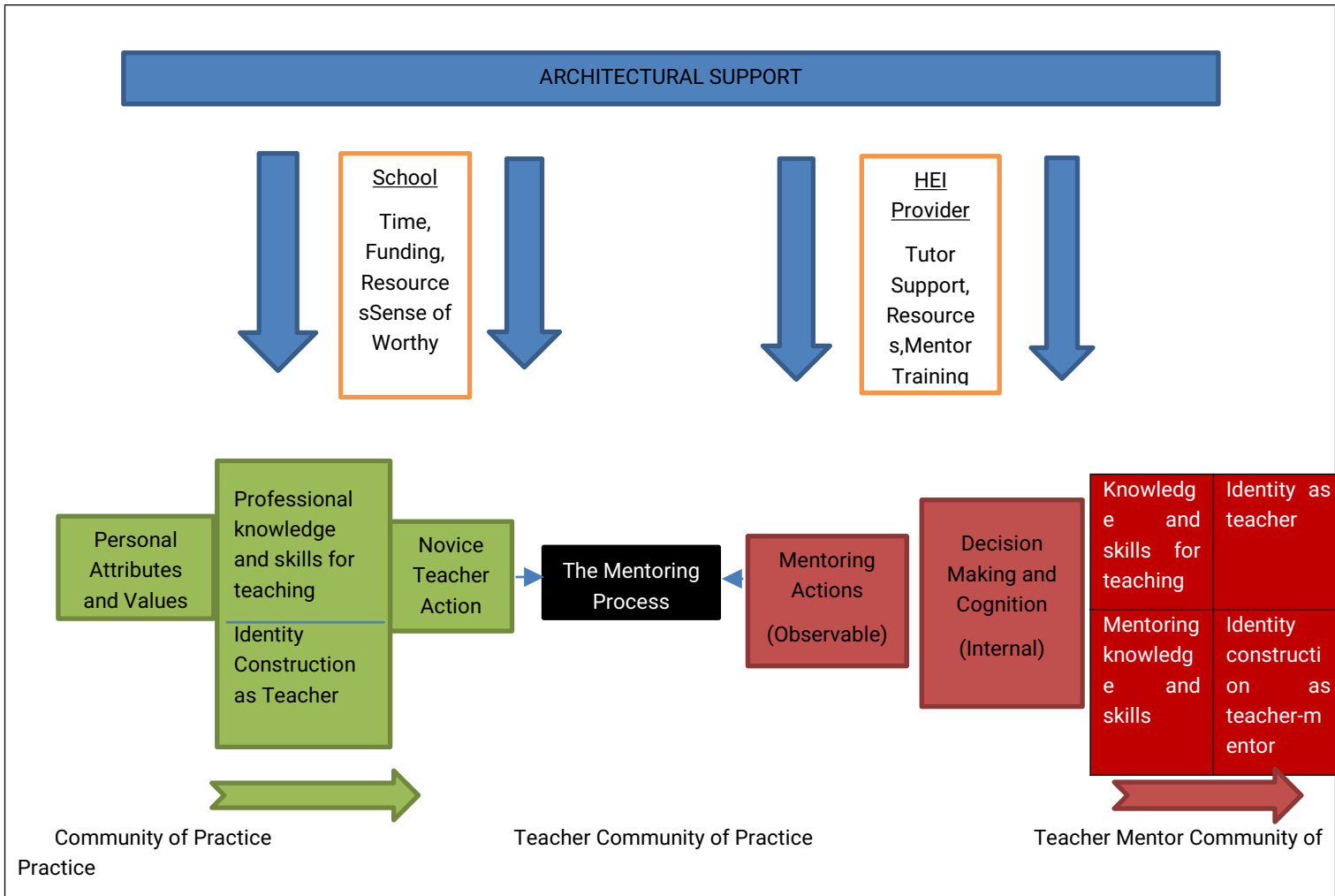
FIGURE 2.2 SCHON/WALLANCE/ROELEFS-SANDERS/LAVE-WENGER/CUNNINGHAM MODEL OF THE MENTORING PROCESS THROUGH REFLECTIVE PRACTICE (CAMERON, 2011: 6)

However, reflection is not enough for promoting learning and professional development. Unless acted upon, reflection without an action equals no development. So it is recommended that abstract conceptualization and active experimentation be utilized to plan what could be done differently next time as well as to implement changes. Researchers have identified that reflection is a difficult skill that needs to be explicitly taught and modelled (Baird & Winter, 2005); this is only possible in an environment that is safe, respectful and with confidentiality assured (Sumsion, 2000). Students and practitioners need to know why reflection is valued, be prepared for reflection and know what to reflection (Baird & Winter, 2005).

2.6.1. School-based mentorship in teaching practicum

Wong and Goh (2002), in a Singapore study, showed variations in the expectations from the student teachers and the support given by school-based mentors on the ground. Most student teachers had struggles translating the specialized course content to the teaching practicum experiences and attributed this to several arising factors from the different types of school settings in which they were assigned (Fry, Ketteridge & Marshall, 2009). Notable other factors were differences in the emphasized practices in the formal training course mismatching the actual practices in schools, unfamiliarity to the teaching settings and inadequate skills to connect content knowledge to pedagogical knowledge (Allsopp, DeMarie, Alvarez-McHatton & Doone, 2006).

By offering the student teachers professional knowledge, technical support and help to develop their own teaching style, school-based mentors allow student teachers to reflect on their own practice within the classroom setting (Black & Halliwell, 2000; Sanford & Hopper, 2000; Pajak, 2001). In addition, their university-based supervisors provide focused supervision, systematic observations and regular feedback (Hall, Murphy, Rutherford, & Ní Áingléis 2018). As the overall success of the professional practice unit, the practicum heavily depends on the positive relationship between these two parties (Graves 2010). Research in this area has mainly focused on identifying the roles of school-based mentors and the significance of their roles (Tauer, 1998; Rowley, 1999; Beck & Kosnik, 2000; Barnett & O'Mahony, 2005; Bray & Nettleton, 2007; Ambrosetti & Dekkers 2010; Graves 2010), features of optimal mentoring relationships (Jacobi 1991; Beck & Kosnik, 2002, Glenn 2006), student teacher and mentor teacher perceptions of their roles (Abell et al., 1995; Zanting et al., 2001; Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Draves, 2008) and tensions and conflicts in the student teacher-mentor teacher relationship (Martin et al., 2011; Patrick, 2013).

It has been discovered that school-based mentors struggle with their dual roles of

assessors and supporter, bringing a conflict of interest with their responsibilities. This impedes the outcome of student teacher feedback as the assessor role is poorly recognized. According to Mapolisa and Tshabalala (2014:20), school-based mentors play an important role in the success of the practicum for student teachers through a collaborative field experience which leads to skill and knowledge development as prospective teachers. Mentor teachers provide experiences with teaching that student teachers cannot receive by simply reading books from their courses. In addition, findings from a study conducted by Izadinia (2016) propose that student teachers need emotional and academic support from their mentor teachers. Because the student teacher practicum experience is a first experience with the teaching profession, they enter without confidence in their abilities to lead a classroom. Hence, mentors build student teacher confidence through encouragement and support, find their own way of teaching through mentor observation, and receive teaching strategies and constructive feedback from their mentor.

Yayli (2018:598) notes that the intrinsic attributes of mentor teachers influence their quality of communication with the student teachers. Their personality, for example, determines how well a student teacher can grow their identity as a teacher. Korhonen et al. (2017) state that mentors are expected to give personal, social and professional support to their mentees. Findings from this study display inadequate support from the mentors to help mentees grow personally, socially and professionally. Considering the multiple identities of the school-based mentorship role, research has emphasized the need for not only taking into considering their theoretical backgrounds but personality traits when assigned with mentees.

Atputhasamy (2005:9), studying the level of support and guidance student teachers receive from school-based mentors when assigned to teaching schools, reveals negative perceptions between the dyad. The results reveal, for instance, unpreparedness of the school-based mentors to sufficiently adjust to the added responsibilities of student teacher mentoring. The level of help provided by the

school-based mentors in the areas surveyed fall short of the expectations of the student teachers. Even in the evaluation and feedback on teaching, the core task of supervision, less than 60% of the student teachers reported that they received enough help. Some have argued that perhaps they are not clear about their roles in the partnership model in teacher education. Some problems may also rest with the lack of clear communication between the university and the schools. Overall, most student teachers rated their mentors low on support and guidance in teaching subjects, in their development of classroom management and motivation skills, and introducing them to the school policies and regulations.

Cohen et al. (2013:14) in respect to their studies on mentorship, have concluded that the fullest mentor-teacher activities are helping the student teachers through assimilation into school culture by nurturing, observing and evaluating. To do this, mentor-teachers demonstrate the teaching and learning process to the trainees through modelling, reflecting and mirroring. This helps student teachers get acquainted with their role. In this process, student teachers assimilate and imitate the behaviors of their mentors as they prepare for an evaluation of school-based attachment performance. Consequently as suggested by the South African Norms and Standards for Educators (Republic of South Africa,2000), teaching practice is meant to provide for the authentic context within which student teachers are exposed to experience the complexities and richness of the reality of being a teacher. This brings us to the concept of mentoring, in this case school based supervision.

2.7. Concept of assessment

Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning. Assessment guides the entire process of teaching and learning by providing mutual feedback to student teachers, school-based mentors and teacher educators to improve in their respective tasks (Sethusha, 2012:1). It covers the learning process (as summative assessment) and generates meaningful feedback to the learning process (as

formative assessment). Assessment, then, as typically enacted in initial teacher education, serves a dual role with both formative and summative purposes (Tillema, Smith & Lesham, 2011). Joughin (2009) refers to these as learning and judgement functions and identifies the challenge of balancing these different purposes.

With reference to practicum, assessment refers to strategies designed to confirm what student teachers know, to demonstrate whether they have met curriculum outcomes or the goals of their individualized programmes, or to certify proficiency and make decisions about future programmes or placement (Aspden, 2014:138).

Previously conducted studies on student teacher assessment on practicum has described the formative and summative assessments as an influence on a set of interpersonal relationships of the key participants (Haigh & Ell, 2014). In the triad meetings there is a joint focus on the formative and summative assessment. Formative assessment identifies the strengths of the student and areas for development whilst the summative determines the level to which the student teacher has met the institutional criteria and is eligible to pass the practicum.

Positive relationships are shown to minimise student teacher stress and to act as a buffer (Caires, Almeida & Vieira, 2012) to some of the identified challenges of practicum assessment. However, Brown and Danaher (2008) discovered that dissonance in expectation arises from the fact that each member of the triadic has different interests, both explicit and implicit, and that these interests are often to some extent in competition with each other. Caires, Almeida and Vieira (2012) discourage the emphasis on the roles and responsibilities of the triad but rather a shift to affective-relational elements of the student teacher-assessor relationships because student teacher demand for a positive relationship with their assessor is a defining characteristic of an effective practicum (Haigh, 2005). According to Bradbury and Koballa (2008), student teacher expectation is that they establish close relationships with their assessors both personally and professionally, as friendly, open and responsive. A lack of such relationships has resulted in student

teacher dissatisfaction and increased stress and frustration of the practicum. Brown and Danaher (2008:150) insist that student teachers should realise that seeking peaceful, productive relationships might not materialise all the time as the reality is that those involved in the practicum will have their own agenda and bias; dissonance and tension must be anticipated and then worked through.

Campbell-Evans and Maloney (1997:46) and Doxey (1996:5) believe that relationship contexts are significant in facilitating the best outcomes of positive relationships as they nurture openness in reflection, support the risk taking that leads to improvement, reduce student's anxiety and improve confidence and competence. According to Haigh (2005), the quality of the personal relationships as described by student teachers during practicum is more valuable than the professional competence of the school-based mentors as they help negotiate the terrain of teaching and assist student teachers in developing their professional identity. If the initial teacher education programme practicum component is to be effective and efficient, the triad must espouse a shared understanding of the roles and relationships they will be developing (Haigh, 2001:2).

2.7.1. Integrating the 8 Ps model of practicum in teaching practicum assessment

In relationship to student teacher experiences of teaching practicum, this study has adopted the 8 Ps model of teaching practicum. The theory provides the background that supports the investigation and offers a clear justification to the study as intricately linked to the research problem, including the variables the study intends to measure and the relationships the researcher seeks to understand. The model is clearly in line with the triad relationship which described the student teacher experiences of teaching practicum. Developed by Shulman (1986, 1987), 8 Ps highlights the importance of the performance-based assessment (PBA) which measures student ability to apply the skills and knowledge learned from previously studied theory.

The 8 Ps model has three conceptual segments (pre-practicum, formative assessment and summative assessment) of eight components. In the pre-practicum phase, student teachers attend to lessons in various subjects, observing the students' performance and participating in training activities (Elayyan, 2017:40) by accompanying the school-based mentors to their classrooms. Formative assessment consists of four methods: portfolio, project, peer-assessment and performance in the classroom. These methods form a cyclic relationship because each depends on the other and the students' work to achieve their standards over the practicum period. The portfolio measures student skills; it is a purposeful collection of student work that tells the story of the student's efforts, progress or achievement in a content area. The project is an opportunity for the students to self-study, to show their knowledge and their scientific practical abilities (Elayyan, 2017:41). Formative assessment is useful for the student teachers to know their advan

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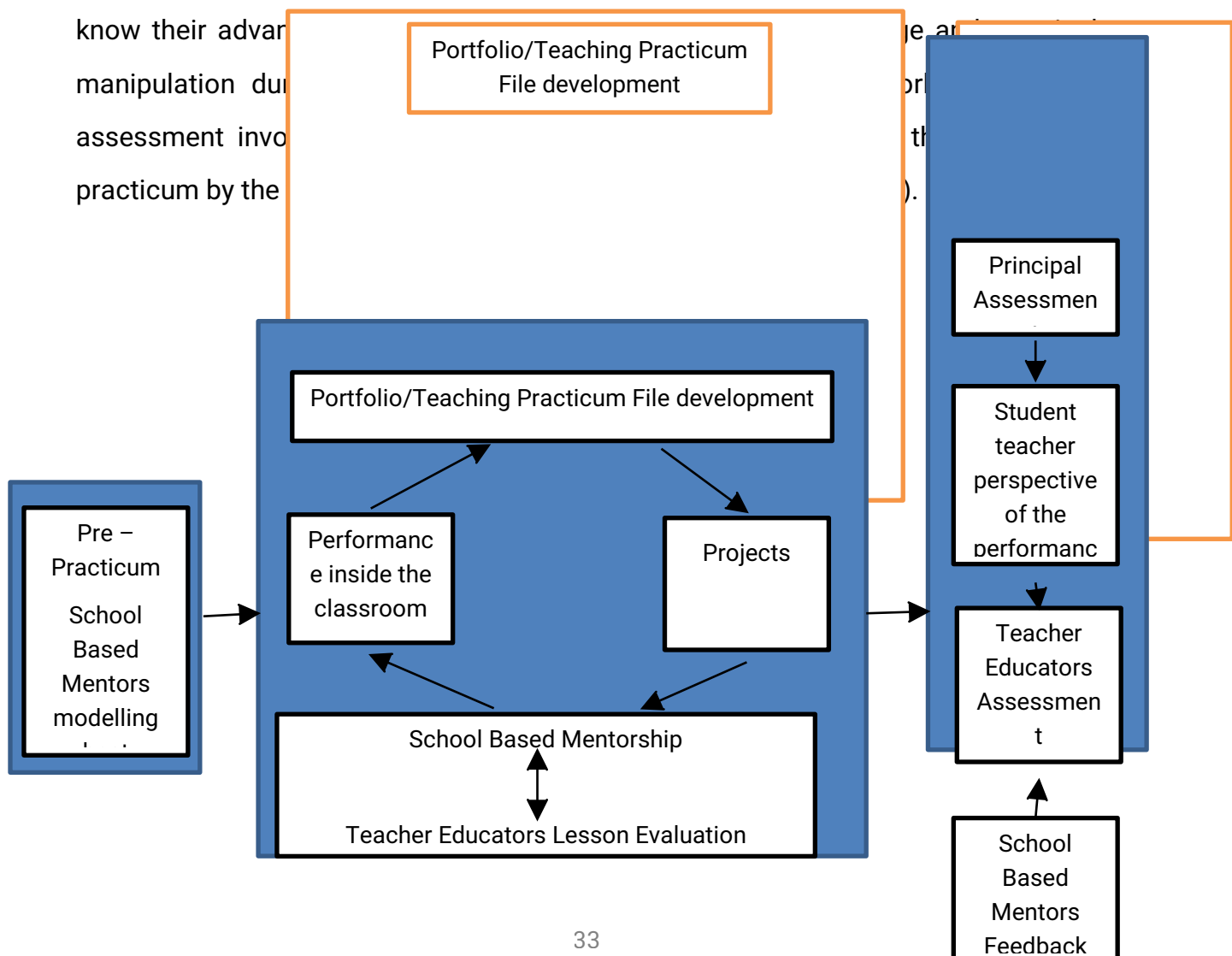
Phase 1   Phase 2

Phase 3

FIGURE 2.3: SHULMAN'S (1986, 1987) 8 PS MODEL OF PRACTICUM

2.7.2. Assessment in teaching practicum

Literature related to practicum typically focuses on the role of practicum in supporting the student teacher's development and growth through mentoring, induction and skill development. Yet assessment is integral to the practicum as well, utilised to determine progress, the need for support and guidance, and readiness to enter the teaching profession upon graduation (Musingafi, 2014:31-34). While on practicum, all initial teacher education student teachers are expected to meet the pass criteria determined by their teacher education provider in a set length of time. This provides the necessary minimum benchmark of acceptable teaching practice across all students.

According to Cheng et al. (2010), previous studies on the impact of teacher educators and school-based mentors in have concluded that the teacher educators should take authority in assessment of performance, helping the student teachers to put learning into practice. Darling-Hammond (2010) explains that this could be done by their involvement through their university-based teacher education programmes in designing meaningful early field experiences. Well-designed early teacher practicum experiences provide targeted feedback on student teacher performance using evaluation criteria aligned with those that will be encountered in subsequent teaching (Grossman, 2010; Poulou, 2007). It is expected that teacher educators meet their job responsibilities by visiting student teachers at the practicum site, observing lessons, and holding conferences to assist them

professionally grow. If student teachers are given such a platform, gain practice in applying standards to their teaching that encourage an active stance in the evaluation process, they should be able to incorporate self, as well as supervisor, evaluation early in their professional preparation programmes (Baecher, Kung, Jewkes & Rosalia 2013:11).

ACU (2014:5-7) claims that school-based staff have the prime role in the assessment of students while on placement. Their report indicates that the assessment role is debatable as it is based on the local partnerships to determine whether it should be given only to teachers or university staff embedded within schools or an authority. In New Zealand, for example, the school placement is underpinned by a partnership model between the initial teacher education provider and a fully registered associate teacher. Roles are made explicit, and throughout the experience, the student is actively supported to achieve the aims of the programme. Student teachers are assessed by the teacher educators in consultation with the school-based mentors (New Zealand Teacher Council, 2014).

2.7.3. Teaching practice and assessment as it is in South Africa

According to Westbrook et al. (2013) assessing student teacher performance to teach as an outcome of ITE programmes is an important priority to raise the quality of teaching and learning. As such, it is necessary to develop common methods of assessing prospective teacher readiness to teach. In South Africa, for example, transparent and teacher owned standards that connect what happens in the classroom and in the university to student learning are imperative (Sayed et al., 2018:263).

Whilst the assessment of practicum plays a critical role in determining student readiness to teach and the achievement of graduate standards, it is recommended that the programme must together elements of supportive guidance for the student, alongside judgements as to the achievement of expected competencies and

ultimately, gatekeeping into the profession of teaching (Aspden, 2017:128). The assessment of practicum relies heavily on the professional judgments of assessors.

2.7.4. Teaching practicum assessment roles and responsibilities

There are notable variations in the teaching practicum assessment procedures, tools and mentorship guidelines for HEIs. In the final year of the programme, visits are expected to last longer and be more frequent. To underline the importance of the partnership model of school placement, and to establish meaningful and genuine dialogue with the school-based mentor, the initial teacher education provider is required to provide a briefing on the focus and context of the practicum for the mentors involved in the practicum. A focus on working effectively with student teachers is required as part of this advice.

In Western Australia, the specific roles and responsibilities of the actors involved in School Placement can be found in the university handbooks which prescribe clear roles and responsibilities of all the stakeholders involved in the practicum. In Finland, the work of the supervisor draws on one's own profession as a teacher; on the aims that are striven for in the classroom, and on how the work takes place (Kalaja, 2012:56-79). In Singapore, feedback is offered by NIE supervisors, co-operating teachers, coordinating mentors, and other experienced teachers. Here, the provision of frequent formative feedback is at the heart the NIE practicum model.

2.8. Relationships within the teaching practicum

To assess the student teacher readiness to teach through social-constructivist paradigms of learning and teaching, scrutiny of power and hierarchy delineation issues develop in the roles within the triad relationships. This is because during

practicum, power and ownership are contested (Bloomfield 1997:27), shaping and determining the nature in which practicum is conducted under the jurisdiction of the institutions implementing the programmes. Through clear hierarchies of power, the roles and responsibilities of the triad members are defined (Hastings & Squires, 1999; Turnbull, 1999; Veal & Rikard, 1998).

According to Aspden (2014:8-9), the practicum triad comprises professional relationships that exists between school-based mentors, student teachers and teacher educators. In assessing student teacher readiness to teach, there is a shift from the dyad relationship between the student teachers and school-based mentors into a summative assessment which involves the teacher educators, school-based mentors and student teachers. For many years there has been an emphasis on the triad model to student teachers' assessment, whereby they are sent out to teaching schools for a long period of practicum experience and are allocated school-based mentors who support, guide and advise them on teaching and learning by observing them teach before teacher educators from the HEIs assess them (Grudnoff & Williams, 2010). Haigh and Ell (2014) note that the move to a triadic assessment model emerged from a   assessment and empower the individual participants in their different but complementary roles.
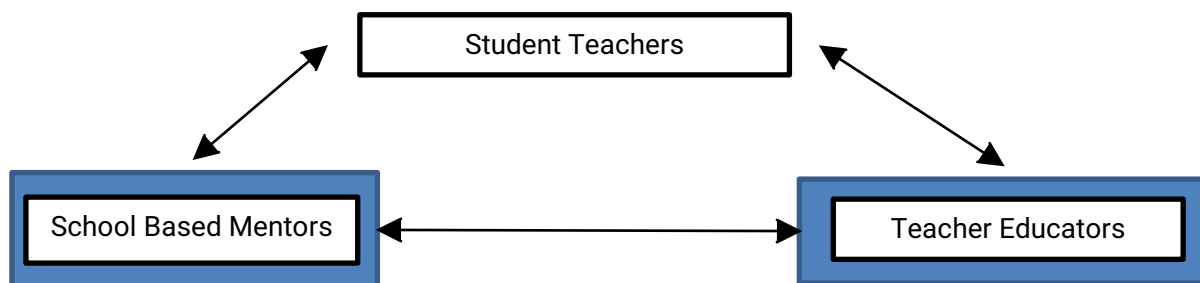
FIGURE 2.4: SCHOOL EXPERIENCE TRIAD

This figure shows that practicum is interdependent on the working relationship of the three parties.

Rodgers and Keil (2007) also recognise the role the traditional student supervision triad of student teacher, associate teacher and teacher educator in contributing to the assessment in different ways. Student teacher teaching professional journeys are supported by the relationships that exists between the triads by recognising their uniqueness (Field, 2002). Student teacher beliefs about themselves both personally and professionally are intensely illuminated during this time. Although the practicum is complex, the student teacher has multiple tasks: to show growth, to reflect, to observe, to build relationships, to link theory to practice and to demonstrate competence (Clift & Brady, 2005). The student must engage in practicum tasks, aware that they are frequently observed and assessed, and knowing that the outcome of assessment determines their progress in the programme of study, and ultimately, entry into the teaching profession.

The associate teacher role is reported as both rewarding and challenging (Beck & Kosnik, 2000). Haigh (2001:4) defines this role as the "subject competent, significant other and key partner for the student teacher". As the associate teacher has responsibility for supervising, mentoring and assessing the student during the practicum, the expectation is that the school-based mentor be a qualified and experienced teacher within the practicum setting and areas of specialties.

According to Haigh (2001), teacher educators are the final member to enter the triad relationship to represent the HEIs as assessors close to the completion of the practicum period. Their main roles are to support the student teachers in their growth and development as competent teachers whilst taking this opportunity to assess the competences acquired. However, their role is filled by a range of people: university lecturers or tutors; teachers from the sector who are appointed to visiting support roles; or designated assessors who may not hold another formal role in the teaching of the education programme (Cameron & Baker, 2004; Kane, 2005). The teacher educator serves as the intermediary between the student, teaching schools and higher education institution, and typically holds responsibility for summative assessment.

