

The Relationship between Pre-service Trainee Teachers and Learners in the Foundation Phase

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ABSTRACT The importance of forming relationship became evident during the pre-service trainee students school-based teaching practice. Hence, this paper explores the relationship that exists between the trainee teacher and the learner(s). The method of observation during the formal assessment of four pre-service B.Ed. students, as well as the dialogical interaction after the lesson contributed to the relationship dynamics that enhanced quality teaching and learning. From an ethical perspective the confidentiality of the four B.Ed. students will be retained. The data was gathered using the school-based assessment tool designed by the Faculty of Education. The emerging findings revealed that the conceptualization of relationship forming between a trainee student and the learners varied and therefore had a significant impact on the trainee students' performance in terms of the quality of their teaching and learning. In other words, the trainee teacher's relationship with the learners ought to be an open dialogical experience where rich pedagogical moments are experienced.

INTRODUCTION

World-wide teacher training programmes are organized around learning experiences aimed at equipping [pre-service] trainee teachers with theoretical knowledge and practical competencies specific to the teaching profession (Mohan 2011). Pitkämiemi (2010) further adds that "one can present a conceptual system to describe the relationships between teachers' cognition and their teaching practice". By this Pitkämiemi means, that there is a relationship that occurs between the trainee teacher and the learners during the presentation of a lesson which Pitkämiemi refers to as the teachers' static cognition (practical theory, script), dynamic cognition (agenda, interactive thinking) and teaching practice. This study asks the following question: How can relational theory (educational theory and practice) respond to quality teaching and learning in the fourth and final year of a trainee teacher's practicum? Globally, teacher education makes reference to various terminologies with regard to practical pre-service teacher training. Practical pre-service teacher training is often referred to as teaching practice, practice teaching, and school-based teaching practice; work integrated learning (WIL) and school practicum. Irrespective of the diversity of related language, the fact remains that "every student in a teacher education programme is expected to do practice teaching" (Ngi-

di and Sibaya 2003). These authors remind us that "practice teaching serves as the pre-service teacher's initiation into the real-life world of the school". In other words, teaching practice affords every student an opportunity to gain "hands-on" experience as they develop into well prepared, competent trainee teachers equipped with the theoretical and practical skills, knowledge, attitudes and values to become competent teacher's in schools.

The question focuses on the following aspects with regard to pre-service trainee teacher assessment: How would a pre-service trainee teacher know if the lesson was successful or not? What philosophical, theoretical and practical indications reflect trainee teacher and learners relationship during a lesson? The empirical evidence is based on the teacher educators (lecturers) observation of the trainee teacher's teaching competence validated through the a) assessment tool used by the Faculty of Education and, b) the teacher educators and trainee teacher's reflection "narrative" after the lesson. Therefore a) and b) above contributes and informs the trainee teacher through to the feedback aligned to the educative and evaluative criteria for firstly, trainee teacher development and secondly to assess the trainee teacher's competence at a fourth and final year for the awarding of the Bachelor of Education (BEd) degree.

The practical component of the pre-service teacher training programme culminates in placing trainee teachers in schools. However, there is a stringent philosophical, theoretical and practical aspect to the development of trainee teacher's skills, knowledge, beliefs and values as an integral part and holistic preparation for the integration of theory blended into classroom-based practice. As a trainee teacher progresses through the levels of yearly competence the opportunity to experience and practice the art of teaching under the supervision of a host professional teacher (Kiggundu and Niyamuli 2009) to reach competent participation in the teaching profession forms the nucleus for teacher training (DoE 2005).

This practice is based on the premise that training and learning to teach has to do with the acquisition of a series of competencies or skills, which are observed by the host teacher for the greater part of the practical training period. In addition, teacher educators (lecturers) assess fourth year trainee teachers on two occasions, whereby the trainee teacher prepares, presents and reflects on the lesson taught for the teacher educator. The duration of the lesson presented by the trainee teacher for purpose of a formal assessment by the teacher educator takes place for a maximum period of ninety minutes. The teacher educator's input is of significance as this assessment forms a stringent part of the overall assessment of competence for a trainee teacher. At fourth year level, the assumption is that the trainee teacher has reached a competent level of teaching skill, acquired in a number of diverse school environments over a four year period, to be discussed later in this paper.

