

Exploring Student Teachers' Experiences of the Concept Quality Education and Quality Instruction at a South African University

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ABSTRACT This study sought to establish university students' experiences on the quality of education received from lectures. Quality of education involves acquisition of pedagogical content knowledge, personal characteristics of lecturers, and teaching and assessment strategies practices in the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The study adopted an interpretive study following a qualitative approach. It made use of a case study design with a purposive sample of fifteen Fourth year Bachelor of Education students. Data were collected using focus group interviews with participating students. Content analysis was used to analyse data through emerging themes. Students argued that most lecturers employed by the university were good quality lecturers while some were considered poor quality. Students categorized poor quality lecturers as inexperienced and those who missed lectures attending conferences or on sabbatical leaves. Students considered an outstanding lecturer as a fully qualified person who is always on time and available for lectures and consultations. The results reveal that students have acquired sound pedagogical content knowledge from the university and lecturers employed various assessment strategies which challenged students' higher order thinking abilities. The usefulness of the teaching practice component was also confirmed though poor organisation of teaching practice was condemned. The study concludes that initial training received by students at UKZN is of high quality and recommends that more attention should be placed on improving teaching practice supervision.

INTRODUCTION

Teachers are the most crucial players in improving the quality of education by enabling students to learn knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. Teacher training institutions are tasked with the preparation of teachers who are able to teach. But they are often blamed for the production of unfit teachers not equipped for the realities of the classroom (Fullan 2007). Fleisch (2007) reveals that teachers in South Africa have low levels of conceptual knowledge, and such knowledge is the critical factors that affect the quality of the teacher.

The problem of poor teacher education is traced back to the apartheid education system

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where teachers were regarded as transmitters of pre-packed knowledge (Samuel 2008). The majority of South Africans received second hand education, Bantu Education (Ashton 2008). The change of curriculum in 1999 was aimed at providing quality education for all South Africans. One main challenge of the new curriculum was the quality of teachers. Teachers were not able to implement the excellent ideas envisaged by the government. Teachers were not involved in curriculum development and were not adequately trained prior to implementation with the skills of implementing new innovation (Jansen 2001; Harley and Wedekind 2004). It took a while for government to attend to the in-service training of teachers as it blamed laziness of teachers, incompetence of principals and managers running other businesses and delays by book suppliers (Spren 2004). The government finally realized that the quality of teachers to implement the curriculum was a hindrance for quality education. The curriculum has been reviewed several times since its introduction. The system has gone through phases of Curriculum 2005 (C2005), Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS), National Curriculum Statement (NCS), and Current Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS). The participation of teachers has increased, and more workshops for subject specific in-service training are conducted. The chal-

lenge that remains is for teacher training institutions to produce appropriate and relevant human resources to handle the tasks ahead of them.

South Africa needs quality teachers to implement “the bold and imaginative set of education policies – admired across the world” (Morrow 2007: 6). Goal 4 of Action Plan 2014 aims to increase the number of Grade 12 graduates eligible for Bachelors’ programme at universities. To achieve such goals, the country requires quality teachers. It is the mandate and responsibility of teacher institutions to produce such quality teachers.

The University of KwaZulu-Natal and other institutions are faced with the challenge of producing teachers who would be able to teach in any school. The restructuring of institutions of higher education in the country, where universities, colleges and technikons were merged, is one of the weapons intended to equip institutions to face the challenge of providing effective education. UKZN is also a result of the change as it arose from the merger according to Amin and Ramrathan (2009):

Prior to the merger, a former college of education was incorporated into the historically advantaged institution.... The merged faculty of education was a result of three different institutions with different teacher education programmes underpinned by different theoretical foundations. The teacher education qualification it offered was also a merger of these differences resulting in some matchers and some mismatches with respect to ideological, philosophical, sociological and cultural underpinnings of teacher education. (p.71)

The faculty of education that resulted from the merger of the three institutions is housed at Edgewood campus. This is where most teachers for the province of KwaZulu-Natal are trained.

The Concept ‘Quality’

The concept of quality is divided into four different approaches called humanist approach, behaviourist approach, critical approach and indigenous approach (UNESCO 2004). In the humanist approach, quality is interpreted as the extent to which students translate learning into social action (Mutemeri 2010). Students should be seen ploughing back to the society after going through training. Behaviourist approach aims to control learners’ behaviour to specific ends,

with quality measured in precise, incremental learning terms (Mutemeri 2010). Whereas, quality education in which social change is prompted, critical analysis of social power relations is encouraged and active participation of students in the design of their learning are ensured is called critical approach (Mutemeri 2010). This is where students are emancipated to carry out change.

The four approaches to quality of education are crucial in producing a holistic learner that will best serve the community. To provide quality education, institutions need to develop relevant courses to provide learners with skills, attitudes and knowledge required to solve problems. This quality could also reflect itself in the form of uniformity or equality which is referred to as quality as consistency. Mutemeri (2010) refers to quality as consistency as quality that requires equitable experiences, in which schools and classrooms provide students with consistent experiences across the system.

One strategy used to solicit experiences of students is the evaluation of student’s satisfaction of the education they are receiving (Tight 2003). This includes focusing on assessing the validity of course evaluation techniques, with a view to designing more effective ones and understanding what constitutes quality or satisfaction for the students. In doing so, institutions ensure active participation of students in the design of their learning experiences to make programmes that are relevant to the individuals as well as to the community (Strydom and Menz 2010).

Quality of Lecturers

Du Plessis et al. (2007) argue that low quality candidates from matriculation apply for the teaching profession. The matriculation graduates only consider teaching when they cannot make it to other professions (Hargreaves 2000). Consequently, teaching attracts the least qualified graduates who eventually become student teachers. These student teachers “are prepared by the least accomplished professors” in the lowest quality programmes and eventually become the low quality lecturers who proliferate the endless cycle (Levine 2006: 26; The walking bear: n.d.). Contrary to that, the quality of applicants has improved tremendously recently. In 2011 UKZN had more than 14900 applicants for the 2012 B.Ed

degrees only and these were definitely not the least qualified matriculates.

Another factor that affects the quality of lecturers is that most skilled teachers are promoted to work in offices and those still in the teaching profession are assigned to teach mature and independent students while the least skilled teachers are assigned to teach those who need sophisticated and diagnostic practice (Darling-Hammond 2006). The skilled professors are assigned to supervise postgraduate students while undergraduates are taught by lecturers with low qualifications (Pike and Kuh 2005). Hence, Levine (2006:87) warns that the skilled professors should realize that "they are teachers of teachers first and scholars second."

