AN EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF WALTER SISULU UNIVERSITY'S
TEACHING PRACTICE AS A CONTEXT FOR STUDENT TEACHERS' COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT

by

DORIS NOMONDE NTSALUBA

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ABSTRACT

This study was aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of teaching practice as a context for the development of student teachers' competences at Walter Sisulu University. The study was necessitated by the lack of information on whether teaching practice really provides an effective context or not. A literature study focusing on planning of teaching practice, preparation of student teachers for teaching practice, placement of student teachers for teaching practice, mentoring during teaching practice as well as supervision and assessment of teaching practice was conducted. The activity and situated learning theories provided a theoretical framework for studying teaching practice. The mixed-methods approach consisting of quantitative and qualitative approaches was used and data was collected through questionnaires and focus group discussions. The participants in the study were: thirty (30) student teachers in their third year of study; ten (10) host teachers who were hosting student teachers at the time of data collection for this study and ten (10) university supervisors responsible for teaching practice supervision. Data from closed-ended questionnaire items were analysed statistically. Frequencies and percentages were derived. Content analysis was used to analyse qualitative data.

The results of the study revealed that there was a serious lack of communication between the university and the schools used for teaching practice and as a result student teachers were subjected to a wide range of treatment when they arrived at the schools. The findings also showed that student teachers were inadequately prepared for teaching practice. Student teachers were faced with serious challenges with regard to placement and there was no common programme of mentoring. The schools, as a result, did not provide a sufficiently-appropriate environment for teaching practice to become an effective context for student teachers' competence development.

The recommendations made include suggestions for the improvement of the general organisation of teaching practice with the university and the schools working as

partners in all the activities of teaching practice. The introduction of a formal programme for the preparation of student teachers for teaching practice is suggested and a teaching practice model is also proposed.

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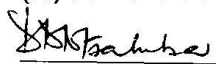
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iii

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- Finally, to the ALMIGHTY GOD who gives me strength day by day.

DEDICATION

The thesis is dedicated to my late parents, Max Sigidi and Bhelekazi Ntsaluba.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS

B.Ed	Bachelor of Education
IPET	Initial Professional Education of Teachers
NSE	Norms and Standards for Educators
MUSTER	Multi-Site Teacher Education Research
PGCE	Post-graduate Certificate in Education
RMCTE	Report of the Ministerial Committee on Teacher Education
WSU	Walter Sisulu University

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE
Table 3.1	A sample grid of participants' biographical variables (N=50)	63
Table 3.2	A grid showing examples of items obtained from literature by author	68
Table 4.1	Involvement in the planning of teaching practice	79
Table 4.2	Planning of Teaching Practice	80
Table 4.3	Preparation for Teaching Practice	84
Table 4.4	Preparation for Teaching Practice	86
Table 4.5	Host teachers' and University supervisors' Views on Placement of Student Teachers	94
Table 4.6	Student teachers' Views on Placement of Student Teachers for Teaching Practice	96
Table 4.7	Host teachers' and University supervisors' Perceptions of Mentoring during Teaching Practice	110
Table 4.8	Host teachers' and University supervisors' Views on Mentoring during Teaching Practice	112
Table 4.9	Student teachers' Perceptions of Mentoring during Teaching Practice	114
Table 4.10	Host teachers' and University Supervisors' Views on Teaching Practice Supervision	124
Table 4.11	Student teachers' Views on Teaching Practice Supervision	126
Table 4.12	Host teachers' and University Supervisors' Views on Assessment of Teaching Practice	130
Table 4.13	Student teachers' Views on Assessment of Teaching Practice	132

LIST OF APPENDICES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

1.1   INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching practice as a context for the development of student teachers' competences. This chapter seeks firstly to examine the background to the study followed by the statement of the problem. Thereafter the research questions, research objectives, the rationale for the study and its significance are discussed. In this chapter the research methodology and the theoretical framework that guided this study are also highlighted. This is followed by a discussion of the limitations and delimitations of the study as well as the definition of pertinent terms.

1.2   BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

One of the important aspects of teacher education programmes is teaching practice (Caires & Almeida, 2005; Marais & Meier, 2004; Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2009; Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010). During teaching practice, student teachers are expected to integrate the theoretical knowledge they are taught at university with practical experience in schools (Fraser, Killen & Nieman, 2005, p.250). In other words, teaching practice is a period during which student teachers are given an opportunity to do teaching trials in an actual school situation (Ngidi & Sibaya, 2003; Hapanyengwi, 2003, Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2009). Terms such as field experience, practice teaching, professional experience, student teaching, internship, school-based experience and practicum are used interchangeably to refer to teaching practice (Marais & Meier, 2004; Fraser et al, 2005, p.251; Le

Cornu, 2008). Teaching practice is the term that is used to describe this period in this study.

Caires and Almeida (2005, p.112) are of the view that teaching practice represents "a unique opportunity for the development and consolidation of a significant variety of knowledge and skills" for the vast majority of student teachers. In addition, student teachers can acquire the various pedagogical experiences such as planning, teaching and assessment that take place during this period. Teaching practice offers student teachers the opportunity to learn and develop as professional teachers along the dimensions of pedagogic knowledge, subject matter knowledge, pastoral knowledge, ecological knowledge, inquiry knowledge and personal knowledge (Mtetwa & Dyanda, 2003, p.151). Thus, the underlying aim of teaching practice is to introduce students to, and prepare them for, the teaching profession.

Teaching practice is also considered to be an opportunity for student teachers to develop creative and thoughtful approaches to teaching within a supportive and knowledgeable collaborative context (Cameron & Baker, 2004, p.44). Similarly, Breitinger (2006, p.99) views teaching practice as a period of supervised classroom teaching during which student teachers practice and acquire classroom skills. During teaching practice student teachers are provided with an authentic context within which they experience and demonstrate the integration of the knowledge, skills and values developed in the entire curriculum (Department of Education (DOE), 2000, p.12).

According to Hapanyengwi (2003, p.2) teaching practice is absolutely necessary for the development of the professional competence of student teachers as it serves as an indication of the quality of the teacher a programme is likely to produce as well as the quality of education in the schools. Another significant aspect of teaching practice lies in the fact that it offers lecturers the opportunity

to get to know the student teachers better and to get exposure to current practices in the schools and classrooms. In support of this view, Izuagie (2003, p.136) likens teaching practice to highly-valued induction programmes in fields such as Accountancy, Business Studies and Medical Studies in which the trainees are exposed to the professions in the real world of work. Amedeker (2005, p. 101) argues that because teaching practice assists in familiarising student teachers with teaching, their confidence improves and commitment to teaching practice results in successful teachers.

Samuel (2009, p.759) argues that the improvement of the quality of education in schools is closely connected with producing quality teachers for and within the schooling system, and managing the teaching practice experience to achieve quality teacher education is a fundamental aspect of initial teacher education. He contends that the professional teaching practice offered within the teacher education curriculum is the climax of initial teacher education programmes where the culmination of expertise of being a teacher is enacted.

Teaching practice as a focus of this study is a component of a formal academic programme, the Bachelor of Education, for preparing educators. Such programmes are offered nationally as well as internationally by a variety of education providers at different qualification levels. According to the DOE (2000,24) in the Norms and Standards for Educators (NSE), the B.Ed is a 480 credit qualification at Level 6 of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) which is spread over four years of full-time study. The introduction of the NSE which was adopted as national Department of Education policy in 2000 had significant implications for education in general and teacher education in particular. The NSE laid the foundation for defining competent teachers and appropriate teacher education programmes. This document sets out in detail the notion of teacher competence and explains what competences educators should be able to demonstrate across a range of teacher roles (Fraser et al., 2005).

The Faculty of Education at Walter Sisulu University (WSU) has had to re-curriculate the B.Ed programme in order to align it to the NSE. According to the re-curriculated programme second year student teachers visit local schools for two weeks where they observe educators teaching in the classroom. The third year student teachers are expected to complete a four-week supervised teaching practice programme at local schools, which is experiential learning and at the fourth year level the whole year is to be devoted to teaching practice.

Although teaching practice is highly valued it can come as a 'culture shock', as in the case of Ghana where tutors were found to be insisting that things should be "done right", leaving little room for experimenting (Lewin and Stuart, 2003, p.85). Teaching practice has also been found to be associated with challenges that compromise its effectiveness. For example, it has been found to be stressful in Trinidad and Tobago (Lewin & Stuart, 2003, p.87); in South Africa (Ngidi & Sibaya, 2003, p. 20; Marais & Meier, 2004, p.224; in Pakistan (Malik & Ajmal, 2010) and in Australia (Murray-Harvey, 1999). The sources of stress may include: the feeling of being assessed; lack of guidance and supervision (Lewin & Stuart, 2003, p.87); having little or no room for experimenting; prescribed rigid lesson plans in Uganda (Breitinger, 2006. p.99); lack of resources in Zimbabwe (Batidzirai & Nyota, 2003); moral and social decay among learners (Marais & Meier, 2004, p.224) as well as heavy workload, difficult classroom management and being observed (Malik & Ajmal, 2010).

In addition, teaching practice as an opportunity for "real" learning for student teachers remains somewhat contestable as there is often a lack of alignment between the goals of the teaching practice, as articulated by teacher educators or in programme documents, and the actual experience of the teaching practice. In some cases this lack of alignment is evident in the practices of the student teachers but it is evident also in the ways in which the associate teachers or

teacher educators undertake their roles as mentors (Haigh & Ward, 2004). Hapanyengwi (2003, p.2) laments the fact that in some quarters teaching practice is criticised for not having changed over the years and as a result failing to comply with changes taking place in education.

Teaching practice is not effective under the above circumstances. The studies have exposed some of the weaknesses in the structure and operation of teaching practice. The teaching practice programme at WSU will definitely benefit from a study that focuses on similar issues especially as changes are being designed. The findings of this study will provide a basis on which the necessary changes can be made as the studies outlined above also show the logistic and administrative problems in providing appropriate teaching practice experience.

Several studies have been conducted on the experiences of student teachers during teaching practice (Marais & Meier, 2004; Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2009; Cakmak, 2006; Caires & Almeida, 2005). Student teachers' experiences have been found to be both positive and negative, ranging from teaching practice being experienced as valuable placement in welcoming and supportive schools to, poor supervision, lack of feedback and, working in threatening and unfriendly environments as well as placement in welcoming and supportive schools. Some studies have looked at assessment of teaching practice and various strategies have been found to be used for assessing teaching practice (Brown, 2006; Azam & Iqbal, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Zindi, 2003). Reddy, Menkveld and Bitzer (2008, p.144) have conducted a study that provides 'an overview of practices, problems and innovative ideas within the teaching practice component of the B.Ed programme at nine teacher education institutions in South Africa'. Their research involved a survey of staff working with students involved in teaching practice in B.Ed programmes by way of focus groups interviews. The present study is an in-depth examination of the structure and implementation of teaching practice in the B.Ed programme at WSU in order to establish the extent

to which teaching practice is an effective context for the development of student teachers' competences.

1.3   STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Although teaching practice is recognised as an essential feature that should be included in all teacher education programmes (Caires & Almeida, 2005; Marais & Meier, 2004; Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2009), there is very scanty guidance with regard to its implementation in the policy documents (Fraser, et al., 2005). This is a programme element to be determined by the provider concerned and the relevant quality assurance body. The background to the study has thus highlighted challenges associated with teaching practice. These include: shortage of resources in some schools (Batidzirai & Nyota, 2003); lack of guidance and supervision (Lewin & Stuart, 2003, p.87) and stress for student teachers (Ngidi & Sibaya, 2003, p.20; Marais & Meier, 2004, p.224; Lewin & Stuart, 2003, p.87; and Murray-Harvey, 1999). Similarly, Killen and Steyn in Fraser, Killen and Niemann (2005, p.251) express the view that "rather than being a well-structured learning experience and an opportunity for authentic assessment, teaching practice for many students becomes demoralising and sometimes even a frightening experience. According to these authors it is uncertain or unknown whether, under these circumstances, teaching practice contributes to the development of a student teacher's competence. Given the importance of teaching practice and the problems associated with its implementation, one wonders whether teaching practice provides an effective context for the development of student teachers' competences. It is against this background that this study was undertaken to establish the extent to which teaching practice at Walter Sisulu University is effective in enhancing student teacher competences.

1.4   MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

Given the above scenario this study sought to find an answer to the following main research question: To what extent is teaching practice an effective context for developing student teachers' competences at WSU? This question will be answered in relation to the structure and implementation of teaching practice.

1.4.1   Sub-Research Questions

The main research purpose of the study was to determine the effectiveness of the structure and operation of teaching practice in developing student teachers' competences. The study was guided by the following sub-research questions:

- What is the nature of planning for teaching practice and how does it contribute to creating an environment that promotes the development of student teachers' competences?

- To what extent is the preparation of student teachers for teaching practice congruent with the purpose of developing their competences?

- How is the placement for teaching practice designed and implemented and what is its contribution to the development of student teacher competences?

- What is the nature of the mentoring programme and how does it contribute to the development of student teacher competences?

- How is the supervision of teaching practice carried out and how does it support the development of student teachers' competences?

- How is assessment of teaching practice conducted and to what extent does it promote the development of student teachers' competences?

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

In tandem with the research questions, the specific research objectives of this study were to:

- investigate the nature of planning for teaching practice and determine the extent to which it contributes to the development of student teachers' competences.

- establish the extent to which student teachers are adequately prepared for teaching practice.

- examine the design and implementation of placement for teaching practice and its contribution to the development of student teachers' competences.

- determine the nature of mentoring and its role in promoting the development of student teachers' competences.

- evaluate the extent to which the supervision of teaching practice assists student teachers develop competences.

- investigate the nature of assessment of teaching practice and how student teachers benefit from it.

- propose a teaching practice model designed to promote an effective context for student teachers' competence development.

1.6   RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The researcher has been involved in teacher education for more than twenty years, having worked for nineteen years at a College of Education, then at a Technikon and later at a University. The researcher has observed some differences in the structure and operation of teaching practice in the three types of institutions. It is a matter of concern to the researcher who now wishes to find out how best the teaching practice programme can be structured and implemented.

The stipulation in the latest teacher-education framework (DOE, 2006) that teaching practice has to be a substantial component of teacher development in initial teacher education implies that part of the competence development of student teachers must reside at the schools. The researcher wanted to establish the nature of the involvement the schools used for teaching practice and the extent to which these schools provide an appropriate environment for student teachers' competence development.

The Faculty of Education at WSU is moving towards introducing a full year of teaching practice in the fourth year, and given the effort, time and money invested in this activity as well as its noble goals on paper, the researcher has realised that it is important to find out whether the structure and operation of teaching practice offered by the University afford the student teachers a valuable learning experience that is conducive to the development of expected competences.

The researcher is also concerned about the comments made by the supervising lecturers, the students and the host teachers which indicate that there is every reason to believe that the student teachers do not derive full benefit from the time spent in the schools.

1.7   SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study will provide useful information to the lecturers responsible for teaching practice on the effectiveness of the structure and operation of teaching practice in developing student teachers' competences. This will assist the Faculties of Education in improving their teaching practice programmes as areas that need improvement will be identified. The study will further assist staff to focus more systematically on providing an effective context for competence development by student teachers through teaching practice.

Student teachers will also benefit from the findings of the study as the information will contribute to a more adequate type of preparation for the teaching profession and make the transition between initial teacher education and the first year of teaching less threatening.

The Quality Assurance Unit at WSU will also benefit from the research findings since the information provided can be used to evaluate the organisation and implementation of experiential training in other programmes in the institution. Future researchers may also use the study as a baseline study for more in-depth studies into the various aspects of teaching practice. Furthermore, policy makers will also benefit from this study as it will provide them with useful information that can be incorporated into policies that address the improvement of the structure and implementation of teaching practice and, as a result, contribute to the improvement of teacher education programmes.

1.8   ASSUMPTIONS

The following assumptions were made:
- The need for the training of new teachers will continue;
- Teaching practice is a significant component of initial teacher education;

- Student teachers at Walter Sisulu University are exposed to similar teaching practice context;
- Effective teaching practice would alleviate the present crisis in the education system in South Africa: and
- All participants would co-operate and provide reliable responses.

1.9   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.9.1 Research Design

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006, p.22) "a research design describes how the study was conducted". It summarises the procedures for conducting the study, including when, from whom, and under what conditions the data will be obtained. The purpose of the research design is to specify a plan for generating empirical evidence that will be used to answer the research questions. This study used a mixed-methods design which is a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods.

Creswell and Plano Clark (2007, p.9) contend that "mixed-methods research helps answer questions that cannot be answered by qualitative or quantitative approaches alone". The view of Creswell and Plano Clark is echoed by McMillan and Schumacher (2006, p.401) as well by noting that "using both approaches allows the researcher to incorporate the strengths of each method".

1.9.2 Sampling

As this study was conducted by targeting a particular group, in the full knowledge that it did not represent the wider population and there was no attempt to generalize, non-probability sampling was used to select participants

(Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p.113). The form of non-probability sampling that was used is called "purposive sampling". According to Cohen et al (2007, p.115), purposive sampling is used to access "knowledgeable people' and its main concern is "to acquire in-depth information from those who are in a position to give it". Patton in McMillan and Schumacher (2006, p.319) supports this view as he argues that purposeful sampling is "selecting information-rich cases for study in-depth". The sample consisted of 30 third year students in B.Ed: Economic and Management Sciences and B. Ed Consumer Sciences, 10 host teachers and 10 university supervisors who were information-rich participants as a result of their recent involvement in teaching practice.

1.9.3 Instrumentation

Since a mixed-methods design was used in this study, a combination of questionnaires and semi-structured interview guides for focus group discussions were used to collect quantitative and qualitative data respectively. This was done in order to "provide a more complete picture of a situation than would either type of data by itself" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006, p.443). This enabled the researcher to validate and cross check findings.

1.9.3.1   Questionnaires

Questionnaires with both closed-ended and open-ended items were used. According to Cohen et al (2007, p.317) a questionnaire is "a widely-used and useful instrument for collecting survey information, providing structured, often numerical data, being able to be administered without the presence of the researcher, and being comparatively straightforward to analyse". McMillan and Schumacher (2006, p.194) concur by pointing out that "a questionnaire is the most widely used technique for obtaining information from subjects and is relatively economical and can ensure anonymity"

Closed-ended and open-ended questionnaire items on issues derived from the literature review of the study were administered to third year student teachers, host teachers and university supervisors. This was done in order to "gather information by asking people directly about the points concerned with the research" (Denscombe, 2003, p.145).

1.9.3.2   Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions with the third year students were conducted in order to "obtain a better understanding of a problem" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p.360). Denscombe (2003, p.169) describes focus groups as "a small group of people, usually between six and nine in number, who are brought together by a trained 'moderator' (the researcher) to explore attitudes and perceptions, feelings and ideas about a topic".

The focus group discussion guide was used to generate information on the perceptions of student teachers about the nature of the structure and operation of teaching and its appropriateness for the development and demonstration of student teachers' competences.

1.9.4 Data Analysis

1.9.4.1   Analysis of Quantitative Data

The researcher made use of descriptive statistics to analyze data from questionnaires. Descriptive statistics "transform a set of numbers or observations into indices that describe or characterize data" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p.150). The data gathered from questionnaires was condensed, summarized and simplified to represent the outcome of the study. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 18, was used to generate frequencies

by which is meant "the number of times something occurs" and percentages which refer to the "proportion of cases contained within each frequency" (Bryman & Cramer, 2009, p.86). The frequencies and percentages were presented in the form of tables.

1.9.4.2   Analysis of Qualitative Data

Data from open-ended items of the questionnaire and the focus group discussions were coded by dividing the text into small units and assigning a label to each unit (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p.131). This was followed by the unitizing of the data by looking out for the occurrence of particular ideas or events in the data, the units were then further refined. Themes and relationships that recur between units and categories that were emerging were identified (Denscombe, 2003, p.271).

1.9.5   Validity and Reliability

To ensure validity and reliability of the study the research process that includes the theoretical background, sampling and data collection and analysis was carefully documented. A pilot of the questionnaires was undertaken to try out the questionnaire items. This helped to check the clarity of questionnaire items, instructions and layout, gain feedback on the validity of the questionnaire, and eliminate ambiguities or difficulties in wording (Cohen et al., 2007, p.341)

The researcher made use of a tape recorder and camera for the mechanical recording of focus group discussion data to ensure reliability. Furthermore, through participant review of data, whereby participants were asked to review the researcher's synthesis of the discussion for accuracy of representation, validity was enhanced (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p.326). Validation of data

was further facilitated through triangulation using multiple sources of data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p.325). The use of Criterion Jury validation where an expert in teacher education looked at the instruments and commented on them also enhanced validity.

1.10   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching practice as a context for the development of student teachers' competences by establishing the nature of its structure and implementation. This study is grounded in the framework of the activity and situated learning theories.

1.10.1 Activity Theory

According to Dayton (2006), activity theory is a versatile framework for workplace and professional development research. The researcher found the activity theory an appropriate framework for this study since teaching practice is a multifaceted professional development activity. An activity theory framework provides tools to organize an investigation into understanding an activity by considering the actors or subjects and their actions as a system, the object at which the activity is directed, the tools or mediating artefacts which are the devices used to perform the activity, the rules which refer to the explicit and implicit regulations that guide the activity, the community involved in the activity and the division of tasks between the actors involved (Boer, Kumar & van Baalen, 2002).

The activity theory emphasizes the importance of the systemic analysis of an organizational setting by considering it as a network of activities (Boer et al., 2002). Activity theory 'considers actions as events in a collective activity system

(Engeström, 1999). The focal point of this model is the object, as it is the object that connects actions to the activity. It is the projection from object to the outcome that functions as motive for the activity and gives deeper meaning to the actions. In the case of teaching practice the object or goal may be the development of student teachers' competences. Within activity theory the analysis considers the activity of the actor (subject) as a task is performed towards meeting the object and the outcomes.

Activity theory has been used as a framework to explore and explain a variety of learning situations and pedagogical innovations. The theory views learning as taking place within an activity system in which the relationship between subject and object is mediated by tools, rules, community and division of labour. A major area of application is for evaluating and intervening in situations of organizational change and learning (Engeström, 2001). The researcher, therefore, realized that the activity theory provides an appropriate framework for this study since it seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching practice as a context for competence development by student teachers. Activity theory has been used as a framework to explore a range of educational innovations in higher education. As a theory of change and learning in concrete, local, socially-situated practices it can be applied critically for summative purposes but also lends itself to developmental or illuminative requirements in situations where people learn to do things that have not been done before. Engeström's interpretation of activity theory provides a model for describing and analyzing activities.

1.10.1.1 Elements in the activity system's model

An activity system model operates as various elements and each of the elements contributes to the activity in their own particular way. The activity system is normally located in particular settings. The settings and the contribution that

each element makes to the system influences the outcome in any activity. Activities comprise actions that are performed in order to accomplish specific goals that would lead to the individual or group achieving desired outcomes. In the case of this study teaching practice is the activity system and the figure 1.1 below shows an application of Engström's Expanded Activity System Model to Teaching Practice.

Figure 1.1: Engeström's Expanded Activity System Model Applied to Teaching Practice (Engeström, 2001, p.135)
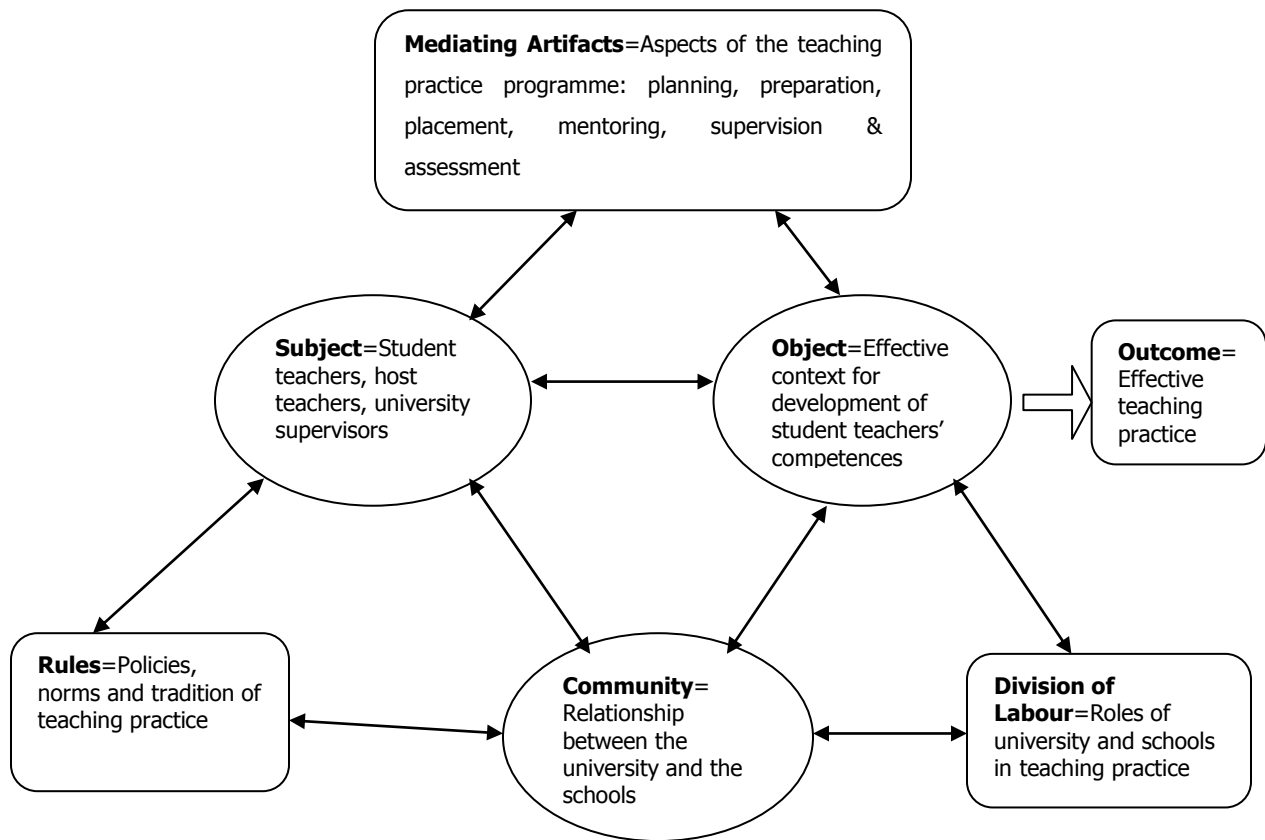
The elements shown in the figure above can be understood as follows:

- **The subjects** are described as individuals identified in an activity system whose activities are being examined are the student teachers, host teachers and university supervisors;

- **The object** is regarded as the immediate goals or motives that subjects aim to achieve is an effective context for development of student teachers' competence;

- **The outcome** is explained as the purpose of the actions in an activity system is development of student teachers' competences through teaching practice;

- **The tools or artefacts** which mediate interactions between the subject and the object and are used to meet the object of the activity refer to planning, preparation for teaching practice, placement for teaching practice, mentoring, supervision and assessment of teaching practice;

- **Rules/norms** refer to explicit and implicit regulations and norms that govern actions and interactions within an activity system are the policies, norms and tradition of teaching practice;

- **Community** consists of individuals and subgroups that focus some of their effort on the object, may refer to the university and the schools; and

- **Division of labour** is understood to mean the role of each individual in an activity system refers to the roles of host teachers and university supervisors as well as the power relations between them.

1.10.1.2 Systemic contradictions/tensions and innovations

Dayton (2006) maintains that studying an activity system involves a search for the system's "contradictions" which in activity theory refers to dissonance within an element of a system, or any misfit between elements. The activity theory, therefore, assists in identifying some of the underlying issues that produce failures, disruptions, or necessitate innovations. In the case of this study, activity theory brought to light weaknesses in the system that are constraints to the

provision of an effective context for the development of student teachers' competences.

When there are contradictions the activity theory seems to be an effective tool for understanding and, if possible, solving the problem, and it prompts people to ask better questions for redesigning activity environment. This leads to the concept of innovation. Creativity and innovation are at the core of the activity theory enterprise. Though activity theory is used descriptively and analytically as a diagnostic framework, its essence is to take a situation or condition and transform it in an effort to create something better (Meyers, 2007). The contradictions and tensions identified in this study led to an innovation in the form of a proposed model for teaching practice. The emphasis placed by the activity theory on the significance of considering the mediation role of social and cultural factors in an activity system signifies the situatedness of learning which is explained below as another theory that provides a framework for this study.

1.10.2 Situated Learning

The theory of situated learning suggests that learning should be understood as social participation with the apprentice observing the community of practice (Herrington & Oliver, 2000). Therefore, since learning occurs through apprenticing with others who are already part of a particular community or culture, the facilitation of student-teacher learning has to do with understanding and providing a field experience. Teaching practice is seen as a learning activity involving the process of social participation whereby the impact of the situation is fundamental (Boer et al., 2002). The features of learning environments found to be useful for situated learning are identified by Herrington and Oliver (2000, p.26) as including the following:

- Provision of authentic context that reflects the way the knowledge will be used in real life;

- Provision of authentic activities;

- Provision of access to expert performances and the modelling of processes;

- Provision of multiple roles and perspectives;

- Support of collaborative construction of knowledge;

- Provision of coaching and scaffolding at critical times;

- Promotion of reflection to enable abstractions to be formed;

- Promotion of articulation to enable tacit knowledge to be made explicit; and

- Provision for integrated assessment of learning within the tasks.

The characteristics outlined above gave direction to the content of data collection tools used in this study and were put under investigation. Questionnaire items and focus group discussion questions were designed to explore issues relating to availability of expert advice, exposure to a variety of activities within the school, provision of coaching and existence of opportunities for discussion of lessons with host teachers.