At fourth year level, the trainee teacher ought to display informed philosophical, theoretical and practical knowledge to display quality teaching and learning. The concern raised is: How does a trainee teacher reflect and "narrate" the success of a lesson and teaching competence. The focus for this paper is on the relationship dynamics that constitutes the lesson, networked into the philosophical, theoretical and practical knowledge for "best practice". What then constitutes "best practice"? Best practice is achieved through the effectiveness of quality teaching and learning that takes place during a lesson or series of lessons. In other words, the practical cognition (Pitkämiemi 2010) and practical teaching is fused into an informed teaching and learn-

ing experience for both the trainee teacher and the foundation phase learners.

The purpose of this paper the relationship between the trainee teacher and foundation phase learners shapes the educative value for good quality teaching and learning. The educative value of relationship forming embraces the skills, knowledge, beliefs and values as a composite whole demonstrating competence going beyond mere skill and routine. Internationally and locally, teachers are regarded as the key agents in the delivery of a quality education system (DoE 2005). Bingham and Sidorkin (2004) refer to meaningful education where relationships are understood and developed through teaching practice. In other words, the trinity and depth of philosophical, theoretical and practical knowledge ought to reflect a fourth year trainee teacher's teaching competence.

With reference to the practical component and preparation for school-based practical teaching the Host Teacher's Handbook (2013), states, "the purpose of school experience (SE) is to afford students practical experience in classroom and school environments. SE is regarded as the students' internship and induction into the teaching profession". Furthermore, "it provides hands on experience and a real life opportunity to apply their theoretical knowledge in practice, under the experienced and empathetic eye of the professional class (host) teacher. The main opportunity afforded to students through SE is making links between theory and practice" (Host Teachers' Handbook 2013). In sum, the student (trainee teacher) is exposed to degrees of competence depending on their respective year of study. Yet, the importance of classroom-based practice cannot be over-emphasised as the educative nucleus for teacher training and teaching competence.

The School Experience, Students' Guide (2013) states that (SE) is the focal point of your teacher education degree. It is your internship period – a time when you work as a professional in training and bring to bear on the task of practical teaching, your knowledge, skills, insights and personality. The synchronicity between the host teachers' handbook and the SE Students Guide (2013), brings to bear that practical cognition shapes the development of the trainee teacher's teaching competence. However, neither of these above-mentioned documents refers to the essence of good teaching and learning – educa-

tive purpose, addressing what Biesta (2004) in Bingham and Sidorkin (2004) refers to as relational theory where meaningful education is understood and developed through trainee-teacher and foundation phase learners relationship forming and shaping. Maybe the purpose of these two documents ought to “fill the gap” that raises Biesta’s (2004) discussions about the educative value of relationship forming and essence for good teaching and learning as the “fundamental gap” in trainee teacher’s lesson presentation and teaching action.

This leads me into a scholarly discussion relating to relational theory as relationship dynamics as the “fundamental gap” between trainee-teachers and foundation phase learners during the presentation of a lesson for a trainee-teacher’s assessment purpose aligned to the SE criteria and assessment instrument (tool) as the competence leverage used by this university.

Literature Review

Bulajeva (2003) reminds us that “teaching has changed dramatically in recent years”. The seminal thoughts of Bulajeva (2003) and Biesta (2004) with reference to relational theory have intensified the work of teachers, in that the focus is on a learner-centred approach to classroom-based practice (DoE 2005). This means that the pre-service trainee teacher requires fundamental skills to address the social and dialogical context that they find themselves in during SE in order to develop teaching and learning skills that align with a learner-centered approach (DoE 2005).

For fourth year pre-service trainee teachers the conceptualization of relational theory impacts on how the trainee teacher’s “practical theory moves to teaching practice” (Pitaniemi 2010). Biesta (2004) supports the notion that an open dialogical experience between the trainee teacher and learners’ creates rich pedagogical moments experienced through the social and dialogical context of teaching and learning. This Biesta (2004) argues is the educative response to quality teaching and learning. Furthermore, Biesta (2004), alludes to communication theory and makes reference to three forms of communication theory. The first form of communication theory: communication as transportation of information (between the trainee- teacher and the foundation phase learners), the second form;

communication as transportation of participation (between the trainee-teacher and the foundation phase learners), the third form; performativity theory of communication (teaching and learning action as a mutual activity between the trainee-teacher and the foundation phase learners) this is endorsed by Sidorkin (2004) as the “focal point of education” where the “duality of the social and the inter-human dimensions” gives meaning to teaching and learning as a manifestation of relational pedagogy.