Quality teachers are not only expected to have sound knowledge of child psychology, but must also have appropriate personal characteristics related to conduct, appearance and leadership skills (Piek and Mahlangu 1990). An outstanding teacher has invitational personality style, walks alongside students and understands that he is not an expert but can learn from students (Stohlman 2009). In this case, the teacher considers the opinions of students, acknowledges and tries to understand their point of view (Van Heerden et al. 2001).

Cohen et al. (2004) warn that teachers should behave like teachers, not as equals to students. As a teacher, one has to keep order in the class which will be challenging if teachers behave like students. Again, a quality teacher plans what to teach and what strategies to use, and does not teach out of the book only (Cohen et al. 2004; Stohlman 2009).

Teaching Methods

Teaching methods are strategies teachers use to present subject matter. They include: lecturing, textbook method, problem-solving, discussion and some basic didactical ground methods (Piek and Mahlangu 1990; Barnett 1992).

Some methods like textbook method and lecturing encourage passive and one-way learning that is least successful because they deliver retention of 5 -10% (Cohen et al. 2004). Learning that involves multiple channels of communications and where learners apply and teach each other delivers a high level of retention (Cohen et al. 2004).

Methods that produce quality learning in which there is high level of retention demand hard work and commitment from teachers. Beginning and inexperienced teachers always find it difficult and challenging to implement the strategies effectively and they also do not know how to teach children with special needs (Darling-Hammond 2006). Sometimes conditions of schools make it impossible to implement effective methods like in a lecture theatre to get 200 students to discuss and exchange their understandings (Trigwell and Prosser 1997). In this case, a teacher is forced to use a lecture-centred method which is less effective.

Teaching and Learning Resources: Teaching and learning resources are materials, facilities, equipment, infrastructure, and apparatus that a teacher uses to present subject matter. It is used to meet an educational need (Vanides 2011). Resources can be in a form of software programmes or hardware. They are classified into still visual media, sound media and community resources. Still visual media resources include; blackboard, wall charts, photographs, posters, flannel boards, magnetic boards, flip charts and overhead projectors. Sound media refers to radio and tape recorder, which link to audio-visual resources such as television (Cohen et al. 2004).

Assessment

Assessment is the process of providing feedback of student learning and it is helpful when it promotes the professional growth of learners. Assessment is a crucial element of teacher education that contributes to quality of education. Therefore, every student should be equipped with assessment strategies before practicing teaching. It helps teachers to know what, how much and how well their students are learning (Angelo and Cross 1993). Poor or lack of assessment can result in absence of learning. When student's learning is simply audited not assessed, students cannot and do not improve (Wiggins 1998). In order to obtain useful information from the results of assessment, examiners should consider why they assess, what to assess, how to assess, how to interpret, and how to respond (Rowntree 1987).

Teaching Practice

Teaching practice can be defined as teaching by a student under the supervision of an

experienced teacher (Peker 2009). Experienced teachers are lecturers from the university, and mentor teachers who are a subject teacher at the host school. Teaching practice is part of the professional training of an undergraduate student. The student spends time in a school teaching with some guidance from school staff member in order to gain classroom experience (Mugabo 2006).

There is also a mini teaching practice called micro-teaching. Micro-teaching is a training concept that is applied at various pre-service professional development programmes of teachers (Piek and Mahlangu 1990). It is a short but complete lesson conducted in a small class by trainee teachers (Peker 2009). In micro-teaching the scope of the lesson is narrowed and the student only teaches a few pupils or fellow students instead of a normal class (Machando and Botnarescue 2005).

Student Teachers' Experiences of Teaching Practice

Both positive and negative students' experiences have been identified from literature. The positive experiences seem to supersede the negative experiences where students recognize and appreciate the benefits of teaching practice such as importance of lesson preparation and decrease of teaching anxiety (Peker 2009). Students regard campus-based teaching practice as "a valuable experience" (Amin and Ramrathan 2009:75). There were a few negative experiences reported by students from the literature. The majority of students indicated that teaching practice assessment was not helpful because the mark was not a true reflection of their performance (Zindi 2003).

Assessment in Teaching Practice

A teaching practice assessment mark comprises the score from the university supervisor and the mark awarded by the mentor teacher. Supervisors and mentors do not only assess students on professional skills but they also provide educational experience and guidance to help students' development (Mugabo 2006). According to Chireshe and Chireshe (2010), there is no agreement between mentor's mark and supervisor's mark. Hence, students consider teaching practice marks as not a true reflection of their

performance and as such not helpful. Students claim that there is a lot of subjectivity during assessment; assessors only focus on students' weaknesses not appraising them; supervisors have insufficient time to assess students effectively and are always in hurry with their overloaded timetables (Zindi 2003).

METHODOLOGY

Research Orientation

The paradigm that informed this study was interpretive which is directed towards gaining understanding of individuals within their own interpretations (Babbie 2004). The most appropriate methods of data production associated with interpretive paradigm are interviews and observations where the "central endeavour is to understand the subjective world of human experience", to get inside the person and understand from within and interpretations of the world around individuals (Cohen et al. 2007: 21).

The interpretive paradigm has a weakness of not being able to generalize findings of research studied. But it is useful as the information obtained is rich and detailed because it focuses on the full complexity of human sense making (Lowe 2007).

Research Design

The research was a case study of students' experiences of quality of education offered at UKZN. A case study is an in-depth study of one particular case such as a person, group of people, school, a community, movement or geographical unit (Neuman 2006). The case in this study is quality of initial teacher education provide2d by UKZN. The University provides teacher education for all levels, that is, grades R to 12 and lecturers for tertiary institutions, but this study focuses on teachers for grades R to 12. The focus in particular is fourth year students in initial teacher training, to teach grades R to 12. Most case studies use varied data collection methods such as observations, interviews, maps, photos, newspapers, documents and records on a single case (Neuman 2006). The researcher in this study is aiming to capture reality of the participants' lived experiences (Cohen et al. 2007) about teacher education offered at UKZN. It aims to describe what it is like to be a student at the teacher education institution such as UKZN (Bertram 2004).