According to Castle, Osman and Henstock (2003, p.5) the central idea of situated learning is that learning is inherently social in nature and all learning is situated not only in time and space, but also in relation to social context. They further identify the implications of the situated theory for teaching practice in teacher education as: learning that is structured and defined by particular contexts meaning that the best learning environments are the authentic contexts; student teachers move from peripheral to fuller participation, strengthening their competence; availability of experts from whom the novices can assimilate a particular social identity and perform practices appropriate to the context; and time that is required for learning as well the need for exposure to a range of

activities and products in the community. Similarly, Osman and Casella (2007, p.35) argue that theories of situated learning view sites, other than universities, as significant for knowledge-production for student teachers and see knowledge as being acquired in concrete human activity.

The issues referred to above in relation to situated learning, namely, structure of learning, availability of experts and arrangements for the movement of student teachers from peripheral to full participation in the community of practice guided this study in its investigation into the extent to which teaching practice provides an effective context for student teachers to develop competences in 'communities of practice'.

1.11   METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The fact that all subjects in the study were volunteers who may withdraw from the study at any time was a limitation as the participants who finished the study might not be truly representative of the population. Another limitation was the question of limited financial resources which placed restrictions on the area that could be covered and, therefore, excluded potential participants in schools beyond the 40 kilometre radius. Time also posed a limitation for the study as it had a time schedule to which it adhered and could not go on to include as many participants as would have been ideal. Other significant role players in teaching practice, for example, school principals, did not participate in the study. Focus groups were conducted with student teachers only as time did not allow for conducting interviews with other role players.

The study was competing with other activities overseen by the Department of Education involving teachers; for example, teacher development workshops, and the researcher could only use school teachers identified as available by the principals. Since the focus of the study was the Faculty of Education at WSU, the

results of the study could not be generalised to all Universities.

Another form of limitation of the study was the non-involvement of school-management-teams (made up of the principals and senior teachers) as participants in the study. They could have contributed some significant information on the structure and implementation of teaching practice. Furthermore, the fact that focus group discussions were conducted with the student teachers only, and not with the host teachers and the university supervisors, could be a limitation since focus group discussions or interviews with these categories of participants could have yielded useful information.

1.12 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The present study was confined to student teachers registered in 2010 for third year B.Ed: Economic and Management Sciences and B.Ed: Consumer Sciences at the Zamukulungisa delivery site of WSU. Its focus was on the schools used for teaching practice that are within a radius of 100 kilometres from the Zamukulungisa delivery site of WSU. The focus of the study was the effectiveness of teaching practice with special reference to its structure and operation as a context for the development of student teachers' competences.

1.13   OPERATIONALISATION OF TERMS

1.13.1   Initial Teacher Education

Initial teacher education refers to the education received by prospective teachers in order to qualify to teach and it usually takes place in colleges and universities (Breitinger p.51). The initial teacher education curriculum is generally composed of four elements, namely: academic disciplines, foundation of education studies,

professional studies/methodologies/didactics, and teaching practice or the practicum (Breitinger p. 86). The Ministerial Committee on Teacher Education (RMCTE) (2005, p.11) recommends that initial teacher education be conceptualized as having two closely linked phases: formal qualification and site-based induction. In this study initial teacher education will refer to the four-year programme offered for the preparation of teachers.

1.13.2   Student Teacher

The term "student teacher" is used to describe someone who is undertaking a programme of initial or pre-service teacher education (Ngidi & Sibaya, 2003, p.18). In this study student teacher will be used to refer to students registered for the B.Ed programme.

1.13.3   Teaching Practice

Teaching practice is a period during which student teachers, under the guidance of the mentors and the supervision of host school authorities, as well as the university supervisors, take on and practice those roles they are expected to perform when they are fully qualified (Hapanyengwi, 2003, p.3). A variety of terms such as field experience, practice teaching, professional experience, student teaching, school-based experience and practicum are interchangeably used with teaching practice. In this study, teaching practice will be understood to refer to the period of time during which student teachers undertake guided and supervised teaching in the actual school and classroom situation.

1.13.4   Competence

According to Niemann and Monyai (2006, p.2), the general understanding of competence in relation to a profession is that "the competent person has the

knowledge, skills and ability to perform the tasks and roles required to expected and acceptable standards". The NSE (2000) has, as its cornerstone, 'the notion of applied competence and its associated assessment criteria. According to the Government Gazette (4 February 2000, p.10), "applied competence is the overarching term for three interconnected kinds of competence, namely, practical, foundational and reflexive competence". For purposes of this study competence is understood to refer to a situation in which skills are performed in a context, to standards and integrating knowledge and its application.

1.13.5 Mentoring

According to Taruvinga and Museva (2003, p.115), "mentoring generally refers to a supportive relationship between a novice (a student teacher) and a more experienced guide (a class teacher or a subject teacher)". The mentor is usually a well qualified, and very experienced and very competent teacher who assists consistently and persistently the student teachers to find their niche in the teaching profession. For this study mentoring refers to a process in which mentors serve as guides, role models and collaborators for the student teachers.

1.13.6 Effectiveness

Harvey (2004, p.7) defines effectiveness as the extent to which an activity fulfils its intended purpose or function. In this study effectiveness will refer to the successful provision of a context that promotes the development of student teachers' competences through teaching practice.

1.13.7   Supervision

Lewin and Stuart (2003, p.54) define supervision as a situation where the tutors work formatively with their student teachers. They are expected to observe their student teachers teach, note strong and weak points in the lesson and then suggest ways of improving the weak areas. They should help the student teachers in class management, organisational skills, preparation and use of teaching and learning aids, and writing lesson plans. The tutors are supposed to provide academic/professional, material and moral support to the student teachers, some of whom may be located in very remote areas. In this study supervision is used to refer to the monitoring of teaching practice and guidance as well as support provided to student teachers during teaching practice by the university lecturers.

1.13.8   Assessment

According to Siebörger (2004, p.5), assessment refers to a wide range of different ways that are used to gain information and give feedback about the progress of learners. The assessment results are used to improve subsequent learning or to obtain a more formal description of what the student has learned for official action(s). In this study "assessment" is understood to mean the process of gathering evidence to determine how well student learning matches expected outcomes in order to assist the student's development.

1.13.9   Evaluation

Evaluation is defined as the process of passing judgment or drawing conclusions or making inferences about the effects and effectiveness of a programme on the basis of information or data obtained through one form of assessment or another (Siebörger, 2004, p.5; Gwarinda, 2002, p.167). The outcome of evaluation may

be the identification of problems and giving specific action-orientated feedback about a problem or provision of information on the strengths and weaknesses of various aspects. In this study evaluation refers to making judgments about the effectiveness of teaching practice as a context for the development of student teachers' competences.

1.14 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

The study is organised into five chapters.

Chapter One: THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

The background and context of the study relating to teaching practice in teacher education programmes in higher education institutions and WSU, in particular, are discussed. The problem statement of this study, the research questions and research objectives are also explained. The rationale for the study, its significance, limitations and delimitation of the study are outlined followed by a description of the theoretical framework that guided this study. Key terms and concepts are explained. The organisation of the study is also outlined.

Chapter Two: LITERATURE REVIEW

A study of relevant literature is to explore the planning of teaching practice, the preparation for teaching practice, the placement of student teachers for teaching practice, the mentoring during teaching practice, the supervision and the assessment of teaching practice.

Chapter Three: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology for the study is discussed. The chapter explains and justifies the adoption of the mixed-methods research design in this study. Techniques of selecting a sample for this study were explained. This is followed by a description of the instruments and data collection procedure. An overview

of the methods employed to analyse the data is given. Furthermore, issues of reliability and validity are considered in the chapter. Finally, ethical issues are also addressed.

Chapter Four: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The data is presented and analysed according to the sub-research questions of the study. Data from the questionnaires is presented first followed by data from focus group discussions. Furthermore, findings of this study are discussed in relation to available literature under the six categories derived from the sub-research questions.

Chapter Five: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A summary of the findings of the study on each sub-research question is given and conclusion is drawn. Recommendations as suggestions for the improvement of teaching practice as a context for the development of student teachers' competences are provided and a teaching practice model is proposed.

1.15 CONCLUSION

This chapter serves as an orientation to the study. Firstly, background of the study and the statement of the problem are outlined, and then the research questions and research objectives are examined. These are followed by the statement of the rationale for the study and the significance of the study. Next, an overview of the research methodology is provided and the selection of the sample is explained. The theoretical framework for the study is described and the limitations and delimitation of the study are highlighted. The key terms are then operationalised. In the next chapter the literature review of the study is presented.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   INTRODUCTION

The present study sought to establish the extent to which teaching practice is an effective context for the development of student teachers' competences. The previous chapter outlined the context and aims of the study. This chapter reviews literature on what various authorities have presented on the topic under investigation. The literature is presented under the following subheadings derived from the research questions: organization of teaching practice, preparation of student teachers for teaching practice, the design and implementation of placement for teaching practice, mentoring during teaching practice, supervision of teaching practice and assessment of teaching practice. The gaps to be filled in by the present study are highlighted.

2.2   PLANNING OF TEACHING PRACTICE

The planning of teaching practice refers mainly to the duration, at what points of the programme teaching practice happens, who is involved in the planning, the different activities planned for the period, and the organisation of teaching practice. According to Marais and Meier (2004, p.221), teaching practice is an important but challenging part of teacher education, especially in developing countries such as South Africa where the effectiveness of teaching practice can be diminished or eroded by geographical distance, isolation, low and uneven levels of teacher expertise, and a highly-structured system of schooling and teacher training. Quick and Siebőrger (2005, p.1) maintain that teaching practice "is such a long established practice that it is easy to assume that all those involved in it have a clear notion of what it is and how it should be operationalised and managed".

Reddy et al. (2008, p.152) established that teaching practice for a B.Ed is organised in different ways in South African institutions ranging from weekly visits to schools for teaching practice in some institutions to block periods of school visits in others. There are variations in the number of days or weeks that student teachers spend in the schools as well as in the manner of teaching practice supervision. The situation explained above is similar to a variety of teaching practice models in Tasmania most of which include sequenced school placements supervised by cooperating teachers and university staff (Brown & Lancaster, 2004).

The view about variations of teaching practice organisation is concurred with by Perry cited in Kiggundu and Nayimuli (2009, p.347) who point out that teaching practice can be conducted in a number of forms depending on the institution. It may be once a day every week; over a semester; or in a two-to six-week block while some institutions may have no teaching practice in the first year, and others have periods of observation (Kiggundu & Nayimuli (2009, p.34). This study seeks to establish how teaching practice is planned for at WSU and the extent to which such planning contributes to making teaching practice an effective context for the development of student teachers' competences.

In an account of the review of teacher education programmes at colleges and universities in America, Darling-Hammond (2006, p.152) mentions that teachers are involved in clinical work throughout the programme and that in all cases student teachers participate in at least thirty weeks of mentored clinical practice under the direct supervision of one or more expert teachers. Lewin and Stuart's (2003, p.87) report indicates that in Ghana it was established that the student teachers had two 3-4 week blocks of teaching practice, with, in some cases one or two visits from tutors whereas in Lesotho student teachers chose the school at which they would spend the 15-week block and were, as a result, scattered over

a wide geographical area. In Malawi student teachers spent 20 weeks in full-time work, following a distance learning course and attendance of zonal workshops. In Trinidad and Tobago 12 weeks of teaching practice were highly organised into three carefully structured blocks, with regular supervision by college tutors (Lewin & Stuart, 2003, p.86). In a newly-introduced 'in-in-out' model of teaching practice in Ghana student teachers spend two years in college training, while the whole third year is spent in a school, learning to teach (Akyeampong, 2003, p.65). The teaching practice elements for the first and second years are: school attachment for observation of teaching and work experience; on-campus teaching practice; and project work based on the planning and construction of teaching/learning materials and classroom-based research.

Darling-Hammond, (2007, p.206) suggests that extensive and intensely supervised clinical work is important. This does not happen in traditional teacher education where students first go through coursework in isolation from teaching practice and thereafter have teaching practice added towards the end of the programme. The schools that students are sent to sometimes do not model good practice whereas in the most powerful programmes students have to spend extensive time in the field throughout the entire programme working with teachers who can show them how to teach in ways that are responsive to learners. In a reconceptualised teaching practice in Tasmania, Brown and Lancaster (2004) reveal that teaching practice consists of a series of four placements in order to assist the student teacher develop the competences of a beginner teacher. During the first part student teachers are primarily involved in observation, and orientation which requires interaction with individual and small groups of learners followed by the second part which requires planning, teaching and evaluating the whole class. Lam and Fung (2001, p.7) describe a similar teaching practice organisation where student teachers are inducted to teaching progressively with the early part involving teaching observation of individual learners, and thereafter working with individual learners with problems and,

finally, looking after a small group of learners. The present study sought to establish whether the above scenarios pertain to teaching practice planning at WSU.

Akyeampong (2003, p.65) is of the opinion that although teaching practice is highly valued by student teachers in Ghana, the ways in which it is organised do not take full advantage of its potential benefits. A similar view is expressed by Lewin and Stuart (2003, p.84) in that traditional college-based initial teacher preparation programmes have sent students into schools for various lengths of time, under varying degrees of supervision from tutors and 'cooperating teachers' or mentors. Consequently, much as student teachers usually regard this as the 'most useful' part of their training, tutors, on the other hand find it tiring and time-consuming while the college finds it expensive and difficult to organize.

There is a need to make teaching practice more effective by ensuring that its ethos reflects a conceptualisation based on a more recent understanding of teacher learning for effective practice. The essential characteristics are identified as 'using the critical activities of teaching and learning; using the investigation of practice as a starting point; and building on professional discourse' (Akyeampong, 2003, p.65). In order to enhance harmony between organisation, implementation and conceptualisation Marais and Meier (2004, p.231) suggest that it is necessary that written guidelines and training workshops for supervisors be included in the planning for teaching practice. The present study sought to establish whether the organisation of teaching practice at Walter Sisulu University contributes to the promotion of an effective context for the development of student teachers' competences.

In effective teaching practice programmes the planning of teaching practice involves establishing partnerships between the universities and the schools.

31

Breitinger (2006, p.99) argues that good teacher education depends on the quality of the partnership between the university and the school and not on the contractual agreement made. In such a partnership the university and school are equal partners and their partnership contains mutual respect for differing roles (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p163). Along similar lines, Lam and Fung (2008, p. 6) contend that it is important for teaching practice to have a structure which identifies the administrative roles and operations. The present study would want to establish whether or not the role players participate in the planning of teaching practice as planning together can promote the understanding of the purpose of, and the roles and responsibilities of, the different role players during teaching practice.

Izuagie (2003, p.144) argues that extensive logistics are involved in the preparation for teaching practice placement. These include consultations at various levels and sensitisation of all stakeholders including student teachers. It is important that transport problems as they affect staff and students are duly studied and reduced to minimum proportions. This study is looking at establishing what activities are planned for teaching practice and to what extent they can promote student teacher development. It is important that student teachers' development should be structured and direction sustained with meaningful activities for them to benefit from teaching practice.

An important element of planning for teaching practice is the preparation of student teachers for teaching practice. The following section addresses the issue of the preparation of student teachers for teaching practice.

2.3 PREPARATION OF STUDENT TEACHERS FOR TEACHING PRACTICE

Literature has various programmes for the preparation of students for teaching practice. Some of these programmes are structured and others are not. Lewin and Stuart's (2003, p. 74) report on a study of teacher education in Trinidad and Tobago gives an outline of a structured programme for preparing student teachers for teaching practice known as Principles of Effective Teaching which aims at preparing student teachers to develop and demonstrate the pedagogical skills necessary for effective teaching as well as motivating them to display an attitude of professionalism in their approach to teaching. According to Amedeker (2005, p.101), in Ghana too, the preparation of student teachers for teaching practice is formalised by making it a prerequisite (before doing the Student Internship) for each student teacher to undergo a period of training during the fifth and the sixth semesters (i.e. in their third year in the university). Two courses are organized during these semesters as part of their regular academic courses and they involve tuition and practice. The fifth semester courses lay emphasis on aspects of educational research and student teachers are put under the supervision of methodology lecturers. The second education course taken by the student teachers during the sixth semester focuses on professional development and practising teaching skills. The present study sought to establish whether the Trinidad, Tobago and Ghana scenarios obtain at Walter Sisulu University.

The results of a study at the University of Durban-Westville in which the majority of student teachers suggested that more time should be spent on preparation at the university, prior to the school-based teaching practice, clearly point to the value that student teachers attach to preparation for teaching practice (Samuel & Sayed, 2003, p.146). A similar view was expressed by fourth-year students at Edgewood College of Education. The students noted that there was a need for

more preparation at college with teacher educators giving more demonstration lessons and providing help in lesson planning in order for teaching practice to be more valuable (Reddy, 2003, p.188). This study seeks to establish the extent to which appropriate preparation for teaching practice is provided to student teachers.

Samuel (2009, p.750) gives an account of a programme used at the University of KwaZulu-Natal to orientate student teachers from the early stages in both the B.Ed and Post-graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) programmes. This programme involves arranging 'mixed groups of student teachers to be transported into a range of different schooling contexts'. This is followed up with 'on-campus' activities and assignments related to the range of contexts they visited. Reddy et al. (2008, p. 155) identified strategies such as micro lessons and transporting school learners to campuses as means of preparing student teachers for teaching practice in the schools. This study would want to find out the nature of activities used for the orientation of student teachers to teaching practice.

Izuagie (2003, p.142) argues that the degree of teaching practice preparation could have an impact on the effectiveness of the exercise. Izuagie's findings from research conducted in Zimbabwe revealed the following shortcomings: preparation for teaching practicum has been grossly inadequate with insufficient academic preparation either in issues cutting across all disciplines or in specific major subjects; preparation problems exist in general skills in the classroom, imbalance between facilities in college and host schools and college tutors' unwillingness to give demonstration lessons. In concurrence with the view of poor preparation for teaching practice Lewin and Stuart (2003, p.84) point out that schools are often unsure of their role and seldom make an effort to make the time spent in school beneficial to the student teacher and the school. In some instances staff in the schools take time off and leave the student teacher to

'sink or swim' and in others they may re-teach every lesson taught by the student teacher. Izuagie (2003) contends that the practice in many colleges in West Africa where a whole Teaching Practice Orientation Week is obligatory before student teachers are physically deployed could counteract the problems outlined above.

This study would want to find out the nature of student teacher preparation for teaching practice as well as the extent to which student teachers are adequately prepared for teaching practice. Lack of adequate preparation of student teachers would render teaching practice a futile exercise. Once the student teachers have been prepared for teaching practice the next step is placing them in schools for teaching practice. The following section discusses placement of student teachers for teaching practice.

2.4   PLACEMENT OF STUDENT TEACHERS FOR TEACHING PRACTICE

Placement refers to the selection of sites for teaching practice and the arrangements that precede sending student teachers to the schools. Haigh and Ward (2004) argue that teaching practice placement should provide experiences appropriate for student teachers' professional development and not a mere provision of a teaching practice setting. According to Izuagie (2003, p. 144), there is a good deal of preparation that must be done with regard to student teachers' placement for teaching practice long before the start of a teaching practice block, and official agreement by correspondence can never be enough to ensure a supportive environment. Hasty placement arrangements do not accommodate proper orientation of the schools about the expectations of the university during teaching practice. Placement of student teachers has to suit both the schools and the university in terms of accommodating their academic programmes and the appropriate timing of teaching practice block to ensure its usefulness (Samuel & Pillay, 2003, p.140).

Darling-Hammond (2006, p.153) states that in the American Universities' teacher education programmes the placements are identified to offer settings where particular kinds of practices can be observed and where student teachers will have opportunities to learn from expert teachers. The characteristics of student teachers are also taken into consideration when allocating them to a range of community and school types. Placement is carefully done in order to place student teachers in schools that serve them well in terms of their professional development. These teacher education institutions help to develop high-quality teaching in the schools where they place their students for student teaching, rather than expecting that it occurs without cultivation. In similar vein, Reddy et al. (2008, p.153) contend that student teachers cannot learn to teach well by imagining what good teaching might look like. Settings for teaching practice are surely selected with great care and relationships are developed. This study further seeks to find out if the quality of learning and teaching is taken into account when identifying schools in which student teachers are placed for teaching practice.

In support of the view expressed above, Brown and Lancaster (2004) state that for strong connections between theory and practice to occur close relationships should be established with the schools used for teaching practice as the collaborative culture promotes high quality teaching practice placements that allow student teachers to develop their competences in a supportive environment. Ideally, placement for teaching practice should be made in schools where there is a culture of teaching and learning; teachers model pedagogically-sound teaching and there are opportunities for students to plan, deliver lessons; the reality is that some schools are unsuitable for student placement. Arguing in similar vein as Robinson, Darling-Hammond (2006, p.161) maintains that for teaching practice experience to contribute to the development of student teachers there should be extensive communication between the university and the schools. Such communication may be in the form of handbooks or manuals

given to participating schools and cooperating teachers describing what placements should include, along with examples of tasks and outlines of classroom-based assignments.

Reddy et al. (2008, p.153) found that in South Africa it was not always possible to place student teachers in schools that were suited for effective teaching practice as there were not enough good schools available. Some student teachers were placed in schools where they were not welcome. For example, they were placed in schools where they were not introduced to serving teachers (Marais & Meier, 2004). A similar problem in Zimbabwe is recounted by Batidzirai and Nyota (2003, p.18) who reveal that placement is usually a cause for concern to some student teachers. Student teacher placement is not properly planned and as a result some student teachers find themselves placed in schools where their subjects are not offered and hasty placement arrangements leave no time for school orientation. Other concerns identified in Zimbabwe are the gross inadequacy of resources in some of the schools and the number of supervision visits and assessments a student teacher gets depends on how far or near to the college a student teacher is placed. This study seeks to establish how schools used for teaching practice are identified and how much consideration is given to the selection of schools that can provide a suitable environment for learning to become a teacher.

In Lesotho, due to the shortage of money for student teachers' accommodation during teaching practice, student teachers choose to go to schools nearer their homes and as a result the institution cannot select the best schools or those closer to it for effective supervision (Lewin & Stuart, 2003, p.89). The practice of exposing student teachers to bad learning experiences works against the goals of effective teacher education. Lefoka and Sebatane's (2003, p.43) report on the survey conducted in Lesotho reveals that "students' placement seems fairly

disorganised, with 90% of those in the survey choosing their own schools". It is the contention of the writers that when student teachers are allowed to select schools of their own choice the issues of quality and suitability of the schools and the extent these schools are prepared to cooperate with the college pose serious challenges.

Darling-Hammond (2007, p. 208), while pointing out that student teachers cannot learn to teach well without observing examples of good practice, advises that effective partnerships through professional development schools (PDS), lab schools and school reform networks can assist in creating appropriate school environments for teaching practice. Cochrane-Smith in Reddy et al. (2008, p.146) notes that the environmental requirements that emphasize reform in teacher education should be considered in the placement of student teachers as placement in such contexts promotes learning by student teachers and engenders a critical view of school practices from teachers who seek to bring about reforms in teaching. This study seeks to determine the extent to which the university and the schools where student teachers are placed cooperate in developing student teachers' competences during teaching practice.

The view of developing good schools that provide an appropriate environment for the development of student teachers' competences is reiterated in a Sunday Times' (25 July 2010, pp.1-2) report on a proposed teacher education and development plan which has as one of its features the creation of state of the art teaching schools close to universities to be used for placing student teachers during teaching practice in the same way that teaching hospitals are used by medical students. In the Sunday Times statement, Parker proclaims that each university will be allocated two teaching schools, a primary and a high school, and top teachers will be employed in those schools to assist student teachers who will be placed in these schools.

Amin and Ramrathan (2009, p.73) bring another dimension to the placement of student teachers for teaching practice when they argue that student teachers should have a much wider exposure to a diversity of school contexts so that they do not only come to understand the complications and demands of teachers' work, but are also enabled to review their beliefs about schools based on their own experiences of schooling. This is necessary in order to prepare student teachers for the diverse school contexts in South Africa. Once the student teachers have been placed in the schools, they need to be mentored. The next section discusses mentoring of student teachers during teaching practice.

2.5   MENTORING DURING TEACHING PRACTICE

As already explained in Chapter 1, mentoring is defined as the supportive relationship between a novice (student teacher) and a more experienced guide who may be a class teacher or a subject teacher (Taruvinga & Museva, 2003, p.115). Similarly, Geen (2002, p.18); and Hudson and Millwater (2008, p.2) assert that a mentor is usually a well qualified, very experienced and very competent teacher. Weasmer and Woods (2003, p.174) hold the view that the mentor sets the tone for the teaching practice experience as her or his approach to mentoring determines whether the relationship with the student teacher will be patriarchal, collegial, or collaborative. It is their contention that the host teacher should assume a leadership role in the mentoring process and a non-threatening atmosphere in which student teachers can seek advice and try new ideas with the host teacher.

On the contrary, according to Cameron & Baker (2004, p.51) there is often a lack of alignment between the goals of the teaching practice as given by teacher educators or in programme documents and the actual experience of teaching practice which is reflected in the ways in which the associate teachers or teacher educators undertake their roles as mentors.

Lam and Fung (2001, p.7) identify mentoring as the most important component of their teaching practice model. They argue that within an educative teaching practice student teachers have the opportunity to construct their own solutions or develop their own strategies for improving their teaching hence mentoring is mainly concerned with facilitating student teachers' learning and development. According to Probyn & Van der Mescht (2001), effective mentoring programmes involve student teachers in the mentors' lesson planning, modelling of good practice by student teachers based on the observation of mentors as well as reflecting on their practice with student teachers. Furthermore, in these programmes mentors and student teachers engage in collaborative teaching until they are ready to teach the class on their own under the observation of the mentor who also assists with reflection.

Similarly, Hudson and Millwater (2008, p.2) assert that mentoring is a tool for professional development and is founded on the relationship between student teacher as mentee and the class or subject teacher as mentor; this forms its foundation. Without developing mentor-mentee rapport, there is no connection to each other and learning seldom occurs. A five-factor model of Personal Attributes, System Requirements, Pedagogical Knowledge, Modelling and Feedback is used to describe the mentoring practices. The Personal Attributes factor refers to a mentor being comfortable in talking, assisting in reflecting, instilling positive attitudes, listening attentively, being supportive, and instilling confidence; the System Requirements factor involves outlining curriculum, discussing aims, and policies; Pedagogical Knowledge refers to assisting with teaching strategies, classroom management, planning, timetabling, discussing content knowledge, implementation, assessment, questioning techniques and problem solving, guiding preparation and providing viewpoints; Modelling is made up of modelling classroom management, teaching, a well-designed lesson, rapport with learners, effective teaching, displaying enthusiasm, using syllabus language and demonstrating hands-on activities; Feedback involves observing

teaching for feedback, providing oral and written feedback, evaluation of teaching, reviewing lesson plans and articulating expectations (Hudson & Millwater, 2008, pp. 5-6). The present study sought to establish the nature of mentoring practices to which student teachers are exposed during teaching practice.

In concurrence with the mentoring practices outlined above (Lam & Fung, 2001; Hudson & Millwater, 2008), earlier on, Geen (2002, p.18) identified the following as responsibilities of a mentor: inducting student teachers to the department — including providing them with the necessary documentation; contributing to the provision of a suitable programme of classroom experience; promoting student teachers' expertise in the teaching of their specialist subject which can involve serving as a role model, engaging in collaborative teaching with the student teacher, helping with lesson planning and preparation, observing teaching on the part of the student teacher, giving constructive feedback; assessing student teacher's development and liaising with other role players e.g. university lecturers. Geen's ideas are supported by Amedeker (2005, p.106) who views mentors as advisors, facilitators, supporters and role models. The mentors are expected to deliver the above if they are competent in teacher education practices such as lesson preparation and lesson planning (Maphosa, Shumba & Shumba, 2007, p.297). Similarly, Lam and Fung (2001, p.9) contend that mentors are required to provide close support to student teachers in lesson preparation, pupil learning needs and abilities diagnoses, classroom instructional processes, conferences, reflection, and formative and summative evaluation. Mentors are also expected to induct student teachers into the school community and to take up responsibilities as a normal school teacher. Maphosa et al.,(2007, p.297) maintain that mentors are expected to be competent in the areas of lesson preparation and lesson delivery in order to provide effective guidance to student teachers. This study would want to find out the extent to which host

teachers perform the roles and responsibilities associated with effective mentoring during teaching practice.

It has been observed in Zimbabwe that a mentor is increasingly becoming an important person in the initial teacher education just as the concept of school-based supervisor or mentor is being accepted by those involved in teacher education (Taruvinga & Museva, 2003, p.111). In identifying the criteria for the selection of mentors Geen (2002, p.36) mentions, amongst other aspects, an expressed interest and willingness to take on the role for a number of years; willingness to participate in initial and further training courses; a proven record as a successful classroom teachers with the ability to serve as a role model for student teachers; the possession of good interpersonal skills and the ability to liaise effectively with colleagues both in the school and at the university. The present study sought to investigate the extent to which the host teachers play the role of mentors during teaching practice by providing student teachers with effective guidance and support in order to encourage the development of their competences.

Reddy et al. (2008, p.154) claim that a number of institutions in South Africa are currently using, or planning to use, a teacher-mentor system to supervise student teachers in schools as an innovation to their practice. They are of the view that this system is time-consuming, requiring training and inputs from university staff before and during teaching practice. They further caution that if mentors are not trained or committed the system can be misused by making student teachers perform menial tasks like photocopying and collecting books. Similarly, Maphosa et al. (2007) established that most student teachers received poor mentorship in lesson preparation and that a large number of mentors assumed that the student teachers had been taught aspects of lesson preparation at the college and were thus not very sure of how they were expected to help student teachers on lesson delivery. Marais and Meier (2204, p.

227) allude to the failure of host teachers to assist student teachers when they established that student teachers complained that the host teachers did not pay enough attention to them and some were not given any feedback on their lessons and felt that lack of guidance reduced teaching practice effectiveness.