2.9. Role of university lectures/teacher educators in the teaching practicum

Gimbert and Nolan (2003) observed that college supervisors are of critical importance to the development of student teachers and typically fulfil a constructive, supervisory role in providing feedback to the student teachers. Further to this, Anderson and Radencich (2001) note that in the traditional perspective of practicum supervision, college supervisors periodically visit the student teaching site to observe and evaluate the teaching performances of student teachers. However, Slick (1997) argues that college supervisors are many times seen as outsiders who enter the classroom infrequently, and may be perceived as posing a threat to mentors and student teachers alike. The major weakness of supervision practices in traditional teaching practice is segmentation and isolation. The college gives students theories of teaching based on written literature, but when these student teachers go to their host schools for practicum, they receive traditional advice from experienced teachers. There is a barrier between teachers, colleges and schools.

Discoverable in literature is scarcity of research examining the perspectives of college supervisors, sparse and outdated in comparison to the literature on the other members of the triad (Brown & Steadman, 2011). In part, the absence of research on the work of university supervisors may reflect the tension that exists between the conceptual and pragmatic aspects of teacher education: teacher education classes often focus on theoretical aspects of teaching, while university supervisors often concentrate on the practical application of such theories. Silva and Dana (2001); Gimbert and Nolan (2003); Alger and Kopcha (2009); and Alger and Kopcha (2009) identify other challenges as ill-defined responsibilities and expectations for all individuals in the triad relationship and the lack of effective communication among them.

Brown and Steadman (2011), in their scholarly work, emphasise the need for college supervisors and mentor teachers to collaborate in preparing student teachers for

the varied challenges they will encounter in the classroom. This emphasis is based on research of teachers claiming that the most important elements in their professional education were the school experiences of the teaching practicum (Guyton & McIntyre, 1990). However, college supervisors are frequently pressed for time and limited in the time they can spend in the field observing, evaluating, and providing feedback due to other demands and responsibilities and service commitments (Anderson & Radencich, 2001).

It is thus argued that an effective teacher training programme is ensured when both the school and teacher education institution work in tandem. The major weakness of supervision practices in traditional teaching practice is segmentation: this poses problems for a student teacher who perceives a lack of coherence in the learning of two sites (Musingafi, 2014:35). The college presents theories of teaching based on written literature. When these student teachers go to their host schools for practicum, they receive traditional advice from experienced teachers. There is a barrier between teachers, colleges and schools. The initial teacher-training course involves student teachers trying to learn in different sites – colleges and schools – with two sets of personnel, a tutor and school mentor.

Practices in schools do not influence theories in colleges and theories in colleges are not fully welcomed in schools, hence, colleges and teaching schools conflict. Supervised students seem reticent to offer input into the supervision process but rather conform and accept the mentor/headmaster supervision model, and silently accept comments from college tutors without question; otherwise they risk mediocre grades. It is against such a situation that a mentorship and blended supervision model has been developed in many countries. Blended supervision is an interactive cyclical approach to supervision of student teachers premised upon what Cogan (1973) and Gold hammer (1969) espouse as reflective practice, collegiality and collaboration as cornerstones of any strategy which is likely to succeed in improving teaching.

The experiences would not be complete without interactions between student teachers themselves and their educators. In their research, Choy (2014), Haigh and Tuck (1999) and Hascher, Cocard and Moser (2004) found similarities in how teacher educators and student teachers value the school site-based learning experience as a vital part of teacher education. Student teachers regard it as a pivotal component of the initial teacher education programme whilst the teacher educators consider it as their key focus within the programme. According to Alexander and Galbraith (1997); Daresh (1990); Price (1987); and Wilson, Floden and Ferrini-Mundy (2002), literature is crowded with the benefits of teaching practicum in preparing student teachers for the realities of teaching in a real-school context.

2.10. Literature gaps in relationship to teaching practicum in initial teacher education programmes

Research methodologies influence the way in which data is gathered and determine the quality of data analysed in a study. There is no single previous research study which has relied on a semi-structure phenomenological case study to understand student teacher experiences of teaching practicum, or more specifically, with a multi-unit of analysis of school-based mentorship, practicum and assessment. Hence, this study has opted for a methodology which will allow interactive participation of student teachers in the research with multiple angles by which to study the experiences of the student teachers.

The environment in which mentorship and assessment takes place is fundamental for the student teacher growth and development. It is imperative that HEIs be considerate of this factor when allocating student teachers or the practicum. With careful engagement of scholarly work on student teacher experiences of practicum, the impact of teaching schools on practicum is included in this study.

There are previous research studies on practicum experiences of student teachers here in South Africa targeting PGCE, FET and even the B Ed foundation phase

programme, such as the studies of Sayed (2018:136-146), but only focusing on PGCE student teachers and school-based mentor experiences of practicum here in South Africa. The notable gap in the literature is this: a dearth of studies conducted with only 4th year B Ed foundation phase student teachers about teaching practicum experiences, whether in South Africa or anywhere else globally. The studies reviewed above have similar studies conducted for the 1st year - 3rd year, or the 3rd year only, and if for the 1st - 4th year, the study was not specifically with the B Ed foundation phase students but rather with subject specialties.

2.11. Chapter summary

This chapter introduced a conceptual framework guiding the study that underpins the theoretical models to mentorship and assessment and which interpret the actions of school-based mentors and teacher educators in teaching practicum mentorship and assessment. Relevant thematic areas to school-based mentorship and assessment in teaching practicum were intertwined to form a basis for understanding the student teacher perceptions of the practicum experiences. The next chapter discusses the research methodology of the study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the research methodology of this study. In particular, the research questions are framed in consideration of the research objectives. The chapter discusses the research methods, the research approach, the methods of data collection, the selection of the sample, validity and reliability, the research process, the type of data analysis, the ethical considerations and finally, the limitations of the project.

3.2. Research question

The main research question is: *What are student teacher experiences of the teaching practicum in an initial teacher education programme?*

The main research question will be answered through the two sub-questions below:

- *How do student teachers perceive the support provided by school-based mentors during the teaching practicum?*

- *What are perceptions of the student teachers of teacher educator assessment of their teaching practicum?*

3.3. Research design

Yin (2003:19) describes *research design* as an action plan for answering the research question under study, coordinating all the major parts of the study to address the research questions. This study deployed a qualitative approach to research. According to DeFranzo (2011), *qualitative research* accesses experiences; the concepts under study are refined as the research is conducted. This approach, flexible and inductive, was suitable for studying student teacher experiences of practicum; it focused on individual meaning and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation. Creswell (2014:234) establishes that human and social

problems are attached with meaning through qualitative research. Hence the choice of the approach was based on the purpose of finding meaning which each student teacher attaches to their experiences of practicum. This process of research involved data collected in the participant setting, data analysis building to general themes, and the researcher interpreting the meaning of the data.

According to Creswell (1998:51), a *phenomenological study* describes the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals about a concept or a phenomenon. Phenomenological enquiry requires that researchers eliminate any prior assumptions and personal biases, empathise with the participant's situation, and tune into existential dimensions of that situation, so that they can fully understand the deep structures that drives the conscious thinking, feeling, and behaviour of the studied participants. The concept of practicum in the programme has generated student teacher experiences which need to be studied as they were interviewed regarding the phenomena of interest (Aspers, 2004). Phenomenological strategies are particularly effective at bringing to the fore the experiences and perceptions of individuals from their own perspectives, and therefore challenging structural or normative assumptions (Lester, 1999). In this study the focus was on student teacher experience of practicum" in an initial teacher education programmes. Each student teacher's experience of practicum provided a clearer understanding on how school-based mentors guide, support and advise them as well as how teacher educators assess them during teaching practicum (Kafle, 2011:186). Student teacher interpretation of their practicum experiences constitute their reality and so potentially shape how they believe they were supported and assessed in their readiness to teach (McMillan, 2008:291).

3.4. Research sample & sampling techniques

Considering the depth to which the researcher would like to explore the phenomena

under study, both a non-probability strategy of purposive sampling and probability strategy of random sampling have been deployed. The B Ed foundation phase class of 2016-2019 who had completed and passed their teaching practicum were purposively selected for this study. The choice of the non-probability method for selecting the sample targeted a deliberate unit which reflected the outcome of the activities within the new initial teacher education curriculum programme – the experiences of school-based mentorship and teacher educator assessment of their practice Furthermore, the study purposively selected student teachers who had completed their teaching practicum and were in their final year of study (4th year).

The research study was conducted in one HEI in the Western Cape offering an initial teacher education programme in which student teachers are prepared through theoretical training before the actual exercise of the teaching practicum in the teaching schools. The choice of the site is based on the nature of the study, the composition of the sample, the work relationship already established with the institutions and the favourable environment which accommodated the time for data collection through a proper engagement with the sample. At the university, the researcher intended to interview the student teachers soon after their return from the teaching practicum in teaching schools. It is a diverse institution as it enrols students from different social classes, racial compositions and locations. The institution has adequately trained and qualified staff and administrators with world-class resources and infrastructure and diverse staff. The setting parameter for data collection varied: some students opted to be interviewed on the premise of the institution and others away, as they were graduating from the institution in the year of data collection.

The research population targeted in this research study was homogeneous: female student teachers in the B Ed foundation phase programme class of 2016-2019 who had completed and passed their practicum and had lived experiences of the school-based mentorship and assessment of their practice. While the targeted population comprised close to 100 student teachers, the study interviewed only ten

student teachers to understand their experiences as a representation to the whole. According to Bryman (2008:171), the simple random sampling procedures are probability samples having an equal probability of inclusion in the sample for each unit of under study. Even though random sampling is primarily used in quantitative sampling procedures, it is acceptable in qualitative research because it reduces bias (Miles, 2014:32). Considering the nature of qualitative studies and a need for smaller samples, the research study used a list of the 4th year B Ed foundation phase student teachers from the selected HEI, enrolled in the final year of the programme and had completed their teaching practicum between July-September, 2019. Of these, the researcher randomly selected ten student teachers.

Step One: Identify by a number all elements or sampling units in a

76 Student teachers

Step Two: Decide the sample size number

10 Student teachers

Step Three: Select the sample number using a table of random numbers
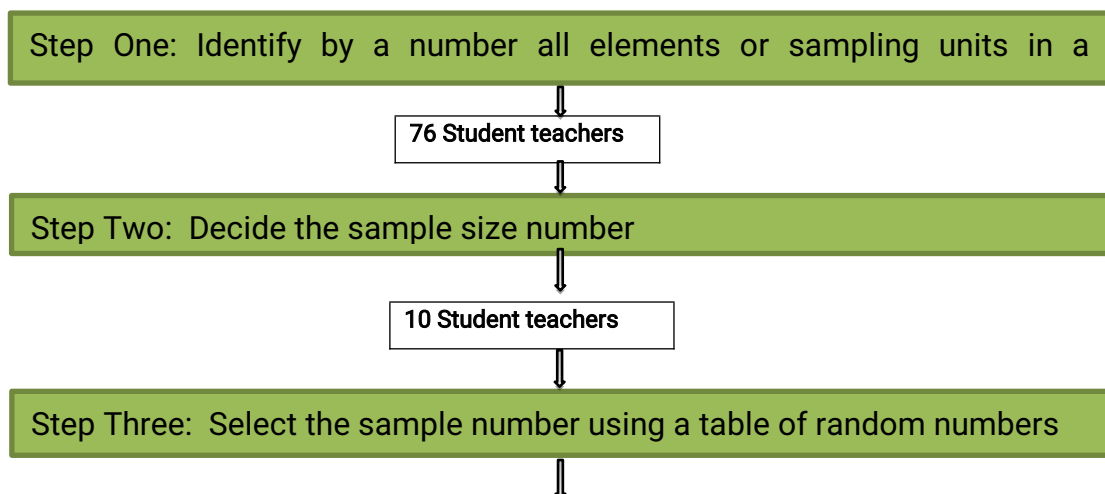
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2

3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Student Teacher 1	Student Teacher 2	Student Teacher 3	Student Teacher 4	Student Teacher 5	Student Teacher 6	Student Teacher 7	Student Teacher 8	Student Teacher 9	Student Teacher 10
6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10

TABLE 3.0: SIMPLE RANDOM SELECTION OF TEN STUDENT TEACHERS FROM A B ED FOUNDATION PHASE 4TH YEAR CLASS

3.5. Data collection methods and processes

Data collection refers to the process through which answers to the research problem are gathered, the research questions answered and the outcome from the participants evaluated (Dudovskiy, 2018). According to Kumar (2011:132), there are two major approaches to gathering information about a research problem: data is categorized into two groups of primary data sources and secondary data sources. During the research study, information is either collected or extracted from the already available sources which demarcates these two categories. In order to garner rich data of student teacher experiences, the study utilised both secondary and primary sources. Data of primary sources was collected through interviews. Interviews gather information on a person's knowledge, values, preferences and attitudes (Cohen & Manion, 2000, in Gray, 2009:370). At times, interviews are used in conjunction with other research techniques to follow up on earlier on studies and shows relationships with recent studies. The researcher analysed the available related literature on teaching practicum studies through analytical engagement with documents relevant to the research study. The scholarly work and document analysis shaped the study in terms of what is expected of these students during their practicum and what exactly the programme assesses.

FIGURE 3.2: METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION (KUMAR, 2011:132)

3.5.1 Semi-structured interviews

Interviewing has various definitions. Monette et al. (2010:156) defines interviewing as a process through which an interviewer reads out questions to the participants and in return records their responses. According to Burns (1997:329), interviews involve a verbal interchange with the intent of eliciting information, opinions and beliefs from the interviewee. The study employed the semi-structured interviews in obtaining data from the research participants as the researcher engaged with the student teachers with room allotted for reflection on their experience of assessment, support and guidance during the practicum by sharing strengths, areas for development, outcomes of summative assessment and factors that qualified them to pass the practicum Burns (1997:329) Interviewing is a powerful way of helping people to make explicit things that have hitherto been implicit, to articulate their tacit perceptions, feelings, and understandings. The use of semi-structured

interviews allowed the researcher to probe for more detailed and clarified responses (Gray, 2009:370-375) to elicit student teacher perceptions of support and guidance by school-based mentors and assessment by teacher educators during practicum.

Kumar (1999, 2005, 2011:144) indicates that the researcher in qualitative studies is positioned to decide on the format and content of the questions to be asked to the interviewee. In studying the student teacher experiences of the practicum, the research chose open-ended questions as the researcher could shift the order of questions and insert additional questions as issues emerged (Gray, 2009:373). The interviews were scheduled to take up to 60-90 minutes depending on the issues arising from the discussions. However, for validity purposes, the researcher ensured each question adhered to the research objectives. The researcher prompted student teachers to illustrate and expand on their initial responses whilst making sure to sufficiently understand their experiences of practicum.

Before each interview, the researcher explained to the interviewee the purpose of the study and the expectations as a participant in the study.

3.5.2 Interview data transcription

Transcription is the action of providing a written account of spoken words. In qualitative research, transcription is conducted of individual or group interviews and generally written verbatim.

Before transcription, the researcher organised, and prepared data collected from the student teachers for analysis. The researcher then transcribed student teacher interviews, scanning the materials, typing up of field notes, cataloguing of all visual material, sorting and arranging data from the biographical forms and semi-structured interviews and document analysis into different types (Creswell, 2014:247).

3.5.3 Piloting of the interview schedule and bio data forms

Before the actual research study, the researcher collected data using the interview schedule and bio data form created from five student teachers as a representation of the fuller sample. The intention was to discover potential problems in understanding the way a question has been worded, the appropriateness of the meaning it communicates, whether different respondents interpret a question differently and to establish whether their interpretation is different to what the researcher intends to convey (Kumar, 2011:158). After the procedure, according to responses, the researcher addressed the challenges to obtain the right information during the actual data collection. The interview schedule was reviewed based on research objectives and designed to ask interviewees questions starting with simple themes to complex ones.

3.5.4 Document data collection

Document analysis, a social research method, is an important research tool, an invaluable part of most schemes of triangulation, the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon (Bowen, 2009:27-28).

The researcher analysed approximately 50 relevant documents and academic journals to structure the literature review and research findings in accordance to the fundamentals of school-based mentorship and assessment in a teaching practicum. On top of these documents were the existing education policies, CAPs policies and procedures, including performance appraisal documents and a student teachers' handbook for teaching practicum. The researcher engaged in a comprehensive process of data coding and identification of themes from the selected documents.

These were supported by an analysis of assessment, support and guidance documentation. The assessment documentation included the teaching practicum files and bio data forms which shared student teacher reflections and provides deeper understanding of the institutional requirements, the nature of feedback, and

the way in which assessment outcomes were reached and communicated to the student teacher (refer Appendix C & E Pages: 28 & 31).

3.6.   Data analysis

Qualitative data collected on the student teacher experiences of practicum from a university offering an initial teacher education programme was analysed considering the research questions and the established framework of the study. Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) is the range of processes and procedures whereby the researcher moves from the qualitative data collected into some form of explanation, understanding or interpretation of the people and situations under investigation (Yayli, 2005:595). The analysis examines the meaningful and symbolic content of qualitative data based on an interpretative philosophy (Babbie, 2007:100); hence, comparative analysis of the quotations from student teachers on experiences of practicum provided a basis for a narrative on the encounters with mentors and teacher educators. The researcher attempted to identify how these student teachers interpret the teaching practicum component of their initial teacher education programme, how they felt about the school-based mentor support and guidance, how they were assessed by teacher educators from the teacher education institutions, and how they assessed themselves in terms of the programme at the end of the practicum.

Research findings are interpreted through the data analysis process, an important phase of research (Seidman, 1998). According to Creswell (2014:180), researchers analyse data fresh from the collection site, in this case at the university of study, and in qualitative research the procedures run concurrently with a write up of the results and the documentation of the narrative account in the final report.

This study used content and thematic analysis methods of analysing data from the semi-structured in-depth interviews with student teacher. Content analysis studies lived experiences, attitudes focusing on who said what, to whom, how and why

(Babbie, 2007). Phenomenological research uses the analysis of significant statements, the generation of meaning units, and the development of what Moustakas (1994) calls an essence description (Creswell, 2014:246). This research study used inductive methods to analysing interview transcripts. The choice of the thematic and content analysis was to find common patterns across the data set: "In general, the intent was to make sense out of text and image data. It involved segmenting and taking apart the data as well as putting it back together" (Creswell, 2014:245).

In this case, data collected from the population of study was transcribed and patterns of teacher practice experiences about support provided by mentors and teacher educator assessment were identified and analysed. The qualitative codes were obtained through content analysis, these codes relating to the emerging themes based on the research objectives and questions guiding the study (Creswell, 2004, 2014). Rossman and Rallis (2012) define *coding* as the process by which meanings are attached to text data, pictures gathered during data collection through labelling, categorising and organising the data using clear language. Through coding, themes for analysis were generated; these formed headings in the findings section of studies and were substantiated with scholarly literature and other relevant documents in the study (Creswell, 2014:198).

In terms of student teacher experiences of practicum, the analysis of the content concluded with their transition to the content (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). At this final step in data analysis, the researcher interpreted the findings based on personal interpretation and experiences and comparing the findings with information gleaned from the literature.

According to Creswell (2014:249), the researchers use a theoretical lens to form interpretations that call for action agendas for reform and change. During the presentation of the student teacher experiences of school-based mentorship and teacher educator assessment, the narrative outcome was compared with theories

and literature on the topic.

Questions	Sample	Data Collection	Data Analysis
How do student teachers perceive the support provided by school-based mentors during teaching practicum?	Student teachers	Semi-structured in-depth interviews	Content & thematic Analysis
How do student teachers perceive teacher educator assessment of their teaching practicum?	Student teachers	Semi-structured in-depth interviews	Content & thematic Analysis

3.7.   Research trustworthiness

According to Polit and Hungler (1996:312), research *trustworthiness* establishes reliability and validity in qualitative research. *Validity* is the ability of an instrument to measure what it is designed to measure (Kumar, 2011:178). To ensure validity in this study the researcher ensured a logical link between the questions and the objectives of the study.

Reliability refers to the condition where the research instrument has a similar meaning through consistency, stability, predictability and accuracy (Kumar, 2011:181). The validity to research findings is usually addressed by credibility, authenticity and trustworthiness: the accuracy of the data gathered is conformed from angles of the researcher, participant and the reader. To make sure this is conformed, the researcher engages with the sample by sending the transcripts for confirmation that information was recorded rightly; room for additional information is given.

To attain trustworthiness in the research findings, the following measures were

deployed: triangulation, use of member checks, use of the rich thick description, clarification on the bias the researcher brings to the study, presentation of the negative or discrepant information that runs counter to the themes, prolonged time in the field, use of peer debriefing to enhance the accuracy of the account, use of an external auditor to review the entire project, check of transcripts to eliminate mistakes during transcription and a check to avoid a drift of definition of codes, a shift in the meaning of the codes during the process of coding.

Collected data from the selected sources were triangulated. Student teacher experiences of teaching practicum were triangulated through biographical data forms, interview schedules and evaluation of the teaching practicum files. The sources were examined to approve the evidence in provision with the intent of building a coherent justification for themes. With themes developing from multiple sources and perspectives, study validity was reached (Creswell, 2014:246).

The researcher considered all negative or discrepant information that runs counter to the themes: by presenting this contradictory evidence, the account became more realistic and more valid (Creswell, 2014;253). The more experience a researcher has with participants in their settings, the more accurate or valid will be the findings. Consequently, the researcher kept in touch with the student teachers throughout the study to maintain an in-depth understanding of their practicum experiences whilst building credibility to the narrative account. Moreover, peer involvement in debriefing allowed for a check of accuracy of transcription, the relationship between the research questions and data, the level of data analysis from the raw data through interpretation, and enhanced the overall validity of the qualitative study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3.8.   Researcher positionality

According to Glaser and Strauss (1967, in Gray, 2009:182-183) and Strauss and Corbin (1990), researchers must adopt a stance of theoretical sensitivity, bias

sensitivity and reflexive sensitivity. During this study, the researcher was a data collection instrument as the researcher collects data by examining documents, observing behaviour or interviewing participants (Creswell, 2014:234). Other notable roles of the researcher include taking notes and deciding which topics to record, how to set up the agenda for the data collection, the type of the questions for data collection and how the questions are asked (Kumar, 2011:104). The researcher further drives analysis procedures by determining which theories are favourable for the predetermined method of data analysis. Furthermore, the researcher makes sure that data is analysed based on the research questions by linking the methods chosen to the type of analysis rationale applied to the study.

For this study, the researcher played multiple roles but assumed a neutral stance. During data collection, the researcher was the main instrument of collection and assumed the roles of interviewer and facilitator in the semi-structured interviews (Gray, 2009:323).

3.9. Research ethics

Ethical means in accordance with principles of conduct that are considered correct, especially those of a given profession or group. Ethical consideration is vital in both quantitative and qualitative studies. In terms of student teacher experiences of practicum, the researcher was thoughtful of the student teachers as the main participants, as they were informants to this enquiry, the researcher herself taking into consideration their role in collecting information for the specific purpose of understanding, consolidating, and enhancing professional knowledge in teacher education programmes.

The researcher secured ethical consent from the university offering an initial teacher education programme to collect data from the student teachers under study. Bailey (1978:384) stipulates that it is a requirement that the research participants be knowledgeable of the information being sought through consent

forms on which both the researcher and the participants bears signatures.

In addition to consent from the student teachers prior to research data collection, anonymity was maintained with no participants named. The information collected was intended only for this study and was kept privately. Confidentiality was maintained throughout and no adjustments were made by the researcher to the information collected. To ensure true representation and avoidance of misinformation, the researcher used a tape recorder to collect qualitative data.

3.10. Limitations

There are several limitations to this research. The methodology was designed to obtain information directly from the student teachers on their experiences during teaching practicum in an initial teacher education programme; it is not quantifiable or statistically justifiable as no figures were used. There was likelihood that the student teachers might be challenged to rate their own teacher educators and mentors because these are the people charged with responsibility to analyse the student teachers. More importantly, the methodology of the study involves only semi-structured questions targeting student teachers and no perspectives were sought from teacher educators or school-based mentors. The researcher anticipated limitations to the study methodology: it was not possible to control the student teacher responses to the questions as their understanding varied, and secondly, not all of them were aware of the exact competencies the teacher educators assess in or what exact support the mentors are supposed to give. So, it is uncertain whether or not they are able to adequately judge their teacher educators and school-based mentors.

3.11. Chapter summary

The chapter focused on the research design and methodology used in the study. It elaborates the characteristics of a qualitative methodology, followed by an

explanation for the adoption of this approach. This chapter discusses in detail the research philosophy, data collection procedures, research instruments, the unit of analysis and the methods used for data analysis, including issues of integrity and trustworthiness. The next chapter discusses the study findings.