Data Collection Instruments

The methods of data collection in qualitative design usually favour mostly interviews and observations whereby there is a lot of text and data collected are in the form of words (Festing-er 2005; Marczyk et al. 2007). The method of data production used in this study was focus group interviews where participants were sharing their experiences of quality of education. Focus group interviews is "contrived setting, bringing together a specifically chosen sector of the population to discuss a particular given theme or topic (Cohen et al. 2007: 377). From discussions of participants, the researcher obtained detailed understanding of how students interpret the quality of education obtained from UKZN (Chang 2006; Slavin 2007).

In a focus group discussion, participants can hear the views of others and consider their own views accordingly (Fraenkel and Wallen 2008). Therefore, it has the possibility of yielding a collective view rather than that of an individual (Cohen et al. 2007). But with good interview skills, it creates a truthful conversation that addresses, in depth, the issue of teacher quality at UKZN in order to "elicit a range of feelings, opinions, and ideas; understand differences in perspectives; uncover and provide insight into specific factors that influence opinions; seek ideas that emerge from the group" (Bloomberg and Volpe 2008: 84). In these focus group interviews, open-ended questions were used as they "permit a free response from the subject rather than restricting the participant to a choice from stated alternatives" (Vithal and Jansen 1997: 22).

Sampling

There were 578 fourth year students registered for the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) course at UKZN in different phases for the year 2011 (student records). The phases were Early Childhood Development (ECD), Further Education and Training (FET), Foundation and Intermediate (F and I), Intermediate and Senior (I and S), and Senior and FET (S and FET). Table 1 shows the information in each phase:

The participants were drawn from Foundation and Intermediate (F and I) phases. From 66 students registered with UKZN in 2011, 16 were Blacks, 38 Indians, 9 were Whites, 3 were coloureds. The diverse student community at

Table 1: UKZN 4th year BEd students registered in 2011

<i>Phase</i>	<i>Number of BEd students per phase</i>
ECD	18
FET	188
F and I	66
I and S	109
S and FET	197
Total	578

UKZN can have different experiences regarding education provision. Therefore, a representation from different ethnic groups was observed to cater for wide experiences. The information is also presented in Table 2.

Table 2: 2011 4th year BEd students per ethnic group

<i>Ethnic group</i>	<i>No. of students registered</i>
Black	16
Indians	38
Whites	9
Coloureds	3
Total	66

The number of participants in a focus group interview varies as far as a number of researchers are concerned. Cohen et al. (2007) propose 4 to 12 members while Neuman (2006) says 6 to 12 participants, and McMillan and Schumacher (2010) suggest the range of 8 to 12 members. For this particular research, 24 students were selected to participate in focus groups interviews. Purposive sampling has been used to select students for the study. Henning (2004: 71) refers to purposive sampling as sampling that "looks for people who fit the criteria of desirable participants". The sample took into account different racial groups represented in this university. There were four groups of six students each selected such that ethnic groups were represented as illustrated in Table 3.

Of the 24 students who participated, there were four students who were repeating 4th year.

Table 3: Ethnic groups representation in focus groups

<i>Focus group</i>	<i>Blacks</i>	<i>Whites</i>	<i>Indians</i>	<i>Coloureds</i>	<i>Total</i>
A	2	0	4	0	6
B	2	1	2	1	6
C	2	2	2	0	6
D	2	1	2	1	6
Total	8	4	10	2	24

This is because they did not do some modules for different reasons and came back specifically for them. Pseudonyms were used to identify all participants. Table 4 shows information about different groups:

Table 4: Participants who attended interviews

<i>Group</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Participants</i>
A	16/04/2011	3
B	29/04/2011	3
C	06/05/2011	4
D	07/05/2011	3

The table shows the participants who honoured the invitation. In each group, about half of the participants invited for the interviews attended. The choice of the number of participants is in line with Neuman (2006) who argues that a typical focus group study consists of four to six separate groups. The selection of participants was done such that they formed a homogeneous group with similar background in education at the same level of study, in that they were all 4th year students at UKZN. The selection also considered the representation of males and females. Each focus group had at least two females and there was no group which was homogeneous in terms of gender (Neuman 2006).

In each of the four groups, both international and local students were represented. A trained moderator is usually chosen to facilitate discussions by posing initial and periodic questions (Mcmillan and Schumacher 2010) but in this study, due to the inaccessibility of such moderator, the facilitation was done by the researcher. He performed the tasks of both facilitation and recording and used a tape recorder for recording purposes.

Ethical Considerations

All participants were informed about the purpose of research and their freedom to or not to participate. They were also informed that they were free to withdraw from participation at any time without giving reasons for withdrawal. This was communicated to them both verbally and in writing. The information sheet was given to each participant to read before undertaking any activity. Permission was also requested for the use of audio tape recorder during interviews. Before each interview session, participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. In this

case participants were promised protection of their identities.

Trustworthy

Trustworthiness mainly apply to qualitative research and is categorised into dependability, confirmability, confirmability, credibility and transferability. Lincoln (1985) posits that dependability and confirmability are achieved through the use of audit trails. As far as credibility is concerned, one way of checking the credibility is what is called member check where data is tested with members of the participating groups from whom the data were originally collected (Lincoln 1985). In this study, the transcripts were taken four of the participants to check the authenticity of data. On the issue of transferability, this study is a qualitative study and cannot yield numerical, quantifiable and generalizable data (Cohen et al. 2007) since the findings obtained from this study are specific to UKZN and cannot be generalized to wider populations (Scott and Morrison 2006) such as other universities in the country. According to Lincoln (1985), it is impossible for a researcher to know whether or not his data transferable.

RESULTS

The results in this study are organised according to the themes that emerged from the research findings. These were used to coin the subheadings in this section. Also, the real names of participants are not used in any section. Participants' anonymity has been observed and the names that are used in this section are not those of the participants and are not related by all means.

Teaching Methods/Strategies

Student teachers (students) were asked what teaching methods were used mostly by lecturers. They revealed that the common methods are lecture and reading. In lecture method, participants claimed that lecturers talked or went through the course pack materials while they were expected to write notes on exercise books. In reading, students claim that some lecturers expected them to read *the course pack* and discuss them during lecture period. One participant noted the following:

Lectures should not comprise of notes from the reading material (course pack), as this is also a waste of time as we can read these. Perhaps explanation of certain terminologies is relevant but not a replica of what's in the notes. (Mamokuena, Interview, 16/04/2011).