Marais and Meier (2004, p. 227) made a similar finding in that the host teachers were unfriendly and student teachers were treated as intruders whose role in the classroom was that of a 'cover teacher'. Probyn and Van der Mescht (2001) indicate that there is a need for student teachers to be properly prepared for their role as mentees since some mentors in their study felt that student teachers hardly ever asked questions. They suggest that student teachers should be exposed to the craft of observing a teaching performance and learning to ask questions about what they see. The present study sought to establish whether or not the problems outlined above were experienced in relation to mentoring during teaching practice at WSU.

The view that host teachers should be trained in mentoring so that they can provide effective guidance and support to student teachers is confirmed by the Quick and Siebőrger's (2005, p.2) finding in that mentor teachers would be more useful if given sufficient guidance and structure from the university regarding teaching practice. Geen (2002, p.54) too argues that the professional development of mentors should be addressed through strategies such as internal meetings of members of the mentoring team devised to share good practice, courses organized to meet specific needs, the use of software to provide information on partnership, attendance of mentors on courses which lead to the award of a higher degree, the establishment of 'professional development' schools and the creation of a national professional qualification for mentors. The notion of capacity building for mentors is supported by Lopez-Real and Kwan's (2005) suggestion that mentoring teachers should be intrinsically motivated by making them feel that they have benefited by achieving professional

development to ensure a healthy sustainability in mentoring. This study would want to find out if the university provides any support to host teachers as a way of capacitating them to perform their roles as mentors.

Robinson (1999, p.198) contends that there is limited dialogue and communication between teachers and university staff as university staff "pop in and out of schools to evaluate students' teaching and often hardly speak to the teachers"; there can therefore be no meaningful support to the students by the teachers. School teachers should be informed about the meaning of their expected role as subject teachers as this is also necessary in order to create an ideal environment for teachers to engage in critical inquiry and reflective practice. Furthermore, Hudson and Millwater (2008, p.2) maintain that the relationship between the mentee and the mentor should be democratically shared with opportunities for collaboration and two-way dialogue. An apprentice type of teaching practice in Zimbabwe with the mentor being the master teacher and the student teacher the apprentice is regarded by some educationists as limiting the student teachers only to aspects of teaching that have been observed (Taruvinga & Museva, 2003, p.122).

The present study further sought to establish the extent to which the university ensures that the host teachers understand and are ready to perform their duties as mentors to the student teachers. A key element of mentoring is supervision. The following section discusses teaching practice supervision.

2.6 SUPERVISION OF TEACHING PRACTICE

According to Lewin and Stuart (2003, p.54), supervision refers to a situation where lecturers work formatively with their student teachers with the expectation that they will observe their student teachers teach, note strong and weak points in the lesson and then suggest ways of improving the weak areas. Supervisors

should help the student teachers in class management, organisational skills, preparation and use of teaching and learning aids, and writing lesson plans. In agreement with the views expressed above, Samuel and Pillay (2003, p.141) revealed that the supervision of student teachers by full-time and part-time members of the University of Durban-Westville was on a weekly basis and it included visits to classrooms, engagement with action research projects within the school, and peer group tutorials within the school.

Supervisors play an important role in fostering and supporting the student teachers' professional and personal growth and there are certain requirements that the organisation and operation of teaching practice must meet in order for student teachers to benefit from the experience (Caires & Almeida, 2005). Furthermore, the university or college supervisors as teachers of theory and pedagogics should assist the student teachers with information on how to improve teaching skills and be concerned with the student teachers' general welfare during teaching practice (Haponyengwi, 2003, p.6). It has, however, been established that most student teachers are afraid of their supervisors and become nervous when they are visited by supervisors. The fear could stem from the harassment and criticism student teachers had previously received from their visiting lecturers (Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010). Gwarinda (2002, p.147) maintains that a supervisor seeks to see the student teacher in terms of his strengths and weaknesses and general problems with a view to reinforcing the strengths and suggesting solutions to the weaknesses and problems. It is the task of the supervisor to take back to the university the student teacher's problems directly related to placement and performance of duties. This study would want to find out how the supervision of teaching practice at WSU contributes to promoting an effective context for student teachers' competence development.

Supervision of teaching practice has been found to be faced with a number of problems. The fact that a number of university lecturers lack recent experience

of, or current exposure to, the challenges of present-day school teaching has a negative impact on their accurate assessment of student teachers' teaching in school contexts (Reddy et al., 2008, p.154). Another problem established by Reddy et al. (2008) is that some lecturers are not sufficiently interested or competent and do not take teaching practice seriously.

Although the tutors are supposed to provide academic/professional material and moral support for the student teachers, some of whom may be located in very remote areas, the number of visits needed is too large to be done effectively by the tutors and logistics, such as the widely-dispersed placement of student teachers and non-availability of transport, make it difficult for supervision to happen as required (Lewin & Stuart, 2003, p.54).

Amedeker (2005, p.60) established that in Ghana the student teachers felt that supervision was not always productive because supervisors did not have a common understanding of good practice. This pointed to a need for training of supervisors who could be classroom teachers, head teachers, circuit supervisors and college tutors. It was also necessary to adopt a common framework of standards for effective professional practice. The area of supervision is recorded as posing problems in Lesotho as well. Only 15% of the student teachers were seen the correct number of times (four) over a period of roughly four months, with most getting just two or three visits (Lefoka & Sebatane, 2003, p.43). The findings in Lesotho also reveal that the visits were uncoordinated and rushed with only half of the student teachers being given grades. In concurrence with the above research findings, Batidzirai and Nyota (2003, p.18) established that in Zimbabwe student teachers observed that the number of visits for supervision and assessment of teaching practice was not uniform as those student teachers placed closer to the college or university were likely to get more visits than those farther away. In Malawi, too, it is reported that there was insufficient support and supervision for the first cohort and the schools did not have the basic

resources; college tutors were unable to make visits due to insufficient funds and time (Lewin & Stuart, 2003, p.90). This study would want to establish whether or not problems similar to the ones outlined above are experienced in relation to the supervision of teaching practice at WSU.

Marais and Meier (2004, p.226) observed that some supervisors gave good feedback on student teachers' lesson presentations, resulting in student teachers feeling good about themselves. Similarly, Chireshe and Chireshe's (2010, p.522) study also revealed that student teachers preferred receiving advice and encouragement from their visiting college lecturers. This study would want to establish the extent to which university supervisors provide feedback to student teachers at WSU and how useful such feedback is for the development of student teachers' competences. A key component of teaching practice is assessment. The following section discusses assessment of teaching practice.

2.7   ASSESSMENT OF TEACHING PRACTICE

Assessment as presented in Chapter 1 refers to a wide range of different ways that are used to gain information and give feedback about the progress of learners (Siebörger, 2004, p.5). The word 'assessment' is derived from the Latin verb *assidere* which means to sit beside. It therefore involves a much deeper involvement of a teacher in the development and progress of the learner through guidance, taking into account the physical, emotional, intellectual, cultural and economic context in which learning takes place and providing consistent support to the learner on the road to achieving the expected outcomes (Beets & Le Grange, 2005, p.1203).

Assessment can be understood in terms of the purposes for which it is used, namely, formative and summative. Several authors define formative assessment as the process of monitoring learning progress during instruction and providing

feedback to learners and teachers concerning successes and failures, while summative assessment refers to the collection of sufficient and appropriate evidence at the end of a course on which to base a judgement about how well learners have learned what they have been taught (Maree & Fraser, 2008, p.229; Blachard, 2009, p.137; Killen, 2009, p.339). Summative assessment is used to establish whether learners have met all the competency requirements. Peer-assessment, self-assessment and group assessment are useful for formative assessment.

Fraser et al. (2005, p.247) maintain that according to the NSE approach, assessment should focus on demonstrations of applied competence within the particular student teacher's fields of specialisation. They observe that teacher educators have a complex task developing assessment criteria that can clearly distinguish between those who are competent and those who are not (yet) competent. These authors are of the view that no one assessment tool or instrument can be adequate to assess all the skills and competences of a student teacher. In agreement with the view expressed above Reddy et al. (2008, p.155) observe that 'the assessment of teaching practice seems to be both a contentious and a complex issue in a number of institutions'. They note that institutions are moving away from awarding a mark for teaching practice to merely stating whether a student teacher is competent to teach or not. In most instances supervisors are allocated to students to assess them within the context of a particular school and class. Guidelines in terms of competences required in the form of rubrics or other descriptions are supplied to supervisors, but reports also have to be accompanied by written and oral feedback. Feedback might be provided to individual students or to student groups. This study would want to establish the nature of teaching practice assessment and the extent to which assessment contributes to the development of student teachers' competences.

The assessments used by American teacher education programmes evaluate what novice teachers have learned and organize learning by deliberately marrying knowledge and application, rather than assuming that one automatically follows the other (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p.114). The assessments used share four features, namely: a focus on performance, integration of knowledge and skills in practice, multiple measures, and opportunities for learning and practicing the desired outcome as well as a move away from Likert-type-scale behavioural lists of teaching practice in favour of a more holistic view of teaching practice within context.

Azam and Iqbal (2006) report that student teachers expressed their fear of being observed and losing marks and indicated preference for the portfolio as an effective way of assessing their teaching. The student teachers thought that through portfolios they could demonstrate their learning about teaching without feeling nervous, anxious and losing confidence as often happens when they are being observed. The use of teaching practice portfolios appears to be on the increase as institutions use them from either the first year for students to 'build a CV' or in later years to help students with their recording and reflective skills (Reddy et al., 2008, p.156). Portfolios, as a form of assessment, have proven to be useful for assessing student's learning in different disciplines (Maree & Fraser, 2008, p.131; Hogan, 2007, p.199; Siebörger, 2004, p.46; Azam & Iqbal, 2006. The portfolio is regarded as an appropriate means of self-assessment because compiling a portfolio is seen to be both a learning process and an expression of knowledge gained over time.

Siebörger (2004, p.46) and Vandeyar (2008, p.126) define a portfolio as a purposive and structured collection of work that illustrates growth of student learning and includes evidence of student reflection. According to Vandeyar (2008, p.126-7) clarity of purpose is fundamental for the determination of contents of the portfolio, the selection of items that are included in the portfolio

and the manner in which the portfolio will be assessed. The focus of portfolio assessment is on the developmental process which is linked to formative assessment where the main purpose is not only to monitor the learning process and achievements and to allow for the correction of learning mistakes, but to give students the opportunity to become responsible for their learning as well as on the final product.

Chireshe and Chireshe (2010, p.512) argue that as a result of the importance of teaching practice in teacher education a number of stake-holders such as the college lecturers, school heads, mentors, the student teachers themselves and the Department of Teacher Education are involved in the assessment of teaching practice. Similarly, Lam and Fung (2001, p.8) are of the contention that the people who are involved in assisting student teachers' learning and development should participate in developing the student teachers' performance profile as reliable data may be obtained from cooperating teachers, because they have long periods of interaction with the student teachers. Their view is that other than university supervisors and cooperating teachers, the student teachers themselves have the right to evaluate their own performance. Through the assessment of their own learning student teachers are assisted to learn more about themselves and actively construct their own learning. This study seeks to identify the role of key role players in the assessment of teaching practice and the extent to which they understand the significance of their assessment.

It is claimed that in a number of institutions student teachers are encouraged to assess their own teaching competence and reflect constructively on efforts to improve their practices (Reddy et al., 2008, p.156). In all cases, schools themselves need to provide accounts of student teachers' performance on teaching practice. These reports appear to include written feedback from both teachers and principals or their delegates. At most institutions the assessment of teaching practice is the responsibility of all the staff who teach in the B.Ed

programme. Some institutions only involve lecturers who specialize in particular phases or learning areas/subjects, putting huge demands on staff in terms of time and responsibility. A few institutions also make use of temporary or part-time staff to assess teaching practice. This study sought to find out who is involved in the assessment of teaching practice at Walter Sisulu University.

Zindi (2003, p.97) revealed elements of subjectivity and bias in the evaluation forms used to assess student teachers in Zimbabwe. Chireshe and Chireshe (2010, p.522) made similar findings on subjectivity in teaching practice assessment and made a recommendation for teaching practice assessment to be more objective by involving mentors, establishing clear teaching practice assessment criteria and focusing on student teachers' positives and not negatives. This study would want to establish whether or not the issues of subjectivity and bias are experienced in the assessment of teaching practice at Walter Sisulu University.

Caires and Almeida (2005, p.119) having identified significant levels of stress involved in the student teachers' evaluation process and therefore caution that these should be attended to as they may have a negative impact on the student teachers' learning and development. Student teachers should be assisted with developing adequate coping strategies. Supervisors need to be more aware of how they conceive and conduct the evaluation process, the conditions that foster or hinder it, and their impact on the student teacher's performance. To promote a more objective, transparent and valid evaluation it is important that the evaluation tools are clarified for the student teachers. Similarly, Brown (2006, p.90) argues that developing common understanding of expectations and having clear goals has been identified as an important element in successful teaching practice. Such shared understanding, especially with regard to assessment of teaching practice between stakeholders, can be achieved by interrogating the perspectives of student teachers, cooperating teachers/mentors and university

supervisors. This study further sought to establish the extent to which the different role players participate in the assessment of teaching practice.

2.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the literature relevant to the study has been reviewed. The review covers six areas derived from the sub-research questions. The emerging issues in the literature are that there are variations in the manner of the planning of and preparation for teaching practice in the different institutions; teaching practice placement should ensure a supportive environment that is appropriate for student teachers' professional development; mentors should be trained if they are to provide effective guidance and support to student teachers; and there are a number of challenges facing effective supervision and assessment of student teachers during teaching practice

The next chapter explains the research methodology of the study and justifies the choice made with regard to the research design, sample, instruments and methods of data analysis.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1   INTRODUCTION

This study aimed to determine the effectiveness of teaching practice as a context for the development of student teachers' competences. The study sought to answer questions on the nature of the structure and operation of teaching practice and the extent to which they promote the development of student teachers' competences. Chapter two reviewed literature on teaching practice during initial teacher education. This chapter focuses on research methodology for the study. The chapter explains and justifies the adoption of the mixed-methods research design in this study. Techniques of selecting a sample for this study are explained. This is followed by a description of the instruments and data collection procedure. An overview of the methods employed to analyse the data is given. Furthermore, issues of reliability and validity are considered in the chapter. Finally, ethical issues are also addressed.

3.2   THE PHILOSOPHICAL WORLDVIEWS OR PARADIGMS

According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2007, p.21) it is important for all research to have a foundation for its enquiry, and the researchers must be aware of the implicit worldviews they bring to their studies. In addition Creswell (2009, p.5) states that philosophical ideas influence the practice of research even if they are hidden. Guba (1990), cited in Creswell (2009, p.19), defines a paradigm or worldview as "a basic set of beliefs that guide action". Mouton (1996, p.36) maintains that paradigms are not merely collections of research methods and techniques but also include certain assumptions and values regarding their use under specific circumstances. Paradigms underpin the actions of the researcher

and the methods used in the research project. A paradigm provides the largest framework within which research takes place.

Creswell (2009, p.5) identifies four different worldviews, namely, the postpositivist, the social constructivist, the participatory and the pragmatic worldviews. Postpositivist researchers adopt a deterministic philosophy in which causes probably determine effects or outcomes and knowledge production is achieved through careful observation and measurement of the objective reality that exists "out there" in the world (Creswell, 2009, p.7). Postpositivism represents thinking after positivism and disputes the idea of absolute truth and accepting that we cannot be "positive" about our claims of knowledge when studying human behaviour and actions. According to Creswell and Clark (2007, p.22), postpositivism often employs quantitative approaches.

Although this study was not purely based on postpositivism it had an element of postpositivism in as far as it sought to establish the extent to which teaching practice provides an effective context for the development of student teachers' competences. It was not, however, the intention of the study to establish relationships among variables and have questions or hypotheses that pose such relationships (Creswell, 2009, p.7). On the other hand constructivism is mainly associated with qualitative approaches and works from a different worldview (Creswell & Clark, 2007, p.22). According to Creswell (2009, p.8), social constructivists hold assumptions that individuals seek to understand the world in which they live and work. The understanding or meaning of phenomena, formed through participants and their subjective views, make up this worldview.

A participatory worldview holds the view that research inquiry needs to be intertwined with politics and a political agenda. According to Creswell (2007, p.21), research based on the participatory worldview contains an action agenda for reform that may change the lives of the participants, the institution in which

individuals work or live, and the researcher's life. Creswell (2009, p.9) observes that the participatory worldview can also provide a foundation for quantitative research as well.

Creswell and Plano Clark (2007, p.23) state that pragmatism is typically associated with mixed-methods research. The focus of this worldview is on the consequences of research, on the primary importance of the question asked rather than the methods, and multiple methods of data collection inform the problem under study. Creswell (2009, p.10) is in support of this view as he argues that pragmatism is appropriate for mixed-methods research where researchers are free to draw from both quantitative and qualitative assumptions in doing research as it is not committed to any one system of philosophy and reality.

Since it was important for this study to establish the participants' views about the structure and operation of teaching practice it tended to lean more towards the philosophical assumptions of social constructivism. On the other hand, due to the use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches, which are often associated with postpositivism and constructivism respectively as indicated above, the study could not be positioned within a single worldview. Hence the study was situated in multiple worldviews, namely, postpositivism and constructivism.

3.3   THE RESEARCH DESIGN

3.3.1 Introduction

Based on the philosophical worldviews outlined above, research designs can be classified into three major categories: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p.22; Creswell, 2009 p. 3). Mouton (1996, p.107) states that the main function of a research design is to enable the

researcher to "anticipate what the approximate research decisions should be so as to maximise the validity of the eventual results". Wiersma and Jurs (2009, p.118) and MacMillan and Schumacher (2006, p.22) concur with Mouton (1996) in their common view that a research design is a plan according to which research is conducted. Several authors seem to agree on the idea that a research design is determined by the research question and that an appropriate research design should be identified for a research question (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009, p.118; MacMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p.22). Creswell (2009, p.5) further explains that the research design which is a plan or proposal to conduct research "involves the intersection of philosophy, strategies of inquiry, and specific methods". This study used a mixed-methods design which is going to be explained below.

3.3.2 Mixed-methods Research Approach

Mixed-method research designs are a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p.10) regard mixed-methods research as involving both collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data. Flick (2006, p.37) contends that the different methodological perspectives are used so that they can complement each other when studying an issue. In support of Flick's viewpoint, Fraenkel and Wallen (2006, p.442) maintain that the fact that mixed-method studies use both qualitative and quantitative approaches it enables them to provide a more complete picture of a situation than would either type of data by itself.

This study used the mixed-methods design for a better understanding of the issue under investigation by obtaining different but complimentary data on the topic (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p.65). This design is used when a researcher wants to directly compare and contrast quantitative statistical results with qualitative findings or to validate findings or expand quantitative results with

qualitative data as was the case with this study. This view is supported by Cohen et al. (2007, p.377) when they state that qualitative data from the focus groups can complement the quantitative data and may be used for purposes of triangulation with data collection methods such as interviewing, questionnaires and observation.

Creswell and Plano Clark (2007, p.9) contend that the use of mixed-methods research counteracts the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research. In agreement Creswell (2009) argues that since all methods have limitations, using more than one method results in the biases inherent in one method being neutralised or cancelled by the biases of other methods. The view of Creswell is echoed by McMillan and Schumacher (2006, p.401) as well when they note that the strengths of each method are exploited when using both approaches. They further indicate that the use of mixed-methods design assists in gaining a more comprehensive picture of what is being studied from the emphasis on quantitative outcomes as well as the process that influenced the outcomes. Furthermore, data collection is not restricted to one type of method thus allowing for a more complete set of research questions as well as conclusions.

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected using one instrument in this study as the questionnaire consisted of both closed and open-ended items. In a second step, as recommended by Flick (2006, p.37), a decision was made about the questionnaire respondents that should form focus groups. More qualitative data was collected by means of focus group discussions. Fraenkel and Wallen (2006, p.443) caution that to undertake a mixed-methods study requires that the researcher be trained in both the qualitative and quantitative design. Furthermore, mixed-method studies may require the collection of an extensive amount of data and a considerable amount of time and energy to undertake and

complete them. The researcher is quite familiar with qualitative research, having used it in two studies for Master's degrees. The researcher paid special attention to the construction of the structured section of the questionnaire such that data was easily coded and analysed. The sampling technique of this study was done so that the data yielded was manageable and the use of focus groups saved on time and energy.

In outlining the advantages of mixed-methods research, Creswell and Plano Clark (2007, p.9) indicate that mixed-methods research provides more comprehensive evidence for studying a research problem than either quantitative or qualitative research alone, presents researchers with opportunities where they are not restricted to the types of data collection typically associated with qualitative or quantitative research, answers questions that cannot be answered by qualitative or quantitative approaches alone, encourages researchers to collaborate across the sometimes adversarial relationship between quantitative and qualitative researchers, and encourages the use of multiple worldviews or paradigms rather than the typical association of certain paradigms for quantitative researchers and others for qualitative researchers. Mixed-methods research is viewed as "practical" in as far as the researcher is free to use all methods possible to address a research problem and also considering the fact that individuals tend to solve problems using both numbers and words.

3.3.2.1 Quantitative Research Approach

McMillan and Schumacher (2006, p.12) and Wiersma and Jurs (2009:118) are in agreement that quantitative research designs are associated with research questions that deal with the interrelationship among variables, predictability of certain outcomes, and the comparison of specific groups and are founded on positivism, which assumes there are stable, social facts with a single reality,

separated from feelings and beliefs of individuals. The results of quantitative research are generally expressed as numbers, and research design aims at enabling the researcher to compare and break up those numbers in order to arrive at valid interpretations. In concurrence with the views expressed above Leedy and Ormrod (2005, p.94) maintain that quantitative research is used to answer questions about relationships among measured variables in order to explain, predict, and control phenomena hence quantitative researchers make use of methods that allow them to objectively measure the variable(s) of interest". The quantitative approach was used in this study to garner social facts, separate from feelings, on the nature and implementation of teaching practice from different categories of participants through closed-ended questionnaire items.

Quantitative research enables researchers to establish relationships and explain causes of changes in measured social facts using an established set of procedures and steps, and since the ideal quantitative researcher is detached from the study in order to avoid bias, most quantitative research attempts to establish universal, context-free generalisations (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p.12).

Fraenkel and Wallen (2006, p.433) state that quantitative researchers assume that there exists a reality "out there", existing independent of human beings and waiting to be discovered, thus making it the task of science to discover the nature of that particular reality and how it works. Another assumption of quantitative researchers is that accurate statements about the way the world really is can be arrived at through research investigations. The purpose of educational research, therefore, is to explain and be able to predict relationships and ultimately construct laws that determine prediction. McMillan and Schumacher (2006, p.23) further point out that the quantitative research designs can be traced to research in agriculture and the hard sciences as their origin.

The positivist philosophy of knowing adopted in these fields emphasizes objectivity and quantification of phenomena hence quantitative research designs ensure objectivity by using numbers, statistics, structure and control. In the present study numbers and statistics were used to discover the reality about the structure and implementation of teaching practice.

McMillan and Schumacher (2006, p.23) consider a very important classification of quantitative design as being experimental/non-experimental. In an experimental design, there is manipulation of what the subjects experience whereas in non-experimental research designs things that have occurred are described and relationships between things are examined without any direct manipulation of conditions that are experienced. In as far as there was no manipulation of conditions experienced by the participants in the present study, the design was non-experimental. Wiersma and Jurs (2009, p.13) confirm the opinion of McMillan and Schumacher by pointing out that for quantitative research, a major distinction is made between non-experimental research, in which the investigators have control over one or more factors (variables) in the study that may influence the subjects' behaviour, and experimental designs in which the investigator has no direct influence on what has been selected to be studied. In line with the argument by Wiersma and Jurs (2009, p. 13) that a quantitative study usually describes something or reveals relationships between two or more factors, the intention of this study was to describe the structure and implementation of teaching practice.

In highlighting the limitations of quantitative research, Creswell and Plano Clark (2007, p.9) advance the argument that a shortcoming of quantitative research is its weakness in understanding the context or setting in which people talk thus rendering the voices of participants to be silent. It is further noted that the personal biases and interpretations of quantitative researchers are seldom discussed as they are in the background. The use of qualitative research

together with quantitative research, as it was the case in the present study, serves to reduce these weaknesses.

3.3.2.2 Qualitative Research Approach

Qualitative approaches are appropriate for research questions that have to do with 'processes, unanticipated outcomes and cultural impacts'. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p.10), qualitative studies emphasize the qualities of entities and processes that are not experimentally examined or measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity or frequency. Leedy and Ormrod (2005, p. 94) concur with Denzin and Lincoln by indicating that "qualitative research is typically used to answer questions about the complex nature of phenomena, often with the purpose of describing and understanding the phenomena from the participants' point of view". They further explain that qualitative researchers move from general research questions rather than specific hypotheses; a small number of participants yield an extensive amount of verbal data which is organized into some form that gives them coherence, and they use verbal descriptions to portray the situation they experience. In line with the views outlined above this study was based on research questions rather than hypotheses; open-ended questions were included in order for the participants to express their opinions; focus group discussions were conducted with the student teachers in order to get verbal data from the participants.

McMillan and Schumacher (2006, p.315) argue that the constructivist philosophy provides a foundation for qualitative research hence it assumes that reality is a multilayered, interactive, shared social experience that is interpreted by individuals. Qualitative research, therefore, is first concerned with understanding social phenomena from the view of the participants which is arrived at through analysing the contexts of the participants' responses and by relating the meanings that participants attach to situations and events. Creswell (2009,

p.175) concurs with the argument of McMillan and Schumacher by identifying the characteristics of qualitative research. Characteristics are: natural setting which refers to the qualitative researchers' tendency to collect data in the field at the site where participants experience the issue or problem under study; researcher as key instrument which means the qualitative researcher's "ability to interpret and make sense of what he or she sees is critical for understanding any social phenomenon" (Leedy & Ormrod,2005, p.133); and multiple sources of data which the researchers should review, make sense of, and organize into categories or themes. Furthermore, Creswell (2009, p.175) indicates that the participants' meanings are of great significance in qualitative research. The focus group discussions, as one of the data collection methods of this study, seem to display most of the characteristics outlined above and therefore justifies the qualitative aspect of the mixed-methods approach of the study.

Qualitative research also has its own weaknesses which include the bias created by the personal interpretations by the researcher, and the difficulty in generalising findings to a large group because of the limited number of participants studied. Because such weaknesses are not found in quantitative research, combining the two approaches has the benefit of having such shortcomings addressed.

3.4   SAMPLE

The sample for this study was made up of fifty (50) participants. There were thirty (30) third year B.Ed students in the Economic and Management Sciences and Consumer Sciences education areas of specialisation at WSU. There were ten (10) university supervisors of teaching practice from WSU where the researcher works as a lecturer thus enabling the researcher to gain access to them with ease. Two (2) of these university supervisors were specialists in Economic and Management sciences; three (3) in Consumer sciences and five (5) in Educational foundation subjects. There were also ten (10) host teachers from

the schools used for teaching practice and situated within a distance of 100 kilometres from the university. The host teachers were also within easy reach of the researcher.

Below is a sample grid that shows numbers of participants and their breakdown.

Table 3.1: A sample grid of Participants' Biographical Variables (N=50)

Participants	Biographical Variable	Variable Description	Number
Host teachers	Gender:	Female	6
		Male	4
		TOTAL	**10**
	Age:	25-29 yrs	2
		30-34 yrs	2
		35-39 yrs	2
		40-44 yrs	2
		45-49 yrs	1
		50-54 yrs	1
		Over 55 yrs	
Student teachers	Gender:	Female	26
		Male	4
		TOTAL	**30**
	Age:	16-19 yrs	1
		20-24 yrs	15
		25-29 yrs	9
		30-34 yrs	5
University supervisors	Gender:	Female	6
		Male	4
		TOTAL	**10**
	Age:	25-29 yrs	
		30-34 yrs	
		35-39 yrs	1
		40-44 yrs	1
		45-49 yrs	1
		50-54 yrs	5

As this study was conducted by targeting a particular group, in the full knowledge that it does not represent the wider population and there is no attempt to generalize, non-probability sampling was used to select participants (Cohen et al. 2007, p.115). The form of non-probability sampling that was used is called "purposeful" sampling. There seems to be consensus on the view that purposeful sampling is used to access 'knowledgeable people' (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p.319; Wiersma & Jurs, 2009, p.342; Cohen et al., 2007, p.115). According to Cohen et al. (2007, p.115), in purposeful sampling the researchers "handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgement of their typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought". The researcher handpicked third year BEd students because they had recently been involved in teaching practice for a period of three weeks; host teachers who had student teachers attached to them during the last teaching practice block, and supervising lecturers who had recently supervised student teachers during teaching practice were also selected.

3.5   INSTRUMENTS

In this study a combination of questionnaires and semi-structured interview guides for focus group discussions were used. This enabled the researcher to validate and cross check findings.

3.5.1 Questionnaires

McMillan and Schumacher (2006, p.194) state that questionnaires can use statements or questions but in all cases the subject is responding to something written for specific purposes. A questionnaire has the same questions for all subjects, and can ensure anonymity. According to Cohen et al. (2007, p.317), the questionnaire is a widely-used and useful instrument for collecting survey information, providing structured (often-numerical) data, being able to be

administered without the presence of the researcher, and often being comparatively straightforward to analyse. Denscombe (2003, p.144) maintains that in order to qualify as research questionnaires they should meet the following criteria: be designed to collect information which can be used subsequently as data for analysis; consist of a written list of questions so that each person who answers the particular questionnaire reads an identical set of questions; and gather information by asking people directly about the points concerned with the research as questionnaires serve the purpose of getting the information "straight from the horse's mouth".

A questionnaire was found to be suitable for this study as it is relatively economical. Questionnaires, according to Denscombe (2003, pp.159-160), have the advantages of being economical, easier to arrange than personal interviews; they also supply standardized answers as all respondents are posed with exactly the same questions and pre-coded answers that allow for speedy collation and analysis of data by the researcher.

