As Educators of Teachers, Where and When Do Our Responsibilities End?

Elsa Fourie[1] and Une Fourie[2]

*School of Educational Sciences, North-West University, Vaal Triangle Campus,
100 Hendrik van Eck Blvd, Vanderbijlpark, 1911, South Africa
E-mail: [1]<elsa.fourie@nwu.ac.za, [2]<une.fourie@nwu.ac.za>*

ABSTRACT Quality education is a basic right of every South African learner, though despite many positive changes in the country since 1994, the legacy of low-quality education in many historically disadvantaged parts of the school system remains. It is, therefore, not surprising that the quality of teacher education itself is becoming a crucial point of debate. The purpose of this research was to explore the perceptions of teacher educators at a teacher education institution in South Africa regarding the nature of their responsibilities as educators of teachers.This paper offers insight into the nature of teacher education and the importance of researching teacher education practices. A qualitative research design was utilized to gain a deeper understanding of the context and the participants' categories of meaning. The paper outlines what it means to professionally develop as a teacher educator as well as the ways in which teacher educators' perceive their own professional development and the extent of their responsibilities.

INTRODUCTION

In general, the term 'an effective teacher' refers to a teacher's ability to foster student achievement. There is a long tradition of research on teacher effectiveness, dating back to the 1960s and 1970s (Talbert-Johnson 2006). Much of this research, as well as more recent studies, examined specific teaching practices and correlated it with student learning achievements (Masondo 2013; Venter 2013; Flores 2015). Though, the empirical research that focuses on teacher attributes is far from conclusive (Rice 2003; Griffiths et al. 2014), criteria often considered in teacher quality discussions include overall academic ability, strong academic knowledge in particular content areas and racial or linguistic diversity.

It is disconcerting to note, that despite years of research and experimentation, there are still many teachers who fail to provide quality education for our nations' youth regardless of ethnicity, race, gender, religion, language or socio-economic status (Grant and Gillette 2006; Seidla et al. 2015; Zeichner 2014). If poor school perfor-

Address for correspondence:
Dr. Elsa Fourie
School of Educational Sciences,
North-West University: Vaal Triangle
Campus, Hendrik van Eck Blvd 100,
Vanderbijlpark, 1911, South Africa
Telephone: +27.016.910.3066
E-mail: elsa.fourie@nwu.ac.za

mance is caused by teachers who are unable to deliver the curriculum, then something is seriously wrong with teacher education (National Education Evaluation and Development Unit 2013).

Given the unsatisfactory level of learner achievement in South Africa, it is no surprise that the quality of teacher education itself is becoming a crucial point of debate (National Education Evaluation and Development Unit 2013). Evidence is increasingly sought to prove that all student teachers are prepared in such a way that they will be able to positively affect Grade 12 results. In this regard Korthagen et al. (2005) and Smith (2010) claim that in the light of the increasing attention paid to the nature of teaching and teachers' work, there has also been an increasing focus on the quality of teacher education and the professional expertise of teacher educators themselves (Griffiths et al. 2014). Further, questions arise about the nature of the responsibility of teacher educators towards student teachers.

Answers about the nature of the responsibility of teacher educators could guide teacher educators and teacher education institutions to prepare student teachers more effectively and to assist them in such a way that they will be able to positively affect teaching and learning.

In the next sections the discussion focuses on the nature of teacher education, partnerships between school districts, schools and teacher

educators and the professional development of teacher educators.

The Nature of Teacher Education

Teachers are the main pillars of a sound and progressive society: they pass on knowledge, skills and values and prepare the youth for further education and their roles in society (Motshekga 2011). Professional teacher education must enable student teachers to develop an effective system for learning that will facilitate their transition into practice. Further, professional teacher education must integrate research activities with professional education and concerns in educational practice (Liston et al. 2008).

