

## UNDERSTANDING ROLES WITHIN WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING IN UPPER-PRIMARY TEACHER EDUCATION

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**ABSTRACT:** *This research examined the work-based component of teacher training for the upper primary school phase at the University of Namibia by studying the varying roles of individual members of the practicum triad which comprised the university-based teacher educator, the school-based support teacher and the student teacher. This ethnographic study, which used a range of instruments such as participant or non-participant observations, in-depth interviews and content analysis, managed to establish the perceptions of the triad members about the effectiveness of their work integrated learning and also identified the facets of the work environment most effective in supporting trainee teachers throughout work-based practicum. This study thus posits that the teaching training agenda be aligned to expose teacher trainees the realities of teaching and other related professional activities through the development of sustainable norms and a continuum of realistic practicum partnerships which effectively respond to the need for higher education institutions to produce employable, work-ready graduates. The study revealed that there is an information gap pertaining to the roles of the individual members of the practicum triad. Despite the fact that the guidelines clearly spell out the responsibility of each party, the guidelines are seldom followed by the three different parties. This study therefore recommends that university and partnership schools should collectively work on challenges, misconceptions, mistrusts, and to iron them out. The university and schools should develop ways of ensuring that pre- and post-lesson conferences become part of assessment to encourage the triad to convene them more regularly. The study recommends that time spent on School-based studies be significantly increased to ensure that students receive sufficient work-based learning [WBL]. The current state of SBS is by far inadequate.*

**KEYWORDS:** Triad, Practicum, Support Teacher, Student Teacher, University Supervisor, Work-Based

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## INTRODUCTION

### Background

Teacher training for the upper-primary phase [Grades 4 to 7] at the University of Namibia comprises of alternating campus-based studies and school-based teaching studies premised on the principle that theoretical knowledge is reciprocally impacted with practical work-based experience. However, Korthagen, Lougran, and Russell (2006) point out that a myriad of challenges with this model of professional development invariably arise where there is little or no coordination. In some countries universities design and implement entire study programmes while school authorities are only engaged in the organisation and implementation of the school-based component.

Collaborative approaches to professional development, in whatever structure or model, are critical to effective work-integrated practica. In order to attain the objective of producing

effective teachers, numerous collaborative models in teacher education are currently in practice the world over. The introduction of the teaching practicum as a core component in teacher training has added a new dimension to professional development and has brought in a new arena where trainee and novice teachers can learn the art and skills of teaching in the real context of a school. The practicum exposes the new teacher to the ‘power of experience’ and critically moulds student teachers’ perception of the teaching and learning processes (Kennedy, 2006).

Trainee teachers require strict supervisory support and mentoring in order for them to professionally develop. Supervision focusses on matters to do with teaching decisions as they impact on classroom learning outcomes while mentoring, according to Wenger, (1998,) is a process of inducting trainee teachers into the “community of practice”. He regards mentoring as a process of “collaborative working”. Mentoring, therefore, comprises a process and a partnership meant to foster a caring and supportive nurturing of the novice into a professional practitioner.

### **Problem Statement**

Teacher training programmes in Namibia’s Zambezi Region have often experienced myriad challenges related to teaching practica. Models of work-integrated learning during the practicum have been thinly defined, leaving each member of the practicum triad uncertain of their supposed roles, especially where role overlaps exist. This uncertainty has adversely affected Bachelor of Education [Honours] upper-primary teacher training programme offered by the University of Namibia. Cases have been recorded where role clashes have led to discord in carrying out responsibilities by members of the triad. In some cases, there has been an overzealous approach where members overstep in carrying out their roles, while in other cases the approach was lacklustre, if not aloof, when no one has taken their responsibilities.

### **Justification of the study**

This study aimed to synchronise the roles of each individual member of the practicum triad to effectively support the professional development of trainee teachers engaged in work-integrated learning in schools. This entailed identifying areas of deficit in the university’s practicum practices and to re-align and boldly spell out the expected roles of each member of the triad in the university’s practicum manual.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

This study was underpinned by an interpretive paradigm as it sought to understand the subjective ambit of human experiences and was informed by the perspectives of symbolic interactionism as developed by Blumer (1962). By means of ‘the mechanism of self-interaction’, individuals modify, or change their definition of the situation, rehearse, alternative course of action and consider their possible consequences” Haralambos and Holbron (2008:883)

An ethnographic research approach was adopted and information was gathered through a range of instruments such as participant or non-participant observations, in-depth interviews and content analysis. The researcher investigated the university-school-student triad experiences

and realities through a sustained contact with the triad members in their natural environment in order to produce rich, descriptive data in order to understand those experiences.