Denscombe (2003, pp.159-160) goes on to identify the following potential disadvantages that go together with the advantage:" pre-coded answers can frustrate respondents and thus deter them from answering; pre-coded questions can bias the findings towards the researcher's, rather than the respondent's way of seeing things; and questionnaires offer little opportunity for the researcher to check the truthfulness of the answers given by the respondents". As a way of reducing the impact of these disadvantages, the questionnaire used in this study included open-ended questions to allow respondents to write their own responses and the questionnaire information was followed up with focus groups in order to confirm some of the questionnaire responses.

Both closed and open-ended questionnaire items were used. Nardi (2006, p.74) explains that closed questionnaire items provide respondents with standardised

responses from which to select. Respondents can complete closed-ended items more easily and quickly than open-ended ones and the coding of responses is also simpler and more efficient. The main advantage of closed-ended questionnaire items is that the responses are consistent for all respondents and the information generated can be quantified and compared (Cohen et al., 2007, p.321 and Wierma & Jurs, 2009, p.204).

The Likert scale which is defined as "a series of gradations, levels, or values that describe various degrees of something" was used for the structured items to allow for fairly accurate assessments of opinions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p.198). For most of the items a 5-point Likert scale was used. According to Cohen et al. (2007, p.325) rating scales are used to manage "the degrees of response, intensity of response, and the move away from dichotomous questions". Likert scales are some of the "useful devices for the researcher, as they build in a degree of sensitivity and differentiation of response while still generating numbers". A Likert scale provides a range of responses to a given question or statement. The categories need to be discrete and to exhaust the range of possible responses which respondents may wish to give. The Likert scales were chosen because they provide great flexibility since the descriptors on the scale can vary to fit the nature of the question or statement.

Open-ended questionnaire items allow respondents to give the responses in their own words (Wierma & Jurs, 2009, p.204; Nardi (2006, p. 72). It is the view of Cohen et al., (2007, p.321) that qualitative, less-structured, word-based and open-ended questionnaire items are useful in capturing the specificity of a particular situation. In the case of this study the three groups of respondents were allowed to express themselves in their own words with regard to their experiences of the structure and operation of teaching practice. Denscombe (2003, p.156) believes that it is an advantage of open-ended questionnaire items that the information gathered by way of the responses reflects the diverse and

complex views of the respondents without any limitations. On the other hand, Cohen et al. (2007, p.322) point out that open-ended questionnaire items may require more time on the part of the respondent and this may result in their unwillingness to participate in the research. Furthermore, open-ended questionnaire items may yield information that is irrelevant.

One questionnaire was designed for host teachers. It was called Host Teacher Questionnaire (See Appendix A), another one for student teachers. It was called Student Teacher Questionnaire (See Appendix B), and another for university supervisors which was called University Supervisor Questionnaire (see Appendix C). Since each entity's role and effect on teaching practice is convergent, some questions were similar and others were differently phrased for each of the entities to determine their exact perceptions and opinions.

A literature review produced a theoretical basis for generating the questionnaire items. Examples of questionnaire items derived from the literature are shown in Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2: A grid showing examples of items obtained from literature by author

Items	Author(s)
Planning for teaching practice	Reddy, Menkveld, & Bitzer (2008, p.152) Perry cited in (Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2009, p.347)
Preparation of student teachers for teaching practice	Samuel & Sayed (2003, p.146) Reddy (2003, p.188). Samuel (2009, p.750)
Placement of student teachers	Batidzirai & Nyota (2003, p.18) Samuel & Pillay (2003, p.140) Darling-Hammond (2006, p.153)
Mentoring during teaching practice	Taruvinga & Museva (2003:115) Reddy, Menkveld, & Bitzer (2008, p.154) Robinson, (2001, p.100) Darling-Hammond, (2006, p.161) Hudson & Millwater, (2008)
Teaching practice supervision	Hapanyengwi (2003, p.6) Caires & Almeida (2005, p.155) Batidzirai & Nyota (2003, p.18)
Assessment of teaching practice	Fraser, Killen & Nieman (2005, p.247) Reddy, Menkveld, & Bitzer (2008, p.155) Darling-Hammond (2006. P.114) Zindi (2003, p.97)

Categories of questions were formulated so that they could lead systematically to the development of understanding of the structure and implementation of teaching practice. The following were the broad categories in the questionnaire:

Section A: had items gathering biographical data of respondents

Section B: had items focusing on planning for teaching practice; preparation of student teachers for teaching practice; placement of student teachers; mentoring during teaching practice; teaching practice supervision and assessment of teaching practice.

3.5.2 Focus Group Discussions

Discussions with focus groups of student teachers were conducted in order "to obtain a better understanding of a problem or an assessment of a problem, concern, new product, program or idea" (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p.360). The semi-structured interview guide was used to generate information on the perceptions of student teachers about the nature of the structure and operation of teaching and its appropriateness for the development of student teachers' competences.

Silverman (2004, pp.177-181) describes focus group methodology as a qualitative data collection method which entails involving a small number of people in an informal group discussion focusing on a particular topic or set of issues and goes on to identify the advantages of focus groups over one-on-one interviews as including: their provision of a "way of collecting data quickly from a large number of research participants"; their being more 'naturalistic' than interviews in so far as they are "closer to everyday conversation"; the creation of a "synergistic effect" as group members interact; and the reduced control of the researcher over the interaction "making focus groups a relatively 'egalitarian' method". The description of focus group discussions above corresponds with a statement by Frankel and Wallen (2006, p.461) that focus groups are made up of a small group of people, usually between four and eight who sit together and discuss a series of questions under the direction of a moderator.

Whereas Denscombe (2003) suggests that people may be reluctant to disclose thoughts on sensitive, personal, political or emotional matters in the presence of others, Silverman (2004, p.180), on the other hand, maintains that focus groups "are well suited to exploring 'sensitive' topics and the group context may actually facilitate personal disclosures". Frankel and Wallen (2006, p.461) maintain that it

should not be a matter of concern for the researcher as to whether participants agree or disagree on an issue as the purpose is to get people to share their views and not necessarily arrive at a consensus. Denscombe (2003, p.169) adds another dimension to the use of focus groups by stating that recording the discussion during a focus group discussion may pose a challenge as speakers may talk at the same time and further suggests that the researcher has to make sure that those with naturally dominant personalities do not dominate the proceedings. In order to overcome this the researcher ensured that every participant had a chance to say something by establishing whether or not there were other views on the issue and reminding the participants that all points of view were important. An outline with a limited number of questions was developed in order to guide the discussion (See Appendix E).

3.6   VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Cohen et al. (2007, p.133) maintain that validity is a requirement for both quantitative and qualitative research as lack of validity renders research worthless. They advise that in qualitative research validity might be addressed through the honesty, the depth, richness and scope of data achieved, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation and the objectivity of the researcher (Winter 2000 cited in Cohen et al., 2007, p.133). To enhance validity the researcher ensured accurate capturing by mechanically recording focus group data and taking notes as discussions went on. The focus group data was later transcribed verbatim and to ensure quality of data participant checking was used to confirm with the participants that the data was what the research participants meant.

In quantitative data validity might be improved through careful sampling, appropriate instrumentation and appropriate statistical treatments of data. The researcher also ensured the validity of the instruments through the use of

Criterion Jury validation where an expert in teacher education looked at the instruments and commented on them (see Appendix D). In this study questionnaire and focus group responses were compared in order to provide some evidence of validity (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006, p.421).

According to MacMillan and Schumacher (2006, p.183), reliability refers to "the extent to which the results are similar over different forms of the same instrument or occasions of data collection". The standard questions prepared guided the researcher in order to minimise chances of getting discrepancies that could erode reliability. One of the ways of increasing the reliability, validity and practicability of the questionnaire is to pre-test the questionnaire through pilot study (Cohen et al., 2007, p.341).

3.6.1 Pilot Study

The researcher aimed at reducing ambiguities as far as possible by conducting a pilot study of the questionnaire. In line with the recommendation by Fraenkel and Wallen (2006, p.405), the items were tried out with a small sample (similar to the potential respondents). The view expressed above corresponds with Wiersma and Jurs' (2009, pp.205-206) suggestion that before preparing the final form of the questionnaire, the items should be tried out with a small group in a pilot run to allow for deficiencies to be identified. Although the group used for the pilot run need not be a random sample of prospective respondents it is important that the members of the group should be familiar with the variables under study so that they are in a position to make valid judgements about the items. The results of a pilot study are useful for the identification of misunderstandings, ambiguities, and useless or inadequate items; additional items may be suggested, and mechanical difficulties in such matters as data tabulation may be identified. The pilot run also provides opportunity to discuss the items with the members of the pilot run group and such a discussion may

provide suggestions for item improvement. The pilot run results should be taken into account when working on the final form of the questionnaire.

In concurrence with the ideas expressed above Nardi (2006, pp.94-95) adds that pilot testing provides a good way of assessing whether the questionnaire flows, the instructions are adequate, the wording of the items and format clear, and whether the questionnaire can be completed within a reasonable time. Nardi (2006) warns that the respondents on whom the questionnaire is pilot tested should not be part of the final sample because they have already seen the questionnaire, and having them take part in the study a second time could bias the results. He further recommends that the questionnaire should be distributed with all the same procedures intended for use in the actual data collection phase. When questionnaires are returned, the researcher reads over the responses to the items to see if there is any confusion by looking for incorrect answers or marks left on the page by the respondents such as question marks or other annotations, for items consistently answered incorrectly or skipped, and for multiple responses that were selected when only one was expected.

Three host teachers, five student teachers and three university supervisors were sampled before the administration of the questionnaires in the main study to determine whether the instructions and questionnaire items were clear and whether they found the items to be useful. In other words, the pilot helped to check the clarity of questionnaire items, instructions and layout, gain feedback on the validity of the questionnaire, and eliminate ambiguities or difficulties in wording (Cohen et al., 2007, p.341). Permission to carry out the study was granted by the Department of Education (See Appendix H).

The guiding information to the participants read:

> *This questionnaire seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching practice as a context for developing student teachers' competences at WSU. The study forms part of my Doctor of Education Degree at WSU and should help to improve the effectiveness of teaching practice in developing of student teachers' competences. You were selected to participate in this study because of you have just returned from a teaching practice block. You do not need to write your name and no individuals will be identified or traced from this investigation, i.e. anonymity is assured. All information provided by you will be treated as strictly confidential. You are therefore kindly requested to complete the questionnaire as honestly as you can.*

All the questionnaires in the pilot study were self-administered. The respondents were given the opportunity to make comments on the research instruments and these were carefully considered when the necessary modifications were made before the questionnaire was presented to the full sample. The instruments were finalised and reproduced. An error in the age categories was pointed out: one category in the host teacher's questionnaire was broader than the others. This was corrected in the main questionnaire. Student teachers had a problem understanding the meaning of a statement: *My teaching workload was made available in incremental portions*. In the main questionnaire the statement was changed to read: *My teaching workload was allocated gradually*.

The focus group discussion questions were also piloted on five student teachers who did not form part of the focus groups for the main study. This was done in order to ensure that student teachers understood what the questions were asking and to identify and clarify ambiguities.

3.7 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE: MAIN STUDY

3.7.1 Questionnaire Administration

As in the pilot study, permission to carry out the study was obtained from the Department of Education (See Appendices F, G and H).The questionnaires were personally distributed to the host teachers at their schools and university supervisors in their offices and were collected after two days. All the questionnaires were returned. The questionnaires for student teachers were also personally administered by the researcher to the respondents at a set venue and were completed and collected immediately thereafter to avoid discussion among the respondents. This also enabled queries and uncertainties to be addressed. The instructions given to the respondents did not differ from those given during the pilot study.

3.7.2 Focus group discussions

The focus group discussions were conducted after the questionnaire data had been analysed. Sixteen of the thirty student teachers who had completed questionnaires were available for the focus group discussion. The participants were divided into two groups according to their programme specialisations with one group having ten student teachers and the other with six. This was done in order to have homogenous groups in terms of the field of specialisation, as suggested by Litoselliti (2003, p.33). The teaching practice experiences were, however, different as student teachers had been placed in different schools. Similar questions were asked of each group and all participants had a chance to express their views.

The researcher allowed the participants to express themselves in the vernacular if they felt it would help them articulate their views clearly. The responses in the

vernacular were later translated into English and a language expert was asked to check the accuracy of the translation. The researcher took notes during the focus group discussions, and to enhance accuracy mechanically recorded the focus group discussions with the use an audiotape recorder. The average duration for a focus group discussion was one hour.

Cohen et al. (2007, p.377) caution that the following issues need to be addressed in running focus groups: deciding the number of focus groups for a topic as one group may be insufficient; deciding the size of the group; allowing for people not turning up; taking extreme care with sampling so that every participant has a particular characteristic required or the group has a homogenous background in the required area; ensuring that participants have something to say and feel comfortable enough to say it; and chairing the meeting in such a way that it is open-ended but to the point. The researcher conducted two focus group discussions and invited more than the required number of participants to join the groups to ensure that each group had enough members. The area of specialisation was a common characteristic among the participants and because the participants knew each other they were relaxed and willing to share their views. Litoselliti (2003, p.40) recommends that there should preferably be the same moderator for all focus groups in order to "reduce the problem of different styles which can make the analysis of data difficult". In this study the researcher acted as moderator for both groups.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

3.8.1 Analysis of Quantitative Data

The questionnaires used consisted of different sections in order to facilitate the processing of the data using a computer. Reports from the structured questionnaire data were generated using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 18. The SPSS generated frequencies which meant "the number of times something occurs" and percentages which refer to the "proportion of cases contained within each frequency" (Bryman & Cramer, 2009, p.86). The frequencies and percentages were presented in the form of tables.

3.8.2 Analysis of Qualitative Data

Focus group discussions were mechanically recorded using a tape recorder and were later transcribed verbatim. The notes taken during the focus group discussions were integrated with the transcribed focus group discussion text. Content analysis was used to analyse data from the open-ended questionnaire items and focus group discussions. Silverman (2004, p.182) states that content analysis "produces a relatively systematic and comprehensive summary or overview of the data set as a whole". Following the suggestion by Silverman (2004, p.181), the data was examined for recurrent instances; these instances were then systematically identified across the data sets and grouped together by means of a coding system.

3.9 ETHICAL ISSUES

MacMillan and Schumacher (2006, p.333) caution that "qualitative research is more likely to be personally intrusive than quantitative research" and further

identify the following ethical guidelines: "informed consent, deception, confidentiality, anonymity, harm to subjects and privacy". The researcher benefitted from the supervisor's guidance with regard to ethical issues. In an effort to address these issues the researcher obtained permission from the relevant authorities to administer questionnaires to host teachers in the schools (See Appendices E, F and G). The requirement of informed consent was satisfied by first explaining in detail and in writing the purpose of the study and what would be required from the participants. The participants gave informed consent verbally. Participation in the research was on a voluntary basis, with rights to withdraw at any time without any consequences for the participants. Confidentiality was guaranteed by making sure that the data could not be linked to individual respondents by name as participants were not required to write their names on the questionnaires. Codes were used for identifying people. The conditions were such that there would be no harm to the respondents. After transcribing the researcher asked the participants to check if their responses were captured correctly. This also helped to establish trustworthiness.

3.10 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the research methodology followed in the study has been discussed. The discussion focused on the mixed methods as a research design and non-probability sampling as a method of selecting participants. Data collection instruments, namely, the questionnaires and the semi-structured interview guide for focus groups were discussed. The data collection procedure has been described. A brief overview of the data analysis has been given. Issues of reliability and validity with regard to the study as well as ethical considerations have also been explored. In the next chapter data from the empirical study are presented and analysed. The findings of the study are also discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DICUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1   INTRODUCTION

The aim of the study was to determine the effectiveness of teaching practice as a context for the development of student teachers' competences at Walter Sisulu University. In the previous chapter the research design, data collection methods and procedure were discussed. Data analysis procedures were also described. This chapter contains the presentation and analysis of the data generated from the empirical study. The data is presented and analysed according to the sub-research questions of the study. For each sub-research question data from questionnaires is presented and analysed first, followed by data from the student teachers' focus group discussions.

The findings are discussed under six categories derived from the study's research questions. The six categories are the planning for teaching practice, the preparation of student teachers for teaching practice, the placement of student teachers for teaching practice, mentoring during teaching practice, teaching practice supervision and assessment of teaching practice. In the discussion reference is made to available literature in order to substantiate the findings and draw parallels between them.

4.2   RESEARCH QUESTION 1: What is the nature of the planning of teaching practice and how does it contribute to creating an environment that promotes the development of student teachers' competences?

4.2.1 Responses from closed-questionnaire items

4.2.1.1 Host teachers' and University supervisors' Views on their Involvement in the Planning of Teaching Practice

Table 4.1: Involvement in the planning of teaching practice

Respondents	Item	Opinion on Aspects of Planning for Teaching Practice					
		Very Often	Often	Seldom	Very seldom	Never	Total
	Involvement in planning						
Host teachers						2	8	10
University Supervisors		2	2	4		2	10
	Involvement in teaching practice arrangements						
Host teachers		2	2	3	1	2	10
University Supervisors		2	3	2	1	2	10
	Your role during teaching practice discussed						
Host teachers		3	3	1	1	2	10
University Supervisors		3	2	2		3	10
	Schools use guidelines for teaching practice						
Host teachers		2	4	1		3	10
University Supervisors		2	2	2	2	2	10

Table 4.1 reveals that the majority of the host teachers (80%) were never involved in the planning for teaching practice. The table also shows mixed opinion on university supervisors' involvement in planning for teaching practice. There was also mixed opinion on host teachers' involvement in teaching practice arrangements whereas the majority of university supervisors indicated that they were often involved. The table also reveals that the majority of both host teachers (60%) and university supervisors (50%) often had their roles during

teaching practice discussed. The majority of the host teachers (69%) indicated that the schools often used guidelines for teaching practice. There was mixed opinion from the university supervisors on the use of guidelines by the schools.

4.2.1.2   Student teachers' Views on Involvement in Planning for Teaching Practice

Table 4.2: Planning of Teaching Practice

Respondents	Item	Opinion on aspects of planning for Teaching Practice					
Student teachers		**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**Undecided**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**	**Total**
	Student teacher involvement in planning for teaching practice	11	14	2	2	1	30
	Student teacher awareness of arrangements for teaching practice	9	15	2	2	2	30
	Student teacher role discussed	16	10	1	3		30
	Student teacher made aware of host teacher teacher's role	12	11	4	1	2	30
	Student teacher made aware of university supervisor's role	9	14	4	1	1	29

The table above shows that the majority of student teachers (83%) agreed that they were involved in planning for teaching practice, they were aware of arrangements for teaching practice, their roles were discussed and they were aware of host teachers' and supervisors' roles.

4.2.2 Responses from Focus Group Discussions

Data from focus group discussions showed that the student teachers were of the view that some host teachers were not clear about what was expected of them in relation to the student teachers during teaching practice. The excerpts below reflect the finding on the lack of awareness of expectations during teaching practice on the part of host teachers:

> *"I was given three classes and I realised that the teacher had not taught ever since I had come to collect lesson topics. So whereas I had prepared to teach Term 3 topics I now had to start with Term 2 work that the teacher had not done. I found that disturbing".*

> *"I was given a Grade 10 class that had no teacher for Economics and the teacher who had been teaching the class left everything to me. I worked alone without any help from the teachers"*

The respondents also revealed that within the same school, teachers did not adopt a common practice in dealing with student teachers. The following statements illustrate this finding:

"I was allocated two classes and the other teachers told my host teacher that she should be giving me one class like the other teachers did but she ignored them."

"Most of the time my host teacher unlike those of my colleagues did not come to class with me but remained in the staff room and there were ninety learners in the class".

"My host teacher was absent when I first came to the school but he showed care by calling to check how I was coping."

The data further revealed that some student teachers were not expected by their host teachers when they first visited the schools whereas others were properly received. This finding is reflected in the statement below:

"When I came back for teaching practice in July I did not feel welcome because the subject teacher ignored me for two days until the other teachers tried to find out why she was not giving me a class to teach."

"On the first I did not do any work because my host teacher was away and the other teachers did not know what work she planned to give to me".

"When we first arrived at the host teacher took us to the principal's office and they tried to motivate us and told us not to feel embarrassed when we made mistakes".

The student teachers reported that the use of their own transport to and from the schools during teaching practice was a great inconvenience. The following responses reflect this finding:

"We had to find our own way of getting to school unlike in the other campus where students are provided with transport by the university."

"Our transport arrangement was a challenge because it made us appear inferior to the students from the other campus and the

teachers were commenting that things were not improving at our campus. We felt neglected when we compared ourselves with the students who were provided with transport."

"Sometimes we arrived so late at school that we were even afraid to go into the school. Whereas the school started at 7h30 sometimes we arrived as late as 8h30."

The student teachers also indicated that they were confused by the fact that teachers got ready-made lesson plans from the district office which were different from the ones that the university required from them. The statements below illustrate this finding:

"The teachers get their work schedule form the district office. The lesson plans as well are prepared for them. Their lesson plan is different from the one we are expected to use by the university. The teachers therefore are not able to help us with lesson planning."

"Prepared host teachers' lesson plans are for 2 weeks whereas ours are for each day. The university does not accept the lesson plan used in the schools and this confuses us."

"I would have been better if we were allowed to use the same lesson plans used by the teachers."

4.3   RESEARCH QUESTION 2: To what extent is the preparation of student teachers for teaching practice congruent with the purpose of developing their competences?

4.3.1 Responses from closed-questionnaire items

4.3.1.1   Student teachers' and University supervisors' Perceptions of Preparation for Teaching Practice

Table 4.3: Preparation for Teaching Practice

Respondents	Item	Opinion on Aspects of Preparation for Teaching Practice					
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
	Availability of formal preparation of student teachers for teaching practice						
University Supervisors		1	3	2	3	1	10
Student teachers		12	17			1	30
	University lecturers give demonstration lessons						
University Supervisors		1	1	2	3	3	10
Student teachers		10	12	4	3		29
	Adequate preparation for teaching practice						
University Supervisors			2	3	2	3	10
Student teachers		10	14	1	4		30
	Preliminary visit to schools are undertaken						
University Supervisors		2	2	1	3	2	10
Student teachers		12	8	2	7	1	30
	You participated in identifying areas of preparation						
University Supervisors		4	1		3	2	10
Student teachers		9	9	4	3	3	30
	Student handbook has details of what is to be done						
University Supervisors		4	4		1	1	10
Student teachers		13	13	3		1	30
	Student lesson planning is similar to that of teachers						
University Supervisors				3	3	4	10
Student teachers		12	11	1	5	1	30
University Supervisors	Supervisors meet with host teacher before teaching practice block			1	3	6	10
Student teachers	Student teachers meet with host teacher before teaching practice block	8	12	4	5	1	30
	Student teachers meet with supervisor before teaching practice	3	11	3	6	1	24

Table 4.3 shows that there was mixed opinion from the university supervisors on whether there was formal preparation of student teachers for teaching practice. The majority of student teachers (96%) agreed that there was formal preparation for teaching practice. The table further reveals that the majority of university supervisors (60%) disagreed that university lecturers gave demonstration lessons; student teachers got adequate preparation for teaching practice and university supervisors said that preliminary visits to schools were undertaken before the teaching practice block. The majority of student teachers (73%) agreed that university supervisors gave demonstration lessons, student teachers got adequate preparation for teaching practice and that preliminary visits to schools were undertaken before the teaching practice block.

The table further shows that there was mixed opinion from university supervisors on their participation in identifying areas of preparation for teaching practice. It also shows that the majority of student teachers (60%) had participated in identifying areas of preparation for teaching practice and agreed that the student handbook had details of what was to be done during teaching practice. The majority of university supervisors (80%) agreed that the student handbook gave details of what was to be done. The majority of university supervisors (70%) disagreed that student lesson planning was similar to that of school teachers and that university supervisors met with host teachers before teaching practice.

4.3.1.2   Host teachers' Perceptions of Preparation for Teaching Practice

Table 4.4: Preparation for Teaching Practice

Respondents	Item	Opinion on Aspects of Preparation for Teaching Practice			
Host teachers	Host teachers are aware of student teacher preparation for teaching practice	Yes	Not sure	No	Total
		3	3	4	10
	Student teachers are adequate prepared for teaching practice by the university	6	4	0	10
	Host teacher meetings with student teachers before teaching practice block	3		7	10
	Supervisor meets with host teacher before teaching practice			10	10
	Student lesson planning is similar to that of teachers	6	3	1	10

The table reveals that the majority of host teachers (70%) were not aware of the student teacher preparation for teaching practice; they thought that student teachers were adequately prepared for teaching practice by the university. The table further reveals that most host teachers did not have meetings with student teachers or university supervisors before the teaching practice block. The majority of host teachers (60%) felt that student teacher lesson planning was similar to that of the school teachers.

4.3.2 Responses from open-ended questionnaire items

4.3.2.1   Host teachers' views

Most of the host teachers felt that the student orientation for the schools should take more than a day. The following extracts support this finding:

"Student teachers do not get time to settle well as schools are very busy at this time".

"A week would be enough to familiarise student teachers with the school and learners".

"Orientation should be spread throughout Teaching Practice".

4.3.2.2   University supervisors' views

The majority of the university supervisors reported that orientation of student teachers in the schools lasted for one week — during the observation period. These supervisors felt that a week was enough as student teachers could learn more about the school during free periods.

Four out of ten university supervisors were not sure of the duration of the orientation programme. One supervisor expressed a view that there was no orientation as student teachers were made to teach even during the observation week.

4.3.2.3   Student teachers' views

The majority of student teachers felt that the observation period in the second year had a positive effect on their teaching practice. The extracts below illustrate this finding:

"Observation helped with understanding of teaching";

"Observation period was good for experience"

"I gained confidence as a result of having done observation".

The extracts below reflect the view that observation did not have a positive effect included the following comments:

"Observation and teaching practice were too far apart for it to have an effect on teaching practice".

"The teacher I observed did not know much".

"I did not learn much as I only looked on as the teacher taught".

The majority of responses by student teachers indicated that orientation at the schools took a variety of forms and was in some cases non-existent. The following extracts demonstrate this finding:

"I had to get information on my own from other teachers".

"I was just introduced to the staff".

"I did not get any orientation as the school was already known".

"I was given information by another teacher not the host teacher".

4.3.3 Responses from Focus Group Discussions

Student teachers expressed a view that they were not always provided with learning and teaching materials by the host teachers. The statements below reflect this finding:

> "I told the host teacher on the first day that I was not prepared because she had not given me books when I had come to collect lessons. The teacher said that she was not even keen to give me books because we don't know anything and we have come to waste their time. I pleaded with her until she gave me the books."

> "When I came to the school to collect lessons the subject teacher gave me lesson topics. I tried to borrow a text book that I could use for preparation but the teacher refused to give me one. I asked if she could not get me one from the learners but she told me that even the learners were sharing text books and for that matter there were many text books in Mthatha where I was coming from. So I left without a text book."

> "My host teachers told me that she did not trust student teachers with her books because those who had been there before us had not returned books given to them. She also told me that the university should give us books."

The student teachers' responses also showed differences in experiences with regard to orientation. The following extracts support this finding:

> "On the first day, after the principal had introduced us to the teachers, we were called to the principal's office. There was the

deputy principal and another teacher and they told us how we should dress."

"I was not told anything about the school."

"Some teachers dress appropriately but others don't, they are not a good example."

The student teachers were unanimous in reporting that they did not get any orientation on school discipline policies. The following statement was generally concurred with:

"We did not get any orientation; we did as we thought it was proper."

The student teachers felt that communication between the university and the schools was lacking and as a result they realised that the host teachers were not sure of their roles. The following statement reflects this finding:

"There was not enough communication. I think there should be workshops for the school teachers before we go out for teaching practice so that when we arrive at the schools they know what their roles and responsibilities are and what is expected from the students."

"When I first went to collect lessons I was not attended to at the school because no one knew that I was coming for teaching practice. The principal said the university had not informed him and so there were no arrangements for me."

"There is no information from the university to the school and from the school to the university. I went to find the school myself and when it was time for teaching practice I went back to the school on my own. Nobody ever checked if I was in that school and some teachers were commenting that I have been dumped there as no one seemed to care about what I was doing there."

Most student teachers indicated they were not ready to teach on the first day of the teaching practice block and reported that they were afraid and lacked self-confidence. The following excerpts demonstrate this finding:

"I was afraid; there were 75 learners in class with different attitudes. I rushed through my lesson because I was nervous and ended up finishing before time."

"I was afraid; the mentor gave me books and told me that my class was at 8h30. I told her I was not ready to teach but the teacher encouraged me to go to class. There were 81 learners. I ended up enjoying it."

"I was also afraid; I was going to teach grade 11. I did not get text books when I came to collect lesson topics. I was not prepared and there were 86 learners in my class. I did not teach on the first day."

"I just introduced myself. The principal introduced us to the learners at assembly".

"When I arrived my mentor did not introduce me to the other teachers. She took me to my class; I explained that I was nervous

and I asked her to teach so that I could observe how she was doing it. She agreed."

There was a unanimous view from the student teachers that they had not been prepared for lesson planning. The statements below demonstrate this sentiment:

"I had a problem preparing a lesson plan; I also struggled to introduce a lesson but I asked for help from the mentor and she assisted me. There were troublesome learners who were always playing in my class. I asked the mentor for advice on how to control them and she advised me to distribute them in different groups. That helped to solve the problem."

"My problem was also lesson planning; I was not sure of how to plan a lesson."

"We all had problems with lesson planning and how to handle big numbers in class."

"I was not prepared at all. We never had a chance to practice at the university, we were never taught what a lesson plan is and how to plan a lesson. We were only given formats of lesson plans without any explanation. When we were at the schools we used to phone each other asking for help with the lesson plan as there were things that we did not understand. All in all we were no prepared."

"I want to be honest and say that we were not prepared at all. We were never shown how a lesson plan is done. It was bad because

before you go to class you need a lesson plan especially when you know that you are going to be assessed. We were given the format and it was not explained. We had to ask each other."