When addressing the professional development of student teachers the essence and substance of development programs must be 'the learning of an independent, evidence informed and constructively critical approach to practice within a public framework of professional values and accountability' (Loughran 2010; Hollins et al. 2014). The pedagogy of teacher education is not a synonym of teaching; rather pedagogy is about the relationship between teaching and learning. A main purpose in articulating the pedagogy of teacher education is to ensure that teacher educators' professional knowledge is translated into the practices of teacher education in a more general practical manner (Loughran 2014).

One of the central objectives of standards-based educational reform efforts is that teachers improve their instruction through aligning it with challenging academic content standards (Department of Higher Education and Training 2011). Instructional alignment, the extent to which the content of teachers' instruction agrees with the content specifications defined in state content standards and policies, is intended to lead to improvements in students' learning and subsequently, their achievement. Polikoff (2013) as well as Polikoff and Porter (2014) argue that the curricular knowledge that student teachers must acquire involves knowledge of the full range of modules in the curriculum, the variety of instructional materials and the set of characteristics that serve as both the indications and contradictions for the use of particular curriculum or programme materials in particular circumstances. Despite the centrality of alignment in the theories of action underlying standards-

based reform, research over the past decade has shown that the typical alignment of teachers' instruction with state standards and policies is weak to moderate (Smithson et al. 2007; Polikoff 2012; Polikoff and Porter 2014). In this regard many teacher education researchers argued that teachers' implementation of standards and policies should be contextualized in the school setting (Friedrichsen et al. 2009; Anderson; Polikoff 2013; Stillman 2013), implying that perfect implementation of standards and policies may look different from school to school and classroom to classroom.

However, when considering literature, it seems that although many beginner teachers regard instructional alignment as an important goal, they find it difficult and as a result the actual alignment of instruction with standards and policies remains low (Hamilton and Berends 2006; Department of Higher Education and Training 2011). Newly prepared teachers often work in ethnically diverse schools and unfortunately many of these teachers indicate that they feel ill prepared to teach in these schools (Gordon 2000). Participants in Gordon's study perceived their teacher education programmes as a waste of time and detached from the realities of schools with diverse student populations. Unfortunately, the status quo of the rural school students remains, thus, failing to close the gap in academic achievement and other school outcomes. Teacher educators, therefore, have to accept the challenge to develop effective programmes that are pedagogically and culturally responsive to the needs, abilities and experiences of the growing numbers of ethnically diverse, bilingual and impoverished students (Department of Higher Education and Training 2011).

Many teacher preparation programmes concur that knowledge of subject matter is the foundation for good teaching. However, knowledge of subject matter alone does not make one an effective, compassionate teacher. The South African Department of Higher Education and Training (2011) as well as (Seidla et al. 2015) assert that too often, teacher education programmes focus on the academic ability of candidates while neglecting dispositional aspects. Moreover, it is stated that although some people should not teach because they are weak academically, others should not teach because they lack emotional stability. Effective teachers have intangible qualities or dispositions that are

difficult to define and to assess. Dewey, as far back as 1933, said that content knowledge and pedagogical expertise are not enough if a teacher does not have the attitude to work at becoming an effective teacher. In addition, teachers need a moral compass that can enable them to follow through their commitments to all learners (Grant and Gillette 2006; Breaux 2013).To care within the context of schools means that teachers should not only focus on imparting predetermined knowledge but should also spend significant time and energy on nurturing and sustaining each of their learners (Venter 2013).

In South Africa all teachers have to fulfil the following collective roles:
- Specialist in a phase, subject discipline or practice
- Learning mediator
- Interpreter and designer of learning programmes and materials
- Leader, administrator and manager
- Scholar, researcher and lifelong learner
- Assessor
- Community, citizenship and pastoral role (Department of Higher Education and Training 2011).