With reference to the South African Report of the Ministerial Committee on Teacher Education (2005), it states that “competent participation in the teaching profession” has to do with the acquisition of philosophical, theoretical and practical knowledge and competent skills can be observed and therefore assessed. Informed by this document the model used at one university in South Africa allowed the author the space and ethical confidentiality to address the “fundamental gap” that impacts on the fourth year trainee teacher’s competence skills when at the coalface of “real-life” teaching and learning experiences. Relevant South African national policy documents allude to curriculum policy in the form of Norms and Standards for Educators (2000), which details the types of competences (practical; foundational; reflexive) expected to be developed through initial teacher training programmes (DHET 2000). The current policy on the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (2011), makes reference to teacher education in relation to the requirement with regard to the knowledge mix in any Bachelor of Education degree (DHET 2011: 19). Reference to the school-based section in this particular document is highlighted;

School-based work integrated learning (WIL), including supervised and assessed teaching practice, constitutes an essential part of the BEd programme. In a full-time contact maximum of 32 weeks in formally supervised and assessed school-based practices over the four-year duration of the degree. In any given year, a maximum of 12 such weeks could be spent in schools, and at least three of these should be consecutive” (DHET 2011: 20).

The above-mentioned quotation from the current policy document for teacher education clearly spells out that WIL constitutes an essential part of the BEd programme. For teacher education this implies that WIL translates into

intensified supervised and assessed teaching practice. Does this mean that trainee teachers through WIL will “fill the gap” through social and dialogical interactions in order for quality teaching and learning to manifest in schools. In other words, does this imply the meaning of education as an inter-human activity is the “focal point of education” (Sidorkin 2004).

Detecting Relational Theory as the Focal Point of Education

Relational theory as the focal point of education is constituted at various levels as there are numerous actors that come to the fore for SE with regard to university preparation and learning in partnerships with schools. This partnership is manifested on a macro (DoE policy documents) level; meso (DoE district officials, school principals and school management teams (SMT's) level; and micro (host teachers, trainee teacher, learners, parents and teacher educators) level. The micro level will be discussed for purpose of clarity relating to relational theory as the focal point of quality teaching and learning.

Prior to the BEd 2, 3, 4 and PGCE students embarking on SE, a rigorous pre-preparation process is undertaken through structured contact lectures with the university academic teaching staff. The aim of such lectures is to prepare trainee-students at their respective year group level for SE. The students guide is handed out to all respective trainee teachers and the content thereof is discussed. In addition, micro-teaching lessons take place where academic teaching staff embark on various aspects with regard to “best practice” and the achievement thereof. These university students (trainee teachers) receive numerous documents relating to; teaching methods, approaches, strategies, resources, learner's with barriers, reference to policy documents, school policies.

In order to address all aspects of the school-based practical experience various documents are made available to student teachers. The trainee teacher receives: a) Observation template, b) Structured Lesson Plan, c) Host teacher/Trainee teacher developmental tool – completed half-way through the SE practice, d) Host Teachers Report on Lesson, and e) Lecturer's Report on Lesson. In addition, the trainee student is required to adhere to the student guide, point 3 where the following criteria is tabulated;

- ♦ Lesson observations (Students will record their observations according to the template provided by the Faculty of Education)
- ♦ Formal lessons (for example, planned/prepared by the student). Lesson plans to be included in student files (evaluated by the student). Students are required to plan according to the guidelines provided by their lecturers during the pre-preparation and micro-teaching period.
- ♦ Formal evaluations by the host teacher. The host teacher writes constructive comments in narrative form at the end of the student's lesson plan. The feedback is signed and dated by the host teacher.
- ♦ Formal evaluations by university, Faculty of Education lecturer. The assessment tool/instrument used by both the host teacher and lecturer is a formal report document.

For purpose of clarity the last bullet point referred to as the formal evaluation or assessment tool/instrument titled the lecturer's report on lesson provides the collection and analysis for the empirical informing this paper. This formal document is used as the assessment tool with criteria based on planning, teaching and additional comments as main headings. The three criteria are further sub-divided where comments and evidence is completed by the teacher educator (lecturer). A rating scale is used with text referring to, best practice, adequate, and needs attention, not observed. The additional comments comprise of the narrative section. The assessment tool is discussed with each student after the completion of the lesson, followed by a consultation with the host teacher, as well as the school principal or SMT member.