CHAPTER 4:

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS: SCHOOL-BASED MENTORSHIP

4.1.   Introduction

The previous chapter presented the research approach, research design and methods used in this study. This chapter presents the findings of this study which seeks to understand student teacher experiences of the school-based mentorship practicum in an initial teacher education programme in the Western Cape. The study engaged with a sample of ten student teachers (10) who yielded to the data under analysis. Participants to the research study were addressed based on their role and number in participation. The student teachers were referred to as Student Teacher 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10.

Data on student teacher experiences was generated through three systematic means:

- Biographical data such as gender, age, programme of study, year of study, components of the programme of study, race, B Ed foundation phase programme study information, teaching practicum file information, available documentation and components.

- Semi-structured interviews seeking their experiences on school-based mentor support and teacher educator assessment during teaching practicum.

- Evaluation of the teaching practicum file (known as Portfolio and Teaching Practicum Handbook) to substantiate information on how the student teachers were mentored and assessed during the practicum.

4.2.   Teacher biographical data summary

In order to better understand student teacher experiences of school-based

mentorship and the teacher educator assessment, prior to the semi-structured interview and document evaluation, data was collected from biographical forms requesting participant gender, age, race, programme of study, year of study, and components of the programme of study. The ten student teachers were selected to participate in this study out of a 4th year B Ed foundation phase classroom comprising 76 female student teachers. The whole classroom had an age range of 21-52, with the ages of the selected ten student teachers ranging from 21-40. All ten selected student teachers had completed their practicum upon collection of the bio data information. There were race variations with the student teachers: white (1), coloured (7), Asian (2) and zero (0) black student teachers participated in the study. There were variations with the assigned schools: most had been assigned by the university of the programme under study or had selected state owned ordinary public schools (5), while others opted for private primary schools (3) and two participants went to Catholic schools. These schools were not resourced the same in terms of capacities and materials because they are differently accredited and managed.

4.3. Student-teacher perceptions of the support, guidance and advice from mentors and their schools during their teaching practice experiences

With the intent of gathering data on the student teachers' school-based mentorship experiences and school support in the teaching practicum, the study examined the following aspects: their descriptions of the nature of support, guidance and advice received from the school-based mentors during the school attachment. The student teachers were asked to explain the roles the school-based mentors had played in the transitioning from theoretical knowledge to practice, which competencies were of focus and cultivated through guidance and support; their relationship with the school-based mentors during teaching practicum; the kind of support and guidance received from school-based mentors; the learning opportunities and challenges to the support and guidance from the school-based mentors; and the value the

school-based mentorship in their journey to become professionals.

4.3.1. Nature of school-based mentorship

Mentors – practicing teachers who are formally involved in teacher training in a school setting –are a significant influence in the outcome of any teacher training provision (Hobson et al., 2009). With teacher training becoming increasingly focused on schools, the role of the mentor and the nature of the mentoring provided are central elements of the teacher training experience. With reference to this study, when student teachers were asked to describe encounters of the nature of their mentorship experiences, mixed responses emerged, showing differences and commonalities in the support, guidance and advice during the teaching practicum. The student teachers classified the mentorship experiences as inductive, supervisory, reflective, offering feedback and ongoing support, developing, assessing, providing independent practice, allowing for observations, and overall, an opportunity for team teaching and as a source of open communication.

4.3.1.1.   Induction/initiation to the school culture and its environment

The Vanderbilt University Practicum Handbook (2009:12) stipulates that the university supervisor will contact the mentor teacher and practicum student to set up an orientation meeting before the actual start of the formative processes of assessment. The purpose of this meeting is to provide a time for the mentor teacher, practicum student and university supervisor to become acquainted and to discuss timelines and expectations. According to Conway et al. (2002), and induction programme includes orientation to the school culture, resources and professional development specific to beginner teachers.

In terms of such a meeting, Student Teacher 2 said,

> *Not actually with the teacher educators around, but it was only me and*
> *my school-based mentors. She briefed me on what was expected of*
> *me during the school-based experiences and made sure that she was*

> *assisting me in gathering the required materials for the programme;*
> *she elaborated on what was supposed to be done before and after*
> *each of my lessons … and for each of my evaluation visits by the*
> *teacher educators.* (St 2, 20/09/2019)

This feedback from the student teacher supports the value of school-based mentors with readiness to assist and support for student teachers.   4⊠3.7⊠3.7

According to Aspden (2014:33), school-based mentors should explain to student teachers during the induction processes that practicum is not only a site of learning but the context for assessment within a teaching environment with increasing requirements for accountability as a gatekeeper to the teaching profession. The mentor teacher should ensure that the practicum student is oriented to the school facilities, routines, rules, policies and available resources. During this process, the student teachers are acquainted with the community in which they will work.

Student Teacher 9 added,

> *I received a lot of help from the principal and admin staff. I was given*
> *the key to the lab to make and print resources as well as free access*
> *to the copy room to make copies as I please. Since my tutor teacher*
> *(mentor) was the deputy principal, she was not always around to give*
> *input, but she would always give me tips on lessons … I had access to*
> *all resources.* (St 9, 24/01 /2020)

Unlike Student Teacher 2, Student Teacher 9 was inducted to administrative duties and the culture of the school in addition to the expected classroom practicum experiences. Many studies have determined that student teachers develop their professional identity through relationships with staff (Brown, Doecke & Loughran 1997; Hargreaves, 1995), and that student teachers, as powerless newcomers, have an overriding need for security and inclusion in the school community (McNally et al.,1994; Zeichner & Gore,1990). Research also indicates that the institutional environment has a profound impact on teachers' professional development (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2002; Vulliamy & Yeh, 1998; Wu, 1998), and that teaching tasks, student behaviour, school culture and occupational culture operate powerfully to affect teachers' thinking and practice (Zeichner, Tabachnik &

Densmore, 1987).

Student Teacher 5 affirmed,

> *Yes, we were given certain documentation of what is expected of us during the teaching practicum and in fact inclusive was a section on the development of our teaching practicum files. (St 5,14/10/2019)*

Amongst the evaluated components of practicum are teaching portfolio development skills. Student Teacher 5 was introduced to the concept with the relevant documentation to assist in its development. Wayne, Young and Fleischman (2005) emphasise that schools must ensure student teachers ease into teaching and that they are given a comprehensive induction package.

Student Teacher 7 acknowledged her mentor's role in introducing her to the school environment:

> *… a vital role as they have more experience and know the learners better.* (St 7, 30/01/2020)

According to Mudzielwana and Maphosa (2014:7), school-based mentors are significant in exposing the student teachers to learner diversity. Student teachers are required to know their learners and plan their lessons and practices to meet learner needs. Some learners might have learning barriers, others emotional problems: mentors must show ways to deal with children with emotional problems and how to identify and assist learners with special needs.

4.3.1.2.   Supervisory

Literature on school-based mentorship emphasises the impact of supervision on student teacher experiences of practicum. Although practicum students gradually take over planning and teaching responsibilities, they are to remain under the supervision of their mentor teacher and are not to be left alone with classroom students without authorized school personnel (Department of Special Education. 2009. Vanderbilt University Practicum Handbook Comprehensive Program, 2009:11).

Student Teacher 5 received supervisory feedback during a practicum lesson:

> *Always remember that with the little ones, it is at of upmost importance that they are not fidgeting or doing anything else whilst you are busy as to keep their 100% focus.* (St 5,14/10/2019)

This underscores the supervisory role of mentors and that mentors always be available in the classroom as student teachers are learning how to teach; they should train to overcome weak areas before they finish the experiences, rather than just ticking out the expected areas of competency development without the actual supervision process during their teaching and learning process.

4.3.1.3.   Professional growth and development

Although professional growth and development of student teachers is perceived as a daunting responsibility, some school-based mentors assisted the student teachers as potential, capable graduating teachers, whilst others were challenged to meet the expected standards for developing a student teacher into a qualified educator.

Student Teacher 1 shared her practicum journey,

> *During my first couple years … there was almost no support. The teachers would either leave the classroom or do their own work. I very seldom got feedback. It was either that scenario or the teacher would interrupt me constantly. During my most recent teaching practicum, the teacher was incredibly supportive. She would watch my lessons and take down notes as feedback and then discuss it with me afterwards.* (St 1, 11/11/2019)

This shows the need for supportive school-based mentors who are willing to be a present part of a student teacher journey to qualify to teach. But with limited capacities within schools and inadequate skills and knowledge, occasionally student teachers are not exposed to the expected standards and this consequently

impinges on their professional growth and development. The mentor teacher has the greatest influence on the development of the student teacher as a teaching professional.

Student Teacher 6 showed appreciation this we:

> *My entire teaching experience for fourth year has been extremely beneficial to my growth, not just as novice teacher but also as a person … my mentor teacher being the main part of my growth as I learnt some very valuable classroom strategies. She had made a tremendous impression on me and made a tremendous contribution to my confidence now as a teacher, because I have learnt a lot from her.* (St 6,12/01/2020)

It is agreed that school-based mentorship provides an environment for the integration of practical skills and theoretical knowledge in the initial teacher education programmes. In circumstances lacking a connection between these two, school-based mentors must create an interactive platform with the student teachers for them to gain a deeper understanding of how practicum interacts with the university coursework (McNamara, 2013:184).

Student Teacher 2 received positive feedback from her mentor:

> *Making and presenting great lesson plans, having a positive attitude and being eager, keep up the good work.* (St 2, 20/09/2019)

School-based mentors, as revealed in this student teacher's practicum file, provided positive, encouraging feedback. Student teachers need to know how their lessons went, focus attention on points they may have missed, have accomplishments praised, with occasionally constructive criticism with suggestions for improvement (Spear, Lock & McCulloch, 1997:10).

4.3.1.4. Reflection

Hutchinson (1982, in Turner, 2006:38) proposes that school-based mentors also act as research supervisor, enabling and encouraging reflection *in action* and *on action*.

This idea was supported through one special feature of the teaching practicum: student teacher maintenance of a teaching portfolio. The objective was to gather evidence of their learning and professional growth from the practicum and record their experiences. All materials, including drafts, had to be arranged in the portfolio chronologically to demonstrate growth over time. Portfolios are also valuable because they serve as a measure of writing ability and so are inherently meaningful.

Student Teacher 1 reflected in in her practicum file,

> *While this is a job that requires constant reflection, I will no longer sit up at 9 pm typing out endless reflections; I will reflect in action, and do the absolute best that I can in order to be the best teacher while those children are in my classroom. Other than that, I will switch off when I leave the school building and focus on my family and myself.* (St 1,11/11/2019)

This student teacher resorted to ensuring maximum use of the mentorship reflection during the actual lesson presentation in the classroom. Student teacher attitudes, beliefs and approaches towards their practical experience greatly influences what is learnt from their experiences and their vision of teaching (Naylor, Campbell-Evans & Maloney, 2015).

Student Teacher 3 appreciated her mentor,

> *The support and guidance from my mentor teacher were positive. She was accommodating and gave me the control of her classroom whether it was the layout of the classroom or teaching learners in a specific way. She assisted me in every way with my campus paperwork and helping to plan my lessons.* (St 3,11/11/2019)

Reflections on these student teacher practicum experiences are of value for the identification of the nature of these intensive pedagogical programmes and the special needs of student teachers (Mirici & Ölmez-Çağlar, 2017:13). Reflection involves more than describing what has happened and thinking it through. It is a contextual processing activity related to imagining a way forwards or a conscious attempt to learn from what has happened in the past (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005;

Klemp, 2013).

4.3.1.5.   Mentoring

Mentoring is the process through which an experienced teacher appointed by the university to supervise student teachers on school-based practice takes charge of developing their skills and knowledge by modelling practice. The expectation is that school-based mentors be proactive senior colleague actively training new teachers without an evaluative role (Godley, 1987; Heath-Camp & Camp, 1990). Mentoring roles include demonstrating teaching and management techniques, peer supervising, observing and giving feedback, advising on curriculum management, helping with lessons and long-term planning, supervising classroom research and encouraging reflective (Andrews, 1985).

In her practicum file, Student Teacher 1 indicated this,

> *My tutor teacher went out of her way to show me all her files and explain in-depth about all of the admin and pedagogies that my university failed to prepare me for… or even inform me about. It made me realise just how little I knew about the field that I was stepping into.* (St 1, 11/11/2019)

A Reflective Guide to Mentoring and Being a Teacher Mentor by Ed Partnerships International (2014:9) perceives the mentoring process as an opportunity for growth for both the school-based mentor and the student teacher. In the manual, they state several benefits from the mentoring processes: deep, practical knowledge, both pedagogical content and experience, a rewarding and mutually beneficial aspect of effective mentoring. Supporting this notion is the Vanderbilt University Practicum Handbook Comprehensive Program (2009:11) which indicates that school-based mentors must prepare students for the practicum, explaining the student's role in the classroom and setting expectations for the students.

Student Teacher 10 showed that her mentor did this:

> *She showed me all her files and explained how I gather information and file it*

correctly. (St 10,28/01/2020)

Schools represent a natural meeting place for establishing mentoring programmes which benefit from structure, support, resources, supervision and ease of access for both the mentee and mentor (Bell-Cairns, 2017:3).

4.3.1.6.   Independent practice/observation

As student teachers gain the confidence to implement instructional strategies independently, they welcome observation and feedback. Padua (2003) proposes that mentor teachers should make prior arrangements for observations to ensure that student teachers are not made uncomfortable by them. By discussing the goals of both the lesson and the observation in advance, mentor teachers can respond sensitively to student teacher concerns and needs.

According to Student Teacher 3,

> *The support and guidance from my mentor teacher were positive. She was accommodating and gave me the control of her classroom whether it was the layout of the classroom or teaching learners in a specific way. She assisted me in every way with my campus paperwork and helping to plan my lessons.* (St 3,11/11/2019)

Mentors play an invaluable role in supporting the process when they ensure adequate follow up after the session, involving a reflective and analytical conversation. Mudzielwana and Maphosa (2014:28) suggest purpose, structure, focus, documentation and reflection on classroom observation as negotiated with the student teacher beforehand during practicum, as one way of support is by allowing them to teach independently and observing them teaching. This is a powerful strategy for ongoing professional learning. When the observation and reflection processes have been carefully designed and facilitated, student teachers gain insight about the teaching and learning process, and more significantly, necessary skills and knowledge for competence.

4.3.1.7.   Team teaching

Padua (2003) argues that team teaching techniques work especially well with student teachers who are not completely confident but willing to try new strategies. The student teacher leads the lesson, but the mentor teacher is alongside, ready to give advice and assistance. In this context, risk taking is less intimidating. In team teaching, the school-based mentors and student teachers plan together to enrich the experiences, focusing on different ways to organise activities and design new and effective strategies for class development, class management and integration of topics, taking into account individual experiences.

Student Teacher 1 commented on team-teaching,

> *My mentor teacher gets in between my lessons when am not doing well. She stops me, takes the lesson and model it to me then allows me to re do it again and she observes me teaching.* (St 1,11/11/ 2019)

In similar studies on how school-based mentorship works through team teaching, Arregui, Perez and Garcia (2009) and Tillemma (2000) found that this approach demonstrated multiple gains and effective ways of performing teaching tasks, acknowledging achievements during mentoring and teaching practice. Team teaching allows both school-based mentors and student teachers a platform for dialogue where more powerful experiences are shared in different forms. The school-based mentors engage in team teaching and team planning with the student teachers and they both observe each other's practice and learn from each other.

Student Teacher 5, however, shared these experiences,

> *They have also given me great feedback on the lesson that I have taught, which I have been able to use to improve on my teaching, however I am not comfortable with the way they have rated me on my research on the topic. I feel the school-based mentor has not been fair with me.* (St 5, 14/10 2019)

Some research on school-based mentorship feedback to student teachers shows that in instances when feedback to the student teacher is not useful, both parties

may feel frustrated and tensions might run high; it is only when things are working well that a mentoring relationship is interactive and meaningful (Maynard, 2000; Hobson, 2002). But according to Izadinia (2016:394) and Bradbury and Koballa Jr (2008), although communication is an important factor in a positive mentoring relationship, it is normal to have tensions arising in interactions between student teachers and mentor teachers when things are not going on well.

Student Teacher 6 had only a short comment about her mentor's feedback:

> *It was quite good and helpful.* (St 6,12/01/2019)

Student teachers had high regard for feedback, viewing it as an essential aspect of the practicum experience, although Caires and Almeida (2009) found in some studies that feedback was not regarded as significant, constructive or clear. Generally, however, most student teachers valued feedback and suggested that a significant amount of feedback be dispensed during practicum. They hinted that they appreciated feedback because their mentors had a good understanding of the position, and offered practical advice and professional tips.

4.3.1.8.   Assessor

Dishena (2014:49) realises the role school-based mentorship plays in evaluating the performance of student teachers; such programmes operating under state mandate and are primarily evaluative in nature, but evaluation is combined with limited assistance. Student teachers are required to demonstrate the mastery of specified teaching competencies to receive a permanent teaching certificate. However, Mudzielwana and Maphosa (2014:8) do not support the idea of mentors evaluating the performance of the student teachers, arguing instead that school-based mentors take a neutral stance and only support and guide the student teachers, leaving the role of performance evaluation to summative evaluators.

Student Teacher 1's practicum file contained notes on assessment of her performance:

> *Very good preparation. Excellent class management. Shows lovely patience with the children.* (St 1,11/11/ 2019)

The school-based mentors focused on a number of aspects when evaluating the student teachers: preparation of the student teacher lessons; research on the topic to be taught; and presentation of lesson to meet learner needs. In terms of classroom management, the school-based mentors looked for how the class is arranged to suit the learning; how the student teacher engages the learners in the teaching and learning process; and how the student teachers ensure that learners are kept busy and minimise behaviour issues.

Student Teacher 8 received positive feedback from her school-based mentor,

> *You are a focused student who plans her lessons very well, you manage your classroom in accordance, and you give children the impression that you are part of the group you are teaching.* (St 8,20/09/2019)

Constructive feedback in initial teacher education programmes is a vital ingredient of the mentoring process. Feedback allows student teachers to reflect to improve teaching practice, in what Schon (1987:157) calls the "reflective practicum". Specifically, school-based mentors must observe practice to generate oral and written feedback on aspects associated with the mentor's pedagogical knowledge (Ganser, 1995; Rosean & Lindquist, 1992), which also includes reviewing plans (Monk & Dillon, 1995) and assisting in developing the student teacher's evaluation of teaching (Long, 1995).

Student Teacher 1 praised her school-based mentor's feedback:

> *My tutor teacher was amazing. This was the first time that I received a tutor teacher who really invested into me. She sat with me every day and spoke to me about what I could improve on. She gave me tips. We WhatsApped back and forth with lesson ideas. It was amazing.* (St 1,11/11/2019)

Linked to the provision of feedback is the school-based mentor's articulation of expectations (Klug & Salzman, 1990). Whether mentor teachers are demonstrating,

team teaching, or observing, all these techniques should be followed up with timely feedback. Like learners, student teachers thrive from support and feedback, celebrating successes as well as addressing challenges. By revisiting classrooms, seeing teachers in action, and providing ongoing feedback and support, mentor teachers help classroom teachers grow professionally.

4.3.1.9.   Open communication

Maintaining open communication with mentor teachers has been identified as crucial by student teachers, a main ingredient to a successful mentoring relationship (Beyene et al., 2002). Liliane and Colette (2009) found that when mentor teachers exhibit openness to student teacher ideas and encourage them to reflect on their practice, the student teachers develop confidence to express their own ideas.

In this study, student teachers highly valued an open communication with their mentors, being able to approach their mentors easily, discuss their issues freely and be listened to.

Open feedback was valued by Student Teacher 10,

> *Every lesson that I taught while on teaching practice the school-based mentor would provide constructive feedback on what worked, did not work, and gave me feedback on tips on how to try new teaching strategies, she gave room to improve on my previous performance through an open discussion and improved future performance.* (St 10, 28/01/2020)

According to Patrick (2013) in Izadinia (2016:394), the opposite is also true: an environment where student teachers do not feel safe to open up, are intimidated by the judgements of their mentors and are constrained by power relationships ushers in silence and self-censoring. Student Teacher 10, though, had a fruitful experience because the environment was suitable for open communication with her school-based mentors. They would clarify what was expected of her before the

lesson and give feedback on what she accomplished and what was still required based on the unmet expectations. Student teachers could ask the school-based mentors questions about what happened in the classroom and the feedback provided. To the contrary, in circumstances where student teachers have no room for open communication with school-based mentors, teachers remain silent. According to Albers and Goodman (1999), silence due to communication problems seems to be common during practicums.

4.3.1.10.   Methodological development support

As key players in launching student teachers into the teaching profession, mentor teachers are recognised for their practical knowledge of the teaching profession, which complements the theoretical knowledge that student teachers acquire in university (Maphalala, 2013:123).

Student Teacher 3 applauded,

> *My mentor teacher played a role in transitioning my theoretical knowledge into practice by guiding me how I should conduct my lesson through Piaget and Vygotsky socio-cultural theory. She allowed me to do group work with the learners and instructed that I should allow the learners to speak out their thoughts and ideas when I introduced a new concept.* (St 3,11/11/2019)

According to Turner (2006:38), school-based mentors must be knowledgeable about current literature in teaching, teacher socialisation and preparation, child psychology, curriculum theory and design and learning theories if they are to effectively guide student teachers. Huling-Austin, Barnes and Smith (1985:225-226), in addition to the above, add that school-based mentors must be skilful and possess the relevant qualifications through training and in-service training. Maphalala (2013:124) reminds that the primary goal of a mentor teacher is to assist classroom teachers in refining existing instructional strategies; to introduce new strategies and concepts; to engage teachers in conversations about their teaching; and to provide overall support. Findings to this study have alluded to the following:

According to Student Teacher 1,

> *My mentor teacher gave me a platform to experiment. To see what worked for me and what didn't. She always encouraged me to try and apply CPUTs methods and I could see for myself what was realistic and what was not.* (St 1,11/11/2019)

Eisner (2002) realises that student teachers have difficulty determining the way forward when faced with uncertainties. In certain cases, they themselves fall into situations where neither theoretical knowledge nor practical experiences can guide their actions. In these situations, they can draw on practical wisdom from others within the practicum community. Student teachers must develop the capabilities of improvising beyond traditional practices. This requires sensibility, imagination and the ability to make spontaneous judgements and decisions on the spot.

Student Teacher 6 reflected about her practicum,

> *I have had two different mentor teachers over the six weeks being at Observatory Junior School due to unforeseen circumstances, but I have learnt a lot from both of my mentor teachers. Despite their different personalities and teaching methods, I was able to adapt my teaching methods to cater for my learners' needs.* (St 6,12/01/2020)

The above findings resonate with Joubert, Bester, Meyer and Evans (2012:7) insist school-based mentors assist student teachers in applying effective teaching approaches. Student teachers need to be taught to apply teaching strategies successfully in different contexts. It is important to expose student teachers to different grades in the practicum through their mentors, as it is critical that student teachers know and use different teaching approaches to address various learning needs.

4.3.1.11. Information sharing and knowledge development

According to Phillips-Jones (2001:11), information sharing and knowledge development emanates from the student teacher support from school-based

mentors, sharing their goals and discussing areas needing support for growth during practicum. Ulvik, Helleve and Smith (2018:12) stipulate that the practicum should, in connection with the university coursework, have a binding framework and demand related not only to achievement, but also to the quality assurance of the work placement as regards the quality of mentoring and the working conditions of the students

Student Teacher 10 commented about mentorship,

> *They assisted me with planning integrated lessons to cover the necessary content according to CAPs.* (St 10, 28/01/2020)

Knowledge about CAPS needs to be addressed: implementation of CAPS is desperately needed, but implementation faces challenges in schools. Although it is believed that CAPS will eventually bear fruit, teachers are struggling with regard to CAPS implementation, as this has proven to be a mammoth task. Proper training of teachers, ongoing support from the Department of Education and the provision of resources could to ensure a smoother implementation of the curriculum.

Student Teacher 6 vales the knowledge received:

> *Although I have taken most of the learning in the classroom from the negative, I have adapted the knowledge and turn it into the positives not only for myself but also for the learners.* (St 6,12/01/2020)

According to Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999), most student teachers, when they experience the classroom practices, tend to agree that either knowledge *in* practice or knowledge *for* practice is enough. In some situations, however, there are no obvious solutions, and one must imagine a way forward. Education should therefore provide different kinds of knowledge. Schultz and Manduzuk (2005) and Bråten and Ferguson (2015) note that student teachers regard practicum as valuable in terms of knowledge: experiences from practice make it easier to understand theory and make the theory become more meaningful.

4.3.1.12.   Modelling

Mentor teachers should model the practice of teaching to student teachers as teaching skills will be learnt more effectively through modelling (Bellm et al., 1997; Carlson & Gooden, 1999; Hudson, 2013). Modelling effective instructional strategies is one way a mentor teacher can help. In addition to seeing how concepts are applied and how students respond, the student teacher can learn appropriate instructional language, classroom management techniques and lesson pacing.