"Lesson planning was my biggest problem. When a lecturer came to assess me she asked for my lesson plan. It was full of red marks that she made to show the wrong things. The lecturer said we all could not plan lessons properly."

The student teachers further pointed out that micro-teaching had not been used to prepare them for teaching practice. The following responses illustrate this finding:

"There was never any micro teaching."

"I think if there had been micro teaching we would have been better prepared for the classroom; and we would not have been so afraid when we went for teaching practice. It helped that we had made some presentations."

"Micro teaching would have helped."

4.4 RESEARCH QUESTION 3: Is the placement for teaching practice designed and implemented to promote the development of student teacher competences?

4.4.1 Responses from closed-questionnaire items

4.4.1.1 Host teachers' and University supervisors' views on Placement of Student Teachers for Teaching Practice

Table 4.5:   Host Teachers' and University Supervisors' Views on Aspects of Placement of Student Teachers

Respondents	Item	Opinion on Aspects of Placement of Student Teachers					
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
University Supervisors	We are knowledgeable of criteria for selection of schools	2	1	2	2	3	10
	Host teacher explanations to student teachers are sufficient						
Host teachers		2	6	1	1		10
University Supervisors		1	5	3	1		10
	Student teachers are provided with learning and teaching resources						
Host teachers		5	4		1		10
University Supervisors			2	2	4	2	10
	We understand the use of log book forms						
Host teachers		2	3	3	2		10
University Supervisors		1	6	2	1		10
	Time spent in schools by student teachers is sufficient						
Host teachers		2	5		1	2	10
University Supervisors		2	3	1	3	1	10

Table 4.5 reveals that the majority of university supervisors (50%) have no knowledge of criteria used for the selection of schools for teaching practice. It is further shown in the table that the majority of host teachers (80%) and university supervisors (60%) agreed that student teachers were given sufficient explanations on what to do during teaching practice by the host teachers. The table also shows that whereas the majority of host teachers (90%) indicated that student teachers were orientated to the school and class, the majority of university supervisors (60%) disagreed with this view.

The table reveals that the majority of both university supervisors (70%) and host teachers (50%) agreed that they both had an understanding of log book forms and 70% of host teachers felt that the time spent by student teachers in schools was sufficient.

4.4.1.2 Student teachers' views on Placement of Student Teachers for Teaching Practice

Table 4.6: **Placement of Student Teachers**

Respondents	Item	Opinion on aspects of placement for Teaching Practice					
Student teachers		Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
	Student teachers are involved in identifying schools for teaching practice	8	17		4	0	29
	Student teachers receive sufficient explanation from host teachers	10	15		4	1	30
	Student teachers were orientated to school and class	11	15	1	3		30
	Student teachers are provided with learning and teaching resources	12	15	1	2		30
	Host teachers understand log book forms	8	18	1	2	1	30
	Student teachers spent sufficient time in schools	15	12		2	1	30
	Student teachers are placed properly for teaching practice	13	14	3			30

Table 4.6 shows that the majority of student teachers (between 83% and 90%) agreed that they were involved in identifying schools for teaching practice, got sufficient explanations from host teachers, were orientated to the school and class, were provided with learning and teaching materials. The table further reveals that the majority of student teachers (86%) were of the view that host teachers understood log book forms, the time spent by student teachers in the school was sufficient and that student teachers were placed properly for teaching practice.

4.4.2 Responses from open-ended questionnaire items

4.4.2.1   Host teachers' views

There was agreement among host teachers that it would be useful for student teachers to be involved with the schools in the early stages of the teacher education programme. The extracts below support this finding:

> *"It is better to start at the beginning in order to familiarise student teachers with the school environment."*

> *"If teaching practice starts early it will help student teachers to get used to monitoring and assessing their own progress."*

> *"Students will have the opportunity to gain experience and become familiar with learners' needs if they start teaching practice early in the programme".*

The majority of the host teachers felt that the time spent by third year student teachers in schools was insufficient. The following extracts reflect this finding:

> *"One term would be better in order for the student teachers to see the effect of their teaching".*

> *"Student teachers need more time to get used to the real work environment".*

"The student teachers need to spend more time in the schools in order to gain confidence".

"The time is too short for the student teachers to build relationships with learners and understand their individual differences".

The majority of the host teachers felt that the timing of the teaching practice block was appropriate. This finding is reflected in the extracts below:

"In the third term teaching in the schools has gained momentum and learners have focus in the third term".

"Learners are settled in their classes in terms of content during the third term".

"The subject teacher is able to measure learner performance before and after teaching practice if it takes place during the third term".

"Almost all work has been covered and student teachers can choose any topic".

All the host teachers were of the view that the schools provided a suitable environment for student teachers to learn to become teachers. The following extracts illustrate this finding:

"Student teachers are provided with resources at school".

"Teachers are always available and learners are encouraged to co-operate with student teachers".

"Student teachers are welcome and orientated to make them relax and perform at their best".

"The school has necessary structures and facilities".

There was mixed opinion from the host teachers on whether established relationships existed between the schools in which student teachers were placed for teaching practice and the university. The views of those who maintained that such relationships were in existence were expressed in statements like the following:

"The university writes a letter requesting permission for student teachers to do teaching practice and this is proof that the student teachers are from the university".

"The school has been hosting student teachers for a long time".

"The principal asks host teachers to help student teachers with information".

Some of the responses from the host teachers showed that there was limited communication between the university and their schools. The extracts below demonstrate this finding:

"There is no communication between university and school especially with teachers".

"Teachers do not have enough information on university expectations".

"The university must initiate relationships with the schools so that there are proper arrangements for teaching practice teaching".

4.4.2.2   University supervisors' views

The majority of the university supervisors also agreed that student teachers should be involved with the schools in the early stages of the teacher education programme. The following extracts demonstrate this finding:

"Early involvement of student teachers in teaching practice will enable student teachers to become used to the school setting."

"Involving student teachers early in teaching practice is recommendable for thorough preparation of students as professionals".

"Exposing student teachers early to schools will allow for errors to be corrected early."

"Early exposure to schools should start in 1st year in order for student teachers to build rapport with schools."

The university supervisors had different opinions about whether student teachers spent sufficient time in the schools. The extracts below reflect the view of those who felt it was sufficient:

"The time spent in the schools is sufficient for assessment and evaluation".

"The time spent in schools is according to the programme design".

"It is sufficient because performance improves after the first visit".

"It is enough provided it is monitored and evaluated effectively".

The view of university supervisors who felt that the time spent by student teachers in schools was insufficient is illustrated by the extracts below:

"More time is needed for student teachers to be acquainted with the school environment and practices".

"Student teachers should have more time because part of the time is taken up by activities like sport and meetings".

"Student teachers need more time to practise skills".

"Student teachers go to teaching practice without guidance from lecturers".

There was mixed opinion from the university supervisors on the appropriateness of the third term for teaching practice and on whether the schools provided a suitable environment for student teachers. The extracts below support the view that the third term was appropriate for teaching practice:

"Student teachers are being prepared for teaching practice in the 2nd term".

"Going out for teaching practice during the third term allows student teachers to learn enough theory to practise in schools".

"Student teachers by then have gained sufficient content knowledge to apply in schools".

The extract below reflects the view of some university supervisors that the third term was not appropriate:

"Subject teachers use the third term to prepare for examinations".

"When student teachers come back from teaching practice in the third term lecturers are rushing to finish the syllabus and have no time to give feedback to students".

Below are extracts that support the view that the schools did not provide a suitable environment:

"*The schools are under-resourced and student teachers don't get practice in use of learning and teaching media*".

"*Student teachers are not made to feel part of the school; they are given a separate room to work from*".

"*Student teachers are not properly accommodated in schools and no demonstration lessons are given*".

The view that the schools provided a suitable environment for student teachers to learn to become teachers is reflected in the following extracts:

"*Student teachers get help with problems and most teachers in the schools are professional*".

"*Student teachers are given additional responsibility when teacher is to be away and they are treated like teachers as they share the staff room with the rest of the teachers*".

"*Students are given learning and teaching materials*".

Most university supervisors were of the view that the university did not maintain sufficient contact with the schools in support of teaching practice. The following extracts demonstrate this finding:

"Student teachers look for schools themselves and the university does not contact host schools".

"There is no continuous contact, only when students are in the schools".

"There is no formal contract between school and university".

"When students arrive by themselves they are not received well in the schools, they are only tolerated".

4.4.2.3 Student teachers' views

All the student teachers were in favour of student teachers' early involvement with the schools. This finding is reflected in the following extracts:

"We should start early so that we get information about school and become familiar with school".

"Starting teaching practice early can assist with what is expected from student teachers."

"If teaching practice starts early we can learn how to write a lesson plan."

"Third year is late to start teaching practice."

"More confidence and experience can be gained if teaching practice starts early"

The majority of student teachers viewed the time spent in the schools as sufficient. This finding is supported by the extracts below:

"Students were not paid for doing teaching practice" and *"they use their own money for transport and food".*

"The time is sufficient for student teachers to get enough experience and to be aware of challenges".

"There is no need for a longer period because little work is given to student teachers and it is finished before the end of the teaching practice block".

"Student teachers have to come back to the university in order to submit logbooks".

The majority of the student teachers felt that the third term was appropriate for teaching practice. This finding is reflected by the following extracts:

"In the third term there's still work to be taught".

"The teaching practice block during the third allows time to learn theory before going for teaching practice".

The majority of the student teachers felt that the schools did not provide a suitable environment to learn to become a teacher. This feeling is demonstrated by the following extracts:

"The practising teachers' attitude is most of the time negative".

"Student teachers are not invited to meetings, not involved in sport".
"The schools lack resources".

The majority of the student teachers felt that the university did not keep contact with them or the schools during teaching practice. The following extracts portray this sentiment:

"No university supervisor came to my school".

"I was only assessed by school subject teacher and am not even sure of the level of my performance".

"Lecturers did not even check if I'm okay".

"There is no communication between university and school so issues such as dress code are never discussed by university and school and I was confused".

"The university supervisors only came to assess were not interested in my welfare".

"The school teachers play the role of university".

4.4.3 Responses from Focus Group Discussions

Data from the focus group discussions revealed that some student teachers felt unaccepted in the schools. The following statement reflects this feeling:

"On the first day we realised as soon as we had arrived that it was bad — we were made to sit in a laboratory and it was cold and yet there are three staffrooms in the school."

Student teachers were unanimous in reporting that they found schools for teaching practice on their own and their responses reveal that the criteria they used to choose schools differed. This view is demonstrated by the statements below:

"We choose our own schools."

"When choosing a school I considered schools closer to where I stayed or schools that had the subjects I was offering as my majors."

"I chose the school because I had heard that it was a good school; that learning and teaching was going on very well; but when I arrived at the school I noticed that the teachers were always in the staffroom and did not do much teaching. I was hoping to learn in this school. The learners were learning on their own."

"I chose a school where I thought I could learn something as the teachers went to school even on Saturday trying to improve the pass rate."

The responses of the student teachers reveal that student teachers felt undermined in some of the schools they approached for placement and schools found the arrangement confusing. This feeling is reflected in these statements:

"The treatment I got at a school that I first went to was very bad! The principal asked what I wanted and I told him that I was looking for placement for teaching practice and that I had a letter of introduction from the university. He made me read the letter to him and after that told me that he didn't have time for that and he left me standing in his office. When he was at the door he asked if there was anything else that I needed and when I said there was nothing more he told me to leave. I felt humiliated and was very angry."

"When we arrived at the school to seek placement the principal wanted to find out why we were finding schools for ourselves and how many we were. He remarked that this arrangement was confusing for him because they didn't know how many students to arrange for from our campus whereas from the other campus a lecturer came to arrange for a particular number of student teachers."

The student teachers also felt that the teachers were not keen on hosting them for teaching practice. This view is demonstrated by the following statements:

"My mentor made it clear that she would never take any students for six months teaching practice and told me that I must not even think

of coming back next year for a year because we waste their time. But I had also made up my mind never to go back to that school."

"The principals work with the subject teachers but when you meet with the subject teacher you are not taken seriously as it would be the case if it had been university staff. When as a student I go to a school to request placement the matter is not given serious consideration whereas if placement is requested on behalf of the student by the institution it is regarded as a serious matter."

"When I got to the school I was told to wait for the principal and when he arrived he pushed me out asking what it was that I was wanted. I told him that I needed placement in his school for teaching practice. He told me to move aside because there were student teachers there already. I learnt that placement for those students had been arranged by staff from their university".

4.5 RESEARCH QUESTION 4: What is the nature of the mentoring programme and how does it contribute to the development of student teacher competences?

4.5.1 Responses from closed-questionnaire items

4.5.1.1   Host teachers' and University supervisors' Perceptions of Mentoring during Teaching Practice

Table 4.7: Host teachers' and University supervisors' Perceptions of Mentoring during Teaching Practice

Respondents	Item	Opinion on Aspects of Mentoring during Teaching Practice					
		Very Often	Often	Seldom	Very seldom	Never	Total
	Student teachers observe host teacher's lessons						
Host teachers		2		6	1	1	10
University supervisors		1	4	3	1	1	10
	Host teachers check student teachers' lesson plans						
Host teachers		1	1	5	2	1	10
University supervisors		5	1	1	2	1	10
	Host teacher remains in classroom when student teacher teaches						
Host teacher		1	2	4	1	2	10
	Student teacher gets feedback after each lesson						
Host teachers			3	4		3	10
University supervisors		8	2				10
	Supervisors discuss student teachers' progress with host teachers						
Host teachers				2	2	6	10
University Supervisors		3		3		3	10
	There are problems in supervisor/host teacher-student teacher relationship						
Host teachers		1			1	8	10
University Supervisors			1	3		6	10

Table 4.7 reveals that there were contradictions between the views of the majority of the host teachers (70%) and the majority of the university supervisors (50%) as host teachers indicated that student teachers seldom observed host teachers' lessons, while the university supervisors indicated that student teachers often observed teachers' lessons and student teachers' lesson plans were often checked. The table also shows that the majority of host teachers (70%) seldom checked student teachers' lesson plans; seldom remained in class when the student teachers were teaching and seldom gave

student teachers feedback after a lesson. All university supervisors indicated that they often gave feedback after each lesson.

The majority of host teachers (60%) never discussed student teachers' progress with university supervisors and had never had problems in their relationship with student teachers. There were mixed opinions from university supervisors on whether they discussed student teachers' progress with host teachers and the majority of university supervisors (60%) had never had problems in their relationship with student teachers.

Table 4.8: Host teachers' and University supervisors' Views on Mentoring during Teaching Practice

Respondents	Item	Opinion on Aspects of Mentoring during Teaching Practice					
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
	Host teachers give appropriate guidance to student teachers						
Host teachers		4	5	1			10
University supervisors		2	2	2	3	1	10
	Host teachers are aware of expectations in relation to student teachers						
Host teachers		1			6	3	10
University supervisors		4	4	2			10
	The responsibility for student teacher development is shared between host teachers and university supervisors						
Host teachers		3	7				10
University supervisors		2	6		1	1	10
	Host teachers/university supervisors keep records of student teachers' performance						
Host teachers		1	2	2	3	2	10
University supervisors		3	5			2	10
	Host teachers/university supervisors discuss professional conduct with student teachers						
Host teachers		1	5	1	3		10
University supervisors		4	2		4		10

Table 4.8 shows that the majority of host teachers (90%) agreed that they provided appropriate guidance to student teachers and shared the responsibility for student teachers' development. There were mixed opinions from university supervisors on whether or not host teachers gave appropriate guidance to student teachers.

The table further reveals that the majority of host teachers (90%) were not aware of what the university expected from them in relation to student teachers during teaching practice. The majority of university supervisors (80%) agreed that they were aware of expectations in relation to student teachers, shared the responsibility for student teachers' development, were aware of student teachers' assignments during teaching practice and kept records of student teachers' performance. The majority of university supervisors (60%) indicated that they discussed professional conduct with the student teachers. The table shows that the majority of host teachers (50%) did not keep records of student teachers' performance and 20% were undecided on this issue.

4.5.1.2 Student teachers' Perceptions of Mentoring during Teaching Practice

Table 4.9: Student teachers' Perceptions of Mentoring during Teaching Practice

Respondents	Item	Opinion on Aspects of Mentoring during Teaching Practice					
Student teachers		**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**Undecided**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**	**Total**
	Student teachers observe host teachers' lessons	6	15	2	5	1	30
	Student teachers are allowed to ask questions on host teacher's lessons	7	8	2	10	3	30
	Host teachers check student teachers' lesson plans	12	15	1	2		30
	Host teachers remain in classroom when student teachers teach	11	16	1		2	30
	Student teachers get feedback after each lesson	11	9	2	6	2	30
	University supervisors discuss student teachers' progress with host teachers	6	4	3	16	1	30
	There are problems in student teacher-host teacher relationships	3	2	2	14	9	30
	Host teachers give useful advice to student teachers	13	8	1	4	3	30
	Host teachers are confident about what the university expects from them during teaching practice	9	15	3	3		30
	Host teachers are willing to help student teachers	13	11	2	1	2	29
	Student teachers' workload is allocated gradually	4	11	3	4	7	29
	Host teachers help student teachers to reflect	4	16	4	5	1	30
	Host teachers/university supervisors discuss professional conduct with student teachers	11	8	1	8	1	29
	Host teachers keep records of student teachers' performance	10	13	2	3	2	30

Table 4.9 reveals that the majority of student teachers (70%) agreed that they observed teachers' lessons and were allowed to ask questions on host teachers' lessons. The table further reveals that the majority of student teachers (90%) agreed that their lesson plans were checked, that the host teachers remained in the classroom when they were teaching and 67% indicated that they got feedback after each lesson. The majority of student teachers (57%) disagreed that university supervisors discussed their progress with host teachers and that there were problems in relationships with host teachers. The majority of student teachers (70%) agreed that student teachers were given useful advice by host teachers and host teachers were confident about what the university expected. The view of 50% of student teachers was that the host teachers were willing to help and their workload was allocated gradually. Twenty (20) student teachers indicated that host teachers helped them reflect on the lessons they had given and nineteen (19) student teachers agreed that the host teachers discussed professional conduct with them. The table further shows that the majority of student teachers (77%) agreed that the host teachers discussed professional conduct with them.

4.5.2 Responses from open-ended questionnaire items

4.5.2.1   Host teachers' views

The majority of the host teachers indicated that their own workloads had no negative effect on their performance of the task of supporting and guiding the student teachers. The following extracts reflect this finding:

> "*I am overloaded but I do give guidance and leave the student teacher alone in class*".

"Not much effect and it's my first time hosting student teachers".

"Not a problem".

"I'm used to working under pressure".

The majority of the host teachers felt that the university was not providing sufficient support to host teachers. The following statements portray this finding:

"The schools are not provided with resources to acquire the necessary Learning and Teaching Support Material for student teachers".

"There is no communication and no support from the university".

"The host teachers do not feel that they are of any help to the university, there is no recognition".

The majority of host teachers agreed that it was necessary for school teachers hosting student teachers to be trained in mentoring. This finding is reflected in the following extracts:

"Training is necessary to assist host teachers understand how to assist student teachers".

"I'm not aware of what is expected of me when guiding student teachers during teaching practice and I was never trained in NCS (National Curriculum Statement)".

"Some teachers just give over their work to student teachers without coaching and guiding".

4.5.2.2   University supervisors' views

All the university supervisors were of the view that their workloads had a negative effect on their performance of the task of supporting and guiding student teachers. The following extracts demonstrate this finding:

"I don't have enough time to check lesson plans before students go for teaching practice".

"I'm so overloaded that I am unable to focus on individual lesson plans".

"I have no time to focus on guiding student teachers as the teaching of 1st and 2nd year students continues at the same time as teaching practice for the 3rd year students".

The university supervisors indicated that long distances between the schools, where the student teachers were placed, and the university, made it difficult for them to visit some of the student teachers during teaching practice. The extract below reflects this sentiment:

"Student teachers may be 200 kilometres away from the institution".

The majority of the university supervisors were of the view that the university was not providing sufficient support to host teachers. The following extracts demonstrate this finding:

"Host teachers complain about the lack of clarity on how to guide students".

"I'm not aware of any support to host teachers".

"There is a need for workshops to orientate host teachers".

"There are no regular visits by university staff to schools, except when lecturers come to assess student teachers".

All university supervisors agreed that there was a need for host teachers to be trained in mentoring. This finding is reflected in the extracts below:

"Mentor training will help host teachers know their responsibilities during teaching practice".

"Mentor training will help to bring about an understanding of the support needs of student teachers by host teachers".

4.5.3 Responses from Focus Group Discussions

Student teachers' responses during focus group discussions revealed that student teachers were discouraged by the treatment they got from some host teachers. The statements below reflect this finding:

"I saw the subject teacher and went to tell her that I had arrived. Her response was: "Oh, have you arrived? Who are your lecturers? I have heard that you don't know anything. Are you one of these that do not know even the end product of protein? Are you prepared?"
"I told her that I was not prepared because she had not given me books when I had come to collect lessons. The teacher said that she was not even keen to give me books because we don't know anything and we have come to waste their time. I pleaded with her until she gave me the books."

"My first day at the school was a very long day for me. The school in which I was doing teaching practice was a private school and almost all the teachers were foreigners. They spoke in their language and ignored me. I felt lonely and lost".

"My first day was difficult and I realised that this was not going to be a nice place to be in. I had a language problem because the teachers at the school spoke isiXhosa and I spoke isiZulu. I did not feel accepted at all on the first day but things got better as time went on."

Some student teachers reported that they were excluded from other activities going on in the school. This finding is portrayed in the following statements:

"I just saw things being done, nothing was said to me. Even when teachers were on strike I just saw people taking their bags and leaving and I just followed them. Nobody told me anything. Even when there were parents' meetings we were never informed about what is going on."

"I was not involved in anything else except going to class. Sometimes I would notice that the teachers were doing something but they did not involve me."

"In our school we were excluded; we were even given a separate room away from the main staff room. We would be called for staff meetings only to be told to go back because it was meant for teachers only".

"In our school we were excluded from meetings but I was happy about that because there were tensions among the teachers and I did not want to be involved because the issues that they talked about did not concern me. The teachers were most of the time fighting over the principal's position that was going to be vacant."

"Even though we were excluded we could see that there were divisions among the staff. There was not much communication among them. We were so excluded that we were made to sit in the library. We were also bored with their discussions because there was a group that was against the principal."

"The teachers at the school were unruly; when they were invited to meetings they did not go. They would just take their bags and leave without saying anything to us student teachers. We would be confused not knowing what to do."

Some student teachers related experiences of understanding and support on the part of their host teachers and the following statements were made:

"When I arrived my mentor did not introduce me to the other teachers. She took me to my class; I explained that I was nervous and I asked her to teach so that I could observe how she was doing it. She agreed and I observed her teaching."

"The mentor teacher was good to me. He checked even before I came to the school how my preparation was going and offered to help whenever I had problems."

"The subject teacher was absent from school on my first day but she phoned to check how I was doing. The principal was also very happy to have me in his school."

Other student teachers indicated that they were involved in all activities going on in the schools. The following responses demonstrate this view:

"I was involved in staff meetings; we were given notices of these meetings and made to sign like the other teachers. Even when teachers were attending meetings during their strike we were informed and asked to look after the classes together with a few other teachers. We were left in charge of the school and told to release the learners at a particular time."

"I was involved in all the activities because they said I was a teacher so I should be involved in all the activities."

"We were involved in staff meetings."

"I was involved in staff meetings; even when there were disciplinary cases I was involved in order to learn how discipline was maintained."

Some student teachers indicated that some host teachers were not capable of giving assistance to them. This finding is demonstrated by the following statements:

"When we ask for assistance from the teachers sometimes they tell us they trained to become teachers before the new changes in the curriculum and that since we are still undergoing training we should know better that they do."

"No, the teachers could not help us because they said when they did teacher training lesson planning was done differently. They did not know anything about lesson planning and with the many changes in the curriculum they were many things that they did not know. Sometimes you feel that as a student teacher you know better than some of the practising teachers.

The student teachers also indicated that the host teachers thought that the student teachers were better informed since they were university students. The statement below portrays this view:

"The teachers also think that we know better because we are from a university."

4.6   RESEARCH QUESTION 5: How is the supervision of teaching practice carried out and how does it support the development of student teachers' competences?

4.6.1 Responses from closed-questionnaire items

4.6.1.1   Host teachers' and University supervisors' Views on Teaching Practice Supervision

Table 4.10: Host teachers' and University supervisors' Views on Teaching Practice Supervision

Respondents	Item	Opinion on Aspects of Teaching Practice Supervision					
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
	There is agreement between supervisor and host teacher comments						
Host teachers			4	4	2		10
University supervisors			6	2	1	1	10
	Supervisors' and host teachers' supervision is of equal importance						
Host teachers		1	6	2	1		10
University supervisors		3	3	2	2		10
	Supervisor and host teacher emphasize same issues						
Host teachers			2	3	5		10
University supervisors			4	2	4		10
	Supervisor and host teacher discuss issues affecting student teacher						
Host teachers		1	1		5	3	10
University supervisors			5	2	2	1	10
	Student teachers implement host teacher/supervisor suggestions						
Host teachers		2	7		1		10
University supervisors		1	4	3		2	10
	Student teachers seek advice from host teachers/supervisors						
Host teachers		3	7				10
University supervisors		3	4	1	1	1	10
	Student teachers' performance improves with practice						
Host teachers		4	6				10
University supervisors		1	6	3			10
University supervisors	Supervisors pay sufficient number of visits to student teachers	1	4	2	3		10
University supervisors	Student teachers get equal number of visits		4	1	2	3	10
University supervisors	Supervisor teams and students meet to share ideas and experiences	2	1	1	1	4	10

125

Table 4.10 reveals that four (4) host teachers and six (6) university supervisors agreed that there was consensus between host teachers and university supervisors on student teachers' lessons and seven (7) host teachers and six (6) university supervisors are of the view that university supervisors' and host teachers' supervision of teaching practice was of equal importance. The table further reveals that while 50% of host teachers felt that university supervisors and host teachers did not emphasize the same issues, there was mixed opinion from university supervisors on this item. Eight (8) host teachers disagreed while five (5) university supervisors agreed that supervisors and host teachers discussed issues that affected student teachers. Nine (9) host teachers and five university supervisors indicated that student teachers implemented host teacher and supervisor suggestions; all host teachers and seven (7) agreed that student teachers they sought advice from host teachers and supervisors and that the performance of student teachers improved with practice.

The table further shows that the majority of university supervisors (50%) agreed and 40% disagreed that they paid sufficient number of visits to student teachers and that student teachers got an equal number of visits. The table also shows that the majority of university supervisors (50%) were of the view that supervisor teams and student teachers did not meet to share ideas and experiences.

4.6.1.2   Student teachers' Views on Teaching Practice Supervision

Table 4.11: Student teachers' Views on Teaching Practice Supervision

Respondents	Item	Opinion on Aspects of Teaching Practice Supervision					
Student teachers		**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**Undecided**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**	**Total**
	Student teachers would have liked to have more visits by supervisors	7	17	1	5		30
	Student teachers get equal no. of visits	5	6	1	13	5	30
	There is agreement between supervisor's and host teacher's comments	2	14	4	8	2	30
	Supervisors' and host teachers' supervision is of equal importance	8	12	4	5	1	30
	Student teachers would like to be supervised by subject specialists	9	14	1	6		30
	Student teachers' performance improves with practice	19	11				30

Table 4.11 shows that the majority of student teachers (80%) would have liked to have more visits by university supervisors and 60% indicated that they did not get an equal number of visits by university supervisors. The table further reveals that the majority of student teachers (53%) agreed that there was no contradiction between the comments of the university supervisors and those of the host teachers and 67% regarded supervision by university supervisors and host teachers as being of equal importance. All the student teachers were of the view that their performance improved with practice.

4.6.2 Responses from Focus Group Discussions

The student teachers complained that the university lecturers did not keep regular contact with them while they were on teaching practice. The following statements reflect this finding:

"I was phoned once by someone who wanted to know if I was at the school I had said I would go to. That was the end."

"The university people do not even have the phone numbers of the schools we do teaching practice in or those of our host teachers so they cannot communicate with us through them."

"The university did not check on my progress for all the time I was doing teaching practice. Nobody ever came to assess for the whole period and there was never even a phone call to check if I was in that school. The principal concluded that my being there did not have anything to do with the university. No one would have known even if I had never gone for teaching practice."

The student teachers commented that they were not even informed when a university supervisor was coming to assess them. The statements below demonstrate this finding:

"I was phoned by the lecturer wanting to find out which school I was at, but she did not tell me that she was coming to visit me."

"In my school we just saw the lecturer coming in without telling us before that she was coming to assess us. The subject teacher had to arrange time for us to teach for her because we had already had our periods for that day."

"It is important for supervisors to communicate when they are coming to the schools so that the principal can be aware and if the principal is not going to be around for a staff member to be aware of the coming lecturer."

"I think lecturers should indicate when they are coming because one day the school programme was disrupted because a learner had collapsed and died. A lecturer came without informing the school only to find that there was no learning and teaching going on. If she had indicated that she was coming she would have been made aware of the problem at the school."

Some student teachers indicated that they found supervision helpful. The statements below reflect this sentiment:

"The lecturer assisted me in class when I could not answer a learner's question."

"Supervision was helpful."

The student teachers expressed a common wish for more visits by their lecturers. This finding is demonstrated by the statements below:

"I wish the lecturers could come more often to the schools because I was more comfortable and relaxed when they there than when I'm with the host teacher only. The subject teacher did not make any comments on my teaching. I had a feeling she was only looking for mistakes in my teaching."

The student teachers indicated that they needed guidance from university supervisors during teaching practice. The following statement reflects this finding:

"Teaching practice is ok if there's going to be guidance as to what is right and wrong so that you don't make the same mistakes over and over. It does not help if you are left alone for the whole period."