In addition, a set of basic competences required of newly qualified teachers is specified. For instance, newly qualified teachers must:
- know who their learners are and how they learn;
- have highly developed literacy, numeracy and Information Technology (IT) skills;
- understand diversity in the South African context in order to teach in a manner that includes all learners;
- have a positive work ethic and display appropriate values; and
- be able to reflect critically, in theoretically informed ways and in conjunction with their professional community of colleagues on their own practice in order to constantly improve it and adapt it to evolving circumstances (Department of Higher Education and Training 2011).

Teacher educators are responsible for preparing student teachers to fulfil the above roles and competences. The teaching of teaching is not only about the delivery of information and ideas of teaching, but rather the teaching about knowledge of practice through careful and purposeful creation of situations in which that knowledge is borne out in experience of practice (Loughran 2010; O'Dwyer and Atli 2014).

In this regard it can be argued that school districts and schools also have an important role to play.

Partnerships between Teacher Educators, School Districts and Schools

Shared understandings should be developed regarding the roles, responsibilities and expectations among teacher educators, school districts and schools. According to many students, teaching practicum plays an important role in their preparation for teaching. However, merely providing the practice setting for student teachers is not sufficient, especially given the complexities and challenges of teaching in today's schools. Teachers should be full partners in teacher education programs, rather than only providers of classrooms for students to teach in.

As the teacher shortage intensifies, school districts are increasingly seeking for models of successful programmes to place qualified teachers in classrooms as quickly as possible and keep them there. In spite of the efforts being made to recruit and retain qualified teachers, many schools still appoint unqualified teachers. Large numbers of teachers are appointed to teach subjects that they have never studied. These teachers live in daily fear of being exposed and humiliated (Lee 2013). Since candidates who qualify for graduate teacher education programs generally also qualify to fill these emergency vacancies, some school districts wishing to increase the number of qualified teachers, have formed partnerships with teacher education institutions. Through these partnerships students start teaching while they complete their qualifications. However, few school districts provide mentoring and support for these teachers (Elmars 2013).Grudnoff (2011) and Reynolds et al. (2013) argued that even qualified novice teachers find it difficult to become more confident teachers as they experience little support.

Teacher education and career experience variables should ensure substantial gains in student teachers' curricular knowledge, their ability to align instruction with standards and policies, and their ability to adapt knowledge and skills to specific school contexts. The question that arises is: 'Why did the beginner teachers seem to find the change from being a student to being a teacher so difficult?' A possible answer could be that teacher educators do not fulfil their

responsibilities to the extent that is expected of them. According to Korthagen et al. (2005) and Hollins et al. (2014) two main factors lead teacher educators towards their teaching role:

* they were good school teachers; and
* they take it for granted that a good teacher will also be a fine educator of teachers.

Loughran (2014) as well as O'Dwyer and Atli (2014) and Chambers (2014) posited that many teacher educators were once school teachers and that the shift to being a teacher of teachers carries with it a number of challenges that were not so obvious from the situation of the school as a workplace and, therefore, impact the transition in the nature of work. Research into the transition from teacher to teacher educator indicates clearly how demanding the shift can be for those who embark on the journey of becoming a teacher educator.

According to Mayer et al. (2011) as well as Hollins et al. (2014) most teacher educators come directly from working as teachers and have experience of teaching in primary or secondary schools, but have no advanced academic qualifications. A few come with good qualifications, but little experience. This leads to a next question, namely: 'If teacher educators are responsible to prepare student teachers to fulfil their expected roles and competences in an effective way, what then about their own professional development?'

Loughram (2014) argued that learning to be a teacher educator requires a careful analysis of the teaching and learning experiences in the classroom, an identification and re-interpretation of a teacher educator's own experiences as a student of teaching and creating and sustaining a context of productive learning for student teachers.

Mayer et al. (2011) state that it is only recently that a small body of knowledge about the nature of teacher educators' work, their pathways into teacher education, their work experiences and their career trajectories have been produced. There is a wealth of information about how teachers develop professionally but little evidence could be found about how teacher educators develop professionally (Flores 2015).