### **Purpose of Work-Based Teaching Practicum**

The term practicum is used to refer to a requirement where students are exposed to a teaching experience in a school or learning institution where they get an opportunity to interact with real learners. The teaching practicum has traditionally been viewed as central to the development of student teachers' pedagogical skills, initiation into the teaching profession, and as the most effective component of professional preparation for the role of a teacher (Cruickshank and Aramalin, 1986) and (Tannehill and Zakrajsek, 1988). Many teacher educators believe that it is during this experience that trainee teachers begin to develop their teaching skills, beliefs and values (Darden, Darden, Scott and Westfall (2001).

The practicum component of teacher training is regarded as the equivalent of work-based learning (WBL) (Brodie and Irving, 2007). Each practicum triad partner plays an equally important role in the whole process and is involved in decision-making about issues of the practicum. They jointly determine their individual roles and responsibilities as well as what to expect from the entire exercise.

The student practicum is critical in teacher education due to many reasons and functions it performs. Student teachers can rehearse what they will be doing in the real context of a mainstream institution like a school or college when they will eventually take up their teaching assignments. Purdy and Gibson (2012) equate teaching practicum in education to field attachment or internship in medical, legal or engineering professions. The terms “induction” or “internship” are also applied to describe the practicum experience given to student teachers. Therefore, the terms practicum, teaching practice (TP) or internship essentially mean the same basic idea of deploying trainees to natural work stations where they will acquire practical experience. There is a general consensus amongst teacher-education scholars that the practicum is a core component of teacher training programmes, irrespective of what nomenclature it is referred by (Beck, 2002; McIntyre, Byrd, and Foxx, 1996; Russell, 2005).

Teaching practicum enables trainee teachers to develop innovative and reflective thinking and equips them with a repertoire of teaching methodologies and strategies. It also strengthens trainee teachers' application of behavioural objectives and trains them in using various teaching aids, choosing and organizing learning activities, and applying remedial interventions to given exit learning outcomes (Murtaza, 2011).

A very important dimension of the practicum is that it encourages interaction between the student teachers and the experienced teachers. This interaction enables the student teachers to develop teaching process insights by observing and sharing ideas with the seasoned experts. Practicum furnishes the student teachers with an opportunity to have model in front of them to follow where they get exposure to professional practices of experts (Zeichner, 2006).

The teaching practicum has traditionally been regarded as pivotal to the development of student teachers' pedagogical skills and to their initiation into the teaching profession. According to Taggart and Wilkinson (1985), student teachers and practicing teachers view their practicum experience as the most vital component of their training. Over a couple of years, it has been argued that the practicum should be based on collaboration, student teachers' empowerment, and reflection in order for the student teachers to realize their potential. This position has witnessed a gradual shift from what Rodgers and Keil (2007) call the traditional student

supervision triad, where the teacher educators were the sole goal-setters, problem-solvers, and decision-makers, to a more student teacher dominated approach of enquiry and investigation (Dobbins, 1996).

Villiers and Mackisack (2011) propose that highly skilled personnel from both the university and school can be identified to spearhead the practicum in a professional and manageable way. If this responsibility is shared, meaningful partnerships to promote informed and effective positioning of the practicum in teacher education programmes will be developed. They argue that “there is no alternative to genuinely and tangibly sustaining partnered, educative mentoring with a professional learning community in order to ensure that student teachers have optimum opportunity to hit the ground running as beginning teachers” (p.193). Tuli and File (2009) observe that incorporating a practicum component in the teacher education programme enables student teachers to understand the socio-cultural, economic and political factors which underpin education. The practicum should therefore be considered as the core component of teacher training that aims at preparing effective teachers.