"My host teacher did not give me any feedback, she just sat at the back of the classroom but the university lecturers gave feedback to guide us when they came. This helped us a lot."

There was mixed opinion from the student teachers on the issue of how supervision was arranged. The following statements demonstrate this finding:

"In my school when the university supervisor was coming to assess me the principal was informed that the supervisor would be assessing particular students."

"The lecturer phoned to inform me that she would be coming to assess me."

4.7   RESEARCH QUESTION 6: How is assessment of teaching practice conducted and to what extent does it promote the development of student teachers' competences?

4.7.1 Responses from closed-questionnaire items

4.7.1.1   Host teachers' and University supervisors' Views on Assessment of Teaching Practice

Table 4.12:   Host teachers' and University supervisors' Views on Aspects of Assessment of Teaching Practice

Respondents	Item	Opinion on Aspects of Assessment of Teaching Practice			
		Yes	Not sure	No	Total
	We are familiar with assessment criteria				
Host teachers		5	3	2	10
University supervisors		7	1	2	10
	We are involved in the review of evaluation form				
Host teachers		4	2	4	10
University supervisors		3		7	10
	Host teacher gives mark for student teacher's performance				
Host teachers		5	2	3	10
University supervisors		4	4	2	10
	We are knowledgeable of effect of own assessment on student teachers' overall result				
Host teachers		5	2	3	10
University supervisors		7	1	2	10
	Evaluation forms cover important aspects of student performance				
Host teachers		7	3		10
University supervisors		7	1	2	10
	We ensure student teachers understand why a particular mark has been allocated				
Host teachers		6	3	1	10
University supervisors		8	2		10
	Assessment of student teacher's performance is fair				
Host teachers		8	2		10
University Supervisors		8	1	1	10
	Assignments/tasks related to teaching practice are given				
Host teachers					
University supervisors		3	5	2	10
	The Teaching Practice is file a true reflection of student teacher's work during teaching practice				
Host teachers					
University supervisors		3	5	2	10

Table 4.12 reveals that most host teachers (50%) and university supervisors (70%) were familiar with the assessment criteria used to assess teaching practice. There was mixed opinion from host teachers on their involvement in reviewing the evaluation form used in the assessment of teaching practice whilst the majority of university supervisors (70%) indicated that they had not been involved in reviewing the form. Five (5) host teachers and four (4) university supervisors were of the view that host teachers gave marks for student teachers' performance; four (4) university supervisors were not sure about this issue. The table further shows that five (5) host teachers and seven (7) university supervisors indicated that they knew the effect of their assessment on student teachers' overall result; seven (7) host teachers and seven (7) university supervisors felt that evaluation forms covered important aspects of student performance. Six (6) host teachers and eight (8) university supervisors ensured that the student teacher understood why a particular mark had been allocated and eight (8) host teachers and eight (8) university supervisors indicated that assessment of teaching practice was fair. The table further shows that the majority of university supervisors (50%) were not sure if assignments/tasks related to teaching practice were given to student teachers during teaching practice and also if the teaching practice file was a true reflection of the student teacher's work.

4.7.1.2 Student teachers' Views on Assessment of Teaching Practice

Table 4.13: Student teachers' Views on Aspects of Assessment of Teaching Practice

Respondents	Item	Opinion on Assessment of Teaching Practice			
		Yes	Not sure	No	Total
Student teachers	Assessment criteria are explained to student teacher	14	2	14	30
	All student teachers have same number of lessons assessed by supervisor	11	8	11	30
	Assessment of teaching practice is fair	19	4	6	30
	Knowledge of effect of host teacher's assessment on student teacher's overall result	6	8	16	30
	Student teachers get feedback on performance	26		4	30
	Student teacher used feedback to improveon following lessons	25	2	2	29
	Evaluation forms cover all important aspects of student teacher's performance	14	11	4	29
	Assignments/tasks related to TP given	10		19	29
	Teaching practice file is a true reflection of student teacher's work during teaching practice	25	3	2	30
	Student teachers know how final teaching practice mark is arrived at	8	11	11	30

Table 4.13 reveals that there was mixed opinion from the student teachers as to whether assessment criteria were explained to them as well as whether the student teachers had the same number of lessons assessed by university supervisors. The majority of student teachers (63%) were of the view that assessment of teaching practice was fair; 86% indicated that they got feedback on their performance and they used it to improve subsequent lessons and 83% felt that evaluation forms covered all important aspects of student teachers performance. The table also reveals that the majority of student teachers (53%) did not know the effect of the host teachers' assessment on their overall result and 63% were not given assignments/tasks related to teaching practice. The majority of student teachers (83%) felt that the teaching practice file was a true reflection of their work during teaching practice. Whereas eleven (11) of the student teachers indicated that they did not know how the final teaching practice mark was arrived at, another eleven (11) were not sure about this.

4.7.2 Responses from open-ended questionnaire items

The majority of university supervisors were of the view that the methods they used to assess teaching practice were not sufficient. The extracts below reflect this finding:

"It is not easy to use more than one method because of the shortage of time and manpower".

"One method is used and is not covering all aspects".

"Since the methods used are insufficient, student teachers should do self-assessment".

"There is a need for various methods as subjects are different".

"The assessment forms require one method of assessment".

4.7.3 Responses from Focus Group Discussions

Some student teachers expressed a view that teaching practice was assessed differently by host teachers and university supervisors. The statement below reflects this finding:

"Assessment by the subject teacher was unrealistic; the marks were so high that I was embarrassed to bring them to the university."

"I don't think host teachers assess in the same way as university supervisors. Sometimes they look at what the lecturer gave you and give you the same mark".

There was a view from some student teachers that they were not sure if the lecturers applied the assessment criteria in the same way. Some of the comments that demonstrate this finding were:

"We are not sure of what the lecturers need so we study each lecturer's requirements and next time she comes we teach to please her".

"I don't think lecturers use uniform criteria to assess lessons because sometimes you do not even finish the lesson but the lecturer gives a mark for conclusion which I don't understand".

"I would have liked to be supervised by my subject lecturer so that I can be sure of relevant feedback."

Some student teachers also indicated that they found assessment of teaching practice terrifying. The following statements reflects this result:

"I was afraid when the lecturer came to assess but I did not run away like some of us did".

"You are never sure what the lecturer wants and as a result you are feel nervous when you are going to be assessed".

"After the lecturer had come to assess my teaching I was now relaxed".

The student teachers felt that assessment requirements were emphasised as the most important aspect of teaching practice. This finding is demonstrated by the following comments:

"Information about the number of lessons to be assessed was emphasised to us because the most important thing were the records you brought back from teaching practice."

"It was emphasised that we should have assessed lessons but not all us were assessed by university staff."

Some student teachers complained that they found the manner in which feedback was given by some host teachers to be embarrassing. The comments below reflect this finding:

"I was embarrassed when the host teacher gave me feedback in public"

"Some host teachers shouted about our mistakes".

"The host teacher confronted me in front of learners about my mistakes."

4.8   DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The purpose and focus of this study was to determine the effectiveness of teaching practice as a context for the development of student teachers' competences. This section discusses the findings of this study in the light of the research questions which focused on the planning for teaching practice, the preparation of student teachers for teaching practice, the placement of student

teachers for teaching practice, mentoring during teaching practice, teaching practice supervision and assessment of teaching practice. The discussion involves presenting the major findings of the study in relation to available literature.

4.8.1   Planning for Teaching Practice

It emerged from this study that the role players in teaching practice were not fully involved in the planning for teaching. The majority of the host teachers indicated that they were never involved in the planning for teaching practice and there was mixed opinion on university supervisors' involvement in planning for teaching practice. Even when it came to arrangements for teaching practice there were mixed opinions on the part of the host teachers, whereas the majority of university supervisors indicated that they were often involved. The experiences related by the student teachers during the focus group discussions indicated that the host teachers behaved like outsiders to the teaching practice programme. Even though the majority of the student teachers reported that they were involved in planning and making arrangements for teaching practice there were still a few who were undecided about issue as well as about their awareness of host teachers' and university supervisors' roles. This finding bears similarity to the traditional approach to student teaching in which student teachers are confronted with ideas that are entirely different from those they had learnt in theory because the university and school-based staff did little planning or teaching together (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p.152).

The exclusion of the host teachers from planning for teaching practice may render teaching practice ineffective as a context for the development of student teachers' competences since the host teachers may not support the exercise and yet they are central to the student teachers' experience at the schools. This finding is inconsistent with Reddy et al.'s (2008, p.155) argument that there should be continuous liaison between the university and school staff in effective

teaching practice programmes. It is the contention of Reddy et al. (2008) that good relationships with and goodwill from schools are essential for effective teaching practice especially with regard to relationships with school principals and mentor teachers. Such good relationships can create an appropriate context for the co-operation of role players in planning for teaching practice.

The non-involvement of host teachers in planning for teaching practice revealed by this study may also explain the lack of commitment to and understanding of the teaching practice programme by the host teachers as reflected in the accounts of their negative attitudes towards the student teachers in some instances. This finding on exclusion of host teachers contradicts Brown's (1999, p.15) view that shared understandings between university staff and host teachers play a very important role in creating an effective context for the development of student teachers.

The university may be experiencing difficulty in involving host teachers in planning for teaching practice because the schools in which student teachers find placement cover a very wide area and are not easily accessible since student teachers have to find their own schools for teaching practice and some are in remote areas. It may also be possible that the role of the schools in the development of student teachers' competences is not viewed in a serious light by the university. Lack of involvement of host teachers in planning for teaching practice coupled with the unfriendly environment that student teachers have to survive in during teaching practice is likely to have negative effects such as lack of self confidence and the development of negative feelings towards teaching on the part of the student teachers as they find the environment threatening rather than welcoming.

The finding on the exclusion of host teachers from planning for teaching practice is inconsistent with the views that effective teaching practice programmes are

well planned through extensive communication between the university and the school teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p.161). The planning for the teaching practice programme at WSU is also inconsistent with Izuagie's (2003, p.144) view that effective teaching practice requires that comprehensive logistics, including consultations at various levels and sensitisation of all stakeholders, including student teachers, be attended to.

The finding of the study indicating that the university and the schools do not work as partners in preparing students for teaching practice is inconsistent with the situation reported by Breitinger (2006) where schools have assumed even more exclusive responsibility for student teachers during their practical preparation in England. Breitinger maintains that good teacher education depends on the quality of the partnership between the university and the school and not on the contractual agreement made. She further contends that a professional partnership borne out of collaboration between university and school, and not forced from outside is more worthwhile. In such a partnership university and school are equal partners and their partnership contains mutual respect for differing roles. Reddy et al. (2008, p.155) maintain that continuous communication between university staff and school staff, especially good relationships with principals and mentor teachers, is necessary in order for teaching practice to be effective.

Furthermore, the finding on lack of guidelines for teaching practice contradicts the contention that to enhance harmony between organisation, implementation and conceptualisation it is necessary that written guidelines and training workshops for supervisors be included in the planning for teaching practice (Marais & Meier, 2004, p.231).

4.8.2   Preparation of Student Teachers for Teaching Practice

It emerged from this study the student teachers were inadequately prepared for teaching practice. For example, the university supervisors revealed lack of demonstration lessons for student teachers' preparation for teaching practice. However, the majority of student teachers revealed that university supervisors gave demonstration lessons. The contradiction between the views of the university supervisors and those of student teachers over the giving of demonstration lessons is probably the result of the student teachers' lack of knowledge about demonstration lessons and it could also point to the fact that the student teachers are not familiar with the practice of demonstration lessons.

Similar findings on inadequate preparation for teaching practice were established in Zimbabwe by Izuagie (2003, p.142) who stated that preparation for teaching practice in that country has been grossly inadequate with insufficient academic preparation either on issues cutting across all disciplines or in specific major subjects.

It emerged from this study that the student teachers would have liked to be better prepared for teaching practice. This finding confirms the results of a study of face-to-face Teacher Education at the University of Durban-Westville in which ninety-two per cent of the student teachers suggested that more time should be spent on preparation at the university prior to the school-based teaching practice (Samuel & Sayed, 2003, p.146). The finding on requiring better preparation is also consistent with the results of a study conducted at Edgewood College of Education where the student teachers indicated that there was a need for more preparation at college with teacher educators giving more demonstration lessons and providing help in lesson planning in order for teaching practice to be more valuable (Reddy, 2003, p.188).

The finding on the inadequate preparation of student teachers for teaching practice is inconsistent with the best practice of ensuring proper preparation for teaching practice. For example, in Ghana, the preparation of student teachers for teaching practice is formalised by making it compulsory for each student teacher to undergo a period of training during the fifth and the sixth semesters (i.e. in their third year at the university) before doing teaching practice. Two courses are organized during these semesters as part of their regular academic courses and they involve tuition and practice. The fifth semester courses lay emphasis on aspects of educational research and student teachers are put under the supervision of methodology lecturers. The second education course, taken by the student teachers during the sixth semester, focuses on professional development and practising teaching skills (Amedeker, 2005, p.101). A similar practice of making sure that student teachers acquire teaching skills is also central to Zimbabwe's teacher education programmes (Dyanda & Hapanyengwi, 2003, p. 59).

The adequate preparation of student teachers for teaching practice plays an important role in reducing the student teachers' stress levels and boosting their self confidence. When student teachers are inadequately prepared they experience anxiety about teaching practice and can therefore not benefit fully from the programme. Izuagie, (2003, p.142) argues that inadequate preparation for teaching practice can affect teaching practice negatively because the degree of teaching practice preparation could have an impact on the effectiveness of the exercise.

The study also found that there was no full participation by the role players in identifying areas of preparation for teaching practice. Host teachers with their expert and current knowledge of what is required to teach successfully in the schools are in a better position to indicate critical areas that preparation for teaching practice should emphasise.

The results of the study further revealed that the student handbook had details of what is to be done during teaching practice. It is, however, worth pointing out that the student handbooks referred to by the respondents are made available to the student teachers only and there are no documents available specifically to inform either host teachers or the supervisors about their roles and responsibilities in the teaching practice programme.

An alarming revelation of this study was that student teachers and university supervisors maintained lesson planning by student teachers was not similar to that of school teachers. In the focus group discussions student teachers complained that host teachers were unable to assist them with lesson planning because their planning was different from that required by the university. The difference in how lessons are planned by the student teachers and host teachers is a reflection of a regrettable situation where the role players do not come together and discuss how basic aspects of teaching practice (like lesson planning) should be approached. This situation, unfortunately, might lead to confusion on the part of the student teachers and negates the potential to contribute to the development of student teachers' competences. The majority of the host teachers, in fact, indicated that they seldom checked student teachers' lesson plans. It is, therefore, not surprising that they are not aware of how the student teachers prepare their lessons.

It emerged from this study that there were no stipulated topics to be covered during orientation as the respondents gave varying accounts of how student teachers were orientated. This finding confirms Quick and Siebörger's (2005, p.4) finding that schools varied widely on how topics like school management and discipline were addressed. The finding is also related to Kiggundu and Nayimuli's (2009, p.352) observation where respondents noted that they did not get any general initiation when they first arrived at the schools.

This study also showed that the host teachers did as they pleased with regard to orientation of student teachers on school management and discipline and these topics were not covered in an organised manner. Some student teachers were given orientation in these aspects while others did not get any information. This finding about the varied treatment of student teachers by host teachers is consistent with the finding by Kiggundu and Nayimuli (2009, p.356) in that the treatment student teachers received varied from one school to another. Kiggundu and Nayimuli (2009) report that student teachers revealed that they were neither well received nor properly introduced at their schools of placement. The finding on lack of induction also confirms Marais and Meier's (2004, p.227) observation that some student teachers noted that there was no general induction procedure in place when they first came to the school and they were not introduced to the staff members. Student teacher performance during teaching practice is bound to be affected negatively as student teachers need to be introduced to the workings of the school in order for them to gain confidence in, and be positive about, what they are doing.

The study also established that only student teachers undertook preliminary visits to schools before the teaching practice block. There does not appear to be any opportunity for host teachers and university supervisors to negotiate a common understanding of the needs of the student teachers and how they should be supported during teaching practice. Such a situation cannot contribute to the promotion of an effective context for the development of student teachers' competences as host teachers are not in a position to provide the necessary support and guidance.

4.8.3 Placement of Student Teachers

It emerged from this study that there were no common set criteria for the selection of schools for teaching practice. This finding contradicts Darling-Hammond's (2006, p.153) assertion that in effective teacher education programmes placements are selected to offer settings where particular kinds of practices can be observed and learned by working with expert teachers and with student teachers having particular characteristics in a range of community and school types. Darling-Hammond (2006) argues that in effective teacher education programmes students are not just placed in schools that serve diverse students but in schools that serve these students well. The teacher education institutions have the responsibility to help in the development of high-quality teaching in the schools where they place their students for student teaching, rather than hoping it might occur without cultivation or closing their eyes to poor practice where it is commonplace. Darling-Hammond (2007, p.208) emphasizes the importance of selecting appropriate schools for teaching practice by pointing out that student teachers cannot learn to teach in school environments that do not provide appropriate examples of good practice.

The study further revealed that student teachers chose their own schools for placement. This finding confirms Lefoka and Sebatane's (2003, p.43) report on the survey conducted in Lesotho which reveals that "students' placement seems fairly disorganised, with 90% of those in the survey choosing their own schools". According to the report, the practice of student teachers selecting schools of their own choice raises many uncertainties, including the quality and suitability of the schools and the extent to which these schools are prepared to co-operate with the university. The finding on student teachers choosing their own schools for teaching practice is inconsistent with Reddy et al.'s (2008, p.153) view that settings for teaching practice are selected with great care and relationships are

developed. The argument advanced by Reddy et al. (2008) is that the student teachers cannot learn to teach well by imagining what good teaching might look like. The absence of criteria for the selection of schools for teaching practice might result in the selection of sites that "are not ideally suited to the process" (Reddy et al., p.153). Student teachers might find themselves placed in schools with an environment that is not conducive to the development of their competences.

It also emerged from this study that the student teachers felt that the arrangement according to which they approached schools for placement presented them with serious challenges. They suffered humiliation at the hands of some principals because the practice of student teachers seeking placement on their own with minimal support from the institution gives an impression to the schools that teaching practice is not a serious programme of the university.

The finding on improper student teacher placement may be an indication of less care being paid to identifying appropriate schools for teaching practice and this may affect teaching practice negatively because some of the schools may not provide an appropriate environment for learning to become a teacher. Hence student teachers reported instances where some host teachers had remarked that teaching practice was a waste of their time. The finding about the existence of a serious problem with regard to the selection of schools for placement relates to another finding of this study and that is that certain schools do not provide a suitable environment for teaching practice. The placement of the student teachers as it is, therefore, cannot possibly contribute towards creating a context that is effective for the development of student teacher competences.

It also emerged from this study that student teachers were given sufficient explanations on what to do during teaching practice by the host teachers. It is

worth noting that these explanations were based on the host teacher's understanding of what teaching practice should entail and might not necessarily be compatible with the requirements of the teacher education programme.

The study also revealed that student teachers were not often provided with learning and teaching resources by the host teachers. This further indicates that once the student teachers were in the schools it is up to the host teachers to deal with them as they deemed fit without any guidelines from the university. Under these circumstances there can be no guarantee that teaching practice is an effective context for the development of student teachers' competences.

4.8.4 Mentoring during Teaching Practice

It emerged from this study that there was no common programme of mentoring to be implemented in all the schools during teaching practice. This is contrary to Geen's (2002) proposal that the mentors should undertake administrative duties such as inducting students into the school, providing them with a suitable timetable and ensuring that they receive constructive feedback on their teaching. Without guidelines to direct mentoring the host teachers probably use their own discretion in dealing with the student teachers during teaching practice and as a result student teachers are exposed to a variety of experiences some of which may be detrimental to the development of student teachers' competences. The finding on the lack of a mentoring programme also contradicts Hudson and Millwater's (2008, p.2) description of best mentoring practices referred to as the five-factor model of Personal Attributes of being supportive and instilling confidence, System Requirements involving outlining curriculum, Pedagogical Knowledge that refers to helping with teaching strategies and classroom management, Modelling of classroom management and teaching, and Feedback involving observation of teaching for feedback.

It also emerged from this study that student teachers' observation of host teachers' lessons was not a common practice. This finding contradicts Darling-Hammond's (2006, p.157) argument that it is critical in learning to teach that the student teachers should develop an understanding of the key elements of the classroom and school environment which in some programmes is done by guiding student teachers through their observations. Such programmes require student teachers to complete observation logs, journals, or other guided observations about elements of classroom organisation and management. The finding on lack of observation of lessons by student teachers also contradicts Taruvinga and Museva's (2003, p.124) assertion that it is important for student teachers to learn by observing other qualified teachers teach and discuss with them their observations. What emerges from this finding is that the university supervisors assume that observation does take place when student teachers go to the schools during the observation week whereas this is not always the case.

The study also revealed that in addition to lack of observation, the student teachers were neither assisted in lesson planning nor provided with guidance on lesson presentation by the host teachers. This finding confirms Robinson's (1999, p.199) finding that in ineffective teaching practice programmes host teachers were not aware of what was expected of them, and there were problems when teachers were required to guide and support student teachers. This finding is also consistent with Maphosa et al.'s (2007, p.303) revelation that most host teachers failed to assist student teachers in lesson planning. This may be ascribed to the host teachers' lack of confidence in their capabilities to provide the necessary assistance.

Some student teachers' responses during focus group discussions indicated that sometimes the host teachers did not feel confident enough to assist them as they had feelings of inferiority since the student teachers were studying at a university whereas most of the host teachers qualified from the colleges of

education. This finding may be an indication of host teachers' lack of understanding of their important responsibility for guiding the student teachers. As a result, during teaching practice the host teachers generally adopt an approach similar to what Maphosa et al. (2007, p.303) refer to as the "business as usual" approach in which host teachers go on with their duties without any consideration of the fact that the student teachers need to learn from the way they operate. The failure by the mentors to assist student teachers refutes Geen's (2002) assertion that in effective teaching practice programmes, it is the responsibility of the mentor to help the student teachers in lesson planning, to provide direct assistance and support for specific teaching activities and give feedback on lessons taught by the student teacher. Robinson (1999) argues that school teachers should be informed about the meaning of their expected role as subject teachers as this is also necessary in order to create an ideal environment for teachers to engage in critical inquiry and reflective practice.

The present study also found that student teachers were not well received in the schools during teaching practice. This finding is inconsistent with Weasmer and Woods' (2003, p.174) contention that the host teacher is responsible for creating a non-threatening atmosphere in which student teachers can solicit advice from the host teacher and experiment with new ideas and Hudson and Millwater's (2008, p.2) assertion that mentoring as a tool for professional development is founded on the relationship between student teacher as mentee and the class or subject teacher as mentor. The finding on the negative reception of student teachers in the schools confirms Marais and Meier's (2004, p.227) observation that student teachers indicated that some host teachers were unfriendly and treated student teachers like intruders. On the other hand, some student teachers appreciated the positive attitudes of the host teachers and their good feedback made them feel good about themselves (Marais & Meier's, 2004, p.227). The finding on the negative reception of student teachers by some host teachers also confirms Kiggundu and Nayimuli's (2009, p. 356) revelation that

some mentors gave too much work to student teachers, while others did not have confidence in them and under such treatment student teachers felt discouraged and experience feelings of inadequacy. The finding on poor relations between the host teacher and the student teacher is inconsistent with Marais and Meier's (2004, p.222) assertion that the student teacher's relationship with the host teachers is a prerequisite for learning to teach and that a good relationship between the mentor and mentee is indispensable. The danger of this situation is that the student teachers may internalise the lack of confidence in them displayed by the host teachers and this could hinder the development of student teachers' competences.

The study also found that there was a serious lack of dialogue and communication between the university supervisors and host teachers. Commenting about a lack of communication, Robinson (1999, p.198) argues that within a context where university supervisors "pop in and out of schools to evaluate student teachers' teaching and often hardly speak to the host teachers.

It also emerged from this study that host teachers' qualifications varied widely with the majority holding diplomas in education and a few holding degrees. Their teaching experience was also found to vary from three of them with zero to three years, two with four to seven years, one with eight to eleven, one with twelve to fifteen years and three with over fifteen years. This finding indicates that the selection of host teachers is not done according to identified criteria that are typical of effective teaching practice programmes (Darling-Hammond, 2006). The finding on the varying qualifications and experience of host teachers is inconsistent with the assertion that a mentor should be well qualified and very experienced (Geen (2002, p.18) and Hudson and Millwater (2008, p.2). Taruvinga and Museva's (2003, p. 116) finding that in Zimbabwe mentors are identified and appointed by the school administration, and the criteria used for

such selection are neither fully known nor consistent is confirmed by the finding on varying host teachers' qualifications and experience.

It cannot be expected that the guidance and support that the student teachers get from a group of host teachers with widely-varying qualifications and teaching experience will be of an equal standard especially in the absence of guidance and support to the host teachers by the university. In the absence of communication between the university and the schools it is not surprising that there was no uniformity in how the host teachers dealt with the student teachers because other student teachers made positive comments. The student teachers' responses also showed differences with regard to student teachers' involvement in activities other than class teaching. The student teachers were exposed to a variety of forms of mentoring and their experiences of teaching practice, therefore, differed widely.

It also emerged from this study that the university is not providing sufficient support to host teachers. On the contrary, in the review findings Darling-Hammond (2006, p. 161) states that in a number of effective teaching practice programmes regular meetings are held with school-based colleague members to address issues relating to the university-based curriculum, the teaching practice curriculum and questions about mentoring and supervision. Such meetings are said to take place in large groups, and individually, with a co-operating teacher and student teacher to plan the experience and later to review the process and consider necessary adjustments and support. Lack of support to host teachers may result in host teachers not providing appropriate guidance and support to the student teachers and without such support teaching practice will be a matter of trial and error for the student teachers.

This study also revealed that host teachers hosting student teachers should be trained in mentoring. This finding supports Darling-Hammond's (2006, p.161) observation that in some effective teaching practice programmes the preparation of co-operating teachers took the form of a two-day workshop before the start of school or was offered as a full semester course in supervision and mentoring with university credits. It is the view of Darling-Hammond (2006, p.161) that the relationship created by effective teaching practice programmes with schools for student teachers' placement allows many opportunities for discussion of educational goals and practices as well as participation in the professional development of host teachers.

The finding on host teacher training in mentoring further confirms Reddy et al.'s (2008, p.154) observation that a number of institutions in South Africa are currently using or planning to use a teacher-mentor system to supervise students in schools as an innovation to their practice. This system is understood to be time-consuming, requiring training and inputs from university staff before and during teaching practice. The idea of mentor training is emphasised by pointing out that if mentors are not trained or committed the system can be misused by making student teachers perform menial tasks like photocopying and collecting books. The finding about the need for mentor training is also consistent with the proposal by Quick and Siebőrger (2005, p.2) that mentor teachers would be useful if given sufficient guidance and structure from the university regarding teaching practice. Furthermore, Ngidi and Sibaya (2003, p.21) point out that effective guidance from host teachers can play a significant role in reducing anxiety among student teachers.

4.8.5   Teaching Practice Supervision

It emerged from this study that although university supervisors' and host teachers' supervision of teaching practice was viewed as being of equal importance, the two groups did not emphasize the same issues. This goes to indicate that there are no common issues that are identified and accepted as a focus for teaching practice and as a result, the issues emphasized by university supervisors and host teachers differ. In addition to not emphasising similar issues, the study revealed that university supervisors and host teachers did not discuss issues that affected student teachers. The finding on failure to discuss issues affecting student teachers may indicate a lack of clear guidelines regarding co- operation between host teachers and university supervisors.

The study also revealed that student teachers did not get an equal number of visits by university supervisors and that they felt abandoned when they were not visited by the university supervisors. This finding confirms Batidzirai and Nyota's (2003, p.18) revelation that in Zimbabwe student teachers indicated that there wee inconsistencies and discrepancies in the number of visits for supervision and assessment that student teachers were getting as those student teachers placed closer to the college or university were likely to get more visits than those further away.

The finding on the unequal number of visits paid by university supervisors to student teachers is consistent with Lefoka and Sebatane's (2003, p.43) report on Initial Primary Teacher Education in Lesotho where the area of supervision is reported as posing a problem. The report indicates that only 15% of the student teachers were seen the correct number of times, which is four, over a period of roughly four months, with most getting just two or three visits. The findings of the study in Lesotho also reveal that the visits were unco-ordinated and rushed

with only half of the student teachers being given grades. Failure to provide consistent supervision to student teachers may compromise the quality of teachers who are products of such programmes.

The student teachers in this study wished for more visits by their lecturers. This finding confirms Quick and Siebörger's (2005, p.3) observation that the students prefer more supervision by the university supervisors. This finding is also in line with Chireshe and Chireshe's (2010, p. 521) observation that student teachers felt that more visits could bring about improvement in teaching practice. The student teachers could have been benefitting more from the feedback they got from their lecturers than that given by the host teachers. In fact, in this study most host teachers indicated that they did not give feedback to student teachers after lesson presentation whereas the university supervisors always gave feedback. This situation may be the result of host teachers not taking full responsibility for providing guidance to the student teachers and assuming that the university had already equipped the student teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills (Marais & Meier, 2004, p.223).

Although the student teachers regarded supervision by the university supervisors as helpful they were not pleased with the manner in which it was arranged. The student teachers felt that it was important for them to know when a supervisor was coming. This finding concurs with Chireshe and Chireshe's (2010, p.519) view that student teachers advocated for warning student teachers of impending teaching practice visits. This view may be based on the fact that the student teachers viewed the university supervisors' visits as the major purpose of teaching practice and that they needed to make special preparations in anticipation of a visit by the university supervisors. It could also be that the student teachers did not normally prepare properly for every lesson, and needed to be warned about supervisors' visits in order to avoid being found unprepared.