The Professional Development of Teacher Educators

Loughran (2014) argued that an important difference between the notion of professional development in relation to teachers and teacher educators is enmeshed in the sense of professional autonomy and responsibility attached to the respective roles and their accompanying expectations. Teachers who educate future teachers are the people who instruct, teach and provide support to student teachers. Their roles are numerous and diverse: they are lecturers in a specific field of expertise; they make the learning process accessible to student teachers; they encourage reflective processes; they are involved in research and in developing research skills in their students (O'Dwyer and Atli 2014). Beyond this, they need to cope simultaneously with teaching; training students to teach and to be role models (Smith 2010; Mayer et al. 2011). Teacher educators themselves need to be doing the same in their teaching as that which they expect of their student teachers in practice (Loughran 2010; Loughran 2014; Turner et al. 2014). This implies inventing pedagogy of teacher education where the problems of practice are central and where the question of what it means to know and learn is integrated in on-going work with students. Smith (2010), and O'Dwyer and Atli (2014) posited that creating a pedagogy of teacher education depends on teacher educators being conscious of not only what they teach but also of the manner in which their teaching is conducted.

In many countries standards for teacher educators are developed, often as a reaction to the wide criticism of teacher education (Smith 2010; Turner et al. 2014). In the Netherlands all teacher educators are expected to master three task areas, namely, working on their own development and that of colleagues; master the competencies of communication and reflection; and be able to evaluate their own teaching and make changes accordingly (Koster et al. 2005). In Israel teacher educators are expected to hold a PhD to be involved with professional development activities (Smith 2010). Professional development of teacher educators is not limited to expanded theoretical knowledge in a specific subject, but is a whole person development with cognitive and affective aspects (Turner et al. 2014). In support of this argument one of the participants in a study of Liston et al. (2008) said:

'It is important to specialize in good guidance, good teaching. I am not sure if specializing in research or project assessment, or technology is so important. A teacher educator

should have basic knowledge and keep updating this knowledge in two areas; subject matter and the best ways of teaching it. A teacher educator is first and foremost a teacher. A teacher educator must know how to make a connection between personal knowledge and the accumulated public professional knowledge'.

According to Koster and Dengerink (2001) and Lunenburg (2002) teacher educators have long been recognized as a group who live between two worlds. In Australia the role of teacher educators has changed from being teachers of the craft of teaching, to having a more scholarly and theoretical focus (Aspland 2006). However, literature suggests that research is one of the most stressful professional development activities of teacher educators (Turner et al. 2014). According to Smith (2010) and Mayer et al. (2011) there are several constraints that influence the research activities of teacher educators: time and resources; a lack of support in a very competitive environment; confidence; and intrinsic motivation.

In a study Liston et al. (2008) conducted interviews with teacher educators. At the start of the interview the participants were asked: Whom do you call teacher educators? Their definition, in its most simplified version, was 'Everyone who trains teachers'; or, in its more detailed version: 'Everyone who teaches, mentors or guides teachers in the 'pre service' as well as in the 'in service' teacher education arenas'. A number of participants claimed that this definition was not addressing all the issues.

A participant argued that:

'One has to develop a commitment to teacher education by constantly studying how to be a better teacher. We are talking about a double commitment; to the students one teaches at present and to their future pupils'.

Other participants said that:

'You have to model a good pedagogy. It doesn't matter if you teach pedagogy or psychology or if you teach biology or literature, you have to be good as a pedagogue. This particular professional identity obliges you to be committed to the field as well as to the academy'.

A participant argued that:

'A teacher educator needs research knowledge, needs to be able to look at social phenomena and social practices from various points of view. A teacher educator needs to learn how to interpret students' behaviour, how to listen to the voice of the 'other'. Action research is also very important for teacher educators so they can examine their own work'.