Teaching competence will forever be rooted in experience and learning to teach demands that one travels deep into the recesses of one’s self-awareness. This demand indicates that practicum is a vital component of teacher education and is a vehicle of providing such invaluable experience to the student teachers. An effective practicum ought to be allotted an identifiable part of a teacher education programme where teacher education institutions take the leading role in the concept development of an effective practicum model. The partnership model should take on board all relevant professional stakeholders and consists of closely integrated university and school components which lead students to develop and demonstrate knowledge-based skills and attitudes which are pivotal to their professional career development.

### **Theoretical frameworks**

Theories that deal with environmental influences on learning are quite ideal and helpful in the research of teaching practicum due to the fact that teaching practicum takes place in particular environmental settings. Specifically, it takes place at authentic workplaces- the school. At real workplaces, the expert (mentor teacher, support teacher, etc.) is the person best positioned to share occupational experiences with trainees and novices. In such a setting, teaching practicum can be structured to effectively facilitate the transfer of skills, knowledge and attitudes (Rusch and Chadsey, 1998).

Vygotsky’s theory of *Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)* has implications for the teaching practicum where novices strive to improve their own skills to the level that of their mentors. Through guided participation, trainee teachers can undergo the teaching practicum process at the workplaces. Bandura’s theory of imitation provides value to both environmental and cognitive aspects of trainee teachers’ development (Bergh and Theron, 2006). Trainees have the opportunity to imitate their mentors as they seek to sharpen their own teaching skills. Through Bandura’s theory of observation, a novice or student teacher imitates an experienced mentor in the teaching profession at a school. The nature of learning in the teaching practicum requires that the trainee observes the skills of the mentor, supervising university lecturer or school principal. During this process, the student teacher does not passively absorb all he/she observes or hears. This argument goes in line with constructivists’ views on learning.

According to the constructivist view of learning, knowledge can be constructed by the students as they attempt to make sense of the environment they are in. It follows, therefore, that students are not simply passive recipients of knowledge, but they can also construct knowledge. For this reason, the student teacher is expected to be engaged actively in meaningful learning activities at the practicum schools. Students are expected to solve real challenges that require them to apply the skills and knowledge they acquired from their university in their field. The architects of the theory of situated learning, Lave and Wenger (1991), argue that engaging in practice is the fundamental condition for effective of learning. In light of this, the teaching practicum requires the trainee/student teacher to learn from workplaces where the actual occupational skill practices take place. They learn the skills of their profession more by performing real work assignments. The tasks enable them to apply their theoretical learning.

Before a trainee teacher is effectively deployed to the classroom for teaching practicum, he or she needs to be inducted by the school-based mentor and the university supervisor within a *community of practice*. These will share with the trainee teacher the requisite cognitive background and associated intentions to the setting which the student will construct during the actual teaching and through discourse. This will constitute the important periods for “explanation” (Wittgenstein, 1996) and that for “critical debate” (Williams, 1999). At this stage of crucial debate, the trainee teacher begins to question their university supervisor or mentor teacher about whether the student is following the correct “rules of the trade”. The lecturer teaches the student by numerous examples of the rules that have been agreed to by consensus within the “community” and which should be adhered to by all members of the “community”. All this is done with the objectives of enabling the trainee teacher to appreciate and understand the rules of teaching in their own practicum sessions.

It is paramount that the first steps are fully monitored for conformity by the community because as novices, the student teachers are unable to associate the shared intention of conforming to rules of practice (Nelson, 2008). Trainee teachers will progressively succeed in intentionally adhering to the rules of practice through repeatedly abiding by the same rules in a broad variety of contexts and they will gradually learn to appreciate the significance of these rules (Berducci, 2004). The professional development of the student teachers is arguably mainly as a result of participation in the practices and language of the community (Rogoff, Matusov, and White, 1996).

Partnerships within the practicum triad were conceptualised within Bandura’s postulates of ‘community of practice’ where members adhere to mutually agreed parameters. School-based teaching practica provide student teachers with opportunities to be exposed to the realities of teaching and other related professional activities. This is the only opportunity that student teachers have to put the theories that they learnt in their lectures into practice, as they get into contact with real teaching life situations (Ogono and Basamus, 2006).

## **Trends in Teacher Education/Models of Teaching Practicum**

### **Singaporean Practicum Model**

The Singaporean teaching practicum is a core component of the country’s Initial Teacher Preparation programme and enables student teachers to acquire their initial teaching experiences and competencies. The main purpose of the practicum is to prepare student teachers for the realities of the world of teaching by providing them with a clear understanding of school contexts.