There were less common teaching methods mentioned such as guest lecturers who were invited to teach on topics of their respective areas of specialization. One student said: *Some lecturers did arrange for guest lecturers who are experts in their field to enlighten us further on policy issues etc. This was beneficial to us as future educators as we got in-depth knowledge of our rights and responsibilities* (Ntjongola, Interview 6/05/2011).

On another occasion Mamokuena (16/04/2011) observed that *"Group discussions that we are exposed in the lectures will enable us to conduct our lessons using similar methods to teach"*.

On one hand, some students supported the use of lecture method at the university. They argue that lecture method is appropriate in large classes and help to cover the syllabus on time and some students considered teaching methods relevant and useful to them as teacher education students. Nun (16/04/2011) noted that: *We can use some of these methods in our classroom next year.* This was also supported by Ntjongola (06/05/2011) who stated that *"Group discussion and group work that we are exposed in the class will enable us to conduct our lessons using similar methods to teach.* To justify their claim, students provided some reasons. They indicated that transparencies can save time in class over chalkboards, since a set of transparencies on one topic can be used repeatedly in many years and even during revision prior to tests and examinations. They also alluded to the skills they have acquired from observing lecturers when handling group discussions. They argue that this has encouraged them to develop social skills in dealing with their learners.

On the other hand, other students considered the lecture method useless and waste of time and this affected their learning. Palesa (29/04/2011) argued that *Content was valuable but the presentation was very uninteresting.* This was echoed by Slindile (07/05/2011) who lamented that *I did not enjoy the manner in which lectures are presented, I felt as if I had learnt nothing, I learnt more by researching.*

Therefore, to remedy the situation, students recommended variation. *Some lecture mode; chalk and talk and transparencies are okay but not every lecture. They should not be monotonous and difficult to understand* (Siya, Interview, 7/05/2011).

Recommended Delivery Methods

When students were asked to recommend the best ways of teaching, they suggested a number of different strategies. The majority recommended: field trips; PowerPoint presentations; group work and class discussions. A few students suggested chalk and talk method with the use of transparencies.

Some students suggested that teaching methods should be varied to create and capture the attention of learners. One participant claimed that:

Lecture modes must be varied to create and capture the learners. Field trips; PowerPoint presentations; group work; class discussions to be done must be told well in advance for students to prepare well especially if we are being awarded marks for this work (Siya, Interview, 7/05/2011).

One student suggested that lecturers should not discuss course packs in class since they can go through them without guidance from lecturers. She continued by saying:

Lectures should not comprise of notes from the reading materials, as this is a waste of time as we can read these. Perhaps explanation of certain terminologies is relevant but not a replica of what's in the notes (Mamokuena, Interview, 16/04/2011).

However they recommended that lecturers should only explain relevant terminologies, highlight key issues and provide personal experiences. *Points can be highlighted and examples from personal experiences must be related to the discussion to make the lecture more personal, interesting and captivating* (Mamokuena, Interview, 16/04/2011)..

Furthermore, students recommended that there should be time allocated for revision after lectures in order to consolidate issues discussed in class. Most of them complained about the accents of some lecturers which makes it difficult for them to understand their teaching.

Effective Teaching

There were positive and negative responses on the question of quality of teaching that students received. One participant stated that: *“some (lectures) were outstanding as the lecturers explained many new concepts and encouraged students to contribute. Some were hands-on, interactive where we were engaging in the relevant discussions with case studies and analysis”* (Palesa, Interview, 29/04/2011).

Some responses indicated bad organization and poor preparation in some modules. For example, Shini (29/04/2011) noted that *“Some lectures were awful. There was no coherence in some modules. Some content of modules have been repeated in other modules which is a waste of time and money and an insult to my intelligence”*.

In addition, there was a claim that course packs were of low quality as some pages were missing. Slindile elaborated as follows:

More care must be taken when lecture notes are being photocopied as some notes are cut off and we cannot read them. We are paying for notes but some course packs had the page numbers mixed and did not follow a sequence. We had to copy these notes from the library. This causes inconvenience to us. “If you want help making notes please ask us, we will be more than willing to help to compile it properly. If you decided to make such a thick course pack then make sure that all the notes are relevant instead of still asking us to photocopy in the library. This costs money (7/05/2011)

Quality of Lecturers/ Teachers

When asked about their expectation from lecturers as far as lecturing is concerned, students disclosed that they prefer to be taught by good quality lecturers. One participant noted that: *“Some lecturers are excellent in their jobs but this is not true for all lecturers. The range can be described from excellent to very weak”* (Palesa, interview, 29/04/2011). Students described a good quality lecturer as one who is up to date with information and with changes taking place concerning education locally and globally. They therefore, recommended that lecturers should be committed and well prepared to teach. As one student, stated: *“Some lecturers are well prepared and very well informed yet others are*

there to waste time and do not stay for the full duration of the lecture, they must be well prepared in order to pass this valuable trait to us as future educators (Leshoboro, Interview, 16/04/2011).

There were some lecturers who were considered weak by participants. They argued that some lecturers were not fit to teach them, as one participant said: *However, over the four years we did have some lecturers who really need to be reassessed or checked prior to being employed as it is unfair to us* (Siya, Interview, 7/05/2011).

The argument of students in this case is three-fold: firstly, they maintained that there were those lecturers who did not know how to teach. Thabo said *some lectures were awful, are unable to lecture”* (Thabo, Interview, 29/04/2011) indicating that lecturers who presented such lectures were not able to pass information to them. One participant noted that *“the bad performance of lecturers usually leads to strikes or protests in order for the lecturer to be removed which results in a waste of valuable time and resources* (Taelo 16/04/2011). Hence one participant recommended that all lecturers should have taught in a school for some years to acquire teaching experience as educators before joining the university. This was noted by Ashraf (29/04/2011) as follows:

All lecturers must be first and foremost a teacher who taught in a school for many years to be able to share their first hand experiences with us as we train to become educators. Honours students (as tutors) or lecturers who have not taught at school level will not have the tried and tested experience to make us better teachers when we go out into the field because they are unable to answer when we ask them some questions relating to the module and its link to the school set up. Some of these tutors have no idea of the policy documents and often confuses us (Ashraf, Interview, 29/04/2011).