From the above it might be inferred that professional development of teacher educators is a rather straightforward process. If so, why is it not more widely discussed in literature? According to Johnson (2013) and O'Dwyer and Atli (2014) professional development is not easy, it takes time and it demands sacrifice. It might not be because teacher educators do not develop professionally, but probably because there are few systematic routes to professional development, and, therefore, little documentation. Engaging in professional development is a mindset; it has to become a habit and eventually an integral part of a person's personality achieved through openness to lifelong learning' (Johnson 2013; Chambers 2014; Turner et al. 2014).

The literature that was studied makes it evident that teacher education must equip student teachers with an effective system for learning that will facilitate their transition into practice and must also integrate research activities with professional education.

If teacher educators are responsible to prepare student teachers to fulfil their roles and competences effectively in schools with diverse learner populations, the question that arises is: *'Where and when do our responsibilities as teacher educators stop?'*

No empirical research could be found to answer the research question. However, professional development of teacher educators is important not only to teacher education, but also to the educational system as a whole and can therefore not be left in a virginal state regarding research and documentation (Smith 2003).

This research aims to fill the gap in literature.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research design was used for this research. Creswell (2009) as well as Clark and Creswell (2014) define qualitative research as multi-method focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. A qualitative research design was suitable for this research as it takes into account the context and the

participants' categories of meaning. It further allows for examining complex issues, is dynamic and researchers can generate explanatory theory about a phenomenon.

The research population comprised of fifty teacher educators. The whole population was used as the research sample. Initially the researchers requested the participants to express their views regarding the research question in writing:

- *'Where and when do our responsibilities as teacher educators stop?'*

After analysing the written responses, focus group interviews were conducted with the participants to gain a deeper understanding of the context and the participants' categories of meaning. A set of predetermined open-ended questions on an interview schedule was developed to guide the researchers during the interviews. Participants were guided and encouraged to share their experiences and views (Maree 2007; Clark and Creswell 2014).

Through, conducting focus group interviews with the participants, the researchers established a relationship with them and also gained their co-operation. The interviews were audio-taped and handwritten notes were used to support the recordings. This assisted in the transcription for the purpose of data analysis (Maree 2007).

The following stages of content analysis were adhered to during the process of data analysis (Creswell 2009; Clark and Creswell 2014):

Stage 1: The data was scanned, sorted and the verbal focus group interviews were transcribed.

Stage 2: The data was read to obtain a general sense and understanding of the overall meaning of the information.

Stage 3: The data was coded. This entails a process where data is organised and clustered into specific themes and categories. The use of multiple coders enhances the trustworthiness and accuracy of the research results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following themes emerged from the data analysis:

Theme 1: Positive Change and Growth in Children's Lives and in the Communities

The majority of the participants argued that the responsibility of teacher educators stop when student teachers have acquired the knowl-

edge and skills to make a positive change in children's lives and in their communities. This finding is in line with the statement of the National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (2013), namely that teachers must be able to deliver the curriculum effectively. However, the finding also supports the argument of Grudnoff (2011), Reynolds et al. (2013), Polikoff (2013), Polikoff and Porter (2014), Stillman (2013) and Seidla et al. (2015) when stating that the implementation of standards and policies should be contextualized in school settings and that teacher education programs should prepare students not only with knowledge and skills but also for the complexities and challenges of teaching in today's schools with diverse learner populations.

One participant stated that:

'They have to respect the power they have to affect positive change and growth in children's lives and the communities'.

Another participant argued that:

'They have to understand that they shape the future of South Africa'.

One of the participants said that:

'I don't want to boast, but if we do our work properly we can change the country in terms of integrity and self-pride. We must train good teachers; it is a calling until your death!'

The remarks of the participants suggest, as is also argued by Talbert-Johnson (2006), Venter (2013), and Seidla et al. (2015), that it is important that student teachers are prepared to align their pedagogy with their learners' and their communities' cultural experiences and needs. Not only do teachers influence their learners' achievement and cognitive development, but they also influence their self-concept and attitudes. Student teachers should understand the larger social context in which they work. Academic and social achievement do not occur in a vacuum and is affected and affects societal structures (Grant and Gilette 2006; Polikoff 2013; Polikoff and Porter 2014; Stillman 2013).