Student teachers are guided, through systematic observations, mentoring and supervision by their School Coordinating Mentors (SCMs), Cooperating Teachers (CTs) and National Institute of Education Supervisors (NIES). During the entire practicum, the students actively participate in, and are involved with all aspects of the school's programmes. Through such exposures, they will be able to link theory to practice, and to learn the skills necessary for effective teaching in a range of classroom situations. Beyond that, according to Smith and Lev-Ari (2005) and Schulman (1987), the practicum offers the environment and opportunity for trainee- teachers to develop their professional competence as well as to acquire and develop their content knowledge of teachers. In addition, students will learn soft skills such as working collegially with other staff members, independent problem-solving, and appropriate professional values and attitudes (Ramsden, 1992). Through the practicum, student teachers are also enabled to acquire important attributes that would shape their professional lives, as well as self-control and inter-personal skills (Eraut, 1988, cited in Yan and He, 2009).

Singapore's NIE adopted The Enhanced Partnership Model which provides a collaborative framework of common values and goals for teacher education and research, while respecting each partner's specific roles, perspectives, experiences, expertise and knowledge and beliefs. The NIE – Schools partnership model acknowledges the *theory-practice gap* as the major shortcoming in teacher education. The Enhanced Partnership Model enables schools to play a larger and more active part in practicum, school attachments and other collaborative programmes that facilitate professional development in an effort to bridge the gap between campus-based learning and real school teaching.

Singapore's NIE teacher education model is characterised by university -based courses and a school-based practicum. The practicum partnership that NIE shares with schools and all other collaborating stakeholders helps student teachers to make effective transitions from being university students to becoming classroom teachers.

### Enhanced Partnership Model

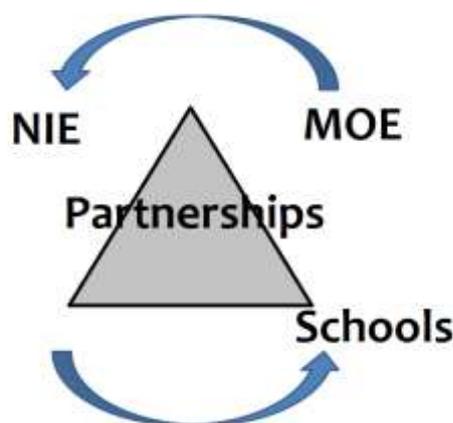


Fig.1

Courtesy: "TE21: A Teacher Education Model for the 21st Century"

Student teachers are mentored by NIES, SCMs and CTs during practicum and are provided with instructional support which involves assistance in the acquisition of knowledge, skills,

and strategies necessary successful classroom teaching. Student teachers are also offered psychological support to build on their sense of self-confidence, feelings of effectiveness, positive self-esteem, enhanced self-reliance, and ability to handle stress related to this transition.

### **Norwegian Practicum model**

Theoretical knowledge about educational assessment and hands-on experience form an indispensable part of the Norwegian University of Bergen, teaching practicum model. This model emphasizes that the competence of assessment of all the parties involved in the teaching practicum is central to the quality of teacher education. It follows, therefore, that the school-based and university-based teacher educators and the student teachers are empowered in assessment. All the parties are engaged in collaborative action research projects on matters related to assessment of student teachers' teaching practicum. Through these research projects, campus-based and school-based teacher educators personally experience how assessment can be applied for students' professional development. By participating in action research projects, trainee teachers experience learning-oriented assessment and they as well acquire invaluable assessment knowledge which they will use in their own teaching later.

### **Teaching practicum [A South African model]**

At South Africa's University of Cape Town, student teachers are expected to experience diversity in classrooms by teaching at differently resourced schools during their first and second teaching practica. They are expected to fully comply with the requirements of both the university and the cooperating practicum school. During this period, students are regarded as full time but unpaid members of staff. They are, however, exempted from all other school functions during the school day. Students have to satisfy assessment requirements of the university-appointed teaching practice supervisors, the cooperating practicum schools where they are placed, and a visiting external examiner.