Lecturer/Host Teacher Report on Lesson

1. Planning

Lesson plan, complete and details; assessment strategies (method and tools), resource(s) organization, quality and relevance;

2. Teaching

The lesson – introduction, lesson development (teaching strategies and methods), content knowledge, explanations (presentation of content), instructions (guide learner activities), use of resources, use of questioning, assessment (aligned with lesson plan), flexibility and initiative (context related), conclusion of lesson

(plenary), attainment of lesson outcomes/learning context;

Professional skills – time management, classroom management (transition of activities), discipline strategies (behavioural issues), voice (tone, volume and pitch), rapport with learners;

Assessment – file (complete/incomplete), self-reflective essay (work in progress)

3. Additional Comments (Narrative Section)

This assessment tool is used to leverage the trainee-teacher’s development and competence in a real-life teaching and learning situation.

The SE tool data will be analysed according to reference made relational theory as the focal point of education as feedback to the fourth year trainee- teacher. The validity, reliability and trustworthiness through sampling of four BEd 4 trainee teacher’s that the author as well as another teacher educator (lecturer) assessments reveal. In terms of university student confidentiality and to avoid bias the assessment narratives by both teacher educators will be analysed. The assessment (raw data) is from a reliable, trusted source (i.e. Faculty archives). Reliability and trustworthiness of the data is further ensured so at no point could data be manipulated and or contaminated. The assessment data remains confidential material of the university.

Four BEd students were used as a sample for this study. All four students were female. Only Grade R, 1 and 2 host classes were used for data collection and analysis purposes.

Student 1	Grade 1	Total number of learners in the class: 51
Student 2	Grade 2	Total number of learners in the class: 29
Student 3	Grade 1	Total number of learners in the class: 48
Student 4	Grade R	Total number of learners in the class: 25

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the observation and interview conducted, the following are revealed; Phrases used by teacher educators (lecturers) to reveal relational theory as the focal point of education.

The empirical data as presented in Table 1 was aligned and analyzed according to the mitigating questions raised earlier in this paper. How would a pre-service trainee teacher know if the lesson was successful or not? What philosophical, theoretical and practical indications reflect

trainee teacher and learners relationship during a lesson?

In response to the first question: How would a pre-service trainee teacher know if the lesson was successful or not? The tabulated overall rating scale used as the assessment tool, reveals the general outcome in terms of the fourth year trainee students level of teaching competence.

Table 2: Overall rating of assessment tool

Fourth year trainee student	Teacher educator: A	Teacher educator: B
Student 1	Best practice	Adequate
Student 2	Adequate	Adequate
Student 3	Best practice	Adequate
Student 4	Best practice	Best practice

Table 2 shows the following:

Student 1: Revealed an overall rating scale that varied between best practice and adequate. Student 2, received an overall rating of adequate from both teacher educators. Student 3, achieved an overall rating scale that varied between best practice and adequate. Student 4, achieved an overall rating scale reflecting best practice from both lecturer educators.

In sum, to answer the question, the analysis of the assessment tool is interpreted by student 1, receiving 50percent as best practice and 50 percent as adequate. Student 2, interpretation is 50 percent adequate and 50 percent adequate. Student 3, is interpreted by 50 percent best practice, and 50 percent adequate. Student 4, interpretation is 50 percent best practice and 50 percent best practice.

It becomes apparent from the rating scale that forms an integral part of the assessment tool, that fourth year student competence varies between the assessments of two teacher educators. The overall rating scale reveals varied strengths of trainee teachers’ competence when teaching foundation phase learners.

Added to the overall rating scale is the analysis of the actual comments, evidence and written narrative that is shared with the fourth year training student after the lesson. What philosophical, theoretical and practical indications reflect trainee teacher and learners relationship during a lesson? This can be seen in the Table 3.