Theme 2: To Be A Role Model Never Ends

The majority of the participants stated that their responsibility to be role models for their students never ends. The finding supports the argument of Loughran (2014), namely that teacher educators must be good models of the kind of teaching that they promote and that they need to invent the pedagogy of teacher education

where problems of practice are central and integrated into on-going work with students. The Department of Higher Education and Training (2011) also requires that newly qualified teachers must have a positive work ethic, display appropriate values and conduct themselves in a manner that befits, enhances and develops the teaching profession. These qualities should be modelled by teacher educators (Mayer 2011; Atli 2014; Hollins et al. 2014). Although, literature mainly focuses on the modelling of good teaching, the participants in this research added the following:

A participant revealed that:

'You are a role model even if they are away for long. Last week Mr X was talking to a group of people when I approached. He immediately dumped his cigarette and when I asked why he said that he will never smoke in front of me because of respect and he was my student. I do not boast, I know my work as teacher educator never stops'.

Another participant said that:

'As a teacher you are on duty 24/7 - even when you meet the kids in the street, mall, restaurant, they must always see you as their role model. Does the same not count for us as lecturers?'

From the above remarks, it seemed that the participants place more value on teacher educators' behaviour than on the modelling of good teaching practices and pedagogy. However, during the interviews all participants explained that they assumed that the modelling of good teaching practices is not negotiable and they did not think it was necessary to mention it.

In contrast to the other participants two participants answered the open-ended questionnaire question as follows:

'Ideally the teacher educator's responsibility continues forever and a day. In practice, however, only few students come back to their lecturers for advice or just to say hello'.

'For that reason one should hope that the lecturer has imparted far more than content knowledge to their students during their years of study. Hopefully the student has picked up on the management style and different teaching and learning methods of various lecturers, and has selected from that to adapt to their own style when teaching. Such a young teacher will prove to have become independent, using his/her own discretion in planning and decision-making, thus meeting the needs of their learners, as well as, the general needs of the education situation of the country as a whole'.

During the interviews, all participants indicated that they would be willing to support students after they have qualified, but confirmed that few ever come back to seek help. This was a statement for which no support or contradiction could be found in the literature that was reviewed.

Theme 3: The Pastoral Role of Teachers is Important

The South African Department of Higher Education and Training requires that all teachers fulfil a community, citizenship and pastoral role (Department of Higher Education and Training 2011). It is specified that 'the educator will practise and promote a critical, committed and ethical attitude towards developing a sense of respect and responsibility towards others and will uphold the Constitution and promote democratic values and practices in schools and society. Furthermore, the educator will display a critical understanding of community and environmental development issues' (Department of Higher Education and Training 2011).

Ben-Peretz et al. (2010) as well as Venter (2013), Breaux (2013) and Stillman 2013 posit that teachers need to be able to look at social phenomena and social practices from various points of view and that teacher educators need to learn how to interpret students' behaviour. According to El-mars (2013) teaching is a noble profession and although it can be rewarding it requires a level of commitment that few other jobs do.

The following responses from participants support the claims made by the above authors:

A participant stated that:

'Social problems, poverty, HIV and general social degradation. There are more demands on the teacher to fulfil his social/pastoral role in the school context'.

Another participant argued that:

'Love, empathy and leadership is needed as they do not get it at their homes. The child's only safe haven is at school and the teacher is the 'father/mother' figure in the child's life'.

The above response supports the 'in loco parentis' rule stating that South African teachers have the responsibility of parents when the child is at school during school hours.

A participant said that:

'It is important to train student teachers whose passion it is because it is not a profession that you do for money. The harm that teachers without passion do is 'child abuse''.