Secondly, some students claimed that there were lecturers who did not have experience and were always away on programmes to undergo development on how to lecture in their modules. One participant justified the argument by saying:

when lecturers are employed and still have to undergo development to lecture in their modules so how were they selected and what are the criteria that were used to choose them because

we suffer the consequences when they are often out on development programmes (Siya, Interview, 7/05/2011).

Siya further recommended that experienced and qualified lecturers should be employed because students suffer when inexperienced lecturers skip classes to attend staff development programmes.

Thirdly, students claimed that some lecturers missed classes due to conference attendance. This made lecturers unavailable for lectures and consultations when students required clarity on issues concerning assignments and examinations. In this case students were either left unattended or with unqualified lecturers, such as honours students employed to stand in for professors. Siya, interview, (7/05/2011) said: lecturers are always out on *conferences or sabbaticals and not available on their specified dates for consultation and this made it difficult when we required clarity on issues of assignments and examinations and other related issues.*

Data shows that some of the lecturers employed by the university are highly qualified as observed by Refuoe (29/04/2011) that *some lecturers have doctorates ...*, but the problem was the allocation of classes, monitoring of class attendance and availability of lecturers for consultations. Students suggested that lecturers on contract should be available for revision rather than terminating their contracts as soon as lectures are over. This was suggested by Sam (7/05/2011) thus:

Most lecturers it seems are on contract based, as they are not available as soon as lectures are over. This makes it extremely difficult for us to clarify issues and it is very frustrating when we are stressed out during examinations and not to have the lecturer who lectured to us around to reassure us and clarify concepts (Sam, Interview, 7/05/2011).

Students were also asked to give characteristics of an outstanding lecturer. One participant stated that:

Fully qualified in the teaching profession as some lecturers have doctorates ...They have no people's skills and often embarrass and scream at us when things can be resolved in a better way. Skills in handling teenagers and students must be a pre-requisite as well (Refuoe, interview, 29/04/2011).

The characteristics that emerged from students include: fully qualified in education, con-

flict resolution, caring, approachable, listens to students' gripes, skills in handling teenagers, an expert in his/her field.

Some lecturers especially teaching practice supervisors are allocated subjects which are not areas of their specialization. One participant noted that a supervisor said: *I don't know what to do as I am not trained in this field* (Ashraf, interview, 29/04/2011). In this case a student did not get help as both supervisor and mentor did not know what to do.

Teaching and Learning Resources

The teaching and learning resources that were used in the University, according to students were transparencies, chalkboards and PowerPoint presentations. These were noted by participants as follows:

We are exposed to PowerPoint presentations and these can be used depending on the schools that we are placed in. Transparencies could be used again during revision prior to tests and examinations. Very few lecturers use PowerPoint presentation. Chalk and talk and transparencies are okay but not every lecture (Leshoboro 16/04/2011; Shini 29/04/2011).

Development of Skills

Campus Based Skills Development

Students were asked to discuss components of their programme that focused on development of teaching skills. Three categories emerged from the discussion. They were: modules that focused on teaching methods, campus based teaching practice that was offered when they were in first year, and teaching practice which they did from second year to fourth year.

A student stated that modules on teaching methods assisted them with teaching strategies and use of resource materials. She further stated that they gained some insights into theories of education including child psychology. Again, they experienced and acquired skills on how to handle discussions and group works from observing lecturers. Another participant elaborated that:

Group discussion and work that we are exposed in the lectures will enable us to conduct our lessons using similar methods to teach. It will be useful to develop social skills in our

learners as we observe and work in groups and watch how the lecturer guides and steers the group discussion (Ntjongola, 06/05/2011).

Students commented that lecturers went into great depth explaining the NCS documents and how lessons were developed using assessment standards and learning outcomes. They were also exposed to concepts that needed to be taught in schools. One participant said: *Some lecturers go into great depth explaining the NCS documents and how lessons are developed using the assessment standards and the learning outcomes* (Ntene, interview, 6/5/2011).

On the question of the best learning opportunities that lecturers have provided for them, they mentioned major assignments, project work and construction of resources. One student specifically said:

Major assignments that required in-depth research helped us to get a deeper understanding of policies and other things that are relevant to students in teacher education. Project work that entailed visiting and interviewing school personals. Assignments that deals with critical review of articles helps us to focus on issues of this nature where scenarios are set for us to analyse and design lessons for them (Mveli, Interview, 6/05/2011).

They also considered construction of resources as helpful because it gave them an opportunity to create and develop their own teaching materials which they hope to continue developing when they are out in schools teaching. Therefore, the study shows that students found major assignments, project work and construction of resources to be productive in their learning progress.

There were some comments about the campus based teaching practice. One participant gave its benefits thus: *A first year programme called mini micro assists us with planning and presenting lessons at Campus. This programme assists us with developing confidence when we are really placed in a classroom situation* (Ashraf, Interview, 29/04/2011), Interview, 29/04/2011). Another student commented on limitations of campus based teaching practice as follows:

Although the mini micro module does provide us with an opportunity to teach and experience planning and preparation of lessons we find that it is not sufficient as it expects us to plan lessons without being competent in using the NCS documents and making an attempt at

working with assessment standards and learning outcomes as we had not engaged with that document (Refuoe, Interview, 29/04/2011).

Besides lack of competence in using NCS documents, another student noted that:

There are about 12 students in each class and with us having to prepare and teach two lessons each of the time is too short and often we found it rushed and not much opportunity to really come to grips with the real teaching situation. Perhaps a longer period where one learner presents the entire lesson and the remainder of the students critically evaluate it and in this way we all will learn and develop confidence quickly (Taelo, Interview, 16/04/2011).

Alternatively, students recommended an introduction of a new module where students should be taken through processes of implementing assessment standards, learning outcomes and critical outcomes for the relevant learning areas. A student stated that:

A special module should be created for in depth training of this aspect (teaching) since this is the reason for us being at this institution. Definitely more focus must be placed on the teaching aspects as sometimes we are fed with so much theory and not much practical experience (Leshoboro, 16/04/2011).

The student continued by suggesting that:

Each student should be given a specific concept to teach and evaluate for development purposes. We should be required to plan lessons for each learning area and have it evaluated and discussed in a lecture to look at strengths and weaknesses. All modules should include a lesson plan development into their programme to make us confident in planning and teaching (Leshoboro, 16/04/2011).