Students normally undergo three phases of teaching practice in three different schools:

- The first phase is an unsupervised two week observation period done before registration.
- The second phase, Teaching Practice 1 (TP1), spans over the first four or five weeks of the second school term.
- The third phase (TP2) runs for six weeks during the third school term.

Mentor teachers complete a *confidential* report for each student at the end of TP which is then submitted to the university. Students are not shown the report. An external examiner visits schools, rather than individual student teachers, during TP2 to assess the quality and standard of supervision and students' teaching in general. The reports are submitted to the Teaching Practice committee on which the external examiner sits as a moderator during the finalisation of the TP marks.

Students are expected to keep a confidential teaching practice journal which tracks their professional growth and to encourage them to reflect on school experience during the two teaching practice phases. This journal can be used as a record of evidence at the end in the school experience essay and should be made available only to their supervisors. The journal

ends with an honest and comprehensive evaluation, summary and retrospection of the practicum experience from the student's own perspective. This is in addition to the weekly entries made by the students. Submission of the journal is an assessment requirement, failure of which will mean the programme to be rendered not completed.

Students also need to keep a TP portfolio which may contain lesson plans, copies of material used, handed-out notes, assessments, photographs or videos of themselves and learners, among other artefacts. The portfolio constitutes important evidence of the teaching practice experience and would be invaluable in answering questions that may be raised concerning a student's TP evaluation. The UCT TP portfolio is separate from the journal and does not need to be submitted.

The UCT model emphasises peer interaction when student teachers share and work together for mutual professional growth. To this end, students are encouraged to do co-teaching to supplement, and not to completely replace, individual teaching.

University supervisors and mentor teachers assess TP students using four outcomes which are:

### **Planning and organization**

Students are expected to;

- Plan balanced, appropriate lessons and tasks systematically and imaginatively
- Identify and interpret learner interests, vary teaching styles and learning needs

### **Communication skills**

Students are expected to;

- Relate and talk to students in a mature, respectful way, without condescension
- Motivate students to want to learn
- Respond to the needs of individual students as well as the needs of the class as a whole
- Be sensitive to students by gaining an understanding of the societal and classroom influences that affect their learning

### **Conducting lessons confidently**

Students are expected to;

- Implement theories and models of learning when teaching
- Teach correct and appropriate subject content
- Assess learning in ways that reflect theories and models of learning

### **Self-assessment and Reflection**

Students are expected to;

- Evaluate their personal learning and their teaching
- Make informed decisions and judgements
- Critically reflect on their teaching
- Keep a journal as evidence of professional growth.

### **The Namibian Practicum model**

The essence of the University of Namibia's partnership model, according to the university's School Based Studies Manual for Primary phases of the Bachelor of Education [Honours] programme (2014), is to support the professional development of teachers according to the philosophy of teacher education. During partnership meetings, the School Based Studies [SBS] Committee outlines the partners' roles and responsibilities during the practicum.

The university teacher educator is expected to meet student teachers, the associate teacher and the support teachers during the first visit of SBS. The university teacher educator is also expected to convene pre- and post-observation conferences with the student teachers and support teachers and to keep records of school visits. They are expected to assess students and complete a Lesson Evaluation form for every student teacher that they visit. She/he refers all the problem-cases of student teachers or those who perform below standard to the office of the SBS Coordinator.

The School Principal appoints an associate teacher, and ensures that the SBS Partnership concept is implemented in a mutually beneficial way. She/he oversees the placement of student teachers under well-qualified and experienced support teachers, who are deemed cooperative and willing to be partners. She/he ensures that all partner members are aware of policies and procedures that have an influence on the SBS programme, and that all documentary artefacts such as the Principal's confirmation Form and Attendance Register are in place as requested by the university.

The Associate Teacher coordinates all SBS-related activities in the school and regularly liaises with the University SBS Coordinator. She/he appoints appropriately qualified and experienced support teachers under whom to place student teachers at the school. Support teachers are the key players in the partnership and are expected to assist the student teacher to learn from practice by regularly giving professional guidance and constructive feedback, enabling the student teacher to identify areas for improvement and professional growth. Student teachers acquire theoretical knowledge during campus-based studies (CBS), but they acquire real teaching skills during SBS, under the watchful tutelage of support teachers.