Student Teacher 5 indicated,

> *Becoming a teacher is not just about standing in front of a class and transferring the knowledge. It goes beyond that. You have to know how to conduct yourself and be professional with other staff members and the learners in your class you need to be able to deal with the amounts of admin and you need to be able to deal with parent pressure from the outside. The mentor teacher shows you how to put the teaching theory into practice and the school help you with the admin side of teaching.* (St 5,14/10/2019)

Considering the increasing demands on their time, role modelling may be the most effective teaching method available; students work alongside practitioners so tasks need not take significantly more time. Mentors need to think about how to engage students in professional activities if role modelling is to be successful (Allen, 2001). According to Shadio (1996), modelling reflects commitment in education and respect for those who would like to join the teaching community.

Student Teacher 10 appreciated feedback and modelling:

> *Every lesson that I taught whilst on practicum the school-based mentors would provide constructive feedback on what worked, what did not work and they gave me feedback on new ways of teaching which I should try to improve on my previous performance. They would teach in front of me and then allow me to teach.* (St 10,28/01/2020)

Student Teacher 6 added,

> *In theoretical terms what we are taught in university does not always work our practically and mentor teachers help student teachers adapt their theory to practice in the classroom.* (St 6,12/01/2020)

Initial teacher education practicum is valuable in the transformation process in which existing beliefs are challenged against theory and practice, often through modelling (Goodfellow & Sumsion, 2000). Likewise, Aspden (2014:32) suggests that the marrying of practice and theory is valued for helping student teachers to understand the realities of teaching while watching another teacher (Clift & Brady, 2005). It is the context in which student teachers are given the opportunity to grow and develop as future members of the profession, to practice their skills and reflect on what it means to teach (Cattley, 2007).

4.3.2. Frequency of school-based mentorship support and guidance when conducting lessons in the classroom during practicum

During the teaching practice in schools, student teachers work in schools and their progress is monitored and evaluated regularly. A pass in teaching practice is a prerequisite for graduation, along with passes in courses or modules. To pass, student teachers rely on the guidance and input of school-based mentors. When student teachers were asked to indicate how often they were engaging with their school-based mentors, several of them mentioned every day, some indicated twice a week whilst a few of them stated occasionally. Frequency was usually a result of *who* mentored them as some were mentored by phase specialists who shared a grade of teaching, others were mentored by different phase specialists such as intermediate and FET, whilst others were mentored by principals and deputy principals who, having administrative duties as well, were unavailable to support student teachers during their classroom lessons.

4.3.2.1. Daily

Research conducted by the National Mentoring Working Group (1990:33-34) asserts that longer-term mentoring relationships bring more benefits to student teachers than shorter-term relationships. Other studies have confirmed the value of meeting frequently and regularly.

Mudzielwana and Maphosa (2014:1) stipulate that teaching practice is quite a challenge to many student teachers, a view shared by Groundwater-Smith (1993:137) who observes that challenges can only be minimised if student teachers get proper, regular guidance whilst on teaching practice. Koerner (1992) notes that the quality and success of teaching practice depends on the role and effectiveness of the mentors guiding the student teachers, inclusive of the frequency which the school-based mentors interact with the student teachers.

Student Teacher 1 commented about frequency of support:

> *During my first couple of years ... there was almost no support. The teachers would either leave the classroom or do their own work. I very seldom got feedback. It was either that scenario or the teacher would interrupt me constantly. During my most recent teaching practicum, the teacher was incredibly supportive.* (St 1,11/11/2019)

In this regard, Student Teacher 3 added,

> *I engaged with my mentor teacher every day. We would discuss and go over my planning in the morning and after school for the next day.* (St 3,11/11/2019)

During teaching practicum, the expectation is that the student teachers be in constant engagement with the school-based mentors who are expected to have regular access to a classroom to assist in their development. Without mentor time and support, new teachers can flounder and may leave the very profession they have spent years studying to join.

Student Teacher 5 praised the time and material from her mentor,

> *When planning lessons, the mentor would give us what needs to be covered during the four weeks, usually at the end of the previous term. 48 hours before the lesson is taught the teacher would edit the lesson and give feedback based on the lesson plan. Once the lesson is taught, the teacher will give feedback on the lesson and then at the end of the week, she would give feedback on the week. By the end of the four weeks she will give feedback on the entire session.* (St 5,14/10/2019)

Rowley (1999) argues that a good mentor is highly committed to the task of helping beginning teachers find success and gratification in their new work. Committed mentors show up for, and stay on, the role to assist the student teachers. Committed mentors understand that persistence is as important in mentoring as it is in classroom teaching. Such commitment flows naturally from a resolute belief that mentors can make a significant and positive impact on the life of another.

Student Teacher 7 appreciated this time:

> *They were always there throughout my lesson. All the time.* (St 7,30/01/2020)

4.3.2.2.   Twice a week

Villanueva (2008:16) realises that commitment is a must from school-based mentors as well as programme coordinators if the experiences are to be productive. It is believed that effective school-based mentorship fosters a culture of collegiality manifested in trust, acts of caring, connectedness, positive and open communication, mutual respect, information sharing, collaboration, reciprocity, and making oneself accessible to the other (Eller, Lev & Feurer, 2013; Race & Skees, 2010).

Student Teacher 3 connected with her mentor twice a week:

> *Twice a week she would check my lesson planning.* (St 3,11/11/2019)

Student teachers on practicum have lessons every day, so the expectation is that school-based mentors be supportive regularly throughout the practicum, from planning, researching topics, identifying resources and developing lesson plans, if not daily, then twice a week.

4.3.2.3.   A fair amount of time

While there is substantial evidence that longer matches tend to produce stronger outcomes, the notion of 'ideal' match length for mentorship becomes more complicated when considering the goals, theory of change and structure of a programme. While research has consistently found strong effects of school-based programmes, there are examples of targeted programmes that achieve meaningful results with mentoring relationships of a much shorter duration, should the mentor and mentee spend a fair amount of time together.

Student Teacher 6 indicated that her mentor, while busy, still make time to spend with her:

> *A fair amount as my mentor teacher was the grade head so she was quite busy but made time to discuss progress and offer advice* (St 6, 12/01/2020).

4.3.3. Cultivated and focused competencies during mentorship

The following emerged from the student teachers as cultivated and focused competencies during school-based mentorship: lesson planning, active learner involvement, class management, communications skills and administration and organisation skills.

4.3.3.1.   Lesson planning

Lesson planning is an important component of organising any lesson as it sorts out

various aspects of teaching to render successful learning outcomes. According to Spear, Lock and McCulloch (1997:5), school-based mentors are expected to observe and give feedback on multiple aspects when evaluating student teacher lessons during practicum: coverage of the subject content and teaching skills, and the outcomes of the lessons. The role of teacher education programmes is to challenge preconceived ideas about teaching and learning and within this milieu, lesson planning offers opportunities for engaging beginning teachers in reflective thinking to trigger self-development in teaching.

Student Teacher 1 received the following feedback from her lesson observation:

> *The lesson plan for the lesson observed was conceptually cohesive and comprehensive. The teacher had prepared adequate resources for her lesson, this was good.* (St 1,11/11/2019)

Lesson planning should not be viewed as an isolated procedure but rather as an undertaking to enhance reflection the micro and macro dimensions of teaching (Ho, 1995). According to Wasim, Rawat and Thomas, (2012:49-50), in regard to the role of school-based mentors developing necessary teaching skills of student teachers during practicum, school-based mentors observe and evaluate skills of lesson planning, student teacher ability to implement the plan, the effective use of teaching aids, classroom management and self-reflection during practicum. However, they are quick to point out that the school-based mentors are also required to organise student teacher-led workshops focusing on lesson planning skills, including the use of teaching aids and various techniques.

Student Teacher 6 explained what she learned in regard to lesson planning:

> *Being able to adapt and improvise, use your theoretical knowledge to plan practical lessons, admin skills, behaviour skills, innovate and being creative.* (St 6,12/01/2020)

Student Teacher 9 reflected on lesson planning,

> *Lesson planning has been hard for me as it is Grade 3 and finding the bridge*

between foundation phase but also being prepared for intermediate phase has been challenging. Also meeting the gap between where learners are supposed to be and where they are has been another obstacle. (St 9,24/01/2020)

According to Barry and King (2002:45), an effective teacher spends a great deal of time on careful and detailed planning. The expectation is that student teachers will be skilful at planning lessons to meet learner needs depending on their developmental stage, often selecting topics with the supervising teachers. In South African schools, the choice of planned lessons must be based on CAPs, particularly because effective teaching corresponds closely to effective planning.

4.3.3.2. Active learner involvement

Learning takes place through interactions with surroundings, nature and people. Active learner involvement affords the student teachers an opportunity – through classroom observation, interaction with school-based mentors in pre- and post-discussion sessions – to gain some pedagogical strategies to better manage the instructional processes. During practicum, student teachers interact with learners, making use of learner mistakes to consolidate the newly learned knowledge and practice, to apply different learning styles, to find ways to motivate, to provide reinforcement, to encourage learner participation, to plan effective lessons, and to diagnose student interest – many pedagogical benefits of interaction.

Student Teacher 1 practicum file provided evidence of active learned involvement:

Involving learners, positive comments to encourage the learners. (St 1,11/11/2019)

When young children are encouraged to learn, they participate fully and thereby give student teachers opportunities to discover various abilities and ways to improve planning and lesson delivery.

4.3.3.3. Class management

Studies on school-based mentors found that school-based mentors should take an upper hand in assisting student teachers to manage the classrooms. According to Alberta Teachers' Association (2003:22), for example, school-based mentors should guide student teachers in classroom management by arranging the classroom setting, establishing teaching rules, managing the student work, establishing a positive classroom climate and supporting good learner behaviour in a professional manner.

Student Teacher 1 mentioned the classroom management help she received:

> *They focused mainly on classroom management. I was always told that a person can either teach, or they can't. But what takes practice, is the ability to manage a classroom. So, I was really helped with tips and tricks on how to manage a large classroom.* (St 1,11/11/2019)

Student teachers on practicum are faced with several challenges – big classrooms, noisy classrooms, different learning styles, restricted space – which affect the way they communicate to the learners, the materials they choose to meet learner needs and engage students.

Student Teacher 9 admitted struggling with classroom management:

> *For me, it was classroom management, as I struggled with it in the first session. My tutor teacher would always give me advice and encourage me to try my own strategies and find what works. So, classroom management was cultivated.* (St 9,24/01/2020)

Mentors should also engage student teachers in various aspects of their duties. Such a view is consistent with a view by Fisher, Higgins and Loveless (2006:2) that teacher learning is an active, experiential process, through which knowledge is enacted, constructed and revised, and this applies to classroom management as well as any other aspect of teaching.

4.3.4. Mentor-student teacher mentorship relationship

Gray and Gray (1985) assert that a key area of significance in successful school-based mentorship is the relationship between school-based mentors and student teachers. School-based mentors are charged with the responsibility of leading the student teachers in the school environment and, more importantly, of being an agent of change in student teacher professional growth and development (Timperley, 2008).

In this study, the student teachers indicated that the relationship between the student teachers and their mentors during teaching practicum was comprised primarily of feedback – criticism and weekly evaluations – as evidenced from their interview responses and teaching practicum files. Graham (2006) determines two components critical to the success of the teaching practice: 1) the mentor teachers who advise support, assess, guide and assist behaviour management and encourage student teacher reflective practices; and 2) the sites where the experiences occur (Maphalala, 2013:123). The role of mentor teachers is vital to student teacher growth and development. Mentor teachers, as practicing professionals, are aware of current issues in education, and are uniquely positioned to help student teachers navigate the demands of the practicum, particularly in matters of curriculum and classroom management.

4.3.4.1.   Advisor

Amongst the roles of the school-based mentors is that of advisor (Turner, 2006:38). Schools, when assigning mentors, need to brief them on their advisory role to the student teachers as evidenced on the second page of the CPUT Teaching Practicum Manual for Sessions 1 and 2 (2019:2). Likewise, Burke and Schmidt (1984) suggest that teaching schools should provide mentors whom new teachers could contact for advice.

Student Teacher 1 practicum file, for example, contained advise from her mentor:

> *Try to do the lessons a little quicker because the CAPs are so full.* (St 1,11/11/2019)

Student teachers need to be thoroughly trained and assisted by subject advisors to achieve the objectives of CAPS. Andrews (1987:1-50) proposes five ways school-based mentors are assist student teachers: model different instructional methodologies, provide regular observation and feedback, work jointly on the introduction of new curriculum materials, engage in classroom research, and finally, though with incredible importance, act as an advisor.

Student Teacher 2 had a good relationship with her mentor and therefore was open to advice:

> *I related to my mentor teacher as I knew she came from a good place in trying to guide me. She was a CPUT student many years ago so she could relate to how things are done and are expected from me at university level. We could interact well about campus and how to apply the knowledge learnt there within the classroom in a more dynamic and practical way.* (St 2,20/09/2019)

Ulvik and Smith (2011:520-521) suggest that to reach beyond their current personal level, it is useful to be advised by someone who is more experienced. There are limits to how useful a student teacher's internal reflection is in understanding personal reasoning (Penglington, 2008), and because of this, an advising mentor supports entry to the profession.

Student Teacher 1 practicum file showed practical advice,

> *Try to keep an eye on the children at their tables as well as focusing on the group on the mat.* (St 11/11/2019)

The student teachers on practicum are to be observant of the student as they perform tasks. Young children are easily distracted by one another and can lose focus and start playing, so it is especially useful that student teachers apply classroom management skills on the advice of the mentor to take control of the learners.

Student Teacher 9 said;

> *And any advice on planning or prep, she would be glad to offer. I would say I had a*

good relationship with my tutor teacher, as she gave me freedom and I understood my duties, but I formed a deeper relation with her co-worker, who then also became my mentor. (St 9,24/01/2020)

Taking into consideration that student teacher lesson planning and preparation are critical for the success of any lesson, student teachers are advised by the school-based mentor on topical research resources planning.

4.3.4.2.   Supporter

Student teachers on practicum are placed in the classrooms under the support of an experienced school-based mentor who has expertise in the subject matter as a professional and who collaborates in planning, teaching and assessment (Mukeredzi, 2013; Robinson, 2015). Such support needs to be formal and planned and should link theory to practice through dialogical engagement (Mukeredzi, 2013). Chubbuck, Clift, Allard and Quinlan (2001) stipulate that school-based mentor roles to be devoid of judgment; nor are the mentors to be problem solver; rather they are to provide support and a reflective process.

Student Teacher 1 practicum file showed evidence of support and encouragement:

Very good preparation. Excellent class management. Shows lovely patience with the children. (St 1,11/11/2019)

According to Smith (2007:283), mentors face tension between their roles as supporters and critical friends and their role as assessors, especially in relation to summative assessment. Smith, accentuating the importance of school-based mentor assessment, insists that this be the foundation for any other type of assessment. The school-based mentor in this study noted that this student teacher had acquired very good preparation skills, excellent management skills and patience with young children.

Student Teacher 10 felt supported,

> *My relationship with school-based mentors was friendly and professional manner in which they would support me with teaching and learning resources when I had asked for and even taught me varying methodological approaches to handling young children.* (St 10, 28/01/2020)

Student Teacher 9 indicated;

> *Support on planning and prepping lessons, support on how to manage the class, support with resources.* (St 9,24/01/2020)

A strong relationship between the student teacher and the school-based mentor is significant in the practicum. Good relationships during practicum guarantee the promotion of the professional growth and development of student teacher readiness to teach.

4.3.4.3.   Guide

Although the student teachers are expected to teach during practicum, this particular teaching is regarded as a learning process as it is to take place under the guidance of a well-equipped subject specialist who mentors. The guidance process involves developing student teachers in how they teach a subject, observing them teaching and thereafter giving feedback on the lesson quality. Such feedback to student teachers is said to be a highly appreciated component of professional development, serving to guide the choices the student teacher makes in the upcoming lessons (Smith & Lev-Ari, 2005:300). When the student teachers are ignored without receiving guidance on the teaching and learning process, they do things in their own way, which may or may not lead to quality teaching.

Student Teacher 1 appreciated the guidance of her recent mentor:

> *This is the first time I've had a mentor that worked very well with me. In past experiences I've always found that there was no connection with my mentor. I was*

mostly ignored in the classroom and in the staffroom. (St 1,11/11/2019)

A thorough practicum offers opportunities for trying out new ideas, in a situation that is safe enough to take risks. The students emphasised freedom to try out their own ideas, to be allowed some independence in planning for a series of lessons. The students wanted to be recognised as teachers and learn about every aspect of being a teacher. When they do not receive this mentor guidance, they seek it elsewhere.

Student Teacher 9 added;

> *With my assigned tutor teacher, not so much. As she was mostly out of the class. But with her co-worker, we formed a bond. She would always check on me and give me advice and show me resources she made, and we would share the highs and lows of our day.* (St 9,24/01/2020)

School-based mentors who are assigned the student teachers to mentor on practicum are expected to be in the classroom at all times so they are in a position to guide the student teachers in their plans and preparation, research on topics, lesson planning and presentation. However, for this student teacher, the assigned mentor was not available to give the anticipated guidance so a co-worker assisted in the absence of the mentor.

Student Teacher 5 said;

> *I gained the practical experience that she was already exposed to.* (St 5, 14/10/2019)

This student teacher is expressing the advantage of having school-based mentors who are experienced and experts and willing to guide and advice. Her school-based experience was a success because the school-based mentor to whom she was assigned gave guidance and support and feedback, shaping the whole experience, and more importantly, sharing her knowledge and skills.

4.3.5. Nature of engagement between mentors and student teachers during mentorship

Student teachers expressed a mix of satisfaction and dissatisfaction of the support they received from the school-based mentorship. The interactions which existed between the student teachers and their mentors were informing, academic and evaluative in nature. When asked to describe the nature of engagements during the teaching practicum, most student teachers mentioned that their interactions with mentors were based on professionalism, social and relational acts and moral grounds.

4.3.5.1.   Social and relational

Some researchers stressed that carrying out practicum within an atmosphere of friendship and trust boosts student teacher confidence and encourages experimentation with innovative teaching techniques (Talvitie et al., 2000). The dyad meetings on formative assessment of student teachers by the school-based mentors existed as social and relational acts whereby the student teachers established respectful working relationships with their mentors, interact freely and asking questions about the subject matter both within the classroom and outside the school environments.

Student Teacher 9 appreciated the relationship:

> *As well as emotional support, if I had a bad day or was nervous about evaluation they would sit and guide me on what to do and just comfort me.* (St 9,24/01/2020)

Aguilar (2013) and Knight (2007) insist that a relationship of trust between the school-based mentors and student teachers is a critical component of coaching. One way to build this trust is through confidentiality; by keeping conversations confidential, the student teacher knows that the mentor's word is good. Student teachers also need to feel comfortable speaking to mentors: there may be a time when a crisis trumps conversation about the lesson.

4.3.5.2. Professional

Well prepared and professionally qualified teachers are not only agents of positive societal change but also have a multiplying effect while executing mentor duties. In the same vein Muhammad (2006) believes that teachers of the highest quality will lead to education of the highest quality.

Student Teacher 2 appreciated the professional relationship with her mentor:

> *Type of support that I received from my mentor was exceptional. It was better than I expected because I was anxious at the beginning of the year, what type of teacher I would end up with in my final year. This mentor teacher is a wonderful and amazing person and teacher that strives to help others in any way possible.* (St 2,20/09/2019)

This student teacher received all the support a student teacher on practicum is supposed to receive.

Formal mentorship entails the act of two people engaging in an organised, systematic relationship of providing and receiving assistance and insights (Mudzielwana & Maphosa, 2014:2; Mel, Heller & Sindelar, 1991:6). Moreover, Mel, Heller and Sindelar (1991) explain that in this relationship, the mentor may share materials but also goes beyond the sharing and moves into the development of materials within a collaborative team. This requires reflective practice, collaborative planning and action research coupled with a joint action plan by the mentor and student teacher.

Student Teacher 10 appreciated the professional guidance of her mentor:

> *Critical feedback, positive praises, practice on how to mark, making observations during group reading, administration duties.* (St 10,28/01/2020)

When mentors have a good working relationship with the student teachers during practicum, it's easy to allocate adequate time to assist in understanding their challenges and developing strategies. It is evident in numerous studies that student

teachers on practicum value school-based mentors who share experiences, give constructive feedback, praise and criticize, and listen to them.

4.3.6. Learning opportunities from the mentorship

Ulvik and Smith (2011:522), in their studies on student teacher school-based experiences, discovered that for the student teachers to acquire new skills and knowledge during practicum there needs to be a balance between support received and challenges encountered. It is school-based mentors, they noted, who are key determinants to the quality of the student teacher learning process (Zeichner, 2002:59), as they are the main contributors to the learning and development of the student teachers. An important mentoring skill, then, is the ability to recognise and promote core competencies and identify the learning challenges of the student teachers (Zeichner, 2002:59).

4.3.6.1.   Transition from theory to practice

Korthagen (2011, in Gravett, Petersen & Petker, 2014:12) suggests that student teacher encounters with concrete problems or concerns about teaching allow them to perceive the usefulness of the conceptual knowledge of education as a field. Kessels and Korthagen (2001) state that student teachers' concrete experiences lead to conceptual knowledge as a result of school-based experiences which provide sites for concerns emanating from their involvement in the school.

Student Teacher 9 grew in practice:

> *The learning opportunities were that they helped me grow as a practical teacher, not just learning theory.* (St 9,24/01/2020)

Successful teacher education programmes underscore the integration of knowledge *for* teaching with knowledge *of* teaching, the *how* of teaching. Such programmes necessitate an integrative programme design to counteract the schism between the 'world of theory' and 'the world of practice' and draw optimally

on collaboration between teacher educators and teachers who supervise students in schools to achieve this.

4.3.7. Challenges from mentorship

While at the onset of the interviews the responses were predominantly positive about experiences of the practicum in the teaching schools, this section reveals that most of the interviewed student teachers also had feelings of negativity with the mentorship aspect of the attachment and experiences. Practicum mentorship is a long process as the student teachers stay long with the mentors; most of the student teachers, despite seeing a positive side of the mentoring process, expressed negative feelings based on the complexity of teaching practice and feelings of concern about the relationship.

The responses expressed from the ten student teachers revealed a lack of expertise on the part of the mentors, inadequate experience in mentoring, a lack of training on mentorship –all evident from the manner in which the student teachers were handled during the experienced. Six student teacher responses to their mentorship reveal that they were mentored by different teaching phase tutors, for example.

4.3.7.1.   Lack of time to attend to the student teachers

According to the Vanderbilt University Practicum Handbook Comprehensive Program (2009:11) despite the expectation that the student teachers will gradually take over planning and teaching responsibilities during their placements, they are to remain under the supervision of their mentor teacher. Therefore, although a timeous necessity, practicum students are not to be left alone with classroom students unaccompanied by authorized school personnel such as a mentor teacher.

Supporting this, Aspden (2014:41) and Pullman (1995) assert that if formative assessment is conducted in a detailed, comprehensive manner – another timeous activity – it will form a strong evidential framework for the writing of the final

summative practicum report. However, it should not be assumed that formative assessment has occurred as an automatic outcome of a mentoring relationship. Formative assessment should be thoroughly documented to provide a clear picture of the way in which the student teacher has developed, the way they have meaningfully responded to the feedback, and their own reflection and self-evaluation. All of this takes time.

Not all mentors had enough time, as Student Teacher 9 made evident:

> *As I mentioned, my tutor teacher was also the deputy principal so she left me alone with the class quite frequently or she would go and "relax" while I conducted my lessons. She would just check and comment on my resources and worksheets, most of which were positive feedback.* (St 9,24/01/ 2020)

While Cameron (2011) discourages ineffective mentoring of student teachers, in some cases he found it was a consequence of insufficient time provided by the school for the mentor to undertake mentoring activities, a lack of specialist subject knowledge and lack of experience of mentoring practice.

4.3.7.2.   Lack of confidence by school-based mentors

Student Teacher 1 faced a degrading situation:

> *A definite challenge of being in someone else's class is that they forget that you also are there to learn from them. Some 'mentors' are more intimidated by the idea that there is someone 'younger and fresh' with new ideas. I've had an experience where a teacher literally gave me a little desk and chair and put me at the back of the class amongst the children. We never spoke, I was treated like an 8-year-old.* (St 1,11/11/2019)

The findings of this study, as evidenced by Student Teacher 1, share commonality with what Robinson (1999:196) in her study – *Initial Teacher Education in a Changing South Africa: experiences, reflections and challenges* – explored

regarding student teacher experiences of teaching practicum. Student teachers shared varied experiences as some felt that school-based mentors were intimidated by being observed, under-confident, and resisted the student teacher's presence in class. To the contrary, those school-based mentors who were confident and well prepared did not exhibit the same resistance but were approachable, open to new ideas, willing to engage in dialogue, creative, well acquainted with their subject matter, friendly, supportive and helpful.