The findings suggest that the participants place a high value on the pastoral role of teachers and it seems that they take responsibility for preparing their students to be able to perform this role. Banks et al. (2005), Polikoff (2013), Stillman (2014) and Seidla et al. (2015) also argued that when teachers use knowledge about the social, cultural and language backgrounds of their learners when planning and implementing instruction, the academic achievement of such learners will increase.

It was surprising to note that two participants responded to the open-ended question in the questionnaire as follows:

One participant indicated that:

'It cannot be expected that teachers solve all the social problems of their schools. But, they must be willing to improve themselves in at least one of the seven roles as stipulated by the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications. They must have a holistic approach to their learners'.

A second participant revealed that:

'The Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications specify seven collective roles that are apart from teaching. This can be followed by teachers if they want to or if they are required to do so'.

However, during the interview these two participants said that all roles are important and that the pastoral role cannot be neglected. The participants supported the requirements set by the South African Department of Higher Education and Training (2011).

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Theme 4: Technological Development

According to the South African Department of Higher Education and Training (2011), newly qualified teachers must have highly developed literacy, numeracy and Information Technology (IT) skills.

Only two participants referred to technological development in their written responses:

One participant indicated that:

'Teacher training institutions must equip students with the newest methods of teaching. South Africa is far behind other countries. The knowledge of a child starts by the teacher'.

Another participant said that:

'Even if technology changes, I think the teachers will never be replaced'.

During the interviews, all the participants agreed that although teachers will never be replaced, teacher educators should equip students with the necessary skills to use technology effectively in the classroom.

The literature that was reviewed revealed that there is an increased focus on the quality of teacher education as well as the quality of teacher educators themselves (Smith 2010; National Education and Evaluation Development Unit 2013; Chambers 2014; Loughran 2014; O'Dwyer and Atli 2014; Turner et al. 2014).Numerous questions are asked about the extent of the responsibility of teacher educators towards their own professional development. During the analysis of the responses to the open-ended questionnaire item: *'Where and when do our responsibilities as teacher educators stop?'* it was noted that none of the respondents referred to their own professional development as one of their responsibilities. The researchers, therefore, decided to end each focus group interview with the following question:

'Do you regard your own professional development as a teacher educator as one of your responsibilities?'

One of the participants responded as follows:

'We have to do an induction course when we start as teacher educators. I have been teaching for many years and have always produced good results. To me, this is a waste of time'.

Another participant said that:

'Good teachers are born, not made. If you are a good teacher, you will be a good teacher educator'.

A few participants indicated that:

'We are prepared to do the induction, but they take it too far. We already know a lot and these people think we know nothing'.

A participant thought that:

'We know how to teach. Rather show how the technology at the university works as I did not have it at school'.

A participant argued as follows:

'We have a heavy workload, but we can teach. Don't waste our time with these extra training sessions'.

All the participants agreed that they are able to educate student teachers and that they will know if there is a need for their own profession-

al development. They stated that they would then ask for assistance. The findings support the statements of Korthagen et al. (2005), Mayer (2011), Chambers (2014), Loughran (2014), O'Dwyer and Atli (2014), and Turner et al. (2014) namely that good teachers often take it for granted that they will be fine teacher educators. Engaging in professional development is a mindset that has to become a habit leading to lifelong learning (Chambers 2014). Phillips and Hatch (1999), Tok (2011), and Hollins et al. (2014) argue that many teachers choose teaching because they like children enjoy challenges and want to make a difference in children's lives. Based on the responses of the participants in this research, the researchers are of the opinion that this might also be true for many teacher educators. However, liking students and wishing to make a difference in their lives do not guarantee quality teacher education.