The student teachers were dissatisfied with the manner in which arrangements for the visits were made. This finding is consistent with Caires and Almeida's (2005, p.118) discovery that one of the areas in which student teachers displayed low levels of satisfaction was supervision. It is argued that such a situation can have a negative impact on learning and professional growth of the student teachers. The provision of adequate support and systematic guidance of student teachers during their learning process can counteract this effect.

It also emerged from this study that university supervisors viewed their workloads as having a negative effect on their performance of the task of guiding and supporting student teachers. The supervisors indicated that they found it difficult to provide guidance and support to third year students on teaching practice while at the same time they provided lectures to first and second year students. Another common response given to explain inadequate provision of support to student teachers related to long distances between the schools and the university. This finding concurs with Fraser et al.'s (2005, p.251) observation that because sending student teachers to schools for teaching practice supervision involves a great deal of time and is expensive, the level of supervision of most teacher education students is minimal. This finding also confirms Reddy et al.'s (2008, p.159) report that all institutions experience the challenge of lack of time and staff to provide proper feedback, especially to individual student teachers. This finding is related to Taruvinga and Museva's (2003, p.128) observation that student teachers were unhappy with college supervisors who were always in a hurry when visiting their schools to the extent of not assessing the whole lesson. Taruvinga and Museva (2003, p.128) state that excellence in teaching practice supervision requires that student teachers be given appropriate advice and guidance while on teaching practice. Inadequate guidance and support to student teachers may render teaching practice a futile exercise.

4.8.6   Assessment of Teaching Practice

It emerged from this study that student teachers viewed assessment of teaching practice as fair. They also reported receiving feedback on their performance. The finding on the fairness of assessment contradicts findings by Zindi (2003, p.97) and Chireshe and Chireshe (2010, p.522) about the absence of fairness because of subjectivity in teaching practice assessment. The reason for this contradiction may be due what was stated by one student teacher that in teaching practice assessment subsequent marks are in most cases close to the previous ones, in other words, the assessor is influenced by the mark allocated by a previous one.

It also emerged from this study that although host teachers and university supervisors were familiar with the assessment criteria used to assess teaching practice they were not involved in any review of these criteria. This is despite the fact that more than half of the university supervisors who participated in this study had lecturing experience of over fifteen (15) years and four host teachers had been involved in hosting student teachers for eight to over fifteen years. Brown (2008, p.90) points out that it is important that there should be a common understanding of expectations and clear goals in order to have effective teaching practice. Such shared understanding especially with regard to assessment of teaching practice between stakeholders can be achieved by interrogating the perspectives of student teachers, host teachers/mentors and university supervisors.

The lack of involvement of university supervisors and host teachers in the review of assessment criteria could result in these criteria being understood and applied differently by the two parties. Moreover, in view of the introduction of policies relating to teacher education, such as the Norms and Standards for Educators, it is expected that the assessment criteria should be subjected to constant review

in order to align them to current policies. If no such review is taking place the assessment criteria used can easily be inappropriate for the programme purpose and therefore yield irrelevant evidence that does not assist in identifying the development of student teachers' competences.

It also emerged from this study that not all student teachers had the assessment criteria explained to them. This finding confirms Chireshe and Chireshe's (2010, p. 522) observation that student teachers felt that the absence of clearly-defined teaching practice assessment criterion for reference or guidance increased the chances of subjectivity in teaching practice assessment. The finding on lack of clarity about assessment criteria on the part of the student teachers is inconsistent with Caires and Almeida's (2005, p.119) assertion that in order for assessment to be more objective, transparent and valid, it is important that the evaluation tools are clarified to the student teachers.

The study also revealed that only one method was used to assess teaching practice. This method entailed completing an evaluation form to assess teaching practice and allocating a mark. The university supervisors expressed a view that the one method of assessment was inadequate. The use of one method of assessment may not yield sufficient evidence to demonstrate the development of competences and it is quite evident that not much attention is paid to the review of the assessment of teaching practice. This finding concurs with Zindi's (2003, p. 97) argument that the current methods of assessing teaching practice in Zimbabwe are inadequate. During effective teaching practice evidence of the competence of teachers can be collected through direct observation of various aspects of their teaching, (including observation of the products they produce, such as lesson plans or learning resources), assessment of their background knowledge, or assessment of learning of their students (Fraser et al., 2005). The finding on inadequate assessment methods for teaching practice is also inconsistent with the idea that some institutions are no longer awarding a mark

157

for teaching practice but simply state whether a student is competent to teach or not (Reddy et al., 2008, p.155). The use of teaching portfolios is reported to be on the increase as institutions use them from either the first year, for students to build a Curriculum Vitae or in later years for student teachers' recording and reflective skills (Reddy et al., 2008).

It emerged from this study that assignments/tasks related to teaching practice were not given to student teachers during teaching practice. This practice is contradicted by Fraser et al.'s (2005, p.252) proposal that in order to assess the competences in the different roles of an educator it is advisable to link modules in teacher education programmes to practical school-based assignments to be completed during teaching practice.

It was also revealed that the student teachers did not have the same number of lessons assessed by university supervisors. This confirms a finding by Batidzirai and Nyota (2003, p.18) that student teachers wanted the number of assessments to be uniform. The unequal number of assessments may result in some students obtaining higher grades, on the basis of their performance having improved with more practice and feedback, while others may not have had the benefit of being assessed at a stage when their performance had improved. It is disturbing that there are student teachers who are not clear about assessment criteria; they should be taking responsibility for their own self assessment using these criteria in order to monitor the development of their competences.

4.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the results from the empirical study have been presented and the findings discussed in the context of the research questions. The main findings from the student teacher, host teachers and university supervisor questionnaires and focus group discussion with student teachers revealed that:

- planning for teaching practice is undertaken by the university alone without involving the host teachers;

- student teachers are subjected to a wide range of treatment and attitudes when they get to the schools for teaching practice due to lack of communication between the university and the schools;

- the preparation of student teachers for teaching practice is inadequate; the schools do not provide a suitable environment for the development of student teachers' competences;

- there is no common mentoring programme to be implemented by the host teachers; the student teachers would like to have more visits by the university supervisors during teaching practice; and

- only one method is used to assess teaching practice and it is inadequate.

In the next chapter a summary of the findings of the study is given, conclusions drawn from the findings are presented and recommendations are made.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose and focus of this study was to establish the extent to which teaching practice is an effective context for the development of student teachers' competences at Walter Sisulu University. The present chapter recaps the context of the problem presented in Chapter 1. The chapter also presents a summary of the findings of the study on each sub-research question; the conclusion and recommendations as suggestions for the improvement of teaching practice as a context for the development of student teachers' competences are provided and a teaching practice model is proposed. Suggestions for future studies are also presented.

5.2 REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The present study was conducted with the understanding that teaching practice is an important aspect of teacher education programmes (Caires & Almeida, 2005; Marais & Meier, 2004; Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2009; Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010) and yet it is not certain whether it serves the purpose of preparing student teachers for the teaching profession. The significance of teaching practice is confirmed by the stipulation by the Department of Education (2006) in *a National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa* that a B.Ed degree which has 480 credits should include a practical component of 120 credits so that more time is spent on teaching practice experience than has been the case. However, there is a tendency to focus more on the proportion of time spent by student teachers in classrooms or schools rather than on the development and demonstration of educator competences (Fraser et al, 2005).

It was pointed out that instead of being a well-structured learning experience and an opportunity for authentic assessment, teaching practice for many students is a demoralizing, stressful and sometimes frightening experience (Killen & Steyn in Fraser et al., 2005, p.251; Lewin & Stuart, 2003, p.84; Batidzirai & Nyota, 2003; Marais & Meier, 2004, p.224). Other challenges that are associated with teaching practice include lack of guidance and supervision (Lewin & Stuart, 2003, p.87); student teachers being allowed little room for experimenting; prescribed rigid lesson plans as noted in Uganda (Breitinger, 2006. p.99); lack of resources (Batidzirai & Nyota, 2003); moral and social decay among learners (Marais & Meier, 2004, p.224) as well as heavy workload, managing a classroom and being observed (Malik & Ajmal, 2010).

In addition, teaching practice as an opportunity for "real" learning for student teachers remains somewhat contestable as there is often a lack of alignment between the goals of the teaching practice, as articulated by teacher educators or in programme documents, and the actual experience of the teaching practice. In some cases this lack of alignment is evident in the practices of the student teachers but it is evident also in the ways in which the associate teachers or teacher educators undertake their roles as mentors (Haigh & Ward, 2004). Hapanyengwi (2003, p.2) laments the fact that in some quarters teaching practice is criticised for not having changed over the years and as a result failing to comply with changes taking place in education.

The study sought to establish the extent to which teaching practice provides the authentic context within which student teachers experience and demonstrate the integration of the competences developed in the entire curriculum (NSE, 2000). The views of host teachers, student teachers and university supervisors about the different aspects of the structure and operation of teaching practice were sought. This would assist in identifying the areas that need improvement in the structure and operation of teaching practice.

5.3 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

5.3.1 Sub-Research Question 1: Planning for Teaching Practice

The study found that the role players in teaching practice were not fully involved in the planning for teaching. The host teachers were not involved at all in the planning for teaching practice. The university alone made decisions about when and for how long student teachers should go to the schools for teaching practice. The failure to plan together could be responsible for situations where student teachers found that they were not expected in the schools and were, as a result, not properly received.

The study also found that there were no common guidelines for teaching practice used by the schools. Hence there was no standard procedure for dealing with the student teachers and different strategies were adopted by the school principals and host teachers. Some of these strategies could contribute positively to the development of student teachers' competences while others were affecting the development of such competences negatively.

5.3.2 Sub-Research Question 2: Preparation of Student Teachers for Teaching Practice

It emerged from the study that there was no formal preparation of student teachers for teaching practice. This was experienced as traumatising by the student teachers as they were overcome with feelings of fear at the prospect of going to class. The study found that the student teachers were particularly concerned about not being able to plan lessons.

Another important revelation of this study was that according to the university supervisors no demonstration lessons were given and student teachers did not

get adequate preparation for teaching practice. This is a disturbing finding especially when one considers that some student teachers find placement in schools far away from the university where no university supervisor will ever visit them and offer advice. It was also revealed that there was no micro-teaching to give student teachers opportunity to try out some teaching strategies. The student teachers expected to be better prepared for teaching practice.

It also emerged from the study that there was no participation by all the role players in identifying areas of preparation for teaching practice. It also revealed that the student handbook that has details of what is to be done during teaching practice is available to the student teachers only and there are no documents available specifically for either host teachers or the supervisors with similar information.

The study revealed that there were no structured orientation programmes. The duration and manner in which issues were covered differed across schools. For example, student teacher orientation regarding school management and school discipline was not satisfactory

5.3.3   Sub-Research Question 3: Placement of Student Teachers

This study revealed that there were no common set criteria for the selection of schools for teaching practice and that in most cases the student teachers selected schools on the basis of convenience in terms of proximity to places of accommodation; thus, the student teachers chose their own schools for placement.   The role of the university was limited to a standard letter of introduction given to the student teacher indicating what programme the student teacher was in and which grades he/she should be teaching. As a result, some of the selected schools did not provide a suitable environment for teaching practice.

It also emerged from this study that the arrangement according to which the student teachers approached schools for placement presented them with serious challenges. Furthermore, the long distances between some of the schools at which student teachers found placement and the university made it difficult for university supervisors to pay visits to all the schools.

5.3.4   Sub-Research Question 4: Mentoring during Teaching Practice

The study found that no mentoring guidelines on teaching practice were provided to host teachers. This resulted in teaching practice being experienced differently by the student teachers. It is evident that under these varying circumstances it cannot be guaranteed that all student teachers are afforded the opportunity to develop competences during teaching practice. It is evident from this study that there is no mentoring programme agreed upon by the university and the schools.

This study showed that there was no standard practice with regard to student teachers' observation of host teachers' lessons with some student teachers being given the opportunity to do observation while others were denied such opportunity. Another revelation of this study was that the student teachers were neither assisted in lesson planning nor provided with guidance on lesson presentation by the host teachers. It also emerged from this study that host teachers and university supervisors did not discuss student teachers' progress.

5.3.5   Sub-Research Question 5: Teaching Practice Supervision

This study revealed that supervision of teaching practice by the university supervisors and host teachers was viewed as being of equal importance and that

host teachers and university supervisors neither emphasized the same issues nor discussed issues that affected student teachers.

It was also revealed in this study that student teachers did not get an equal number of visits by university supervisors and that they would like to have more by university supervisors. The findings of this study further showed that the student teachers felt "abandoned" when they were not visited by the university supervisors. This study further revealed that the student teachers regarded supervision by the university supervisors as helpful but felt that its organisation was haphazard. It also emerged that university supervisors' workloads affected their performance of the task of guiding and supporting student teachers negatively.

5.3.6   Sub-Research Question 6: Assessment of Teaching Practice

The study revealed that the majority of student teachers viewed the assessment of teaching practice as fair and indicated that they received feedback on their performance The findings of this study also showed that although host teachers and university supervisors were familiar with the assessment criteria used to assess teaching practice they had never been involved in any review of these criteria. This study also revealed that only one method was used to assess teaching practice and it was felt that this method was inadequate. It emerged that the student teachers were not given any assignments/tasks related to teaching practice.

Another finding of this study was that not all student teachers had had the assessment criteria explained to them and that the student teachers did not have the same number of lessons assessed by university supervisors.

5.4   CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to establish the extent to which teaching practice is an effective context for the development of student teachers' competences at Walter Sisulu University. On the basis of the findings of this study it can be concluded that the structure and operation of teaching practice at Walter Sisulu University has a number of shortcomings that compromise its effectiveness as a context for the development of student teachers' competences. The teaching practice programme has also been found to be inadequate when it comes to the university working together with the schools in the planning and preparation of student teachers for teaching practice and as such issues like the planning for teaching practice and the preparation of student teachers do not contribute to making teaching practice an opportunity for the student teachers to develop competences. Another conclusion to be drawn from the findings of this study is that the placement of student teachers for teaching practice is not regarded as significant and mentoring of student teachers as it is understood in effective teaching practice programmes is also non-existent. It can also be concluded that supervision and assessment of teaching practice is not properly organised and consistent for all student teachers to benefit from it.

5.5   CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

In spite of the limitations outlined in chapter one this study made a significant contribution by generating evidence on the structure and operation of teaching practice. It has brought to light the shortcomings of the different aspects of teaching practice. This information will be useful in the review of teaching practice towards making it an effective context for the development of student teachers' competences. The teaching practice model that has been proposed in this study can be adapted for use in other programmes of experiential learning.

5.6   RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings outlined in section 5.2 and findings from literature the researcher would like to make a number of recommendations as suggestions for improvement of the structure and operation of teaching practice. Teaching practice is one of the most significant aspects of teacher education and all participants in the teaching practice programme should play an important role in providing the context in which student teachers can develop their competences in order to become competent educators. The researcher makes the following recommendations with regard to, firstly, policy and, secondly, practice of teaching practice.

5.6.1   Policy

It is recommended that the Department of Basic Education should include Mentor Training as part of teacher professional development by allocating professional development points to be accumulated by teachers when they have undergone Mentor Training. The university should also consider including Mentor Training with some credits in the teacher development curricula. It is further recommended there should be a policy on the remuneration of host teachers so that mentoring can be taken seriously.

It is recommended that a compulsory module for preparation of student teachers for teaching practice should become part of the curriculum and be a prerequisite for doing teaching practice. The Departments of Higher Education and Training and Basic Education should introduce a programme of collaboration/partnership between all universities offering initial teacher education and the schools to which they deploy student teachers for teaching practice.

5.6.2   Practice

5.6.2.1 Collaborative Planning for Teaching Practice

The success of teaching practice depends on the co-operation among school managers and host teachers on the one hand and the university staff and student teachers on the other. Such co-operation can be established and maintained through the communication that university staff, school management, host teachers and student teachers have with one another. In relation to planning for teaching practice, it is recommended that the university should plan together with the schools. This will bring about better understanding of the needs of the student teachers during teaching practice. It is important for the role players to be involved in the planning and co-ordinating of the students' experience in order to achieve the following:

- Provision of relevant information about the school

- Establish criteria for students' experience

- Secure a well-planned induction

- Ensure progression in the students' programme

- Offer a variety of experiences

- Ensure the programme is structured and coherent

- Plan a timetable of realistic proportions

- Provide opportunities for students to develop their professional knowledge

- Give students directions about what is expected from them

- Encourage students to monitor and evaluate their progress (Geen, 2002).

In the present study the university supervisors recommended that planning should be central to the organisation of teaching practice. Carefully-structured

teaching practice, in which student teachers are guided through assignments to make meaningful observations of what is going on in the classroom and the school, is recommended. The host teachers should be guided by the expectations outlined in the programmes and by the kind of evaluations or assessments they are asked to complete on candidates. The planning of teaching practice should provide enough opportunity for student teachers to gradually assume increased responsibility for teaching with time rather than being allocated the full workload from the first day of teaching practice.

5.6.2.2 Formal Preparation of Student Teachers for Teaching Practice

It is recommended that the preparation of student teachers for teaching practice should be formalised by offering compulsory theoretical and practical preparation. When respondents were asked in this study to indicate areas that needed to improve, the following were mentioned in relation to the preparation of student teachers for teaching practice: failure of student teachers to prepare lessons; lack of confidence and failure to take control; student preparation before teaching practice; lesson planning should be taught; demonstration lessons should be given; more emphasis on micro-teaching; student teachers should be prepared intensely; use of learning and teaching support materials by student teachers; use of group work and use of various teaching strategies.

It is evident that leaving the preparation of student teachers for teaching practice to the individual curriculum studies does not yield the required results, hence the recommendation for a specific module. Micro-teaching should be a significant component of this module to facilitate the practice of basic teaching skills by student teachers. The student teachers themselves expressed a view that if they had been exposed to micro-teaching prior to the inception of the teaching practice block they would have been better prepared. It is further recommended that the formal preparation of student teachers for teaching

practice should have a research-methods component to capacitate student teachers for the assignments that link theory to practice during teaching practice.

As part of the preparation of student teachers for teaching practice it is recommended that orientation should be conducted before student teachers are physically placed in the schools for teaching practice. It is further recommended that the orientation of the student teachers to the school and the classroom should be handled with the care that it deserves because students' performance during teaching practice also depends on the comfort or discomfort that they get in their respective schools in as far as acceptability by other members of school staff is concerned. An orientation programme to be implemented in all the schools should be designed in order to introduce the student teacher to the school setting and the work of a teacher. This recommendation is made with the understanding that the first entry into the school setting is a critical component representing the first formal contact between the student teacher and a school.

5.6.2.3 Selection of and Support to Schools used for Teaching Practice

It is recommended that the schools to be used for teaching practice should be selected with care and relationships between the university and the schools should be developed to avoid sending student teachers to unknown settings without connections between the university and the school. The issue of placements has been found to impact heavily on other aspects of the teaching practice programme such as the quality of mentoring and supervision. It is recommended that the university should develop specific criteria for selecting schools to be used for teaching practice. Schools with high-quality teaching should be identified. This is necessary because student teachers cannot learn to teach effectively if they have never been in effective learning and teaching settings and it is important that the schools of high quality should be used for teaching practice. Since there may not be many schools with high quality

teaching it is then recommended that effective partnerships between the university and the schools should be established to help create the appropriate environment for teaching through professional development schools. A professional development school is a school for the development of novice professionals, for the continuing development of experienced professionals, and for the research and development of the teaching profession and it functions in the same way as a teaching hospital, is intended not only to support the learning of teachers placed in their buildings, but also to strengthen the entire profession of teaching.

It is recommended that the student teachers should be placed in schools within a 40 km radius of the university to facilitate quality supervision and communication between the university and the schools so as to promote effective communication between the university and the schools. Extensive communication between the university and the schools is imperative for the success of the teaching practice exercise. Zonal discussions should be held with school managers and host teachers. Without communication there is a high risk of teacher education becoming a disintegrated experience for student teachers, and one where it is more than likely that the status quo will prevail over any progressive theoretical developments advocated in the lecture halls.

5.6.2.4 Development of a Mentoring Programme

It is recommended that the role of host teachers should be clearly defined and understood by all role players as the host teacher is the key person in the teaching practice experience. The host teacher is responsible for bringing to life the professional aspects of the teaching experience through a willingness to share expertise with a student teacher, to observe activities planned and introduced by the student teacher, to offer advice regarding effectiveness of teaching and classroom management techniques, and to provide the support

that student teachers often need in maintaining their professional and personal well-being as they develop from student teacher to professional educator. It follows, therefore, that a mentor should have qualities like being well qualified and very experienced and competent in order to be able to play the mentoring role. It is, therefore, important that set criteria should be used to select mentors and the selection should be done jointly by the university and the school management to avoid selection of ineffective mentors.

It is further recommended that the university should develop a mentor training programme in order for mentors to become effective. In line with the Continuing Professional Teacher Development system, mentor training should be endorsed as a professional development activity with professional development points allocated to it. A Teaching Practice Handbook that outlines the roles and responsibilities of a mentor should be developed. Mentors can be organised into teams so that they can have the same expectations of their students.

5.6.2.5 Teaching practice supervision

With regard to the supervision of teaching practice by university staff it is recommended that attention should be paid to the organisation of supervision in terms of time and the number of visits per student teacher. It is further recommended that before the beginning of teaching practice there should be a meeting involving the student teachers, mentors and university supervisors to clarify expectations and delineate roles and responsibilities of the different role players during teaching practice.

Although all lecturers in the university are qualified to supervise students in their subject areas it is recommended that supervisor training be conducted to ensure

effective supervision. Teaching practice supervision should include holding meetings with mentors to determine the progress of the student teachers.

5.6.2.6 The process of teaching practice assessment

It is recommended that the current assessment tool should be evaluated to establish if it is still relevant for assessing student teacher competences. An appropriate range of assessment methods to be used for gathering evidence about student teachers' progress and success should be identified. Formative assessment by mentors should include regular meetings and post-class-observation conferences during teaching practice periods. There should be a holistic assessment of student teachers' professional performance in and out of the classroom.

Student teachers' self-assessment is also recommended in order to promote lifelong learning. This can be done through a portfolio as portfolio building serves both as a learning process and an expression of knowledge gained. Student teachers should be encouraged to assess their own teaching competence and reflect constructively on efforts to improve their practices. The student teachers can be made to keep a teaching practice journal to track their professional growth and encourage them to reflect on school experience.

5.6.2.7 The Teaching Practice Model

To facilitate the implementation of the recommendations given above a teaching practice model is proposed below. The different elements of the model are interlinked as reflected in the diagram and they are all based on effective communication and partnership between the university and the schools.

Figure 5.1: A Proposed DN Ntsaluba (2011) Model of Teaching Practice
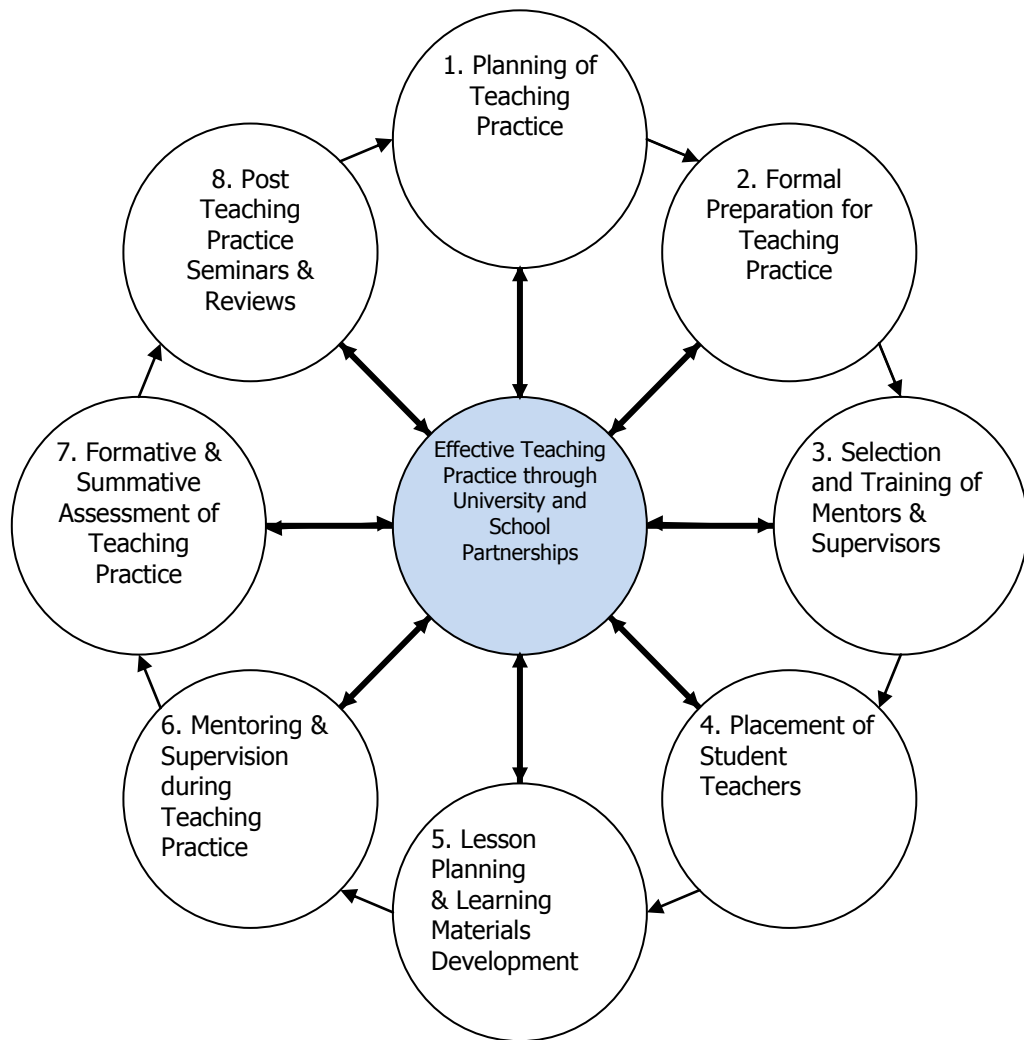
The main activities of the proposed teaching practice model as shown in figure 5.1 include: planning for Teaching Practice, formal preparation for teaching practice, selection and training of mentors and supervisors, placement of student teachers, lesson planning and development of learning and teaching materials, mentoring and supervision during teaching practice, formative and summative assessment of teaching practice and post teaching practice seminars and reviews.

The anchor for all the activities of this model is communication and relationships between the university and the schools as partners in the preparation of teachers.

Activity 1: Planning for Teaching Practice

The activity of planning for teaching practice should be undertaken by the university teaching practice committee and school-based teaching practice co-ordinators. Planning should involve amongst others: deciding on the structure of the teaching practice programme, that is, when in the programme, how often, for how long; developing a Teaching Practice Handbook for use by all role players; designing the learning contract to be signed by student teachers and mentors; establishing whole-school policy for teaching practice that outlines the role of all staff working with students; a minimum student entitlement; and procedures for implementing the students' experience of lesson observation, collaborative teaching and debriefing. The joint planning is meant to bring about a shared understanding of the teaching practice experience.

Activity 2: Formal Preparation for Teaching Practice

As per the recommendations, a Professional Studies course should be introduced as a prerequisite to teaching practice. Micro-teaching should be a component of this preparatory module. A schedule of demonstration lessons should be developed to ensure that student teachers get exposure to the application of different teaching strategies. The student teachers should also be prepared for their role as mentees.

Activity 3: Selection and Training of Mentors and Supervisor

Mentors should be identified through a collective effort of the university and the school management. Mentors and supervisors should be trained for a period of no less than a week.

Activity 4: Placement of Student Teachers

A restricted numbers of schools as partners should be identified. A scheme of pair or group teaching may be arranged and students should be carefully chosen and given clear instructions concerning the need to define precise responsibilities, to rotate roles and to ensure that everyone makes a worthwhile contribution.

Activity 5: Lesson Planning and Learning and Teaching Materials Development

After the student teachers have been to the schools to collect their lesson topics they should start planning lessons and developing learning and teaching materials under the supervision and guidance of their lecturers. This strategy will ensure that student teachers are ready for class on the first day of the teaching practice block. This will also serve to ensure that lesson planning is properly co-ordinated and a common format is used for all lessons.

Activity 6: Mentoring and Supervision during Teaching Practice

As proposed by Probyn and Van der Mescht (2003), in the process of mentoring, the mentors should involve student teachers in their lesson planning; they are observed by the student teachers and model good practice; and they reflect on their practice with the student teacher. Mentors involve student teachers in collaborative teaching, gradually introducing them to classroom teaching until they are ready to take over teaching a class on their own. Mentors observe

student teaching and reflect with them on their teaching experience. Mentors and student teachers meet regularly with university supervisors to reflect on, monitor and plan student teachers' learning experience.

To ensure effective supervision lecturers also have to undergo training in order to update their supervisory skills. Supervision by university lecturers should follow a programme that ensures that all the student teachers are visited on an equitable basis. Feedback should form a critical element of mentoring and supervision.

Activity 7: Formative and Summative Assessment of Teaching Practice

Both formative and summative assessment of teaching practice should be conducted. As recommended by Lam and Fung (2001) assessment of teaching practice should be conducted by the people who participate in enhancing student teachers' learning and growth and they should jointly construct student teachers' performance profile. Besides the university supervisors, the mentors and student teachers themselves should be involved in the evaluation of the student teachers' performance. Formative assessment does not carry any marks, but it is crucial for the on-going reflection and improvement of student teachers.

Activity 8: Post Teaching Practice Seminars for Evaluations and Reviews

Seminars should be held for the purpose of reviewing the performance of student teachers, mentors and university supervisors and also for review of teaching practice operations and relationship qualities. It is recommended that evaluations should be reciprocal, and that the role players evaluate each others' performance and the results are discussed for improvement. Comments should be anonymous because the aim is for improvement and better understanding.

5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Since this study focused on one site of WSU, future research can look at teaching practice in the whole institution. Furthermore, since this study considered only the structure and operation of teaching practice, other research can investigate in detail, the different aspects of the teaching practice programme. Other researchers can also look into the applicability of the teaching practice model proposed in this study.