4.3.7.3.   Lack of understanding on the mentorship role

Lack of understanding of their role as school-based mentors was identified as an issue by the student teachers which consequently led to lack of support as needed by student teachers. According to Yayli (2018:9) and Jaspers et al. (2014), mentors who are not aware of their roles are reluctant to support student teachers and consider their role as a secondary task due to a lack of defined roles.

Student Teacher 1 revealed her difficulty with her mentor:

> *Another challenge is that if a mentor is not willing to be a mentor, the entire experience is not fruitful. I think being in someone else's class and watching them is only beneficial for so long. At some point you need to be given the opportunity to teach as well. So, yah. I think mentors lack an understanding of what being a mentor entail.* (St 1,11/11/2019)

It is also widely acknowledged that the current practices for ensuring that cooperating teachers are professionally prepared for their work are inadequate to address some of the most basic issues associated with their supervisory work (Glickman & Bey, 1990; Knowles & Cole, 1996). Without a clear understanding of the ways in which cooperating teachers participate—or are expected to participate—in teacher education, it is difficult to know how best to support or facilitate that work.

Training for the mentor is necessary because few teachers have had the experience

of observing other teachers at work and commenting on their technique and achievements. The ability to give ongoing support and advice without offending or appearing patronizing is difficult – some training can develop these skills.

4.3.7.4. Lack of professionalism by school-based mentors

Student Teacher 1 provided an interesting insight:

> *I was truly shocked at my first school how my 'mentor' would verbally (and sometimes physically) abuse the learners. I have reported it. but ultimately, had I not known otherwise. I would have thought that this is what is supposed to happen inside a classroom.* (St 1,11/11/2019)

Student Teacher 5 added;

> *The challenges are that teachers are obliged to write a report or give feedback and don't always feel like they can write the honest truth without being judged or reported.* (St 5,14/10/2019)

As the above quotations suggest, being in an environment where student teachers do not feel safe to open up, are intimidated by the judgement of their mentors and are constrained by power relationships instils silence and a level of self-censoring on their part (Patrick, 2013). Such silence due to communication problems seems to be common during practicums (Albers & Goodman, 1999). Researchers argue that as significant the practicum is for learning; it is inherently laden with unequal power relations (Martinovic & Dlamini, 2009) that result in student teacher silence and lack of learning. In other words, when there is lack of communication due to unprofessionalism and power relationships, thinking and learning that require dialogue do not happen (Fung, 2005).

4.3.7.5. Inadequate qualification for foundation phase mentoring

Research shows that student teachers who are mentored by qualified mentors are

encouraged to master practical skills, and in addition, to take risks and develop even beyond their mentor's level. But in circumstances where student teacher experience of practicum falls under a school-based mentor who is unqualified, there is inadequate acquisition of the expected skills and knowledge, a lack of development of the professional competencies expected in the programmes.

Two student teachers shared commonalities on the level of qualifications of the school-based mentors who were to support, guide and advise them during teaching practicum.

Student Teacher 4 & Student Teacher 7 commented,

> *Oh, well she never had her degree in teaching. I'm not too sure how the diploma worked back then. But she has only ever taught in a foundation phase classroom.* (St 4,15/11/2019)

> *She is an older teacher, so she had a diploma in teaching. But she had years of experience as well teaching in foundation phase.* (St 7,30/01/2020)

Research shows that the most appropriate mentor should be an experienced colleague not too distant in age from the student teacher who is teaching a class but roughly the same age group, using the same kind of syllabus and within a similar philosophy (Huling-Austin, 1986; Huffman & Leak, 1986; Goodman, 1987; Heath-Camp & Camp, 1990). Qualifications and experience are imperative.

4.3.7.6. Student teacher anxiety and fear

During practicum the student teacher develops into a reflective practitioner committed to continuous professional development (Steyn, 2004). Evidently, many enter the practicum with fear and insecurity; therefore, student teachers need support from their mentors in reducing fear, anxiety, insecurity and stress due to realities of a classroom settings. Teacher turnover follows when beginner educators fail to cope and have escalating negative feelings towards the profession.

Student Teacher 6 admitted to struggling with anxiety:

In the end, despite the situation and the fact that I got overwhelmed and had anxiety attacks being afraid that I would not be able to do my evaluation lesson because of not being able to teach the whole week, everything worked out for the best. (St 6,12/01/2020)

Student teachers on practicum are faced with countless challenges which cause anxiety. As with the above reflection, the student teacher had a problem with her role clarification, the evaluation procedure, and not knowing the expectations of the mentor teacher, all of which brought anxiety and stress into her practicum (Gonca & Yakışık, 2016:1).

Student Teacher 9 said;

The challenge was that they would at times give advice or support that did not fall within what I was taught at university. They would be more of a traditional teacher rather than active which is what we are taught to be at university. So, I had to take their advice, but balance it in my own way. (St 9,24/01/2020)

Student teachers lesson evaluations cause anxiety, often as a reaction to the school-based mentor feedback to an unsuccessful lesson. Literature shows that a good relationship with, and effective guidance and supervision from, the mentor teacher may reduce anxiety in the practicum. To facilitate this, student teachers prefer mentors who are knowledgeable, experienced, honest, respectable, fair, flexible and understanding.

4.3.7.7. Undeveloped and unstructured mentors

Research shows the differences that exist between the undeveloped and unstructured mentors to developed and structured mentors and the impact this has on the level of knowledge and skills which are transferred to student teachers. Cameron (2011) believes that the nature of support and quality of the mentoring process derives from a mentor's actions and decisions. The mentor's actions and

decisions, however, are based upon a professional knowledge and skill base. Where a teacher is also acting as a mentor, findings suggest that different mentors draw on their knowledge and skills from teaching, and specific knowledge and skills for mentoring, to different extents.

Student Teacher 1 indicated she worked with an underdeveloped mentor:

> *Mentors did not assist me in developing those tactile, visual and auditory teaching and learning aids, but I was using my knowledge from CPUT and a lot of google certainly. It's time like those where I feel that students end up helping the mentors. Often the mentors grow tired, and students are always willing to go the extra mile my mentor told me that I have given her so many fresh ideas that she will implement in her classroom. So, in a perfect scenario, this programme is helpful for both student and teacher, especially for mentors who are undeveloped and unstructured on how to handle student teachers with little to offer.* (St 1,11/11/2019)

4.3.8. Value of the school-based mentorship in the journey to become professionals

According to Kaldi and Pyrgiotakis (2009:4), student teacher practicum journey to professionals requires reflection on their own experiences and work. When student teachers reflect *in action* and *on action* through self-evaluation, they realise the areas they needed support and those in which they have professionally developed into capable educators (Freire 1996:2). It is expected that student teachers be considerate of how their assumptions, beliefs and biases about teaching and learning influence their classroom practices during practicum. HEIs and teaching schools, through their school-based mentors, need to ensure that student teachers are equipped to reflect on their teaching and pupil learning.

When all the ten student teachers were asked to share the value of the school-based mentorship in the journey to become professionals, most mentioned these elements: professionalism, planning skills, flexibility, instilling independent pupil learning,

4.3.8.2.   Professionalism

Student Teacher 10 valued the mentor professionalism of her journey:

> *I would say it has inculcated in me the professionalism and a sense of direction in the expected role of what it means to be a foundation phase teacher as I am today. Not a traditional teacher.* (St 10,28/01/2020)

Research shows that traditional approach to teaching limits the growth and development of student teachers during practicum. According to Schulz (2005), the approach emphasises technical knowledge which is small part of teacher knowledge, not sufficient to the preparation of teachers for the professional role of teaching. However, one student teacher had an opportunity to learn and practice as the school-based mentor to whom she was assigned did not approach the mentoring process through traditional means but perceived the student teacher as a holistic being needing to grow intellectually, emotionally and socially in additional to the technicalities of the practicum experiences, all the while remaining exhibiting great professionalism.

Student Teacher 1 shored what she learned from her mentor:

> *I have learnt how to manage a classroom.... I have learnt the importance of building learners up and encouraging and rewarding hard work....I have learnt the importance of planning....I have also learnt the importance of being flexible....* (St 1,11/11/2019)

4.3.8.3.   Teaching and learning resource development skills

Training of teachers to support curriculum implementation should be subject specific. Ntshaba (2012) highlights that training and provision of support from the Department of Education for the new curriculum have been inadequate. The poor training of teachers and their ill-preparedness for the new curriculum has resulted in a significant number of teachers who have not adapted their teaching practices. Clearly, teacher development must be a priority. One aspect of this is teachers developing appropriate teaching and learning resources.

Student Teacher 3 received this training from her mentor:

> *She taught me the value of making your own resources and work with what you have even if you have a broken small classroom, still find ways and methods to adjust the challenges to your teaching advantage.* (St 3,11/11/2019)

Not all the schools these student teachers attended for their practicum had the relevant teaching and learning aids; in cases where student teachers are afforded inadequate teaching and learning resources, they must skilfully improvise and use locally available resources to ensure that they have delivered their content to the learners effectively and efficiently.

4.3.8.4.   Empathy towards learners

Empathy is the intrapersonal realisation of another's plight that illuminates the potential consequences of one's own actions on the lives of others. As educators, incorporating empathy into instruction can have positive results for your immediate classroom, as well as for the community outside school.

Student Teacher 3 learned empathy from her mentor,

> *She also taught me the value of empathy. That if a student teacher is under your care, help and support them wherever you can because you need to inspire them to teach and not force them to leave because they only see the negatives of what teaching is all about.* (St 3,11/11/2019)

Research has shown that taking time to demonstrate empathy can strengthen student-teacher relationships. Empathy prepares students to be leaders in their communities; deep relationships that result from strong empathy skills have the potential to strengthen a community and build trust.

4.3.8.5.   Source of encouragement and discouragement

Several studies on student teacher experiences of practicum show that developing as a teacher (Aspden, 2014:32) does not happen is isolation; mentors support

student teachers in the practicum setting and provide appropriate valuable experiences (Cameron & Baker, 2004).

In her response, Student Teacher 9 praised the support she received:

> *I was lucky that I had good support system which encouraged me….Your mentors are basically like your school moms, and moms need to encourage and push their children to achieve. So, if you get good support, you are more likely to feel motivated and enjoy your teaching experience. If you have bad support, it might discourage you in your teaching career- and that could have life- long effects.* (St 9, 24/01/2020)

4.3.8.6. Teacher role identification opportunity

All study participants were asked to express their thoughts on the significance of the mentoring relationship on student teacher identity. The data showed that all student teachers attached high importance to the impact of mentoring on their identity development; some acknowledged that it has had a lasting impact. Some insisted the relationship with their university lecturers from the beginning of the programme had already affected their picture of who they wanted to be as a teacher. Others, emphasising the huge impact of the mentoring relationship on their identity, expressed how the ideas and attitudes of their mentors influence their own ideas as they go through the practicums (Izadinia, 2016:397). For many, the practicum is the time to reflect whether teaching is the career for them (Barry & King, 2002). From this perspective, the practicum has the power to critically shape the student teacher's perception of their role in teaching and learning (Gustason & Rowell, Grootenboer, 2006).

Student Teacher 1 expressed her appreciation,

> *I feel like the mentorship programme during teaching practicum is so vital… Teaching is such a tricky career and really requires you to be 'all in'. You start as someone who has a desire to teach, and then you end up being someone who is a teacher… It becomes your identity. and so, having a mentor who can guide you through the process and help develop you is so important. I really wish mentors new*

how much influence they had over a student's learning journey. I'm so excited to be a mentor teacher myself one day and help another aspiring teacher. (St 1,11/11/2019)

Teacher identity, defined as the conceptualization teachers have of themselves (Murphey, 1998; Singh &Richards, 2006), plays a fundamental role in classroom teaching including the decisions teachers make about their teaching practices and the kind of relationships they develop with their students (Beijaard et al., 2004). Given that the social relationships are influential in the process of becoming a teacher and mentor teachers have direct interactions with student teachers, the kind of relationship they have with student teachers makes a significant impact on student teachers' identity (Pittard, 2003; Liu & Fisher, 2006).

4.4. Chapter summary

This chapter presented an interpretation of research findings on the student teacher experiences of school-based mentorship with reference to the school-based mentorship practicum model, mentorship roles and responsibilities as stipulated in the Teaching Practicum Manual for Session 1 and 2, and other relevant previously conducted studies and scholarly articles relevant to school-based mentorship experiences of practicum.

Student teachers expressed several factors and roles with the school-based mentorship which were incredibly significant in determining quality of their practicum experiences. These included the nature of relationships, the provision of authentic teaching experiences and competency based formative assessment, opportunities for supportive reflection and feedback, increased opportunities for empowerment and professionalism which derived from the norms and standards that define reliable and valid school-based mentorship as well as location of the student teachers in teaching schools.

The findings to this research work are a true reflection that student teacher

experiences of the teaching practicum are determined by the nature of school-based mentorship and its teaching school support and that such experiences are the most significant and influential moments in shaping their development as a teacher.

The findings to the study have revealed further the benefits the school-based experiences bring to the professional lives of the supervising teachers and school-based mentors by developing their skills as coach, mentor and assessor through reflection after mentoring and assessment encounters with each student teacher.

CHAPTER 5:

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS: ASSESSMENT OF THE TEACHING PRACTICUM

5.1. Introduction

The previous chapter presented the research findings of this study which sought to understand student teacher experiences of school-based mentorship of the teaching practicum in an initial teacher education programme at a Western Cape university. This section presents the findings of the student teacher experiences of assessment by teacher educators during teaching practicum. Universities, in designing assessment strategies, are expected to ensure that the requirements for student teacher performance in initial teacher education are met. It is expected, therefore, that through appropriate school-based attachment support, the student teachers develop the relevant competencies and abilities to be a qualified, competent teacher.

5.2. Student teacher perceptions of teacher educator assessment of competencies during teaching practicum

Several scholars have emphasised the role assessment plays in determining a student teacher's readiness to teach and the achievement of the expected graduate standards. The practicum assessment, therefore, plays a key role in this regard. It provides knowledge of student teacher ability to teach as a result of her initial teacher education programme and a form of accreditation at state or national level (Aspden, 2017:128). The student teachers in this study had multiple and varying perceptions of teacher educator assessment of their competencies during teaching practicum.

5.3. Nature of school-based assessment of competencies by the teacher educators

The ten student teachers in this study regarded the evaluator visits as generating room for reflection, grading, nurturing, support and an opportunity to critique their performance.

5.3.1. Grading/assessment

Supervisors have expected standards and competencies student teachers on practicum are supposed to meet when they attend for assessment (Snow-Gerono, 2008). They do communicate beforehand the requirements and how the school-based evaluation will be conducted, and this is repeated on the assessment day before the student teacher starts presenting her lesson. During the lesson observation, the supervisor assesses the lesson by providing constructive comments about various aspects of the lesson. A favourable environment is created after the lesson presentation process and observation, whereby student teachers and teacher educators reflect on the lesson and provide the student teacher with the feedback.

Student Teacher 9 had a positive experience,

> *I generally had a positive experience; my tutor teacher assessed me fairly and wrote comments on what I could improve. I do feel like she wasn't as present as she should have been, but that gave me room to grow as well.* (St 9,24/01/2020)

This student teacher's assessment went very well with her teacher educators; according to her she was assessed fairly and received fair feedback in the areas requiring further development and improvement. However, the teacher educator did not visit her as per the expected frequency

Student Teacher 7 also had a good assessment:

> *I was always only assessed by them [school-based mentors]; however, over all good experience.* (St 7,30/01/2020)

The expected standard for the assessment of the student teachers during practicum is that the summative role of assessment is from the teacher educator,

but unlike the recommended assessment, there was no teacher educator to assess this student teacher.

Grudnoff and Williams (2010) propose the triad model: student teachers are assigned to teaching schools for quite a while based on specific arrangements with the HEIs under the observation of the school-based mentors and later on are assessed by teacher educators from the initial teacher education provider. The intent to the triad assessment model is to increase the fairness of the assessment and empower the individual participants in their different but complementary roles (Haigh & Ell, 2014). However, with reference to Student Teacher 7, as above, she lacked a fair assessment as her grading process was conducted through a dyad model, without the participation of an HEI representative.

5.3.2. Supportive

With reference to Rogers and Keil (2007), it is expected that student supervisors will bear the professional and moral obligations of ensuring that they provide feedback which focuses on developing the capabilities of the student teachers into better teachers. During practicum, the school-based mentors are expected to take a greater role in identifying areas requiring student teacher support and guidance and plan opportunities for growth and development for professional identity.

Student Teacher 3 commended her evaluators:

> *My experiences with both of my evaluators were positive. They equally taught me valuable lessons and gave good criticism where needed. They approached me in a professional manner and conducted a fair evaluation.* (St 3,11/11/2019)

This student teacher received positive support from the supervisors; they gave her substantial feedback during assessment and constructive criticism which was productive rather than destructive. They treated her as a professional and with

fairness: the assessment process was open to discussion and involved her views.

Likewise, Student Teacher 10 had good experiences:

> *I had good experiences during my assessments on teaching practice.* (St 10,28/01/2020)

Although this student teacher did not elaborate on her experiences, considering the purposes of the school-based experiences, it seems her assessors were supportive, and she received the expected kind of supportive feedback after each assessment.

5.3.3. Assessor

Joughin (2009:16) and Aspden (2014:40) refer to the term *assess* as procedures of making judgement about student teacher work through an analysis of what they are capable of in the assessed domain and thus what they know, value or are capable of doing. This definition resonates with the intent of this study as the focus is on the formative and summative assessment as conducted by both the school-based mentors and teacher educators during practicum to make professional judgement of the performance of the student teachers as to their current acquisition of knowledge and skills (Haigh & Ell, 2014).

Student Teacher 7 received this assessment:

> *Learning Environments: Successful use of cyclic approach. Each point of learning cycle actively involved all the learners.* (St 7,30/01/2020)

Many of the elements of practicum in early childhood settings are like those in other educational settings, with a focus on practice and professional and relational features with guidance from an experienced practitioner.

Student Teacher 6's practicum file contained this assessment:

> *You are a focused student who has the potential who has a potential of being an excellent teacher.* (St 6, 12/01/2020)

While this student teacher exhibited the traits of an exceptionally good teacher, the teacher educators in their assessment gave room for improvement based on her

performance, indicating that she could do better than what she did in that lesson delivery.

The assessment of teaching practicum at schools plays a major role in shaping a student teacher. It is therefore important to know both who assesses student teachers when they are learning in schools and exactly what it is the assessors are assessing. Assessors of teaching practicum at schools are usually the university teacher educators. However, according to Aspden (2017:133), school-based mentors during practicum through the supportive relationships which they form with the student teachers, assesses on their level of acquisition of competencies with the intent of finding weak areas for further support whilst also forming a basis for the teacher educator assessment.

Student Teacher 8 specified her assessment areas:

> *They assessed me on competencies of research on topic, classroom management, time management learner engagement.* (St 8, 20/09/2019)

Student teachers on practicum are checked on the development of several aspects significant in their teaching professional journey before they are qualified to teach. It is expected that the student teachers are knowledgeable and in possession of good skills in terms of time and classroom management, topic research, development of lesson plans and as well as ability to involve the learners in the teaching and learning processes.

5.3.4. Providing feedback

Feedback is an essential element in the development of student teacher professional, personal and procedural skills. Feedback is a mechanism to enhance teaching skills, reinforcing theory and perspective and improve classroom management. The nature and the frequency of feedback have a great impact on the development of student teacher practicum experience. In this sense, consistent feedback is significant whereas inconsistent guidance, as explained by Zeichner

(1990), is a sign of weakness in practicum, with a damaging impact on student teacher experience.

This is expressed by Student Teacher 6:

Giving feedback and advice as well as showing the ropes, how to go about a lesson of we struggle. (St 6,12/01/2020)

Researchers affirm that reflective practice results from feedback which student teacher receive from school-based mentors and teacher educators. According to Joughin (2009:2), feedback is a process of identifying gaps between actual and desired performance of the student teachers with the purpose of developing the student teachers into reflective practitioners who are capable of learning from their experiences and taking action to bridge gaps. The belief is that assessment that focuses on growth requires effective feedback to the student teachers on their conduct and performance during practicum.

The student teacher feedback process from their assessors is at times filled with frustrations anxiety and unacceptance.

5.4. Guidelines and procedures for assessment by teacher educators

Most student teacher were assessed based on intervals as stipulated in the Teaching Practicum Manual for Session 1 and 2 (2019:1, 9, 17, 18 & 19) although some of them also regarded the school-based mentorship evaluation as assessment (formative assessment) and rated it as conducted regularly, even weekly. The student teachers were assessed based on the expected norms and standards as stipulated in the manual although not all educators conformed to standards, with some not abiding to the 48 hours' rule notifications and some even observing student teacher lessons at the incorrect time, affecting the application of the practice skills to the classroom by the student teachers which are relevant and vital for evaluation.

According to Aspden (2014:56), in most practicum assessment procedures, the teacher educator relies on several aspects in their interactions and feedback process: they assess student teachers on the activities conducted during the lesson and provide feedback on the technical elements of what they observed occurring practically in the classroom. Taking into consideration that this is a foundation phase practicum experience, the student teachers are assessed on a child-oriented performance whereby the assessor evaluates situations in which the student teacher responds to children's learning, whilst the student-oriented assessor places the student teacher at the centre of the assessment, with a focus on their personal qualities and professional growth.

With reference to the Teaching Practicum Manual for Sessions 1 and 2 (2019:1-20), the teacher educators and school-based mentors in this study assessed student teacher performance by evaluating both child-oriented performance and student-oriented performance in the classroom while also reviewing available supporting documentation such as plans, research on the topics, teaching and learning resources and classroom competencies of time management.

5.4.1. Evaluation forms and assessment rubrics

The assigned teacher educators from the university of the sampled student teachers during Session 1 assessment gave final marks or a final grade. The grade was achieved based on the teacher educator's evaluation of the school-based mentor's sheet and their own evaluation of the student teacher's assessment. An evaluation of the ten teaching practicum files shows that the teacher educators hold an upper hand, possessing the ultimate responsibility for leading the assessment visit and determining the assessment outcome, although this was not expressed as an area of concern by most of the student teachers directly.

Student Teacher 1 explained in the interview,

They wrote up an evaluation based on the details of my lesson and gave feedback

on that. And then generated a mark based on that. There was no rubric involved. (St 1,11/11/2019)

In this respect, Student Teacher 1 observed that her teacher educators never used the recommended assessment rubric, although she did not clarify whether the evaluation was written on the forms as provided by the institution of higher learning which in this case could be recommendable.

Student Teacher 3 explains her assessment:

I was assessed twice in my second session of teaching practice. One was a scheduled date to which I knew when the evaluator would come and the other was an unannounced one where I was told in which week the evaluator will come but not knowing on which day. So, I had to prepare all my lessons for that entire week and teach in case they walk in at any given time. The first evaluation was assessed on a lesson that my lecturer wanted to observe. The second evaluation was assessed on any lesson I taught provided by the timetable of the classroom. (St 3,11/11/2019)

Basing on the Practicum Teaching Manual for Sessions 1 and 2, the evaluation visits of her practicum by teacher educators were in accordance to the set patterns as the one was an announced visit and the second, an unannounced visit as recommended. In connection with the experience of Student Teacher 3, the expectation is that the assessment procedures be routinely performed by professional teachers, involve students in the classroom, promote knowledge of the practice of teaching, prompt for self-reflection and serve a formative purpose (Iversonetal, 2008:293). Research conducted on initial providers who have tried to implement these key criteria has proven that the framework is crucial in guiding institutions in ensuring that assessment tasks comply with the principles of authentic assessment.

Student Teacher 9 explained the regularity of her assessment:

We were assessed weekly by tutor teachers; they had weekly evaluation forms to fill in. At the end of each session, they also had to fill in an overall performance form and give us a percentage out of 100. On a weekly basis using a form. But also,

informally when she would observe one of my lessons, which did not happen often, about twice each week. (St 9,24/01/2020)

This student teacher was assessed using the expected evaluations forms and an overall score aggregate was reached based on a set number of lesson observations.

5.4.2. Lesson observation

Research has discovered that observation is a key to assessment too (Haigh & Ell, 2014). Within the regulatory framework, each of the sampled ten student teachers' school of teaching practicum had adopted the traditional student supervision triad of student teacher, school-based mentor and teacher educator, each contributing to the assessment in different ways. The student teacher was the centre of assessment and mentorship with the scene for assessment having been set by the school-based mentors who inducted the student teachers to the teaching and learning environment by modelling recommended classroom practices. After a certain set period of mentorship, the teacher educators from the HEIs visited the student teachers to evaluate them based on the feedback received from their respective mentors and their own assessment of the students' teaching through classroom observation of lessons (Rodgers & Keil, 2007, in Aspden, 2017:132).