CONCLUSION

It is evident where the relationship between the learner and trainee teacher is aligned to theoretical underpinnings as evident in the analysis

Table 1: Phrases used by teacher educators

<i>Student 1:</i>	
<i>Teacher Educator:</i>	<i>A Overall rating scale: Best practice</i>
You dramatized the story and captured the learners attention with interest and excitement.	
Laughter of learners as they were expressing their enjoyment.	
Apple sharing using learners to engage in the teaching and learning.	
Total learner involvement.	
They so enjoyed the lesson with great enthusiasm.	
Learner interaction good to see.	
Student 1, you are a natural teacher.	
<i>Teacher Educator B:</i>	<i>Overall rating scale: Adequate</i>
A bit more resources could have been made to help the children with the lesson.	
The use of the song got the learners' attention and made them think of the sound.	
You used the back and front of the class to make sure all the children were involved.	
You have a good way with the children and controlled them well.	
You praised and motive children.	
You extended the children's knowledge.	
You were very animated when you were explaining the game.	
<i>Student 2:</i>	
<i>Teacher Educator:</i>	<i>A Overall rating scale: Adequate</i>
Very good teaching elements in particular the resources.	
Tempo of the lesson is of utmost importance.	
Be firm with learners.	
The 'big book' was delightful the learners were fully engaged as the visuals were totally appropriate to the teaching of prepositions.	
Emphasize the prepositions when learners are engaged with the table activities.	
Repeat the preposition to alleviate learner confirmation "where Miss..."	
All learners could have actively participated in the action lesson e.g. "Stand behind your chair".	
<i>Teacher Educator: B</i>	<i>Overall rating scale: Adequate</i>
Show pictures of transport from the book.	
Talking around the pictures in the book.	
Asking questions about transport they know.	
Use of discussion method, as to make learners participate.	
Guide the learners with questions.	
Clear questions as to what to do.	
Learners enjoy your lesson with full confidence.	
Communicate at a level that they understand.	
The student controlled the learners.	
Good rapport with learners.	
You involved all the learners.	
<i>Student 3:</i>	
<i>Teacher Educator: A</i>	<i>Overall rating scale: Best practice</i>
Rhyme a lovely interactive way to start the lesson using actions.	
Loved the way you asked learners to come and identify the shapes on the board.	
The tactile/touching of flour on paper plates, a superb learning activity.	
The Grade 1's really enjoyed the lesson.	
Social discussions taking place between learners.	
Learners were so excited.	
<i>Teacher Educator: B</i>	<i>Overall rating scale: Adequate</i>
Very good introduction, it really grabbed learners' attention.	
Good questioning skills.	
Use of leading questions when learners do not understand.	
Learners are active.	
Sound rapport with learners.	
<i>Student 4:</i>	
<i>Teacher Educator: A</i>	<i>Overall rating scale: Best practice</i>
Loved the repetition as the learners willingly offered an echo as you read the story.	
A good sense of 'belonging' as learners felt confident to dramatize the story.	
I saw quality teaching and learning taking place throughout the lesson.	
Absolutely thrilled to see content knowledge, social integration, relationship building and effective learning taking place fully integrated with mathematics and life skills.	
<i>Teacher Educator: B</i>	<i>Overall rating scale: Best practice</i>
Learners well engaged and motivated.	
Watch those children who tend to disrupt your lesson.	
Well done on your ability to explain your content to your learners.	

Table 3: Philosophical, theoretical and practical indications reflect trainee teacher and learners relationship during a lesson

<i>B.Ed. 4 trainee teacher and teacher educators (lecturers)</i>	<i>Philosophical indicators</i>	<i>Theoretical/ Educational indicators</i>	<i>Practical indicators</i>
Student 1 Teacher Educator: A and B	Realism the opportunities to acquire knowledge	Captivated the learners attention: Learners are involved	Dramatization, laughter, use of song
Student 2 Teacher Educator: A and B	Behaviorism: The trainee teachers focus on managing the learners	Tempo of the lesson is of utmost important, make use of discussion method	Resource; "Big Book" show pictures, Ask questions
Student 3 Teacher Educator: A and B	Analytical philosophy; "social interaction"	Sound rapport with learners	Good questioning skills, using actions
Student 4 Teacher Educator: A and B	Existentialism – a sense of "belonging" encouraging self-cognition and understanding Freedom to be responsible for oneself.	Quality teaching and learning taking place Learners well engaged and motivated Trainee teacher helped learners to reveal their possibilities.	Learners repeated and offered an echo as you read the story Dramatized the story Variety of learning activities

of teacher educator feedback, the teaching competence of the trainee teacher is rated more favourably. The philosophical, educational and practical indicators encompasses the theoretical and conceptualization of relationships that are evident between learners and trainee teachers during their classroom-based practice, particularly when been assessed by a teacher educator.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The school heads should do something to foster the trainee teacher's relationship with the learners to be an open dialogical experience where rich pedagogical moments are experienced.

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