5.8 FINAL COMMENTS

The study managed to establish the extent to which teaching practice is an effective context for developing student teachers' competences at WSU. The views of host teachers, student teachers and university supervisors gave valuable insight into the nature of the structure and operation of teaching practice.

The study found that the structure and operation of a teaching practice programme have a number of shortcomings which compromise the effectiveness of teaching practice as a context for the development of student teachers' competences. The study revealed that there was no formal preparation of student teachers for teaching practice.

Another critical area of concern emerging from the study was the lack of criteria for the selection of schools for teaching practice. The study also revealed that there was a lack of communication between the university and the schools resulting in differing experiences for the student teachers. The findings of this study further showed that the student teachers felt "abandoned" when they were not visited by the university supervisors and were not satisfied with the number of visits they were getting from the university supervisors.

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APPENDIX A

HOST TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

Introduction: **This questionnaire seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching practice as a context for developing student teachers' competences at WSU. The study forms part of my Doctor of Education Degree at WSU and should help to improve the effectiveness of teaching practice in developing of teacher educators' competences. You were selected to participate in this study because of your involvement in hosting student teachers. You do not need to write your name and no individuals will be identified or traced from this investigation, i.e. anonymity is assured. All information provided by you will be treated as strictly confidential.**

You are therefore kindly requested to complete the questionnaire as honestly as you can.

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Kindly fill in the blank spaces or tick (√) the appropriate box.

1. Age:

20-24 years	
25-29 years	
30-34 years	
35-39 years	
40-44 years	
44-55 years	
50-54 years	
Over 55 years	

2. Gender: Male: ☐   Female: ☐

3. Your Qualifications:

4. Teaching experience:

0-3 years	
4-7 years	
8-11 years	
12-15 years	
Over 15 years	

5. Subjects you are teaching and grades:

Subject	Grade
e.g. IsiXhosa	Grades 10 & 11

6. Hosting student teachers for teaching practice experience:

0-3 years	
4-7 years	
8-11 years	
12-15 years	
Over 15 years	

SECTION B: Indicate your response by placing a tick (√) in one space only in relation to each statement or question.

PLANNING FOR TEACHING PRACTICE
To what extent do the following teaching practice planning practice statements apply to your own situation?

Statement	Very Often	Often	Seldom	Very seldom	Never
	1	2	3	4	5
1. The university involves me in the planning for teaching practice					
2. I am involved when arrangements for student teachers to come for teaching practice are made					
3. My roles and responsibilities with regard to the student teacher/s during teaching practice are discussed with me					
4. The university and the school work as partners in the preparation of student teachers					
5. The school uses stated guidelines with regard to teaching practice					

PREPARATION OF STUDENT TEACHERS FOR TEACHING PRACTICE

Question	YES	NOT SURE	NO
	1	2	3
1. Are you aware of the kind of preparation the student teachers get before they come for teaching practice?			
2. Have you ever been asked to indicate areas that student teachers should be prepared in for teaching practice?			
3. Are students teachers adequately prepared for teaching practice?			

4. Do student teachers plan lessons in the same way as teachers in the school?			
5. Do you have meetings with the student teachers before teaching practice bloc starts?			
6. Do you have meetings with the university supervisor before teaching practice bloc starts?			
7. Student teachers get formal orientation on the management of the school.			
8. Student teachers get formal orientation on the disciplinary policies of the school.			

PLACEMENT OF STUDENT TEACHERS

To what extent do the following statements apply to your own situation?

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. I have enough time to explain to the student teacher what he/she is going to teach.					
2. I get the opportunity to orientate the student teacher to the school and the class.					
3. I provide the student teacher with the necessary learning and teaching materials.					
4. I have been made to understand the purpose of the different forms in the					

student teacher's log book.					
5. The time spent by student teachers in school is sufficient.					
6. The student teachers were placed in an organised manner					

MENTORING DURING TEACHING PRACTICE

To what extent is each of the following statements applicable to your situation?

Statement	Very Often	Often	Seldom	Very seldom	Never
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Student teachers get formal orientation on management, record keeping and discipline policies of the school					
1. I allow the student teacher to observe my teaching					
2. I check the student teacher's lesson plan before lesson presentation					
3. I remain in the classroom when the student teacher is teaching					
4. I give feedback to the student teacher after each lesson					
5. I discuss the student teacher's progress with the university supervisor					
6. I have experienced problems in my relationship with the student teacher					

To what extent do the following statements apply to your own situation?

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. I feel confident about providing guidance to the student teacher					
2. I have information from the university about what is expected of me in relation to the student teacher					
3. The student teacher's workload was allocated gradually.					
4. It is my responsibility to help the student teacher to develop through reflecting on his/her lessons					
5. I am aware of the tasks/ assignments that the student teacher should do during teaching practice?					
6. I keep a record of the student teacher's performance.					
7. I discuss professional conduct with the student teacher.					

TEACHING PRACTICE SUPERVISION
To what extent do the following statements apply to your own situation?

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. My comments and those of the university supervisor about the student teacher's performance are in agreement.					
2. The student teacher regards my supervision and that of the university supervisor as being of equal importance.					
3. The university supervisor emphasises the same issues as I do.					
4. The university supervisor and I discuss issues that affect the student teacher during teaching practice.					
5. The student teacher always implements my suggestions.					
6. The student teacher seeks advice from me when in doubt.					
7. The student teacher's performance is improving with practice.					

ASSESSMENT OF TEACHING PRACTICE

Question	YES 1	NOT SURE 2	NO 3
1. Are you familiar with the assessment criteria for teaching practice?			
2. Have you ever been involved in the review of the evaluation form used to assess student teachers?			
3. Are you expected to give marks for a student teacher's performance?			
4. Do you know how of your assessment affects the student teacher's overall result for teaching practice?			
5. Do the evaluation forms used to assess student teachers cover all the important aspects of student performance?			
6. Do you make sure that the student teacher understands why you have allocated a particular mark?			
7. Do you regard your assessment of the student teacher's performance as fair?			

SECTION C

Express your views on teaching practice by answering the following questions. Please answer as frankly and sincerely as you can.

1. Is the period of time spent by student teachers in schools for teaching practice block sufficient?

   Yes: [   ]   No: [   ]

   Please explain your response.

   ....
   ....

2. Is the timing of the teaching practice block i.e. beginning of third term, appropriate?

   Yes: [   ]   No : [   ]

Please explain your response:

……
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……
……………

3. Does your school provide a suitable environment for student teachers to learn to become teachers?

Yes: [ ]   No: [ ]

Please explain your response:

……
……
………
……………

4. Do you regard the relationship between the university and your school on the preparation of teachers as a partnership?

Yes: [ ]   No: [ ]

Please explain your response:

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………
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……………………………

5. How long does the orientation of student teachers in the school take?

………
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Why do you think this is sufficient or insufficient?
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………………

6. How does your own workload affect your performance of the task of supporting and guiding the student teacher?

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………………

7. Is the support provided by the university to host teachers sufficient?

Yes: [ ]   No: [ ]

Please explain your response: ………………………………………………………………………………………………… ………………………………………………………………………………………………… ……………………………………………………………………………………………………... ………………………………………………………………………………………………… …………………………
8. Do you think it is necessary for school teachers hosting student teachers to be trained in mentoring? Yes: [ ]   No: [ ] Please explain your response: ………………………………………………………………………………………………… ………………………………………………………………………………………………… …………………………………………………………………………………………………… ………………
9. Would you recommend that student teachers be involved with the schools in the early stages of the teacher education programme? Yes: [ ]   No: [ ] Please explain your response: ………………………………………………………………………………………………… ………………………………………………………………………………………………… ……………………………………………………………………………………………………... ………………………………
10. Mention any problems/ challenges have you experienced with regard to teaching practice? ………………………………………………………………………………………………… ………………………………………………………………………………………………… ………………………………………………………………………………………………… ……………
11. Mention three areas in which you think there should be improvement in the implementation of teaching practice? ………………………………………………………………………………………………… ………………………………………………………………………………………………… ……………………………………………………………………………………………………... …………………………………………………………………………………………………

Thank you very much for your time!

APPENDIX B

STUDENT TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

Introduction: **This questionnaire seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching practice as a context for developing student teachers' competences at WSU. The study forms part of my Doctor of Education Degree at WSU and should help to improve the effectiveness of teaching practice in developing of teacher educators' competences. You were selected to participate in this study because of you have just returned from a teaching practice block. You do not need to write your name and no individuals will be identified or traced from this investigation, i.e. anonymity is assured. All information provided by you will be treated as strictly confidential.**

You are therefore kindly requested to complete the questionnaire as honestly as you can.

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA
Kindly fill in the blank spaces or tick the appropriate box.

1. Programme registered for:

   B.Ed (EMS) [   ]   B.Ed (Consumer Science Ed) [   ]

2. Age:

16-20 years	
20-24 years	
25-29 years	
Over 30 years	

3. Gender: Male: [   ]   Female: [   ]

4. Subjects and grades taught during teaching practice:

Subject	Grade
e.g. IsiXhosa	Grades 10 & 11

SECTION B

Indicate your response by placing a tick (√) in one space only in relation to each statement or question.

PLANNING FOR TEACHING PRACTICE
To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. The university involved me in the planning for teaching practice					
2. I was aware of arrangements made with the school for my placement					
3. My role during teaching practice was discussed with me					
4. I was made aware of the role of the host teacher and the university supervisor					

PREPARATION OF STUDENT TEACHERS FOR TEACHING PRACTICE

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. There is formal preparation for teaching practice.					
2. University lecturers give demonstration lessons in preparation for teaching practice.					
3. I was adequately prepared for teaching practice.					
4. A preliminary visit to the school was arranged before the teaching practice period started.					
5. I have been given the opportunity to indicate areas that student teachers should be prepared in for teaching practice.					
6. A student teacher's handbook that contains details of what student teachers must do during teaching practice is available.					
7. My lessons were planned in the same way as those of the					

teachers in the school.					
8. I met with the host teacher and university supervisor before teaching practice block started.					
9. I was given formal orientation on management, record keeping and disciplinary policies of the school					

PLACEMENT OF STUDENT TEACHERS

To what extent do the following statements apply to your own situation?

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. I was involved in identifying the school that I was placed in for teaching practice					
2. I was given sufficient explanation by the host teacher on what I was going to teach.					
3. The host teacher orientated me regarding the school and the class.					
4. I was provided with the necessary learning and teaching materials.					
5. The host teacher knew the purpose of the different forms in					

Statement					
my log book.					
6. The time that I spent on teaching practice at the school was sufficient.					
7. My placement for teaching practice was properly organised.					

MENTORING DURING TEACHING PRACTICE
To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. The host teacher allowed me to observe his/her teaching					
2. The host teacher allowed me to ask questions on aspects of his/her lesson					
3. The host teacher checked my lesson plan before each lesson presentation					
4. The host teacher remained in the classroom when I was teaching					
5. The host teacher gave me feedback after each lesson					
6. The host teacher discussed my progress with the university supervisor					

7. I experienced problems in my relationship with the host teacher					

To what extent do the following statements apply to your own situation?

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. The host teacher gave me useful advice.					
2. The host teacher was confident about what the university expected of him/her.					
3. The host teacher was always willing to help me.					
4. My teaching workload was made available in incremental portions.					
5. The host teacher helped me to reflect on my lessons					
6. The host teacher was aware of the tasks/ assignments that I had to do during teaching practice?					
7. The host teacher discussed professional conduct with me.					
8. The host teacher kept a record of my performance					

TEACHING PRACTICE SUPERVISION
To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. I would have liked to have had more visits by the university					
2. The number of visits I had from university supervisors was equal to that of other students					
3. The comments made by the host teacher and the university supervisor complimented each other.					
4. I regarded supervision by the host teacher as equally important to that of the university supervisor.					
5. I would have preferred to be supervised by the specialists of the subjects I am teaching only.					
6. My performance during teaching practice improved with more practice.					

ASSESSMENT OF TEACHING PRACTICE

Question	YES	NOT SURE	NO
	1	2	3
1. Were the assessment criteria for teaching practice explained to you?			
2. Did student teachers have the same number of lessons assessed by the university supervisors?			
3. Was the assessment of teaching practice fair?			
4. Do you know how the host teacher's assessment will affect your overall result for teaching practice?			
5. Did you get feedback on your performance?			
6. Did you use the feedback given to improve on the lessons that followed it?			
7. Do the evaluation forms used for assessment of teaching cover all the important aspects of student performance?			
8. Were you given any assignments or tasks related to teaching practice by the university lecturers?			
9. Is the teaching practice file a true reflection of what a student teacher did during teaching practice?			
10. Do you know how your final mark for teaching practice is arrived at?			

SECTION C

Express your views on teaching practice by answering the following questions. Please answer as frankly and sincerely as you can.

1. Were you placed in the same school at which you did two week's observation?

   Yes: [   ]   No: [   ]

2. Did the observation period have an effect on how you experienced teaching practice?

   Yes: [   ]   No: [   ]

   Please explain your response:
   ....
   ....
   ....

3. Was the period of time you spent in schools for teaching practice block sufficient?

   Yes: [   ]   No: [   ]

   Please explain your response.
   ....
   ....
   ....

4. Did you find the timing of the teaching practice block i.e. beginning of third term, appropriate?

   Yes: [   ]   No: [   ]

   Please explain your response:
   ....
   ....
   ....

5. Did the school you were placed in provide a suitable environment for you to learn to become teacher?

   Yes: [   ]   No: [   ]

   Please explain your response:
   ....
   ....
   ....

6. Was there enough communication between the university and the school you were

placed in during teaching practice?

Yes: [ ]   No: [ ]

How did this affect you:

....
....
....

7. How long did the orientation in the school take?

....

Why do you think this was sufficient or insufficient?

....
....
....

8. Do you support the idea that student teachers should be involved with the schools in the early stages of the teacher education programme?

Yes: [ ]   No: [ ]

Please explain your response:

....
....
....

9. What problems/challenges did you experience with regard to teaching practice?
....
....
....

10. Mention at least three areas in which you think there should be improvement in the implementation of teaching practice:

....
....
....

Thank you very much for your time!

APPENDIX C

UNIVERSITY SUPERVISOR QUESTIONNAIRE

Instructions: **This questionnaire seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching practice as a context for developing student teachers' competences at WSU. The study forms part of my Doctor of Education Degree at WSU and should help to improve the effectiveness of teaching practice in developing of student teachers' competences. You were selected to participate in this study because of your involvement in supervising student teachers during teaching practice. You do not need to write your name and no individuals will be identified or traced from this investigation, i.e. anonymity is assured. All information provided by you will be treated as strictly confidential.**
You are therefore kindly requested to complete the questionnaire as honestly as you can.

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA
Kindly fill in the blank spaces or tick √ the appropriate box.
1. Age:

20-24 years	1
25-29 years	2
30-34years	3
35-39years	4
40-44 years	5
45-49 years	6
50-54 years	7
Over 55 years	8

2. Gender: Male: 1 [   ]   Female: 2   [   ]

1= Degree + Educ
2= Hons
3= Masters
4=Doctorate

3. Your Qualifications: [   ]

4. Teaching/Lecturing experience:

0-3 years	1
4-7 years	2
8-11 years	3
12-15 years	4
Over 15 years	5

5. Modules/Subjects you are lecturing in and year levels:

Subject	Grade
e.g. Principles of Teaching and Learning	Year I
1= EMS	1= Yr 1
2= Consumer Science	2= Yr 2
3= Educ Foundations	3= Yr 3
4= Other	4= Yr 4

6. Teaching practice supervision experience:

0-3 years	1
4-7 years	2
8-11 years	3
12-15 years	4
Over 15 years	5

SECTION B

PLANNING FOR TEACHING PRACTICE
To what extent do the following teaching practice planning practices apply to your own situation? Indicate your choice by placing a tick √ in one space only in relation to each statement:

Statement	Very Often	Often	Seldom	Very seldom	Never
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
1. I am involved in the planning for teaching practice					
2. I am involved when arrangements for student teachers to go out for teaching practice are made					
3. My role with regard to the student teacher/s during teaching practice is discussed with me					
4. The university and the school work as partners in the preparation of student teachers.					
5. The school in which student teachers are placed use stated guidelines with regard to teaching practice.					

PREPARATION OF STUDENT TEACHERS FOR TEACHING PRACTICE

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
1. There is formal preparation for teaching practice.					

2. University lecturers give demonstration lessons in preparation for teaching practice.					
3. Student teachers are adequately prepared for teaching practice.					
4. A preliminary visit to the school is arranged before the teaching practice period starts.					
5. I have participated in identifying areas that student teachers should be prepared in for teaching practice.					
6. A student teacher's handbook that contains details of what student teachers must do during teaching practice is available.					
7. Student teachers plan lessons in the same way as the teachers in the schools.					
8. I met with the host teacher before teaching practice block starts.					
9. Student teachers get formal orientation on the management of					

Statement					
the school					
10. Student teachers get formal orientation on the disciplinary policies of the school					

PLACEMENT OF STUDENT TEACHERS

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the each of the following statements by placing a tick √ in one space only in relation to each statement:

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. I know the criteria used to identify schools for teaching practice					
2. Student teachers get clear explanations from host teachers on what they are going to teach.					
3. The student teachers are orientated regarding the school and the class.					
4. The student teachers are provided with the necessary learning and teaching materials.					
5. I understand the purpose of the different forms in the student teacher's log book.					
6. The time spent by student teachers in school is sufficient.					
7. The student teachers are placed in an organised manner.					

MENTORING DURING TEACHING PRACTICE

To what extent is each of the following statements applicable to your situation? Please indicate your choice by placing a tick √ in one space only in relation to each statement:

Statement	Very Often	Often	Seldom	Very seldom	Never
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
1. The host teachers allow student teachers to observe their teaching.					
2. I check the student teacher's lesson plan before lesson presentation.					
3. I give feedback to the student teacher after each lesson I have observed.					
4. I discuss the student teacher's progress with the host teacher.					
5. I have experienced problems in my relationship with the student teacher.					
6. I have experienced problems in my relationship with the host teacher.					

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the each of the following statements by placing a tick √ in one space only in relation to each statement:

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
1. The host teachers provide appropriate guidance to the student teachers.					
2. I am aware of what is expected of me in relation to the student teacher.					

3. The student teacher's workload is allocated gradually.					
4. I share the responsibility to help the student teacher to develop through reflecting on his/her lessons with the host teacher.					
5. I am aware of the tasks/ assignments that the student teacher should do during teaching practice.					
6. I keep a record of the student teacher's performance.					
7. I discuss professional conduct with the student teacher.					

TEACHING PRACTICE SUPERVISION

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the each of the following statements by placing a tick √ in one space only in relation to each statement:

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. My comments and those of the host teacher about the student teacher's performance are in agreement.					
2. The student teacher regards my supervision					

and that of the host teacher as being of equal importance.				
3. The host teacher emphasises the same issues as I do.				
4. The host teacher and I discuss issues that affect the student teacher during teaching practice.				
5. The student teacher always implements my suggestions.				
6. The student teacher seeks advice from me when in doubt.				
7. The student teacher's performance is improving with practice.				
8. I pay a sufficient number of visits to student teachers.				
9. Student teachers get an equal number of visits by university supervisors.				
10. Meetings between teams of teaching practice supervisors and student teachers are conducted to share ideas/experiences on teaching practice.				

ASSESSMENT OF TEACHING PRACTICE

Please complete the following by placing a tick in one space only in relation to each question:

Question	YES	NO	NOT SURE
	1	2	3
1. Are you familiar with the assessment criteria for teaching practice?			
2. Have you ever been involved in the review of the evaluation form used to assess student teachers?			
3. Is the host teacher expected to give a mark for a student teacher's performance?			
4. Do you know how your assessment affects the student teacher's overall result for teaching practice?			
5. Do the evaluation forms used to assess student teachers cover the important aspects of student performance?			
6. Do you make sure that the student teacher understands why you have allocated a particular mark?			
7. Do you regard your assessment of the student teacher's performance as fair?			
8. Are student teachers given any assignments or tasks related to teaching practice?			
9. Is the teaching practice file a true reflection of what a student teacher did during teaching practice?			

SECTION C

Express your views on teaching practice by answering the following questions. Please answer as frankly and sincerely as you can.

1. Is the period of time spent by student teachers in schools for teaching practice block sufficient?

   Yes: ☐   No: ☐

   Please explain your choice:
   ....
   ....
   ....
   ....

2. Is the timing of the teaching practice block i.e. beginning of third term, appropriate?

   Yes: ☐   No: ☐

   Please explain your choice:
   ....
   ....
   ....
   ....

3. Do the schools provide a suitable environment for student teachers to learn to become teachers?

   Yes: ☐   No: ☐

   Please explain your choice:
   ....
   ....
   ....
   ....

4. Do you regard the relationship between the university and your school on the preparation of teachers as a partnership?

   Yes: ☐   No: ☐

   Please explain your choice:
   ....
   ....
   ....
   ....

5. How long does the orientation of student teachers in the schools take?

....
....
Why do you think this is sufficient or insufficient?
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....

6. How does your own workload affect your performance of the task of supporting and guiding the student teacher?

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7. Is the support provided by the university to host teachers sufficient?

Yes: [ ]   No: [ ]

Please explain your choice:
....
....
....
....

8. Do you think it is necessary for school teachers hosting student teachers to be trained in mentoring?

Yes: [ ]   No: [ ]

Please explain your response:
....
....
....
....

9. Would you recommend that student teachers be involved with the schools in the early stages of the teacher education programme?

Yes: [ ]   No: [ ]

Please explain your choice:
....

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....

10. How many methods of assessment do you use to assess student teachers' performance during teaching practice? ....

Is/are the method/s you use sufficient?
Yes: [ ]   No: [ ]

Please explain your choice:

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....

11. What problems/ challenges have you experienced with regard to teaching practice? Mention at least two and not more than five.

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12. Mention at least three areas in which you think there should be improvement in the implementation of teaching practice?

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....
....

Thank you very much for your time!

APPENDIX D

UNIVERSITEIT·STELLENBOSCH·UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot·your knowledge partner

Centre for Higher and Adult Education
Department of Curriculum Studies,
Faculty of Education, Private Bag X1
7602 Stellenbosch, South Africa

Tel +27 21 808 2277/2297
Fax: +27 21 808 2270
E-mail: emb2@sun.ac.za

21 July 2010

Ms N Njamela/Ntsaluba

PhD student

I confirm that the two draft questionnaires you have asked me to comment on are rather well structured and the questions appear in general to be quite clear. I have made a few comments on the documents using 'track changes' which might be of use.

Good luck with your survey and the rest of your studies.

Regards

_____
Prof E M Bitzer

APPENDIX E

<u>FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</u>

1. Preparation for teaching practice:
   - When you went for teaching practice do you think you were adequately prepared?
   - How did the micro-teaching sessions help in preparing you for teaching practice?
2. Placement:
   - Is the type of school at which you are placed important to you?
   - Did you use of your own transport during teaching practice;
   - How does the use of own transport affect your performance as a student teacher?
   - How did the shortage of resources affect your work?

3. Induction: Were you introduced appropriately to the other teachers and learners? Was dress code discussed with you?

4. Communication between schools and university:
   - What issues do you think the university and the schools should discuss in relation to teaching practice?
   - Were the schools ready for you when you arrived for teaching practice?

5. Involvement in other school activities:
   - What other school activities besides teaching were you involved in?
   - Any information on school management, record keeping, discipline
6. Mentoring:
   - Did you work under a mentor?
   - What kind of assistance did you expect to get from the mentor?
   - Did you get help on maintaining discipline and learner control?
7. Supervision by university supervisors:
   - Were you nervous about being visited by the university supervisor?
   - Did the supervisor attempt to make you feel at ease?
8. Feedback
   - Did you learn much from the feedback given after your lesson presentation?
   - Were the comments encouraging?
   - Were you given an opportunity to explain why you did things the way you did them?

9. Assessment
- Do you think university supervisors allocate marks according to set criteria or it depends on who does the assessment?
- Did you, in most cases, agree with the mark allocated by the university supervisor?

10. Value attached to teaching practice
- What are the benefits of teaching practice?
- After teaching practice are you motivated to become a teacher?

APPENDIX F

Walter Sisulu University
Private Bag X6030
Zamukulungisa Heights
Mthatha
5009
25 June 2010

The District Director
Department of Education
Mthatha

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS IN MTHATHA DISTRICT: DN NTSALUBA
I am undertaking a study on the effectiveness of teaching practice in developing student teachers' competences for a doctoral degree at Walter Sisulu University (WSU). I am requesting permission to conduct research in the Mthatha schools used by WSU for teaching practice as reflected in the list attached hereto. The purpose of this academic study is to evaluate the structure and implementation of teaching practice at WSU with a view to making recommendations for improvement.

The University Research Ethics Committee requires written acceptance of this request from your office and you assistance on this issue will be highly appreciated.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Sincerely yours

DN NTSALUBA

APPENDIX G

Province of the
EASTERN CAPE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT-GENERAL
Steve Vukile Tshwete Education Complex • Private Bag X0032 • Bhisno • 5605 • REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
Tel: +27 (27) 608 4205 • Fax: +27 (40) 608 4249 • Website: ecprov.gov.za • Email:
nyameka.tokwe@edu.ecprov.gov.za

05 October 2010

DN Ntsaluba   Facsimile: 047 537 0726
Walter Sisulu University
Private Bag X 6030   Email: njamelan@yahoo.com
Zamukulungisa Heights
Mthatha
5009

Dear Ms Ntsaluba

PERMISSION TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH: AN EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TEACHING PRACTICE IN DEVELOPING STUDENTS TEACHERS' COMPETENCES AT WALTER SISULU UNIVERSITY

1. Thank you for your correspondence received on 25 June 2010.

2. Your application to conduct the above mentioned research in the Eastern Cape Secondary Schools under the jurisdiction of Mthatha District is hereby approved on condition that:

    a. there will be no financial implications for the Department;

    b. institutions and respondents must not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation;

    c. you present a copy of the <u>written approval</u> of the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE) to the District Directors before any research is undertaken at any institutions within that particular district;

    d. you will make all the arrangements concerning your research;

    e. the research may not be conducted during official contact time, as <u>educators' programmes should not be interrupted</u>;

    f. should you wish to extend the period of research after approval has been granted, an application to do this must be directed to the Director: Strategic Planning Policy Research and Secretarial Services;

    g. the research may not be conducted during the fourth school term, except in cases where a special well motivated request is received;

Page 1 of 2 Ntsaluba

225

h. your research will be limited to those schools or institutions for which approval has been granted;

i. you present the Department with a copy of your final paper/report/dissertation/thesis free of charge in hard copy and electronic format. This must be accompanied by a separate synopsis (maximum 2 – 3 typed pages) of the most important findings and recommendations if it does not already contain a synopsis. This must also be in an electronic format.

j. you are requested to provide the above to the Director: The Strategic Planning Policy Research and Secretarial Services upon completion of your research.

k. you comply to all the requirements as completed in the Research Policy duly completed by you.

l. you comply with your ethical undertaking (commitment form).

m. You submit on a six monthly basis, from the date of permission of the research, concise reports to the Director: Strategic Planning Policy Research and Secretariat Services.

3. The Department wishes you well in your undertaking. You are most welcome to contact the Director, Dr. Annetia Heckroodt on 043 702 7430 or mobile number 083 271 0715 should you need any assistance.

Mr. R Swartz
ACTING HEAD: EDUCATION

APPENDIX A

:WSU

WALTER SISULU UNIVERSITY
DIRECTORATE OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES
ELECTRONIC THESES & DISSERTATIONS (ETD) AND PLAGIARISM REQUIREMENT (For postgraduate research outputs from 2009 September)

MANDATORY CONSENT FORM: ELECTRONIC THESES & DISSERTATIONS (ETD) AND PLAGIARISM REQUIREMENT (For postgraduate research outputs from 2009 September)

TEMPLATE FOR THE STUDENT AND SUPERVISOR CONSENT FOR PUBLICATION OF ELECTRONIC RESEARCH OUTPUT ON INTERNET AND WSU INTRANET

FACULTY: _EDUCATION_

QUALIFICATION NAME: _DOCTOR OF EDUCATION_ ABBREVIATION: _D.Ed_ YEAR: _2011_

STUDENT'S FULL NAME: _DORIS NOMONDE NTSALUBA_ STUDENT NUMBER _179601865_

TYPE OF RESEARCH OUTPUT: RESEARCH PAPER/MINI-DISSERTATION/DISSERTATION/THESIS (TICK ONE)

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH OUTPUT: _AN EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF WALTER SISULU UNIVERSITY'S TEACHING PRACTICE AS A CONTEXT FOR THE STUDENT TEACHERS COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT_

CONSENT: I HEREBY GIVE MY CONSENT TO WALTER SISULU UNIVERSITY TO PUBLISH MY RESEARCH OUTPUT FOR THE QUALIFICATION ABOVE ON THE WSU INTRANET AND INTERNET. I CERTIFY THAT TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE, THERE IS NO PLAIGARISM IN THE RESEARCH OUTPUT AS SUBMITTED. I HAVE TAKEN REASONABLE CARE TO ENSURE THAT THE RESEARCH OUTPUT MEETS THE QUALITY LEVEL EXPECTED FOR THE PRESENT QUALIFICATION LEVEL BOTH IN TERMS OF CONTENT AND TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS. I FULLY UNDERSTAND THE CONTENTS OF THIS DECLARATION.

[signature] _06.12.2011_
SIGNATURE OF STUDENT   DATE

ENDORSEMENTS BY:

SUPERVISOR: _Prof. REGIS CHIRESHE_ SIGNATURE: _[signature]_ DATE: _27/01/12_

FULL NAME: _Prof. REGIS CHIRESHE_

CO SUPERVISOR(S):

1 FULL NAME: _____ SIGNATURE: _____ DATE: _____

2 FULL NAME: _____ SIGNATURE: _____ DATE: _____

227