As evidenced in the experience of Student Teacher 10;

They would sit at the back of the class and observe how I taught a specific lesson. They observed classroom management and learner involvement during the lesson, and if the incident arises during a lesson and If I was able to think on my feet and handle it professionally. (St 10,28/01/2020)

Literature on student teacher assessment of their practicum shows a shift towards a competency-based approach (Tinning, 2000). More recently, teacher educators have used an output approach to assess student teacher readiness to teach which involves evaluation of the student teacher's ability to demonstrate specific skills or

competencies in authentic settings (Adams & Wolf, 2008). The response of the Student Teacher 10 resonates well with the 8 Ps model of practicum Phase 3 in which the teacher educators use all the methods from Phase 1 and 2 (formative assessment) at the end of the practicum leading to the summative assessment of the student teacher readiness to teach. The only difference is that the principals and peers were not involved is the assessment in reference to the selected university offering an initial teacher education programme way of assessing student teacher readiness to teach. The student teachers were also uncertain whether teacher educators had relied on their practicum files when visiting for lesson observation.

Student Teacher 1 explained,

> *They wrote up an evaluation based on the details of my lesson and gave feedback on that. And then generated a mark based on that. There was no rubric involved. There was not really room given to discuss my performance or to consult the mentor before grading.* (St 1,11/11/2019)

Many research studies have substantiated the value of the triad relationship between the student teachers, school-based mentors and teacher educators in the summative assessment process as it assists in yielding authentic student teacher performance of practicum results, as it increases fairness of assessment and empowers the individual participants in their different but complementary roles (Haigh & Ell, 2014). To the contrary, this student teacher assessment was graded without room for feedback and discussion with the student teacher and school-based mentor on the performance; nor were recommended rubrics were used.

However, Student Teacher 1 indicated,

> *Performance was assessed by internal evaluators and one of which used the guidance of the mentor teacher and her feedback was given mainly by evaluators. Tutor teacher would provide oral feedback about areas that needed to be improved.* (St 1,11/11/2019)

Studies on practicum assessment state that the efficacy of the triad model of

practicum is to give room for more than one assessor involved in the process, allowing the student teacher, teacher educators and school-based mentors to give their voice in the assessment procedures by contributing their views. Student Teacher 1 had multiple assessors and the score aggregate for her performance derived from the feedback of the triad.

Student Teacher 6 gave evidence of this;

> *The school-based mentors would assess during lessons, giving feedback afterwards and also assess with the university evaluator once or twice during the session.* (St 6,12/01/2020)

However Darling-Hammond and Snyder (2000:528) are quick to point out the role multiple assessment plays in drawing entirely different conclusions based on different levels and kinds of expertise in bringing evidence-based performance for what constitutes a good or competent performance. Authentic assessment, they assert, is enacted by multiple sources. This involves the use of more than on measure in assessing the student teachers with the intent of providing a broader reflection of the skills and competencies acquired. Multiple data sources are used to reach assessment decisions which might include documentation of the student teachers' practices of time or achievements obtained over time and in different situations.

Student Teacher 7 said she was evaluated,

> *Through their observation of me teaching a lesson.* (St 7,30/01/2020)

She did not elaborate, however, on how the lessons were observed and what specific tools and criteria were used in determining the performance in the classroom.

In Student Teacher 6 practicum file, the evaluator wrote,

> *You began your lesson with a good warm up activity in a form of a song, children were focused as they saw the video on time, and it was a good way to introduce your lesson. It was good that you were able to make a distinction between analogue*

and digital time. (St 6,12/01/2020)

It has been argued that traditional approaches to the assessment of teacher competence should be re-examined, that assumptions behind 'competence' and the forms it can take should be challenged However, Cameron (2011), proposes an 'interpretative model of teacher competence' where assessment considers not only the observable actions of the teacher and the learning which is observed, but also the teachers' decision making and cognition processes, the base of professional knowledge and skills upon which these processes rest, and the personal characteristics, attitudes and conceptions of the individual within the role of 'teacher', thereby providing a more comprehensive, or holistic perception of the competence of the teacher (Roelefs & Sanders, 2007).

5.4.3. Review and evaluation of teaching practicum file

Strijbos, Meeus, and Libotton (2007) identify three general characteristics of practicum teaching portfolios as competency-orientation, a cycle of action and reflection, and a wide variety of media and other materials. Competency-oriented education methods, integrated with clusters of knowledge elements, skills and attitudes, require specially adapted assessment methods. Portfolio assessment is one such method and permits the integral evaluation of competencies. Second, the portfolio includes a cycle of action and reflection. In order to learn from personal teaching performance, the student must carry out teaching activities and then reflect on performance and achievements and behaviours of the students. Third, the portfolio uses a wide variety of media and other materials: to illustrate their competencies in a creative and personalised manner, students must make a well-considered selection of media and materials, such as text extracts, artefacts, illustrations, audio and video materials in some cases.

In case of Student Teacher 10 practicum file evaluation, the teacher educator commented,

> *Your school-based mentors wrote that you are a born teacher, and you can be proud of your teaching, you explained to the learners what to do with the work sheets, you positioned yourself close to the learners, your interaction with them was positive, yet another excellent!* (St 10,28/01/2020)

Recognising the role formative assessment plays in the summative assessment of the student teachers, formative assessment should be thoroughly documented to provide a clear picture of the student teacher development, and the way in which they have meaningfully responded to the feedback and their own reflection and self-evaluation. Pullman (1995) argues that if formative assessment is conducted in a detailed, comprehensive manner, it will form a strong evidential framework for the writing of the final summative practicum report.

Student Teacher 1's evaluation of her practicum file read,

> *Your tutor expressed great satisfaction with your work, you involve the learners, you give positive comments to the learners, you have very good preparation of your lessons, excellent classroom management skills, you show patience towards the children. Keep up the good work!* (St 1,11/11/2019)

Teaching practicum files allow student teachers to attain reflective learning as a result of careful consideration of prior activity with a reconstructive purpose as they base their thoughts on a conducted lesson and try to rectify it for the intended next practices (Richert, in Borko, Michalec, Timmons & Siddle, 1997), learning from previous lesson mistakes. The portfolio rests on accuracy on the part of the student teacher as they remember the past classroom events fully. Thomas (2007) determines that portfolio construction enhances reflective practices as well as professional sustainability. An analysis of the teaching practicum files makes evident that the teacher educators based their evaluations on the school-based mentors and student teachers' own reflections as the basis for their grading.

5.5. Frequency of teacher educator assessment of the student teachers

Teacher educator frequency of assessment of student teachers' readiness to teach

is determined by several factors, including their role as stipulated by the responsible HEI, their position (whether they have been appointed as external moderators or not), purpose of assessment, and their background and understanding of the role of the assessor. According to the university offering an Initial Teacher Education Programme Manual for Foundation Phase Sessions 1 and 2 (2019), teacher educators are assigned based on their subject specialisation to assess the student teacher lessons and classroom practices in English, mathematics and literacy.

5.5.1. Twice per practicum session

The Teaching Practicum Manual for Session 1 and 2 (2019:11) for the Cape Peninsula University of Technology for teaching foundation phase classroom recommends that teacher educators assess the student teacher lessons twice per practicum, discouraging that students be evaluated in the same subject during one session unless the second evaluator requires otherwise. When the student teachers in the study were asked the frequency of their school-based assessment, only two indicated that they had been visited by the teacher educators twice, in alignment with what is recommended per CPUT evaluation of practicum for summative purposes.

According to Student Teacher 1,

> *If I'm not mistaken, it was either one or twice during 1 session. Each session lasted 4 weeks.* (St 1,11/11/2019)

5.5.2. Three times a year

Each year the student teachers at a university offering an initial teacher education programme are sent out for their practicum experiences in teaching schools where they are guided, supported and advised by experienced teachers and later on within the practicum exercise, teacher educators are sent to these schools to assess them

on their performance.

Student Teacher 7 indicated this:

> *At least three assessments a year. (St 7,30/01/2020)*

This student teacher, bearing in mind the whole practicum programme from first to fourth year, indicated assessment as three times a year: she was referring to the whole teacher educator assessment procedures of the actual two expected evaluation visits and one unannounced evaluation visit.

5.5.3. Quite a lot

Unlike this student teacher, another student teacher admitted to being assessed 'quite a lot' by her evaluators; she mentioned specific areas which she felt were of too much focus during the assessment. These assessments might have been 'quite a lot' based on the expected two visits and or unannounced evaluation visit, or the student teacher was referring to the evaluation conducted by the school-based mentor. In certain circumstances where a student is performing extraordinarily or under-performing, the HEI assigns another evaluator to confirm if the feedback received is valid or not.

Student Teacher 6 explained,

> *They assess quite a lot as they assess the lessons we teach and the overall session of how we handled the class and other aspects such as admin and punctuality.* (St 6,12/01/2020)

5.6. Student teacher and teacher educator relationship

The ten student teachers interviewed for this research described the relationship

they had with their school-based mentors as professional, assessing, mentoring, supportive, conflict resolving, affirming, and providing feedback to facilitate their professional growth.

5.6.1. Professional relationship of teacher educator

As mentioned earlier, the effectiveness of practicum supervisors is classified into professional, personal and procedural parameters, each of which focuses on several issues pertaining to the overall composition of that parameter. Professionalism constitutes the backbone of the teaching process. This justifies the attention given by the practicum supervisors to the professional parameter, with reference to the student teachers' feedback as evidenced in quotes under provision. Most of the participants agreed that the practicum supervisors were effective at the professional level. They gave special emphasis on the nature and frequency of the feedback; they not only provided student teachers with clear and useful feedback, but they also provided written feedback to refer to at any time.

Student Teacher 1 affirmed,

> *I have a good relationship with them. But I think that's due to knowing them as lecturers for four years. They were always professional and kind to me during assessment. They never interrupted me and observed me. Never made me feel uncomfortable at any point. (St 1,11/11/2019)*

Such findings are supported by evidence from other studies mentioned in the literature which show that teacher educators are regarded as effective sources of professional information related to planning lessons, designing and executing teaching activities, evaluating student performance, tackling discipline problems and a source of emotional support (Wallace, 1991; Smith & Ardle, 1994; Beck & Kosnik, 2000). According to this student teacher, the practicum supervisors were effective in the personal parameter: they were a source of emotional support apart from being professionals because she had known them for a long time. Furthermore, the student teacher expressed positive perceptions towards the

practicum supervisor effectiveness on the procedural parameter.

Student Teacher 3 commented,

> *The relationship I had with both of my lecturers were professional and calm. I was at ease with both as they were my lecturers from my first year, so I'm quite used to them and aware of what standards they are expecting of me as an almost qualified teacher.* (St 3, 11/11/2019)

Student teacher shape their practices in accordance to that which they observe. The 'need to please', as identified by Goodnough et al. (2009), was manifest in these data. The students saw both associate teachers and teacher educators as being in positions of power due to their role in assessment, and actively shaped their practices to achieve a good assessment outcome. A professional relationship, then, brings about good practices.

Student Teacher 2 knew the teacher educator who came to visit had attended face-to-face classes with her within the theoretical initial teacher education context. In the semi-structured interview, the student teacher revealed that she entered the assessment visit with preconceived ideas of what the teacher educator would be looking for and then planned for the 'performance' expected.

The idea of performance for assessment was explicitly evidenced by Student Teacher 2 as she referred to the notion of being a 'performing seal' and admitted that she had made deliberate choices to please the assessor as she was aware of what is expected of a qualified teacher.

Student Teacher 9 said this about her relationship,

> *I think with my own tutor teacher, not a very deep one. It was friendly and professional, as she was distracted most of the time (being the deputy principal). But with her co-worker a good and close relationship, like a true helpful mentor.* (St 9, 24/01/2020)

5.6.2. Mentoring

Mentoring occurred in circumstances whereby teacher educators provided feedback to the student teachers on their knowledge and skills acquired as reflected in their performance during a lesson observation or practicum evaluation based on their strengths and weaknesses through modelling best practices (Nasser, 1987:12; Burke & McKeen, 1989:76). If the student teachers are open enough for discussion after their assessment, teacher educators provide information, advice, emotional support and guidance and transmit their knowledge, skills and professional experiences to the student teachers.

Student Teacher 10 appreciated the mentoring,

> *I feel it was kind of mentoring as my school-based mentor was always present in my classroom to assist me, she modelled lessons and how to use the teaching and learning aids to me. She assisted me in developing my own lesson plans and how to research on my topics. She was really a person who was friendly and professional before me.* (St 10, 28/01/2020)

The expectation is that such relationships last for a period and are marked by substantial emotional commitment by both parties. If the opportunity presents itself, the mentor also uses both formal and informal forms of influence to further the career of the student teacher (Bowen, 1985:31).

5.6.3. Supportive relationships

Other models of teacher competence and teacher effectiveness exclusively highlight the role of learning opportunities in teacher education and professional learning in the enhancement of effectiveness (Muijs et al., 2014). The model of teacher professional competence proposes that competence develops over time through the provision of learning opportunities. Hence, the teacher educator assessment of the practicum serves as an opportunity to support student teacher development of competencies.

Student Teacher 7 said,

> *I had a very supportive and very good relationship with them.* (St 7, 30/01/2020)

While this student teacher did not elaborate, she received a satisfactory assessment procedure from her teacher educators because she had developed an understanding and open professional working relationship with them.

5.6.4. Resolving conflict

Research shows that handling classroom conflict is a part of teacher expectations, as even seemingly small disputes can negatively impact the classroom environment and interfere with long-term relationships. Consequently, student teachers need skills in managing conflicts peacefully if they are to develop young children who are capable of learning to reconcile and value a peaceful classroom environment (Kiebel, 2018:1).

Student Teacher 1 faced some classroom disruption,

> *Definitely a few challenging children. In the beginning, I was frustrated with any child who didn't participate in my lessons, but I then realised that children learn differently... I think teachers also generally struggle with children who have ADD, but I love researching ways to help them without medicine … to keep them busy and not … frustrated.* (St 1, 11/11/2019)

For young children, various tactics to minimize disruption could include group work, encouraging young children to role play through dramatic activities, teaching them how their behaviour can impact others and ways to manage their emotions.

5.6.5. Affirming practice

Only two of the student teachers interviewed out of the designated sample expressed satisfaction in the manner their assessment meetings were conducted, as they were inclusive and involved personal conversation amongst the triad, characterised by a professional sharing of knowledge, giving and receiving of

feedback, and shared engagement in teaching and learning. These were the affirmations which they had received from the evaluators.

Student Teacher 7 received these affirming comments from her teacher educators,

Overall, this was a very good lesson. Well done! (St 7, 30/01/2020)

Student Teacher 7 seems to have been in a collegial and relational supportive practicum assessment environment, with emphasis on affirmation in a positive and friendly way whilst complimenting the practicum her practicum performance.

Student Teacher 3 received this positive comment from her teacher educators,

Your writing is well formulated and understandable. (St 3, 11/11/2019)

Writing has an impact on the delivery of the content to learner during lesson presentation in the classroom. Comments from the teacher educator show that this student teacher discharged well her handwriting lesson during practicum. She received positive affirmations from her assessors on her practice.

5.7.   Assessed competencies during practicum

Student teachers on practicum are evaluated and assessed on the expected and portrayed competences required to qualify them to teach. Amongst these competencies are the skills to plan, research, develop lesson plan present lessons in the classroom, manage a classroom, manage time, and testing and assessment skills.

With reference to this research study, most student teachers mentioned these outcomes as the areas most assessed by the teacher educators during practicum in the teaching schools. Portfolios, for example, include content showing evidence of lesson preparation and presentation skills, time management, classroom management, dress code and research on topic of lesson.

5.7.1. Plans and preparation

Practicum students are expected to carefully plan their lessons and activities. These plans should be available to the mentor teacher, the university supervisor and the seminar instructor prior to the lesson being taught. For the Cape Peninsula University of Technology Initial Teacher Education Programme, student teachers are expected to handle any practicum documents related to the teacher educators 48 hours before the actual evaluation procedures.

In regard to the teaching practicum file, one teacher educator indicated,

> *The lesson plan for the lesson observed was conceptually cohesive and comprehensive. The teacher had prepared adequate resources for her lesson, this was good.* (St 1,11/11/2019)

The mastery of the subject is central to the craft of the teacher. Excellent subject knowledge is indeed hugely important to good teaching, particularly as the CAPS curriculum must be firmly wedded to subjects and all must be reflected into a detailed, well thought out lesson plan to ensure effective classroom performance.

Student Teacher 3 spoke of the importance of planning,

> *The competencies that were of focus was namely: Do I plan with purpose, allow active participation from my learners, provide opportunities for meaningful knowledge and understanding. This also includes the way I teach as well as bringing in the learner's voices during discussions on the mat.* (St 3,11/11/2019)

An evaluation of Student Teacher 5 practicum file revealed this feedback about planning:

> *Work on more expansive lesson plans and involving the learners as much as possible – learner participation is so important.* (St 5,14/10/2019)

Darling-Hammond et al. (2005:176) acknowledge that lesson plans to be developed in such a manner that they meet learner demands of the content. So student teachers on practicum are required to possess very good abilities to plan and construct pedagogical content knowledge in such a manner that they do not restrict their lesson plans in case new knowledge emerges based on the environment in

which the lesson is taking place.

The Student Teacher 9 evaluation of her overall reflection of the teaching practicum experiences mentioned flexibility inherent in planning:

> *Some lessons were a hit and others a miss, I don't think any lesson has ever gone exactly according to plan, but that's teaching; being thrown in the deep end and having to swim.* (St 9,24/01/2020)

5.7.2. Time management

Research shows that supervisors regularly alert student teachers to effective time management skills as they face difficulties in estimating how much time each element of the lesson, in-class activities, or any instructional components will take. Student teachers need thorough training and practice acquiring time management skill. This finding agrees with Collins (1990) when he stated that time management, requiring well-prepared and organised lesson planning by a skilful teacher, remains a challenge to most teachers. In line with this, the participants expressed their perception of preparing activities and exercises associated with the lesson as highly challenging teaching skills.

This element of effective time management skills was expressed by Student Teachers 6 and 9.

Student Teacher 6 was commended in her practicum file:

> *It was also noted that you managed your time very well.* (St 6,12/01/2020)

According to the evaluators, this student teacher managed her time well during her lesson which means she planned her lesson accordingly. Time was allocated to each practical activity and she managed to control the learners during the activities within the set time.

5.7.3. Classroom management

According to Orchard and Winch (2007:15), student teachers on practicum must exude personal authority in the classroom. A successful student teacher on practicum is someone who commands respect in the classroom, evidenced by the high regard in which they are held by their pupils.

Student Teacher 9 made reference to classroom management:

> *They were assessing our professionalism, lesson planning, attitude, initiative taking, work ethic, understanding of planning, resources, learner involvement, class management, communication skills, time management and admin and organisational skills.* (St 9,24/01/2020)

Classroom management problems are sometimes a result of failure to plan thoroughly, resulting in aimless teaching and the choice of inappropriate teaching strategies (Killen, 2010:85; Criticos et al., 2009). Student teachers with confidence develop the ability to anticipate cope with unexpected demands which might affect their classroom management.

Student Teacher 10, for example, was also aware of the priority of classroom management:

> *During my teaching practicum the school-based mentors focused on classroom management, time, learner involvement and flexibility.* (St 10,28/01/2020)

Student teachers indicated that by observing classrooms, interacting with learners in the classroom, and following a cooperative teacher through pre- and post-discussion sessions, they acquired pedagogical strategies to better manage the classroom and the instructional processes (Köksal & Genç, 2019:13).

Student Teacher 6, in her practicum file, was commended for her classroom management:

> *You also managed the class well. As the learners worked on the mat, you walked around the rest of the class to see if help was required. When children are working, try to sit on the mat with them or on the chair and not stand.* (St 6,12/01/2020)

Student Teacher 7, likewise, knew classroom management was important:

> *Classroom management skills, time management, how you teach, what methods you use.* (St 7, 30/01/2020)

Another significant element in the craft of teaching is the ability to make judgments suitable to the current circumstances in the classroom. This classroom management skill of situational understanding enables teachers to consider a range of factors that have a bearing on pupil behaviour and learning (Orchard &Winch, 2014:15).

Student Teacher 9 spoke of management students while multitasking:

> *As well as the teacher competence of testing and assessment, I marked and recorded the marks of tests. And the competency of learning to multi-task, doing group work, controlling the class while having to fill in forms for the principal.* (St 9,24/01/2020)

Student teachers during practicum are also entrusted with testing and assessing the performance of the learners which they are teaching. Student teachers are expected to develop and show multi-tasking skills within their classrooms and outside the classroom during practicum, including classroom management skills.

Student Teacher 3 also mentioned the priority of classroom management:

> *Competencies that were of focus was time management, classroom behaviour management and confidence in teaching. This was her focus in trying to cultivate those factors in my teaching experience and as I continued to teach and plan my lessons, those factors played an important role as a reminder.* (St 3,11/11/2019)

This student teacher, in her previous school-based mentoring sessions, had inadequate skills of time and classroom management, coupled with low confidence in teaching and planning her lessons, but with attention from her school-based mentors, she improved her weak areas and turned these into strengths.

5.7.4. Communication skills

Practicum student teachers are expected to possess particularly good communication skills in all of their conduct. They are to communicate clearly and

professionally in all situations, respectful to fellow members of staff, parents and learners. They are to ensure that they pass on information in the classroom audibly, with a clear voice, clear written materials and good handwriting on the chalk board (Vanderbilt University Practicum Handbook Comprehensive Program: 2009:11).

Student Teacher 7 explained,

> *Communication, the way we were communicating to the learners, fellow members of staff, our school-based mentors as well as the teacher educators. They were expecting us to be clear and under stable in whatever we were doing, teaching young children requires very good communication skills.* (St 7,30/01/2020)

Floyd and Jacobs (1992) suggest that the most important component of the educational organisation is communication, and specifically, if school-based mentors are capable of understanding school communication, it is easy for them to assist student teachers to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Moreover, the student teachers should be aware of the importance of effective communication during practicum, as it easily allows them to acquire the necessary information for support, communicate effectively to the learners and understand the feedback which they receive from their evaluators as they discuss marks.

5.7.5. Administration and organisation skills

The skills of admin and organisation help to integrate knowledge and understanding from a wide variety of fields. In school classrooms in which change can take place individually, if that change is not somehow woven into the larger system, then its impact is considerably diminished, if not misunderstood (Hughes, 1999:134).

Student Teacher 9 commented bout admin,

> *And also, admin, which I don't think theory can prepare you for, I helped with a lot of admin.* (St 9,24/01/2020)

Student teachers are given an opportunity to be part of the instructional decision processes, organising and administrating as well as teaching (Beach & Reinhartz,

2000:39).

5.7.6. Professionalism

Assessment criteria include professionalism, lesson planning, positive attitude, initiative, work ethic, plans with understanding and focus, resources are developed, active learning involvement, class management, communication skills, time management and administration and organisational skills. First on the list is professionalism. And professionalism can encompass the way a student teacher dresses and conducts herself.

Student Teacher 1 practicum file noted:

> *The teacher was well dressed and turned out in line with the CPUT dress code. The tutor teacher expressed great satisfaction with the student teacher work. Keep up the good work!* (St 1,11/11/2019)

The way student teachers dress during practicum and for the rest of their teaching career has an impact on the command and authority which they have in the classroom. Furthermore, learners have better models when teachers dress well as it shows how professional they are and the respect they have for their role as student teachers and ultimately, teachers.

Student Teacher 6 included professionalism in the things she was assessed on:

> *Classroom management, the content we taught, the connection we have with the learners, our time management, professionalism, punctuality, if we are following the correct rules and regulations of the school, if we following the CAPS document and our response to the learners.* (St 6,12/01/2020)

5.7.7. Learning environment

Learning environment refers to the diverse physical locations, contexts and cultures in which children learn. The term encompasses the culture of a school

or class – its presiding ethos and characteristics, including how individuals interact with and treat one another – as well as the ways in which teachers organise an educational setting to facilitate learning.

Student Teacher 10 lesson evaluation by a teacher educator alluded to this:

> *The teacher successfully used the cyclic approach, all the learners were actively involved and engaged at each point actively of the cycle, it was good.* (St 10,28/01/2020)

The student teacher had created a favourable environment for learning in which the children could participate through suitable approaches. As teaching young children is different from teaching student teachers teaching in foundation phase must actively engage all earners when delivering their lessons. Student teachers must be conversant with psychological theories of teaching young children and opt for approaches which entice all the children to participate in lessons.

5.8. Professional growth and development of assessed competencies

Student teachers have multiple roles whilst on teaching practicum as they are expected to show growth, to reflect on their practices and feedback from their performance, to build relationships, to link theory to practice, to demonstrate competency development and show improved practices.

During interviews with the student teachers, on their experiences on areas of professional growth and development, most cited lesson introduction and presentation, teaching and learning methodological practices, handwriting, lesson plans, communication skills and planning skills as competencies which the teacher educators felt were relevant to be assessed as a requisite for growth.