Support teachers are expected to;

- Induct students and give immediate assurance and a sense of availability
- assist student teachers to plan and prepare for lessons,
- support and mentor on various issues related to the teaching profession
- provide appropriate teaching-related challenges for the student teacher

Phase 1 of UNAM's practicum model allows student teachers to observe experienced teachers at work for a four-week period during their second year. At this level, students are only allowed to teach only two lessons, just to have a 'feel' of handling a class of learners.

In their third year, in Phase 2, students are deployed to schools for a six week teaching practicum and are expected to teach a minimum of sixty lessons [an average of two per day].

During these two phases, the students are expected to complete university assigned and assessed task focussing on their observations and teaching experiences.

In their final year, students are sent out for their final practicum stage; Phase 3 for a twelve week period.

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### **Roles of Universities/Higher Education Institutions in the Practicum**

It is critical for teaching practitioners to possess an appreciable body of theoretical knowledge that empowers them to understand, explain, justify and, when need arises, modify pedagogical elements. It is traditionally the university's responsibility to arrange student placements, select cooperating teachers, assign university supervisors, schedule lecturer-student conferences, deal with students' special cases, and carry out assessments (Tannehill and Goc-Karp, 1992). This process of supervision helped student teachers to progress from their current skill levels to suitably higher levels that would enable them to efficiently function as professional teachers (Metzler, 1990).

Sienty (1997) bemoans that the university-based component of teacher education programme is limited to a couple of visits to the schools by university supervisors, limited interaction between the university supervisor and the cooperating teacher. According to Sienty, university supervisors virtually have no involvement with the placement of student teachers, as this activity is usually conducted by the school. The university supervisor's function is to visit the school, observe the student, talk with the student teacher and the cooperating school teacher, and finally, assess the student teacher. They only communicate at length when there is a problem with a student's behaviour or performance. This demonstrates that school teachers and university supervisors operate somewhat independent of one another.

In a study on teaching partnerships, Akhtar, Majeed and Murtaza (2013) observed that student teachers model and follow the lead of their support-teachers and that student teachers benefit immensely in having supportive and well prepared model teachers. Encouragement and positive reinforcement made the students feel wanted and some students pointed out that did not feel upset by constructive criticism because of such support and guidance which involve mutual learning and friendship. One important purpose of a support-teacher is to assist student teachers to build their professional identities by encouraging them to think more deeply about their own practice and by talking about the students' personal beliefs and philosophies.

Trends in teacher training reveal that cooperating teachers' roles in the teaching practicum are vital and indispensable. Specifically, their roles and tasks include settling the student teacher and preparing the learners for the student teacher's adoption of her/his responsibilities, in addition to;

- Introducing the student teacher to other members of staff, and making him/her feel welcome as a co-teacher.
- Assisting the student teacher to prepare for classroom teaching as well as to manage the learning environment.
- Confirming the student teacher's teaching allocations and timetables and review these whenever deemed appropriate.
- Monitoring, advising, mentoring, guiding and coaching the student teacher through pre and post-lesson observation conferences, demonstrations and discussions.
- Liaising with the university supervisor in developing the professional skills and attitude of the student teacher and providing regular written feedback on student's performance.
- Alert the University Supervisor if Student Teacher is not performing well and develop strategies to help the Student Teacher.
- Meeting periodically with the university supervisor to discuss student teacher's progress and helping strategies.

The table below illustrates the different roles of the members of the triad as perceived by the triad:

<b>Student Teachers</b>	<b>Support teacher</b>	<b>University Supervisor</b>
1. Self-reflection 2. Class teaching as per instruction from university and school 3. Maintaining an SBS file 4. Developing a teaching portfolio file 5. participating in co and extra-curricular activities 6. Carrying any other duty assigned by the university or school.	1. Providing feedback to student teacher 2. Facilitating student teaching 3. Guiding and mentoring student teachers 4. Formative/summative assessment functions 5. Lesson observations 6. Determine appropriate workloads	1. Student assessment 2. Mentoring and guiding students Supporter 3. Facilitating triad conferences /Communication 4. Communicating and facilitating university policy 5. Supporting students' professional growth on SBS

### **Envisaged Roles as perceived by the Triad**

The roles played by individual members of the practicum triad were perceived to be numerous, but some were intertwined. It was evident that some of the roles that were attached to university supervisors (SU's) were also played by the support teachers (ST's). The foremost ones were those of providing on-going support and assessment to the TT's. These particular roles were regarded as crucial to the development of the trainee teachers (TT's) throughout their stay during the entire practicum period. It was regarded as paramount that the TT's should acquire the skills and strategies to identify their own strengths and weaknesses during lesson preparation and delivery as well as determine certain behavioural modifications to improve their teaching performance.