Although, it would be unreasonable to argue that every teacher educator needs to start from scratch, there is a need that they should transform their perspectives. The researchers wish to confirm the views of Koster et al. (2005), Liston et al. (2008), Smith (2010), Chambers (2014), Hollins et al. (2014), Loughran (2014), O'Dwyer and Atli (2014), Polikoff and Porter (2014), Seidla et al. (2015) and Turner et al. (2014) namely that professional development carries expectations of a need for teacher educators to be able to conceptualize and enact their own professional learning in ways that require careful planning and thoughtful actions. There is an urgent need for an increased focus on the professional development of teacher educators. This would require an understanding of the nature of teacher education in ways that are supported by reflecting on, and responding to, the needs, demands, and expectations of teaching about teaching within the academy.

CONCLUSION

Although teacher education is often regarded as the key to preparing qualified teachers who are able to educate learners for the demands of the twenty-first century, not much attention has been paid to the teacher educators who are responsible for this task. In South Africa all teachers have to fulfil seven collective roles and it is the responsibility of teacher educators to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills to be able to do so. Teacher educators' roles are numerous and diverse.

It is evident that many teacher educators entered this profession because they were good school teachers. The participants in this research indicated that teacher educators are responsible for enabling their students to make a positive change in the lives of their learners and communities. They further stated that the responsibilities of a teacher educator never ends and that teacher educators must be good models of the kind of teaching that they promote to support their students' learning but also the learning of their future learners. It is also important that teacher educators prepare their students to fulfil their pastoral role, to develop a sense of respect and responsibility towards others and to uphold the Constitution and promote democratic values and practices in schools and societies. However, they also indicated that teachers cannot do everything and that their own boundaries must be respected.

It is important to understand the role of the teacher educator in the context of academic work (one with its own field of research and scholarship) as well as an informed knowledge base about learning to teach. Failure to do so would strengthen the situation where many teacher educators enter the profession by chance or because they were good school teachers. This is not sufficient for a career in teacher education.

It is clear that being a teacher educator of quality is not an easy task. It is, therefore, of serious concern that the participants in this research did not place much value on their own professional development. If we are to sustain the teacher education profession and ensure that student teachers are well prepared for their task, we need to consider the responses of the participants in this study. Being a teacher educator should be a career pathway of choice, but then well supported, where teacher educators are well prepared, drawing on a theoretical knowledge base with practical relevance. The researchers supported the view of many of the participants who stated that their responsibility as teacher educators never ends, but want to strongly suggest a rigorous and well sustained development program for beginner teacher educators.

There are many positive role-players in education, whether it is in early childhood development, in formal school education, in higher education as well as in in-service training and life-

long learning at all levels. This can be seen in many initiatives where interventions that are planned and implemented have a positive effect on education, on uplifting communities and supporting learners to achieve their full potential. Education will continue to influence the future. Well qualified teacher educators and teachers who teach with dignity will mould young minds so that our future can be shaped positively.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the findings of this research the following recommendations are made. Teacher education programs should be structured in such way that students are equipped with knowledge and skills as well as the complexities and challenges of teaching in today's schools with diverse learner populations. Student teachers should be able to align their pedagogy with their learners' and their communities' cultural experiences and needs. In order to achieve this, teacher educators should model good teaching practices and pedagogy.

It cannot be claimed that all good teachers will be good teacher educators. Teacher educators should engage in professional development.

Although, it would be unjust to argue that all teacher educators need an equal amount of professional development, all need to be able to conceptualize and enact their own professional learning in ways that require careful planning and thoughtful actions. Teacher educators need to understand the nature of teacher education by reflecting on, and responding to, the needs, demands, and expectations of teaching about teaching within the academy. This would entail an understanding of the role of the teacher educator in the context of academic work, one with its own field of research and scholarship, as well as an informed knowledge base about learning to teach.

Although, being a teacher educator should be a career pathway of choice, it should be well supported by drawing on a theoretical knowledge base with practical relevance.

The researchers hope that this research will draw attention to the importance of the professional development of teacher educators. Quality teacher education could be the catalyst towards quality education in South African schools.

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