5.8.1. Lesson introduction and presentation

Lesson introduction and presentation involves several ways of making lessons interesting for different ability classes and building rapport with the learners to gain

their trust.

According to Student Teacher 2,

> *They provided the knowledge and understanding of how to introduce and teach a lesson in a fun and interactive way, plus produce competent and critical thinkers in the classroom. They also spoke to me individually about how my lesson went, discussing the areas they approved of and what areas I needed to work on.* (St 2,20/09/2019)

Teaching young children in the early phases of education requires effective lesson introduction and presentation skills. Hence for student teachers, during practicum evaluation, emphasis is placed on how they introduce their lesson and present it. Young children learn best when their lessons are participatory and fun, whilst ensuring that the content is presented in accordance with the plans and meets different learning needs. When the evaluators notice a weak area in the learners, the student teachers are guided and advised accordingly with the purpose of their improvement.

5.8.2. Teaching and learning methodological practices

Clapton and Cree (2004) and Wrenn and Wrenn (2009:261) emphasise the need for learning models that integrate theory and practice in ways that bring the field into the classroom as well as take the classroom into the field. It is crucial for student teachers to ensure that appropriate teaching and learning practices are applied into the classroom during the lesson.

With reference to Student Teacher 1 practicum file,

> *It was good to note that as you introduced the concept of more, less, equal you also used the flashcards related to the concept. Similarly, you also followed this approach with the concepts of smallest, greatest. Your instructions for the other groups was also clear.* (St 1,11/11/2019)

The teacher educator noted that the student teacher's teaching and learning methodologies were suitable for the content and context of the lesson. This was maintained throughout her lesson: this student teacher was able to wind up the lesson by reminding students of what they had learnt for that particular day.

Student Teacher 7's file included this praise,

> *Well thought of and calculated lesson….Demonstrated very good teaching skills, the lesson had all the requisite of an effective lesson, it was learner-centred, interactive and good classroom management skills. The teacher had to improve by using the teacher activity stage of the cyclic approach to allow herself to hear the individual learners read. (St 7,30/01/2020)*

5.8.3. Lesson plans development

A student teacher without a well-developed lesson plan faces challenges in delivering content accurately during practicum. Thoughtful, developed and successful lesson plans meet varying learner needs as they contain well studied knowledge of the subject matter. What a teacher explains has a major impact on how students understand concepts. Therefore, teachers need be competent in their knowledge of the subject they teach, and plan their delivery. This applies to all subject teachers but is especially critical for those who handle subjects such as English, mathematics and science, where an erroneous understanding of one concept can lead to faulty comprehension of other concepts based on it.

Student Teacher 1 said;

> *Well since they marked us on only the lesson, they would give feedback on the lesson… and always told us how we could improve the lesson we taught. But with regards to the actual mark we would receive... I honestly don't know what to do in order to receive a perfect score. (St 1,11/112019)*

This student teacher expressed concerns about teaching with the right pedagogical skills. Through the assessment of her lesson, the teacher educator gave feedback

on her performance and suggestions for improving her pedagogical skills and lesson plans.

5.8.4. Communication skills

Communication with the learners involves the way they present their lesson, how they interact with the learners, how clear their voice and handwriting is, as well as the way their teaching and learning resources are effectively structured to communicate the content to the learners. However, student teacher communication to the learners is hindered by factors such as noisy classrooms, so student teachers need effective classroom management skills. Another challenge to communication is using words which are not age appropriate as they hinder the learners in understanding content clearly. Student teachers need also to speak slowly and clearly when engaging with the learners to avoid them missing important content.

Student Teacher 6 was commended on her communication:

> *For this lesson you gave clear instructions to the children in order for them to complete their activities.* (St 6,12/01/2020)

Effective communication means that the student teacher had clear instructions, making it easy for learners to understand with clarity and also to participate in the classroom activities.

5.8.5. Planning skills

Planning skills are relevant for student teachers on practicum as they are required to prepare for their lessons in the initial stage of practicum, organise their schemes of work, construct a portfolio of learning and develop appropriate teaching aids (Kyriacou & Stephens, 1999:9).

Student Teacher 9 received planning tips:

> *Mainly through the form of oral advice, they would give tips on what to do, as well as by showing me how to plan and work out the day.* (St 9,24/01/2020)

It is common for student teachers on practicum to experience difficulties with their lessons when they do match to the realities of the classroom. Not all planned learning activities planned work in practice and some tasks planned for the learners do not go by schedule, so the teacher educator has responsibility, through written and oral feedback, to advise the student teachers on the critical nature of planning for practicum and teaching success.

Student Teacher 1 indicated that planning was assessed:

> *It seemed like they focused on the following; classroom management, lesson plan format, does your lesson plan follow CPUT guidelines. If your activities developing your learners. If your lesson had an introduction, exposition, conclusion. It was focused on that one lesson you would teach in front of them.* (St 1,11/11/2019)

This student teacher elaborated clearly on the plans during teaching practicum and even went further in explaining the role of the teaching practicum file in the assessment process. Amongst the plans mentioned were lesson plans which the evaluators assessed on the activities and lesson content for developing learners, and if the lesson presentation was in line with the recommended outline in the Teaching Practicum Manual for Session 1 and 2 (2019).

5.9. Nature of the developed competencies

The developed competencies during assessment are reflected from the biographical data collected, semi-structured interview data and the evaluated teaching practicum files. Student teachers, when interviewed, mentioned that planning skills, research skills and practice skills were the most developed competencies during assessment. In the portfolios, others mentioned time management, classroom management, research on different content areas and learner involvement.

5.9.1. Planning skill development

Planning skills during school-based experiences assessed competencies includes lesson planning, their ability to implement the plan, using teaching aids effectively while teaching, classroom management and self-reflection. It was expected that the assessment serves as an opportunity for the student teachers to enhance their pedagogical skills (Barry & King, 2002:45), taking into consideration that effective teachers spends a great deal of time on careful and detailed planning.

Student Teacher 3;

> *The competencies I developed was to teach with a purpose. Plan detailed lessons with a variety of learning styles and activities…. The way I conduct myself as a teacher and to be flexible … to adapt to any situation in which I am placed in and to make the best out of it despite negative factors.* (St 3,11/11/2019)

The student teacher experienced the assessment as an opportunity to develop knowledge and skills in real classroom settings as well as deciding what to teach and how to teach it (Ganand & Lee, 2015).

5.9.2. Research skills

Student teachers on practicum are expected to research innovative teaching approaches, information on teaching curriculum subjects (based on CAPs), research on learner needs and gaps, as well as be conversant with specific content of the lessons to be taught.

Student Teacher 1 expressed her passion that bolstered her research:

> *I am so incredibly passionate about teaching. I love being a part of educating our future leaders and I realise the weight that it has. I have spent hours researching, often while I should be relaxing.* (St 1,11/11/2019)

It is vital that teachers on practicum be knowledgeable of the subject matter, researching as much as necessary to be fully prepared in the classroom. Similar to other student teachers, this student allocated her practicum time to research the lessons to be taught, plan her lessons sufficiently, and research content appropriate

for foundation phase teaching and learning.

5.9.3. Practice skills

As the call to prepare teachers to be reflective about their practices is a dominant theme in recent teacher education literature (Borko, Michalec, Timmons & Siddle, 1997:345), there are demands on student teachers to be reflective in their approaches towards their professional learning and practice teaching (Thomas, 2007a). The student teacher has multiple tasks while on practicum; to show growth, to reflect, to research, to observe, to build relationships, to link theory to practice, to demonstrate competence. Student teachers are expected to effectively teach the content of the subject through proper age-appropriate teaching methodologies, taking into consideration learners different needs and learning styles.

5.9.4. Time management

Time management is another competency assessed during practicum. Student teachers are expected to cope with the general workload of being a teacher, often a quite full schedule. Although their school-based mentors try to reduce their timetable, student teachers seem to be challenged in undertaking multiple tasks and teaching topics for the first time. According to Kyriacou and Stephens (1999:4), students teacher time on planning is demanding: they are compared to experienced teachers, but it takes longer for them to complete tasks as they need to devote to planning and preparation, finding and developing curriculum materials, ensuring that they are knowledgeable about the subject matter, and conducting the necessary assessment of learner progress, including marking any written work.

Student Teacher 7 specifically identified time management as an area needing development:

> *Time management skills and classroom management skills.* (St 7,30/01/2020)

This student teacher developed the ability to pace the lesson for different ability classes and manage her classroom as expected during practicum after practicing for the whole school-based period. Time management is crucial throughout for lesson delivery as content is based on CAPs with a rigorous delivery schedule and recommended time-frame.

5.9.5. Classroom management

It is recommended that student teachers have a solid awareness of learner actions during classroom instruction to be well positioned to maintain a productive learning environment. Disruptive learners are likely to be less disruptive if they are within a teacher's visibility. Hence student teachers need to develop techniques to handle difficult learners in the classroom. In teaching young children, for example, flash cards, visual aids or songs reinforce learner attention to the lesson. Students are more willing to engage in a classroom setting if they believe what they are learning has real value.

Student Teacher 9 received help in this regard:

> *I think I developed classroom management, better planning and admin skills and also professionalism with the staff.* (St 9,24/01/2020)

This student teacher, in addition to acquiring the classroom management skills, went beyond, mentioning planning skills, administration skills and professionalism when working with other members of staff as other competencies developed. She grew capable in proper planning of lessons, managing her classroom resources and her conduct withe members of staff within the school environment as a professional.

Student Teacher 9 also improved classroom management skills:

> *Evaluator said I had very good classroom management and handled the class well even though the mentor teacher was absent.* (St 9,24/01/2020)

Despite her mentor teacher absence, this student teacher managed the classroom

to the best of her capabilities.

5.10. Opportunities and challenges encountered on assessment

Student teacher opportunities and challenges encountered on assessment during practicum emanate from the judgements about their work as enacted by the teacher educators. The teacher educators assess what they can do or not, what they know or not, what they value or not, and these determine their challenges and opportunities from the assessment. Haigh and Ell (2014) explain that teacher educators make 'professional judgements' about the current knowledge, skills and practices of the student teacher to draw inferences as to their potential teaching practices as a graduate entering the profession.

5.10.1. Opportunities resulting from the assessment

The student teachers regarded the evaluation visits as opportunities to converse with teacher educators on substantial issues pertaining to the improvement of their practices and competencies. Practical experiences of expert teachers who observe student teacher lessons and give feedback on various teaching strategies during the school experience are the most important factors in student teacher professional growth and development. When student teachers were asked to mention opportunities gained from practicum assessment, they mentioned two: knowledge on how to improve lesson presentation delivery and classroom management.

5.10.1.1. Knowledge on how to improve on lesson presentation delivery

Student teachers developed knowledge on how to improve their lesson presentation delivery from feedback from their assessors and the classroom context during the lesson delivery. When presenting their lessons, the student teachers had an opportunity to listen to learners, determine their errors and consolidate the newly

learned knowledge and practice. They managed to apply different learning styles, found ways to enhance motivation, provided some kind of reinforcement, encouraged learners to participate in the activities, planned effective lessons, diagnosed student interest and realised their weaknesses. All of this aided in presenting lessons.

Student Teacher 3 relied on lecturers for lesson delivery advice:

> *The opportunities that I took from my lecturers were that I asked them many questions as to how I could improve on my lessons for the future. They gave me good insight and advice in those areas.* (St 3,11/11/2019)

Assessment during teaching practicum provided opportunities for student teachers to gain pedagogical knowledge and skills by enquiring, and then practicing, what constitutes effective teacher in an array of teaching situations. As HEIs are capacitated with the theoretical aspect of training, practicum is the opportunity to apply the pedagogical knowledge and skills within the classrooms under the observation of the teacher educators.

Student Teacher 1 appreciated lesson discussions:

> *Something I always loved about evaluations, was the discussion afterwards. I love picking people's brains. And I know that my evaluators have so much knowledge. So, I love giving them scenarios and asking their opinions.* (St 1,11/11/2019)

Practicum gave the opportunity to receive the feedback from her evaluators and tap into their knowledge as they were more experienced and better positioned to address her pre-conceived ideas, scenarios and opinions about teaching in classroom. From this, the student teacher lesson delivery skills improved.

5.10.1.2. Classroom management skills

As effective learning requires an atmosphere of relative calm during and practice sessions, it is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that learner behaviour in the explanation classroom promotes such an atmosphere. Teachers need to schedule

activities that keep students busy, monitor noise levels and discipline unruly behaviour. A fair and impartial approach, a gentle but firm manner of handling disobedience, supportive criticism, respect for students and being approachable are important qualities that help teachers in classroom management.

Student Teacher 9 was able to grow in classroom management:

> *There were many opportunities for growth in classroom management and planning adapted to the learners needs. I also felt that I was assessed fairly.* (St 9,24/01/2020)

5.10.2. Challenges encountered from the assessment

Challenges to practicum assessment are multiple: lack of support in terms of materials and equipment, problem resulting from the course book, problems resulting from the students, problems resulting from the curriculum and problems resulting from the classroom environment. Foncha, Abongdia and Adu (2017:1) note that school placement, resources, learners discipline and classroom management, supervision and support, and observations impede the evaluation of student teacher performance. Student teachers in this study mentioned the following as challenges affecting their performance: inadequate school evaluation visits and lesson observation, poor timing of teacher educator evaluation of student teacher lessons, inconsistency on *how* the student teachers are evaluated on their practicum and lack of uniformity in the assessment processes.

5.10.2.1. Inadequate school evaluation visits and lesson observation

Student teachers' express dissatisfaction in the frequency of teacher educator evaluation of their lessons through observation of them teaching in the classroom. The student teachers felt that two lesson observations in a practicum assignment of 8-12 weeks was not adequate to determine a final grade of their practicum performance.

Student Teacher 1 noted this frustration:

A challenge I mentioned as before, is that I wish they had observed more… because I don't feel that they could truly assess your ability to be a teacher in 45 minutes. Especially when there are external evaluators. (St 1,11/11/2019)

Haigh and Ell (2014) argue for transparency in relation to the purpose and practice of practicum assessment, taking into consideration the problematic nature of practicum, unfairness and inappropriateness towards the student teachers. Haigh (2001), Ortlipp (2003, 2006), and Hawe (2002) attribute the problems of assessment of practice to bias, unreliability and inconsistency, calling in HEIs and teaching schools to resolve the problems if the integrity of the assessment system and the qualification awarded are to be protected, and if the public is to have confidence in teacher educators as the gatekeepers to an initial teaching position (Hawe, 2001:19). invested in their success, both by the student teacher and the accrediting institution.

5.10.2.2.   Poor timing of teacher educator evaluation of student teachers' lessons

Timing is significant during teaching practicum: both teacher educators and student teachers had to observe to the 48-hour rule to ensure that they met the requirement for each lesson observation before and after each lesson. Time has impact on how the lesson is evaluated: the pace in which the student teacher runs the lesson and the level to which she manages the classroom, rushing or delaying the lesson, might affect learning and retention.

Student Teacher 3 faced this time challenge:

The challenges that I encountered whilst being assessed was the timing of my lecturers in which they came to my classroom. At certain times of the day, my learners become hyperactive especially after first interval. So, once they return to class, their learning capacity and focus is a problem to maintain. (St 3,11/11/2019)

Evaluators were inconsistent in meeting the expectations of the timing rules and regulations for visiting the classes of student teachers for assessment, thereby affecting the classroom management of the student teacher.

5.10.2.3. Inconsistency of student teacher evaluation on practicum

Aspden (2014:24) states that teacher educators should bear the heavy responsibility for making fair and accurate assessments of the practices observed, knowing that such assessments have significant implications for the student teacher's future career, as well as the children which they are to teach, their families and communities in which they work. However, Ortlipp (2003a:33) is quick to identify the subjectivity of those who participate in practicum assessment. Researchers have raised awareness of the need for scrutiny on practicum assessment processes by allowing open debates and discussions. Although there are explicit policies and practices to guide the practicum assessment for a university offering an initial teacher education programme, challenges remain in spite of a handbook outlining practices and regulations.

One of the student teacher interviewed expressed dissatisfaction with her final grade which she was given by the evaluators, claiming that despite strong effort in the exercise, she was still given the same grade throughout and noted that there was no room for negotiation although she tried to reason with the assessors.

For example, Student Teacher 2 commented,

> *I felt like I was not assessed fairly as the two teacher educators who had visited me separately were not using the same criteria of assessment, I never saw any rubric maybe they were using their past assessment experiences. It's really frustrating as the grades which I got did not match my efforts.* (St 2,20/09/2019)

Student teachers tend to be confused by instinctive judgements by the teacher educators because they are not aware of the reasons behind the assessor's decisions; this requires transparency and accountability (Adie, Lloyd & Beutal, 2013;

Coll, Taylor & Grainger, 2002). Scholarly work on the initial teacher education programme assessment of practicum perceives it as an exercise of 'professional judgement' as enacted by HEI teacher educators (Joughin, 2009). Similar studies as conducted by Hawe (2002:98) in New Zealand find that practicum relies heavily on the act of 'professional judgement' within a standards and criterion-oriented approach, and note concern regarding the potential fallibility of such judgements. Several factors are in the mix – intuition, personal feelings, experience, knowledge of the subject and cumulative knowledge of the student were acknowledged – as key elements of professional judgement.

5.10.2.4. Lack of uniformity in the assessment processes

Literature on practicum assessment states that most irregularities and non-uniformities with assessment arise from the struggle in balancing its functions that at times appears to be contradictory (Smith, 2007). According to Boud (2009), formative assessment has gained recent recognition although it is still regarded as subordinate to the summative assessment which carries more weight for the qualification. However, the recommendation is that both summative and formative assessment be conducted, and valued, based on the prescribed criteria as with reference to the HEIs teaching practicum schools partnership models.

Student Teacher 1 expressed dissatisfaction in her practicum assessment,

> *Another challenge is that not all evaluators are following the same criteria when assessing. So, some students are getting crazy high marks... where others are struggling to receive distinctions, because one evaluator is looking for something else in a student's lesson.* (St 1,11/11/2019)

Aspden (2014:41) explains the way in which summative processes are supposed to be enacted to ensure its credibility: grading during summative assessment should rely on the raw data collected through the teacher educator's observation of the lessons and evaluation of the school-based mentors' contribution to the student teacher's practicum file. The teacher educators should aggregate the different

assessment points and convert to the measurement of the system of the institution. The university of this study, for example, replied on a Likert Scale from 1-4.

5.10.2.5. Student teacher failure to meet lesson plan submission deadlines

According to the Teaching Practicum Manual for Sessions 1 and 2 (2019:5), it is expected that all student teachers submit all prescribed documentation for their practicum assessment within either the stipulated dates or time so research supervisors have sufficient time to analyse and evaluate the documentation before the actual day of the assessment. Failure to do so affects the whole process of the assessment; this was one of the factors which student teacher expressed as a challenge during assessment.

Student teachers are required to submit their lesson plans to their evaluators at least 48 hours in advance. There are a number of factors supporting this time-frame for submitting the lesson plans to evaluators; evaluators needed assessed the lesson content taught, number of lesson to be taught, mode of the lesson to be taught, research on the topic to be taught as well as the resources identified for classroom use.

5.10.2.6. Teacher educators disrupting learners in the middle of their lesson

While there are a number of challenges with the practice of student teachers, the pacing of the lesson requires expertise and practice as too much time may be allocated for one learning activity, while not enough for another, with clunky transitions in between. With so many different learning styles and students at different places in their learning, student teachers face additional challenges when teacher educators see a difficulty in practices and try to correct them whilst practicing so that they benefit from learning doing directly. Unfortunately, this disrupts the lesson and the learners.

Student Teacher 10 made this point:

> *My teacher educator sometimes during my lesson would stop me and want to correct me or discipline disruptive learners while am teaching. Learners then do not know who to listen to and it totally disturbs them.* (St 10,28/01/2020)

Although overall, student teachers perceive the entire assessment exercise as impactful for their skills, knowledge and grading, they find it difficult when the teacher educator stops them in the middle of their lessons to correct them or model other practices. Their concern was that it brought confusion in the classrooms amongst the learners.

5.10.2.7. Anxiety

When student teachers are assigned to schools for practicum, they begin with a set of beliefs, experiences and feelings, many of which are negative because are fear of the assessment period and insecurity about their ability to pass or fail. Although some of these feeling are removed during the mentorship period, student teachers still feel anxious when they are challenged on their capabilities, either by the mentors or teacher educators, or when they perform lessons due to fear of being evaluated. This reflects in the way they handle their lessons.

Two student teachers showed anxiety during their lesson presentation. The teacher educators, noticing this, advised them to improve in this area.

Student Teacher 7 had this challenge:

> *Nerves and anxiety ... nothing really.* (St 7,30/01/2020)

Student teacher practicum experiences are not only an opportunity for learning and induction, but are the context for assessment within a teacher education environment with requirements for accountability as a doorway to qualified teachers. Considering the impact assessment has on student teacher practice, when visited by teacher educators for assessment, some student teachers

understandably feel nervous; others are anxious about the whole process, especially the outcome from the assessors.

Student Teacher 9 reflected on her nerves:

> *Evaluator said I will make a good teacher but fizzled out a bit today. Do not let my nerves get the best of me.* (St 9, 24/01/2020)

According to Aspden (2014:33), it is normal for student teachers to show these signs when the evaluators assess them, as it is not easy for students on practicum to adapt to the assessors; they frequently feel nervous about how the process will come out. It is typical of each student teacher to bring the realities and experiences related to teaching and learning process to the pedagogical setting. Being nervous and anxious is an indication of growth as teacher educators are trying to raise the awareness of student teachers about their strengths and weaknesses in teaching (Watson, 1913).

5.11. Value of assessment to the teacher journey

Clarke and Collins (2007:171) contend that assessment is a core component of school-based attachment to determine the progress of the student teacher for support, guidance and readiness to qualify as a competent teacher. Student teachers indicated the value of their assessment experiences: it offered an opportunity to question evaluators on conflicting realities between theoretical training at HEIs with practical realities in schools; it offered a reflection on knowledge and skills gained from 1st year to 4th year practicum experiences; and it developed them into future teachers ready to handle difficult situations.

5.12. Chapter summary

This chapter provided an interpretation of the research findings on student teacher experiences of the teacher educator assessment of practicum, based on the assessment models of practicum which shaped the study. The teacher educator assessment focused on the programme's main aspects of professional knowledge

and understanding, professional skills and abilities and professional values and personal commitment.

Student teachers established that the assessment of practicum was either conducted inappropriately (not all teacher educators followed the recommended assessment procedures or used the right assessment instrument) or the number of visits were inadequate to determine the actual performance of the student teachers, classifying the whole process as full of bias, unreliability and inconsistencies.

Student teachers expressed several factors within the school-based assessment which were significant in determining the quality of their assessment. These included the nature of relationships, the provision of authentic teaching experiences and competency based assessment, opportunities for supportive reflection and feedback and increasing opportunity for empowerment and professionalism which derive from the norms and standards that define reliable and valid school-based mentorship and assessment, as well as the location of the student teachers in teaching schools.

The next chapter shares the conclusions, implications and recommendations drawn from the findings of this study.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1. Introduction

The preceding chapters have discussed the literature and principal findings of the study that answered the key research question. The primary goal of this chapter is to summarise and synthesize the findings and discuss implications and recommendations emerging from the study.

6.2. Summary and discussions of findings

Chapters 4 and 5 presented and discussed the finding relating to the two research questions which are summarised below.

6.2.1. Summary and discussion of findings of student teacher experiences of school-based mentorship

Student teacher perceptions of school-based support, guidance and advice varied, subjected to differences in the nature of the teaching schools in which they were allocated for the practicum, as well as the nature of the school-based mentor qualifications, experiences and training as capacitated to handle student teachers requiring support. In addition, further difficulties arose as most student teachers could not name their mentors; many resorted to naming their tutor teachers which proved difficult to conclude whether they had really had a mentorship experience or had sound relationships with their school-based mentors. Evident from the findings is that not all student teachers received the recommended and expected school-based mentorship as several mentors were not specialist foundation phase teachers and lacked expertise in their subject and content areas. This is contrary to the ISPF: Activity 4.5(d):18 which stipulates that the staff members at the teaching schools should be able to teach methodology courses within their areas of specialisation.

There were three cases in which the student teachers had the same person as both

mentor and assessor, which according to the Teaching Practicum Manual for Session 1 and 2 for the foundation phase programme, and with reference to the HEIs and teaching schools partnerships is not recommended; the requirement is that each and every student teacher be supported, guided and advised by the school-based mentor who is a phase specialist charged with the student teacher evaluation. These are to be mentors as prescribed by the school-based mentorship norms and standards for the appointment of the mentors in the designated teaching schools. The teacher educators from the HEIs are the only ones to conduct the final assessment and grade student teachers after an interval of mentorship sessions. The mentors who supported the student teachers had varied qualifications; some did not study up to degree level but held only diplomas and certificates, also contrary to the Gazette Government documentation of what is expected of school-based mentor qualifications as the requirement that all appointed school-based mentors be specialists in the phase of mentorship and possess a minimum qualification of a Bachelor's Degree in Education or a Post-Graduate Degree in Education.