School Based Learning/Teaching Practice

Teaching practice sessions are attended in August for a period of about four weeks by students in second, third and fourth years. The sessions assisted students to develop teaching skills. Students raised some aspects of teaching that are not taught at university. One student said: *We gained first-hand experience of being in a real classroom situation and benefited from being exposed to all aspects of school work such as marking of registers, collection of funds, extra-curricular activities etc* (Hlophogile, interview, 06/05/2011).

Teaching Practice Organization

On the organization of practice teaching, one student claimed that:

The time chosen for teaching practice- July to August of each year does not allow us to experience the beginning of a year programme. Learners are settled in at this part of the year and we just fit in. Perhaps there should be a rotation of when we go to schools to begin with teaching practice as this will give us more experience in handling the class at different times of the year. Even the concepts being taught seems to be the same at that time of the year (Slindile, interview, 7/5/2011).

The point made by Slindile is that teaching schedule did not change much and as a result similar concepts were being taught at that particular time of the year. Hence, students did not gain experience of teaching variety of concepts.

Teaching Practice Supervision

The study shows that there were some supervisors who were committed to their work and some were not that committed. This is noted by Palesa:

With due respect to some contract staff, others have visited us for the minimum number of times and have often stayed in class for very short periods whereas some committed lecturers stay the whole duration and then discuss our report and guide us with our shortcomings and also prepare us for the next lesson. Then we, who are placed under the non committed supervisors, suffer or are prevented from developing as well as those who are advantaged to have the good supervisors. Specialist lecturers only should visit students who are specialising in certain learning areas (29/04/2011)..

Another participant also noted that: *Some lecturers do assist but I think that they have too many students to visit and they seem to be rushing from one school to another to make sure that they complete their visits (Ntene, interview, 6/5/2011).* This issue also came up from Siya (7/05/2011):

Some of the supervisors that we had who supervised us in the intermediate and FET phases seemed to be in a great hurry to complete their work and often spent too little time and often did not give any guidance. This places some of the students at a disadvantage as they

are not assisted to develop and progress from year to year (Siya, interview, 7/05/2011)..

Some supervisors did not have any clue of what they were supposed to do as witnessed by one participant:

Sometimes we were confronted with tutors who came to schools to supervise our work and clueless as to what's expected of us. The one year some of us had non-specialist supervisors and they were completely at a loss and asking us to do all the wrong things from what we learnt. Lecturers who have lectured to us should be the ones to "crit" us as they will know what to expect of us (Mamokuena, interview, 16/04/2011).

Thabo (29/04/2011) also noted a challenge that is closely related to the lack of assistance during supervision. He stated that:

...there are others (lecturers) who don't know anything about outcomes, assessment standards and integration of learning areas and often confuse us. This is not good as we in our first year need proper guidance to know how to work with these documents (Thabo, interview, 29/04/2011).

The other challenge students faced was of being supervised by lecturers they did not know and were meeting for the first time. One participant complained that:

In the other phases we often get a supervisor who we have never met and some of them are clueless as to what's expected of us. This is not fair to us as we are already stressed out at new environments and now we get no help from these strangers (Mveli, interview, 6/05/2011).

Another student claimed that some educators (mentor teachers) in schools in which they were practising were not helpful. Most educators took teaching practice period as a time for them to rest and leave student teachers to teach by themselves in their classes. He illustrated this by saying:

Some of the rural and semi rural schools have educators who think that when we as students arrive it is time for a holiday for them. They do not assist us at all. They tell us that we are coming from a University and we should know everything (Ntene, interview, 6/5/2011).

Suggestions for the Improvement of Teaching Practice

Students were asked to give their opinion on how practice teaching could be made more effective in the development of teaching skills. Their recommendations are listed below:

- The educators (mentor teachers) should be trained on how to assist and guide student teachers.
- Schools on which students do their teaching practice should be chosen carefully since some schools were not well run and students did not benefit.
- The university should introduce a three year course and the fourth year should be for teaching practice at schools to get better understanding of the workings of the school.
- Students can go out for one day in a week initially and when they return to the university they could discuss their experiences and work on their problem areas.
- Teaching practice assessment should be done by lecturers who have lectured to students since they will know what to expect of them not mentors.
- The university should introduce a new module for in-depth training of teaching practice since this is the most important part of education which links theory to practical experiences.
- The most suitable supervisors should be chosen to assess student teachers' work and to guide them in their teaching practice. Non-specialists lecturers often confuse students and allocate low marks (composite list from Leshoboro, 16/04/2011; Mamokuena, 16/04/2011; Shini, 29/04/2011; Palesa, 29/04/2011).

Knowledge

Knowledge Competence

Regarding the question on the area in which they are most competent, Taelo (16/04/2011) stated that: *We think that we are somewhat confident in our own specialization field but not as much as we would have liked.* Another student pointed out that: *We are familiar with policies and regulations but these often change so we will have to adapt as we go along* (Nun, interview, 16/04/2011). Another participant noted:

We have covered sufficient grounds on discipline at schools, school policies; reading problems; some childhood diseases, some First Aid knowledge; NCS document; lesson plans but as final year students, we are still not yet confident to go out into a classroom and work comfortably on our own (Sam, interview, 7/05/2011).

Knowledge Relevant to Secondary Schools

Students were asked to discuss knowledge areas that contribute more to classroom practice. One participant listed the following: *I think...our field of specialisation; policies relating to school; the NCS document; lesson plans* (Mamokuena, interview, 16/04/2011). Another student said: *Professional studies which gives us insight into classroom situations* (Shini, interview, 29/04/2011).

The responses provided by students addressed almost all the modules in the university with the exception of Educational Studies module. The exclusion of Educational Studies module was explained by one participant when addressing the issue of less important knowledge. Mei (06/05/2011) noted: *Education studies 420 although relevant to education is too vast for a short term and perhaps need to be stretched over two terms. The assignments are too demanding* (Mei, interview, 06/05/2011)

Another student also addressing the issue of less important knowledge suggested that since some concepts change regularly (policies), they could just be introduced to them and they will read and update their knowledge. They might not be discussed in details. He said: *Since education is dynamic it will always be changing so for us to really learn all the policy requirements I feel could be done superficially and we will master these when we are in schools* (Ashraf, interview, 29/04/2011).