The teaching practicum is the student's experience that is closest to the real world of work that they are preparing to enter. It becomes imperative, therefore, that this experience is made to be as realistic as possible. Triad members: the university supervisors, the support teachers and the student teachers who took part in this study were all immensely forthcoming and cooperative in responding to questions and sometimes volunteering valuable information. They all expressed their perceptions about the currently prevailing state of teaching practice and went as far as suggest the envisaged role definition of triad members.

During the analysis of data from the triad members, common themes from the perspectives of each triad member were connected, arranged and organised into specific categories in an attempt to find answers to the research questions. Patterns and themes that emerged from the data categories were matched with the conceptual framework and research questions to enable analysis, interpretation and draw inferences.

Responses and narratives showed that the participants already had some perceptions about their roles and responsibilities during their practicum. Student teachers' eagerly explained and clarified specific circumstances behind their responses. They fully appreciated that the lesson planning and preparation are vital for effective classroom teaching. Student teachers attributed classroom disorganization to poor preparation and they were equally aware that every lesson required its own planning and preparation.

Support teachers were sincere about what they thought of the quality of preparedness of the students they assigned to work with. Some indicated that the practicum schools and the university faculty were virtually living in totally different worlds. It was found that some of the roles that were attached to SU's were also played by the ST's, such as providing on-going support and assessment to the TT's. TT's were urged to acquire reflective skills and strategies to identify their own strengths and weaknesses so as to improve their teaching performance. It was felt that TT's should not feel intimidated during triad conferences. Asking TT's what grade they think they deserve was also regarded as a form of intimidation.

In order to attain the objective of producing effective teachers, numerous collaborative models in teacher education have been developed. incorporating teaching practicum as a core component in teacher training is crucial for enabling trainee and novice teachers to master the trade of teaching in the real context of a school (Hill and Brodin, 2004; Kennedy, 2006).

Literature and this study revealed that student teachers need strict supervisory support and guidance in order for them to grow as professional teachers. Supervision is a strong part of inducting trainee teachers into the "community of practice". Support teachers have to work in collaboration with university-based supervisors to help student teachers to acquire the learning experiences through observing, counselling, instructing, role modelling and providing feedback.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study, therefore, recommends the following:

- (a) The university and partnership schools should improve their communication through mandatory partnership meetings where teachers and lecturers from both institutions

discuss their collective mandate as teacher training institutions. On these platforms, challenges, misconceptions, mistrusts, etc are discussed and ironed out.

- (b) This study noted with concern the apparent ‘second fiddle’ role played by the support teacher during final SBS assessment in spite of his/her formative presence in the student’s practicum attachment. The study, therefore, recommends bringing the status of the support teacher at par with that of the university supervisor. The study also recommends that support teachers and university supervisors receive adequate re-training to play their roles more effectively.
- (c) The study recommends that mechanisms be put in place by both partnership schools and university to ensure that all student teachers are adequately supported during SBS through increased formative assessments by a combined team of support teachers and university supervisors, and that assessment responsibilities are not skewed in favour of the latter.
- (d) The university and schools should develop ways of ensuring that pre and post lesson conferences become part of assessment to encourage the triad to convene them more regularly.
- (e) The study recommends that time spent on School based studies be significantly increased to ensure that students receive sufficient work-based learning [WBL]. The current state of SBS is by far inadequate.

## CONCLUSION

The study has revealed that in the absence of a closely coordinated partnership structure, the practicum triad members, especially support-teachers, usually works at variance with the requirements of the University of Namibia’s School Based Studies rules and regulations. This study, therefore, had sought to establish those parameters with a view to re-define the parameters for the benefit of the triad. This research has established that the majority of school-based support teachers and university lecturers work too narrowly within their own territories. It is envisaged that this study will provide some insight into very important aspects of work-integrated learning for the upper-primary teacher training phase and for the application of best practices in the quest to produce not only employable, but highly productive, graduates.

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