The findings of student teacher perception of the school-based mentor's guidance, support and advice has alluded to multiple and various reflections of their experiences through the data gathered from the semi-structured interviews and teaching practicum file analysis. Some student teachers expressed satisfaction in the way they were supported by the school-based mentors as they were available in their classrooms throughout the whole practicum assignment, whilst others shared a contrary experience, having not had the support which they were expecting from the school-based mentors. Analysis of the teaching practicum files has led to the conclusion that some student teachers might not have school-based mentors at all, or else the school-based mentors had nothing to contribute to the development of their teaching practicum files or had no training on how to handle student teachers when assigned under their jurisdiction of the teaching practicum.

Other issues evident from the findings are that some had school-based mentors

were not specialists in the phase of the mentoring and further, not specialists in content area, and this collated with the feedback of the nature of the experiences which they has received. Most of the student teachers who expressed dissatisfaction in the way they were mentored were either mentored by school-based mentors who had no expertise in the area or by school-based mentors who lacked experience in mentorship. This suggests a need for better ways of mentoring during teaching practicum that would improve on the existing systems. Studies investigating mentoring of student teachers are necessary to generate knowledge, to shed light on the nature of mentorship that student teachers receive in schools, and to develops a clearer view of how the whole experience could be improved in the existing systems.

Bradbury and Koballa (2008) reflect on studies which found that student teachers followed the style and approach of their school-based mentors exactly, even including body language, mannerisms and verbal language patterns. Tension arises when the teacher educator comes into the educational setting to assess the student teacher, particularly if the practices differ from those espoused by the training institution, or in the case of this research study, if the practices do not reflect any foundation phase teaching theories of teaching and learning (Brown & Danaher, 2008).

Based on the reflective model of practicum, it is recommended that the student teachers be subjected, through the school-based mentorship, to be reflective in action towards their practicum, including lesson development and delivery, the choice of the teaching and learning methodologies and their cyclic approach to the entire delivery of the lesson in the classroom.

6.2.2. Summary and discussions of findings of student teacher experiences of teaching practicum assessment

Evident from the findings is that not all the student teachers were assessed by the university-based teacher educators. A few of the interviewed student teachers were

assessed by the university lectures with the other half having been assessed by school-based mentors who sent the student teachers back to the university with an envelope containing their final grade. Ingvarson (2005:10) states that "current levels of funding for teacher education do not make it easy for university staff to provide feedback to students about their developing practice" and yet we know that feedback based on authentic assessment is a critical component of effective teacher education. Veal and Rikard (1998:16) also explain that "clearly articulating and documenting the evidence that underlies assessment decisions is expensive". Although the student teachers could not state the reason for that, through an analysis of their biographical data it was clear that distances to access their schools could have been one contributing factor as the expectation is that the teaching schools be within the parameters of the university.

Another challenge was due to limited number of specialist teacher educators to visit all schools within the prescribed teaching practicum period for assessment. There was one commonality in all the teacher educators who visited the student teachers in their respective teaching schools for assessment because they were specialists in education and came from the School of Education in Mowbray with only one from the Wellington Campus. Amongst the assessors were professional PhD holders, Master's degree holders and some with B Ed degrees. There were no similarities in the areas of specialisation as their field of expertise varied from Early Childhood Education, Sports and recreation, Language in Education, Mathematics Education, Language in Education/EU Grade R/Life Skills and Afrikaans/Education. However, amongst the teacher educators, one lecture specialist in mathematics education dominated as it is clear that he visited almost all the student teachers from whom biographical data was collected. In terms of the courses taught before they were assigned to the practicum, the qualifications of the lectures correlated with the subjects which they learnt in their fourth year of study, with only one exceptional teacher educator having visited a student for assessment but being specialist in sports and recreation.

The student teacher perceptions of the assessment conducted by teacher educators for grading purposes to qualify them to teach revealed various feedback based on the grade outcome, with some getting graded as high as 77% and 75% (a distinction), others 65% (credit) and a few up to 85% (an undoubted distinction). Evaluation of the findings shows that participants who had better grades indicated to have a good experience of the practicum and assessment as compared to student teachers who did not receive a good grade. This could be related to the student teacher preparedness to pass their teaching practicum rather than to develop their teaching skills and knowledge; many are aware of what the assessors look for and prepare to conform to the needs of the university teacher educator assessment.

Scarcity in the subject specialist of the teacher educators had an impact on the student teacher assessment during the teaching practicum. Some of the student teachers expressed dissatisfaction in the timing in which teacher educators visited their classrooms for assessment, which negatively contributed to the way they performed in their assessment for final grading. The problem as indicated was due to the teacher educators having visited a number of student teachers in a day which meant travelling from one school to the next, difficult and time consuming, as the schools in which they were assigned were not within the recommended radius of the prescribed teaching schools by the Department of Basic Education which are expected to be close to the universities. According to ISPF: Activity4.5(d):18, the standards for the location of a teaching school is that it must be a functional school within walking distance from the HEI/TEI campus. Teaching schools must be easily accessible as they are to be utilised by academic staff and teachers as centres for research into teaching and learning and to strengthen teacher education and development programmes.

Whilst the notion of authentic assessment resonates well with the philosophy of teacher education and accepted education practices, there are still several factors which hinder the full application of authentic assessment in practice.

Predominantly, the factors are institutional in nature: the restrictions of time, finance and resistance to change. Effective assessment practices require investment of time for induction, training and ongoing support (Grudnoff & Williams, 2010). Financial and workload limitations impact on the ability of institutions to provide professional development in a meaningful and effective way.

The divisions in the triadic relationship to more of a dyad work relationship could be attributed to lack of proper training of the school-based mentors on how to practically include the teacher educators into the relationship when they are vising the student teachers for evaluation. In addition to this, issues of hierarchical power ushered in divisions during student teacher assessment as evidenced in the conversation with interviewed student teachers who expressed that the school-based mentors had little say on the final grade except their contribution through the teaching practicum weekly evaluation forms or on occasions when they were consulted for their decision or clarity.

One of the concerns expressed by student teachers is that the assessment of their practicum will be influenced by the nature of their relationship with their associate teacher, or teacher educator. The intensely relational nature of the practicum experience leads to the potential conflict and personality issues which may influence the assessment judgements made. According to Bradbury and Koballa (2008), a tension often underlies these relationships, even when they are positive and collegial. Discoverable in the findings is that not all forms of provision from the school-based mentors are reliable for a teacher educator's final grading apart from their own evaluation of the student teachers, as they are missing information due incompleteness. One of the most significant challenges facing criterion- and performance-oriented assessment is the decision around who is responsible for determining the standards and criteria for acceptable or quality practice within the field (Sadler, 2005).

The assessment model deployed by a selected university offering an initial teacher

education programme had its opportunities and challenges in regard to both the assessed and the assessor. Feedback from the student teachers manifested issues of reliability and validity on how the evaluation instruments were used, procedures of the recommended guidelines, inconsistency and ineffectiveness in the outcome of the whole assessment and tense relationships within this process. Previously conducted studies on student teacher experience of practicum assessment shows that most student teachers find the process incredibly stressful (Ligadu, 2005). And this is not an isolated phenomenon (Murray-Harvey, Silins & Saebel, 1999:32). Stress in the student teachers is associated with inconsistencies in assessment, evaluation anxiety, different expectations of performance and variations in the feedback provided by assessors. According to Mau (1997), student teachers were genuinely concerned about a favourable evaluation and struggled with the variability of assessment expectations between teacher educators and associate teachers. It is justifiable that assessment is the source of much apprehension and high emotion.

The student teachers expressed dissatisfaction in the way the evaluation was conducted. They felt feedback from the school-based mentors and teacher educators based on two visits was inadequate to conclude a performance period of 8-12 weeks of practicum in schools. It is even evident in the evaluation of the teaching practicum files that the school-based mentors and teacher educators could not thoroughly fill in comprehensive written comments in the requested sections all the time. Further challenges were that the school-based mentors who formed a basis for the teacher educator's assessment neglected to supply comments on the progress of student teachers in the weekly evaluation forms throughout their evaluation process which either might be due to inadequate training or no training on the use of the forms and their relevance, or lack of understanding on the whole evaluation process and how it impacts the student teachers' image of their performance. However, most of the student teachers had no say, as evidenced in similar studies conducted by Beck and Kosnik (2000) and

Haigh (2001) who suggest that student teachers are often afraid to speak out because they are concerned about the effect this may have on their assessment. Poor representation by some of the school-based mentors on assessment would mean misleading the teacher educator's perception of the student teacher's performance although they had opportunities to assess the student teachers themselves.

6.3. Implications for policy and practice

In terms of the outcome of this study, the sections below outline the policy and practice implications of the findings.

6.3.1. Improved practicum models

Atputhasamy (2005), in an effort to identify the right models for practicum, has determined with seven models which are believed to be incorporated into teacher education programmes: the apprenticeship model, the cell of experience model, the integrative model, the partnership model, the community of teacher model, the 4K-Model Buchberger and the context, input, product, process (CIPP) model.

With reference to the student teacher experiences of practicum under the Cape Peninsula University of Technology Initial Teacher Education Programme, the study adopted the 8 Ps model of practicum and the reflective model of practicum, respectively. Teaching practicum models do not exist in isolation – there are implementors behind them. For practicum, there were school-based mentors and teacher educators who implemented the processes within the stated models in order to transition the student teachers from theoretical knowledge to practical knowledge. From these processes, challenges emerged about how the student teachers were supported, guided and advised by the school-based mentors and assessed by the teacher educators. Implementing these models effectively and efficiently during practicum requires implementors who are professionally qualified,

experienced, knowledgeable and capable of performing to the expectation of the university-teaching school partnership.

The problem with the existing practicum model is that instead of the universities partnering with the teaching schools directly, there is a gap as they focused on working directly with the school-based mentors rather than the teaching school as an institution in general. The school principals were not involved in the process or even in the written communication to the teaching school with reference to the TP Manual for HEIs under study; furthermore, it was notable that the only pair which took the roles of formative and summative assessment respectively were the school-based mentors and the teacher educators. However, the 8 P's model of practicum recommends that school principals take part in the practicum assessment as they are administrators and ultimately responsible for the communication of school policies and related matters which might position them to rate and grade the student teacher performance in these areas.

The teacher educators and school-based mentors faced challenges in the way they implemented their assessment of the student teacher under the models applied in the study, particularly in terms of the nature of their roles. Student teachers expressed dissatisfaction for the support and guidance which they received from the school-based mentors resulting from inexperience in the specialist phase of the student teachers, lack of understanding of their roles, lack of adequate time to support the student teachers, and insufficient understanding of their support to the learners,

There is a weakness as regards the implementation of the current teaching practicum model by both universities and HEIs and teaching schools. The first weakness lies in the nature of the schools in which these student teachers were assigned for teaching practicum with reference to the biographical data information. According to Loock and Gravett (2014:103, 105, 107 & 109), there are four options for teaching school models here in South Africa: a public school with a

teaching school project, model 1; when the Minister of Basic Education declares a separate category of a school by amending the schools act (SASA) to make a provision of a teaching school as a separate school; the independent school model with a different school governance model established in which the HEI/TEI takes ownership of the school and the school is governed by a Board of Directors of similar structure that personifies the juristic personality of the school; and amending the current legislation to provide for teaching schools at the national level by the Department of Basic Education. In terms of the student teacher experiences of teaching practicum, it is significant that of the selected ten student teachers, none had a practicum conducted in any of the prescribed four models for teaching schools, perhaps one reason that the student teachers had a negatively experience of the practicum.

6.3.2. Improved school-based mentorship programme model

There should be restriction on who should mentor student teachers when they are assigned for teaching experience in a school, as not every teacher in such schools is a mentor even if a specialist in the phase of study. The restrictions should be based on criteria delineating who should be a mentor in adherence to the policies which govern the management of teaching schools as established by the Department of Basic Education. Alternatively, a well-structured system for training teachers in the schools in mentorship roles must be established so that when student teachers are located into schools, they are supported, guided and advised properly.

Most of the student teacher experiences of mentors awakened a sense of direction on how the whole programme is being implemented and the need for improvement for how universities must either capacitate existing teachers to be mentors or else reconsider restrictions for sending student teachers to the prescribed teaching schools; as it stands, the expectation is that such schools will have the necessary human and material resources. In regard to the present challenges facing the

management of such schools, a school-based mentor must be screened properly prior to appointment, with qualifications and phase specialisation checked carefully. Guidelines of school-based mentor expectations must be established and adhered to, with the intent that student teachers receive the right experience, enabling them to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to become competent, qualified teachers.

There is need for professional development training to upgrade mentoring skills. For a successful professional development programme, it is important that school-based mentors are aware of the areas in which student teachers expect help from them so that they can prepare themselves with the necessary knowledge and skills to mentor student teachers during practicum.

6.3.3. Improved assessment model for teaching practicum

With reference to the student teacher experiences of practicum at a selected university offering an initial teacher education programme, the expectation was that all student teachers who had gone for their teaching practicum be assessed through both the formative and summative assessment processes. However, an evaluation of the findings shows evidence that although the HEI adopted the holistic model to assessment of teaching practicum, not all students experienced the formative and summative assessment procedures. Furthermore, in some cases where the student teachers had an opportunity of one or both, the procedures were not carried in an authentic manner to determine the true performance of the student teacher or accurate level of competence development.

FIGURE 6.1: SUGGESTED MODEL FOR A HOLISTIC ASSESSMENT OF TEACHING PRACTICE

Through an analysis of the Teaching Practicum Manual for Sessions 1 and 2, the student teacher practicum files, also known as portfolios, and the semi-structured interviews, it is evident that a selected university offering an initial teacher education programme practicum is guided by the holistic approach model to the assessment of the teaching practicum as provided above. However, the challenge entails the manner in which the institutions implement the model, as several flaws are evident. The flaws relate to how communication occurs on the practicum from the teaching practicum coordinators to the student teachers and the school-based mentors before the onset of required mentoring and their specific roles during the assignment. Moreover, there are no clarifications in the manual on whether or not it is strictly required that each student teacher be mentored by a phase specialist apart from an emphasis that the student teachers be assisted into translating the curriculum into practice by allowing them to teach often and supported with constructive criticism.

Furthermore, the current assessment and grading system of student teachers needs to be screened properly; assessment needs to involve a number of assessors taking into consideration that this is the final year and the grade contributes the nature of

the degree to be obtained apart from the skills and knowledge which are expected of a qualified student teacher to teach.

Haigh and Ell (2014) describe practicum as a social and relational act. Due to close working relationships for the duration of the practicum, a set of participants come together to form a temporary community (Goodnough et al., 2009) in which the student teachers work closely with others to negotiate a shared understanding and shared repertoire of practice. However, as the intent of the practicum is to bridge theoretical knowledge of the student teachers into practical readiness to teach, it is required that these student teachers be assessed. Relationships tend to impact the way assessment, leading to bias. Further argued is that when working well, the practicum relationships can offer much to the participants, but such relationships are also quite vulnerable, with potential for conflict, anxiety and discord.

The findings of this study demonstrate that student teacher experiences of the practicum community included the key actors of student teachers themselves, school-based mentors and teacher educators, while also encompassing other characters such as staff, families and children of the educational setting. The recommendation emanating from this study is that the assessment platform be broadened to include contributions from parents of learners on how they perceive the performance of the student teacher based on the performance of their children. The school principal should also assess the student teacher at least once and give feedback in conjunction with the school-based mentors and teacher educators. Moreover, the purpose of the practicum assessment should not only be a final grade but also the development of a pipeline of educators who are capable of handling classroom settings. The association of student teachers with school-based mentors should be based on the fact that these are the people who spend the most time with the student teachers and observe them for a longer period than other members of the practicum community.

6.4. Suggestions for further research

This research study required observation to understand what happens during teaching practicum mentorship and assessment of the student teachers. It is difficult to conclude the experiences based on the models guiding this research study without physically having engaged with the school-based mentors and teacher educators in action. Future observations of school-based mentors and teacher educators will provide deeper understanding of the assessment processes and practices, the way in which the triad members interacted with each other within the assessment process, and the factors that determine the final assessment outcome.

This research study could have benefitted from interviews with both the school-based mentors and the teacher educators to obtain their respective views of the school-based mentoring, guidance, support and advice; this would further substantiate the reflection of the student teachers on the practicum component of the programme

This research study would benefit from interviews with the Dean of the Faculty of Education and academic coordinators and the Head of Foundation Phase Department on the issues surrounding how the HEI and teaching school partnership model is being implemented; and to understand from the perspective of the Head of the Foundation Phase Department of the expectation of the implementation of the programme.

Qualitative semi-structured interview studies are completed with observations which are supported with interviews as associated interpretations. Observations could have assisted the researcher in drawing meanings from the experiences of the student teachers during practicum.

6.5. Conclusion

Based on the literature and the data gathered during the study, student teachers had varying experiences at the assigned teaching schools as a result of teacher

educator assessment and fluctuating school-based mentor guidance and support. The results to the research study show that practicum is multifaceted, that difficulties exist in controlling even the most well-considered and well-intentioned models to school-based mentorship and assessment. Its effectiveness is a determinant of several factors including an institutional and regulatory context that defines and governs acceptable school-based mentorship and assessment.

School-based mentors and teacher educators are at times faced with situations which require intuition in enacting the mentoring and assessment as justifiable, as well as reliance on their -preconceived ideas for given situations. However, it is expected that school-based mentorship be conducted through clearly articulated guidelines in the practicum documentation as established by the HEIs, while assessment is conducted within regulatory and institutional guidelines. As it stands presently, there appear to be variations in the criteria of conceptualizing, operationalizing and utilising policies by the school-based mentors, teacher educators and even the student teachers themselves

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Biographical Data for the Interviews

This form is issued before the actual interview as a preamble to set up the mood for the actual interview session to be scheduled later of the participants convenience.

Instructions: Tick where it is appropriate E.g. Yes_____ No_____

Fill out all the necessary sections and ask where you feel it is not clear.

Take note that the information in this form is confidential and no student teacher can show anyone.

Date of Interview-----------Name of student teacher: ---

Gender of student teacher: --

Age of student teacher: --

Race of student teacher--

Programme of study:--

Year of study:--

Cell Phone Number of student teacher: --

Email address of student teacher: --

Objectives of Interviews

Research study Objective: To seek views of student teachers Experiences of teaching practicum based on the following;

Teacher Educators Assessment: --

School Based Mentors Support and Guidance: ---

B Ed Foundation Phase Programme Study Information

University of study of student teacher: --

Related Courses before teaching Practicum---

Teaching Practicum Information

Name of the Teaching school of student teacher: --

Nature of the Teaching school of student teacher--

Name of School based Mentors' who supported and guided the student teacher----------------

Qualifications of the School based Mentors---

Name of Teacher Educators' who assessed the student Teacher: -------------------------------

Qualifications of the Teacher Educators---

Did the teaching school have adequate resources for practicum? Yes-------------No-----------

Teaching Practicum Documentation Availability

Do you have a teaching practicum File?　　　Yes------------------------No-----------------

Does it have a reflection of overall activities? Yes-------------------No-----------------------

Does it have your Mentors Support & Guidance Information? ---------------------------------

Does it have your Teacher Educators Assessment information? ---------------------------------

What does it say on the following?

   (i)　　　Record of all the performed tasks: ---
   (ii)　　　Learning from any performance: --
   (iii)　　Documentation of areas to be improved: ---

What else is in your teaching practicum File? ---

Signature of Student Teacher--------------------------　　　Date------------------

Signature of Researcher---------------------------------   Date-------------------

APPENDIX B: Interview Schedule for Student teachers

(i)   How would you describe the school-based mentorship through the support and guidance which you received when you were assigned for teaching practicum?

(ii)   What roles did the school-based mentors play in transitioning your theoretical knowledge to practice?

(iii)   Which competencies were of focus and cultivated through guidance and support provided by the school-based mentors in the practicum?

(iv)   How were you relating with your mentors during your teaching practicum?

(v)   What kind of support and guidance did you receive form your mentors?

(vi)   What were the learning opportunities and challenges to the support and guidance being received from the school-based mentors?

(vii)   What value does the school-based mentorship play to your teacher journey to become professionals at the end and beyond?

(i)   Describe your experiences with teacher educators during assessment, support and guidance during teaching practicum?

(ii)   How were you assessed by the teacher educators during teaching practicum?

(iii)   How would you describe the relationship which you had with your teacher educators during teaching practicum?

(iv)   What competences were the teacher educators assessing during your teaching practicum?

(v)   How were the teacher educators assisting you in cultivating the assessed competencies?

(vi)   What kind of competences did you develop during your teaching practicum?

(vii)   What challenges and opportunities did you encounter while being assessed by the teacher educators during teaching practicum at assigned schools?

(viii)   What value does the assessment have for your teacher journey to become professionals at the end and beyond?

APPENDIX C Faculty of Education: Ethics informed consent form

Faculty of Education
Ethics informed consent form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Category of Participants (tick as appropriate):

Principals		Teachers		Subject Advisor		District Official		Other	
Other (specify)	Student Teachers								

You are kindly invited to participate in a research study being conducted by **Centre for International Education (CITE)** from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. The findings of this study will contribute towards (tick as appropriate):

An undergraduate project		A conference paper	✔
An Honours project		A published journal article	✔
A Masters/doctoral thesis	✔	A published report	✔

Selection criteria
You were selected as a possible participant in this study:

One Higher Education Institution was selected from the Western Cape Universities. Ten (10) student teachers being trained to teach the B Ed Foundation Phase from the two HEI's representing a class of 2019 graduating 4th Year B Ed Foundation Phase after completion of their teaching practicum experiences in the assigned teaching schools.

The information below gives details about the study to help you decide whether you would want to participate.

Title of the research:

Student Teachers' Experiences of teaching practicum in an Initial Teacher Education Programme in the Western Cape.

A brief explanation of what the research involves:

The research project is aimed on investigating the student teachers' experiences of teaching practicum in the initial teacher education programmes. One university in the Western Cape is going to participate in the research study. The research study will be conducted with funding by SARCHI – NRF to enable the researcher to fulfil her requirements to the master's degree in Education programme. The researcher is supported by the Cape Peninsula University of Technology where she is undertaking her study.

Biographical data collection, Semi structured Interviews and Teaching Practicum Files evaluation will be used to gather data from the student teachers who have completed their 4th year B Ed Foundation teaching practicum on their experiences on the teacher educator's assessment and school-based mentorship during teaching practicum.

Procedures

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:

Student Teachers: they will be interviewed by the researcher on their experiences during teaching practicum through semi structured interviews.

Potential risks, discomforts or inconveniences

It could be expected that participants may experience added stress, being revitalised on their memories as part of the research study such as having been visited in their respective teaching schools for assessment purposes, assigned portfolios and projects as student teachers to work on under the guidance and support of the school-based mentors and their involvement in sharing lesson plans, materials used for teaching or support, being observer in classrooms, being interviewed as well as upon returning to the University to prepare for their examinations. Some may consider it an additional workload.

You are invited to contact the researchers should you have any questions about the research before or during the study. You will be free to withdraw your participation at any time without having to give a reason.

Kindly complete the table below before participating in the research.

Tick the appropriate column		
Statement	Yes	No
1. I understand the purpose of the research.		
2. I understand what the research requires of me.		

3. I volunteer to take part in the research.		
4. I know that I can withdraw at any time.		
5. I understand that there will not be any form of discrimination against me as a result of my participation or non-participation.		
6. Comment:		

Please provide your name AND sign the consent form. You will be given a copy of this form on request.

Name:
Signature of participant: Date:

Researchers

	Name:	Surname:	Contact details:
1.	Fanny Nombulelo Agnes	Malikebu	malikebuf@yahoo.com
2.			
3.			

Contact persons:
Fanny Nombulelo Agnes Malikebu – malikebuf@yahoo.com

APPENDIX D: Faculty of Education, Research Ethics Clearance Certificate

Cape Peninsula
University of Technology

FACULTY OF EDUCATION
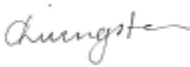
RESEARCH ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

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 <u>Word</u> document)**

Name(s) of applicant(s):	F Malikebu			
Project/study Title:	Student teachers' experiences of teaching practicum in an initial Teacher Education Programme in the Western Cape			
Is this a staff research project, i.e. not for degree purposes?	N/A			
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:	N/A			

2. **Remarks by Education Faculty Ethics Committee:**

Ethics clearance is valid until 31st December 2023

Approved: X	Referred back:	Approved subject to adaptations:
Chairperson Name: Dr Candice Livingston Chairperson Signature:		Date: 2/2/2020
Approval Certificate/Reference: EFEC 2-12/2019		

EFEC Form V3_updated 2016