Suggestions for Improvement on Knowledge

Students were also asked about knowledge areas which needed improvement. A response from one student was: *Teaching methods; some professional studies was too rushed and not beneficial to us as students as we had a lot of notes but could not complete the work set-aside for the term. This module must be reassessed and the test must be user friendly* (Slindile, interview, 07/05/2011). The other suggestion from a student concerned the reading materials. A student noted that:

Some course packs seem to be put together in a hurry with no consultation with the other modules offered and there seems to be a lot of overlapping. This is a waste of time. This time could be spent more profitably by learning new aspects related to education or perhaps impor-

tant aspects such as chalk board writing which we get no practice in (Mamokuena, interview, 16/04/2011).

Another student on the same issue stated that: *"Sometimes two weeks passes by before the resource packs are handed out to us, this is wastage of time and course co-coordinators should work in advance to make sure that course packs are ready before students lecture begins."* (Thabo, interview, 29/04/2011). Another student also commented about reading materials as follows:

More care must be taken when lecture notes are being photocopied as some notes are cut off and we cannot read them. We are paying for notes but some course packs had the page numbers mixed and did not follow a sequence. We had to copy these notes from the library (Slindile, interview, 7/5/2011).

DISCUSSION

Teaching Methods/Strategies

As far as lecture method is concerned, Darling-Hammond (2006) concurs with data that lecturers talk and students write notes on exercise books and according to literature; the two teaching methods, lecture and textbook methods, are the least effective methods in education. They both involve one-way learning and are the least successful because they have retention of less than 10% (Cohen et al. 2004). Therefore, anyone using these strategies exposes students to minimal acquisition of knowledge and understanding. Lecture method is not appropriate for understanding of abstract concepts as it does not lead to maximum achievement (Bonwell 1996). It is only useful for instructing large groups and communicating many facts in a short time (Barnett 1992).

For abstract concepts and high retention of knowledge group discussions can be used. This is an effective method as it is collaborative and involves multiple channels of communications where students learn from lecturers and from each other to increase understanding (Pike and Kuh 2005). Strydom and Mentz (2010) also claim that quality education involves students in their education such that they are active in class either through discussions, presentations, and involvement in out-of-class discussions with others. Methods where students are active make lec-

tures more dynamic and interesting and also hold attention span of students (The Florida State University (FSU) 2010).

Recommended Delivery Methods

The variation of teaching methods ensures that different types of learners are reached. There are dependent learners and independent learners (Cohen et al. 2004) and teachers need to reach all groups of learners in their teaching. Academics agree that one way of improving retention of information learnt by students is variation of strategies to cater for different types of learners (Trigwell and Prosser 1997). A quality teacher does not teach out of the book only but plans both the strategies and what to teach (Chireshe and Chireshe 2010).

Effective Teaching

Bad organization and poor preparation in some modules could be avoided if coordinators, lecturers and students work together to design and plan the curriculum (Levine 2006). Using anecdotal experience, lecturers and students are not involved in designing of the curriculum in this university; it is entirely developed by coordinators. For quality lecture delivery to take place, lecturers and coordinators should work well together in joint planning, teaching and assessment. Lecturers who are not involved in curriculum planning do not give quality teaching (Pike and Kuh 2005). But if they are involved, the objectives of programmes are understood and this makes them select appropriate strategies to achieve them.

Quality of Lecturers/ Teachers

Strydom and Mentz (2010) describe quality lecturers as those who are experts in teaching, up to date in their field, intellectually productive, and have their feet planted in both teacher education and the schools they serve. This means that a quality teacher does not only command sound knowledge of subject matter and strategies but also has appropriate personal characteristics related to conduct, appearance and leadership skills (Walker and Zank 2009) and committed to his/her job too.

It is crucial that lecturers acquire experience of being educators in schools. This provides

lecturers with knowledge of conditions that students will meet in schools. In this case they will be able to prepare them well. Shulman (1986) argues that pedagogical knowledge distinguishes teachers from those who might know subject matter well, but do not know how to develop the knowledge entailed in teaching the subject. The lecturers without high school experience might know how to teach the content they have, but lack professional knowledge that is necessary for teachers (Shulman 1986).

There is a conflict between data and literature on staff development programmes. The students' main problem is absenteeism of lecturers from lectures while Barnett (1992) argues that lecturers should be excused from lecturing when attending staff development programmes as this is an excellent sign of an institution to improve effectiveness. Even if the employment of lecturers is based on thorough selection where experienced lecturers who may not need to be developed are employed, sooner or later they will need to be trained on new innovations or else the standard of the university will drop. . Again, in the absence of experience it is vital for lecturers to undergo staff development to help them be effective in their jobs but a proper planning should be made to avoid lectures absenteeism.

Concerning the issue of conference attendance, on one hand, it is important for lecturers to attend to students so that they interact with students inside and outside the classroom. Student-staff interaction helps students to learn how experts think first-hand and how to solve practical problems (Strydom and Mentz 2010). So if lecturers miss consultations, this affects the learning of students since these meetings are arranged to discuss critical issues and ideas with students.

On the other hand, the attendance of conferences and presentations of articles are crucial to the university's recognition. One of the responsibilities of the university is to contribute knowledge to students and the community. But this does not mean students should be left unattended when the university is engaged in these important activities. Instead, lecturers should remember that they are teachers of teachers first and scholars second (Barnett 1992; Levine 2006). Since all universities, including UKZN, are resourced on the basis of doing both teaching and scholarly work, there should be a plan to cater for both. The university could employ contract staff or senior students to run tutorials and mark

scripts under the close supervision of experienced or senior lecturers.

Teaching and Learning Resources

Both PowerPoint and overhead projectors are useful in enhancing lectures and emphasizing key point to students (Kennewel and Morgan 2003). However, if they are not properly used, they may do more harm than good (Levine 2006). The UKZN has adequate resources to support education but they seem to be underutilized. For instance, all students in this university have access to internet (in their rooms, libraries, LANs and admin block) which is unfortunately mainly used for communication (emails and social networks) and searching for information. The internet could be used in teaching to demonstrate and explain some concepts (Ross et al. 2007). It could also provide a chance for meaningful discussions in class (Mugabo 2006) and online moodle discussion. Course packs that students claim that are missing pages, could be emailed to students instead of photocopying because photocopying and binding is tedious and results in mistakes as missing pages and unclear prints.

There was no mention of other resources such as educational software or multimedia including televisions and videos which are usually used to assist students to understand some of the abstract concepts (Cohen et al. 2004). But misuse and overuse of one type of resource can lead to boredom (FSU 2010).

Development of Skills

Teaching skills are usually developed through practice and theory. Students acquire theoretical knowledge of teaching from attending lectures in the campus. They learnt psychologies and philosophies and subject content. They also have undergone mini teaching practice with colleagues to demonstrate teaching. Thereafter, students went to schools to acquire teaching skills in real classrooms with pupils. This is where they practised what they have learnt about teaching in lectures in the campus. This section discusses both campus-based learning and school-based learning or teaching practice.

Campus Based Skills Development

Quality institutions, UKZN included (data), set high expectations and emphasize higher-or-

der thinking (Pike and Kuh 2005) it is where students are required to do in-depth research and as such, they get deeper understanding of concepts. This is done in summative, continuous and authentic assessment (Garrison 2009).

To expect first year students to use curriculum statements and assessment standards is to expect too much as they are fresh from secondary schools. It is better to introduce them to these policies in the first semester in year two preparing them for teaching practice later in the year.

To rush the micro-teaching is helpless as not much is gained by students from the exercise. The alternative could be to reduce the number of presentations for each student from three to one to allow for critical feedback from students and lecturer.

Students did not mention skills which are related to technology. This could mean that either students had no problems with computer related skills or they were not exposed to them at all. The acquisition of skills of handling of groups during group discussions is vital because learning should be organized symmetrically for students to develop skills (Morrow 2001). There is no effective learning that can take place in a noisy and disruptive class as the most important element of learning is attention (Barnett 1992).

School Based Learning/Teaching Practice

This experience is obtained from pupils and educators in host schools when an institution gives opportunities to students to work with peers on academic matters (Pike and Kuh 2005). In other words this is the learning opportunity given to students to enrich educational experiences (Strydom and Mentz 2010).

Teaching Practice Organization

The fixed period for teaching practice has advantages and disadvantages. August is in the middle of the year in which students do not disturb the running of schools much and host teachers are not sceptical in allowing students to practice with their pupils. This is improper because students are not able to experience the beginning and end of year activities in schools.

Teaching Practice Supervision

The issue of supervisors visiting too many students and thereby rushing not giving students adequate attention is not desirable. Stu-

dents were not gaining enough skills from the exercise since they were not given guidance. The quality of teaching practice is judged by its adequate and thorough organization (Cohen et al. 2004) but unfortunately time for teaching practice is too short and involvement of university professors in the schools is insufficient and therefore students' performance insufficiently monitored (Levine 2006).

Student teachers claim that some educators in schools were not giving them guidance as they were scheduled for leave on their arrival. Teaching practice is a crucial and expensive activity that should be monitored properly. There should be firm rules governing the teaching practice supervisors for the effectiveness of teaching practice. Also, schools in which educators do not assist students should never again be considered by the university to host students and should be notified of their exclusion.

Suggestions for the Improvement of Teaching Practice

Du Plessis et al. (2007) define teaching as a process of helping people to learn. So teaching someone to teach is to equip the person with skills to help others to learn. In skills development, student teachers were provided with educational theories which they learnt in classes and demonstrated during micro-teaching. The theoretical knowledge of teaching is not enough to make one a complete teacher. This is why they were required to go for internships to augment the academic programme (Strydom and Mentz 2010). Both theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge are crucial to a teacher.

Knowledge

The teaching profession requires those involved to have acquired suitable knowledge that will enable them to teach, both content and pedagogical knowledge (Hargreaves 2000; Shulman 1983).

Knowledge Competence

Students claim that they are not yet confident to go into classroom and teach on their own. This is astonishing, considering that these are the final year students who have gone through education theories and teaching practices since second year and are in the verge of joining the

teaching profession. Teacher training institutions should train and educate students sufficiently to understand content in the specific subjects they teach. This is because if teachers have knowledge and competence in their respective areas of specialization, they will be flexible to teach in the different contexts and conditions they find in schools (Amin and Ramrathan 2009; Selwyn 2007). The fact that students are not yet confident to work comfortably on their own, could imply that they were not adequately trained. This is actually in agreement with the literature which says that teachers are not adequately trained to understand content of subjects they teach (Prinsloo 2007).

This might have come as a result of the change in curriculum which was more inclined to Outcomes Based Education (OBE). Teacher training institutions in South Africa (including UKZN) might have felt obligated to change their programmes to prepare teachers for the OBE which emphasizes strategies of teaching more than content knowledge. Consequently, most institutions had put more emphasis on policy changes and less on subject content knowledge. And as a result, teachers were then lacking in content knowledge. This was also observed by Morrow (2007) who states that teacher education institutions did not provide teachers with deep understanding of knowledge in their field other than curriculum implementation.

CONCLUSION

- ♦ The study concluded that students were generally satisfied with the quality of education offered by lecturers and this emanated from their experiences on varied teaching methods used, content delivered as well as assessments methods employed.
- ♦ Students classified low quality lecturers into three groups: those who did not know how to teach, those who did not have experience, and those who were always away attending conferences or on sabbatical leaves.
- ♦ Students' claimed that an outstanding lecturer is a fully qualified person who is always on time and available for lectures and consultations. In addition, outstanding teachers should have the following characteristics: be up to date with information and changes concerning education locally and

globally; be committed and well prepared; possess positive attitudes towards teaching; be approachable and flexible; have audible accents; have taught in schools before; and love students.

- ♦ Most students commended teaching practice as a programme which developed their teaching skills. They claimed that it helped them in developing confidence to address audience and with planning and presenting lessons.
- ♦ Some students were not satisfied with organisation and supervision of teaching practice. They complaint about the short contact time they had with supervisors from the university and negligence from the host teachers (mentors).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ♦ The university should train mentor teachers in schools and a careful selection of schools be made as some schools were not well run hence students do not benefit.
- ♦ Academic staff development programmes should be maintained and improved in the university to assist lecturers who are rated by students as weak. But proper planning for the programmes should be made to avoid staff absenteeism from lectures and students' consultations.
- ♦ In the recruitment of lecturers emphasis should be put on subject expertise which ensures content accuracy and delivery for the good of the students.
- ♦ Lecturers should be trained in the use of technologies so that all of them are able to use them to enhance teaching and learning.
- ♦ Teaching practice supervision and assessment should be done only by lecturers from the university.
- ♦ Adequate time should be allocated for lecturers' supervision in the teaching practice to allow for feedback to students.
- ♦ The modules offered to students should consider experience and knowledge of students in their respective levels.

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