The Initial Teacher Education Research Project

An analysis of Teaching Practice Assessment Instruments:

A cross- institutional case study of five universities in South Africa

Lee Rusznyak and Carol Bertram

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Contents

Acronyms

B Ed	Bachelor of Education
CHE	Council on Higher Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
FET	Further Education and Training Phase
Inter	Intermediate Phase
LTSM	Learning and teaching support materials
MRTEQ	Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications
PCK	Pedagogical content knowledge
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
SACE	South African Council of Educators
Sen	Senior Phase
TP	Teaching Practice

1   Introduction

This report forms part of a bigger study undertaken by JET Education Services, in association with the Education Dean's Forum, the Department of Basic Education and the Department of Higher Education and Training. The research project aims to investigate various aspects of initial teacher education practices and curricula offered by five universities in South Africa that were selected to form part of the case study. The aim of the research project is to provide an impetus for debate within the broader teacher education sector, and raise issues for institutional introspection that contribute to the strengthening of different aspects of initial teacher education programmes in South Africa.

In this report, we analyse the structure and criteria of the teaching practice assessment instruments devised and used by the institutions who have participated in this study. We seek to identify commonalities between how students are assessed during sessions of teaching practice, and we explore where differences in assessment practices exist. Through this analysis, we seek to access the underlying conception/s of teaching and learning that are conveyed (both implicitly and explicitly) to student teachers, university staff, and supervising teachers through these documents.

2   The key research questions

The phenomenon under study in this report is the assessment of student teaching practice, as it is envisaged by the official evaluation forms used by the Education faculties of the five South African universities participating in this study. This study is guided by the following three research questions:

- What commonalities and differences exist in the structure and criteria of the teaching practice assessment instruments used by the five participating institutions?
- What knowledge domains, practical skills and professionalism of student teachers are assessed by the teaching practice assessment rubric/s?
- What conception/s of teaching and learning is/are conveyed implicitly and explicitly by the structure and criteria of the teaching practice assessment rubric/s?

3   Literature review

The role of teaching practice

An abundance of literature suggests that a classroom-based practicum, or teaching practice (TP), has a pivotal role to play in developing student teachers' classroom practice and their understanding of the nature of teaching (Darling-Hammond, Hammerness et al, 2005; Fraser, Killen & Nieman, 2005; Haigh, 2005; Mawoyo & Robinson, 2005; Reddy, 2003; Samuel & Pillay, 2003). However, simply providing student teachers with time in a classroom does not necessarily lead to the development of their teaching practice. It has been recognised that teaching is a complex practice which cannot be acquired by imitation. Nor, it has been argued, is 'learning to teach' merely a matter of mastering a collection of generic routines and technical procedures (Morrow, 2007; Joram & Gabriel, 1999). Nationally and internationally there is a well-documented tendency for school-based mentors and university tutors to focus their attention on the performance aspects

of teaching without due consideration of the cognitive thinking and knowledge bases underlying it (e.g. Zanting, Verloop & Vermunt, 2001; Roelofs & Sanders, 2007; Reddy, Menkveld & Bitzer, 2008).

What knowledge do teachers need?

It was in 1986 that Lee Shulman observed that studies of effective teaching generally focused on the generic aspects of classroom management, with little attention to the management of ideas, in particular, the nature of the subject matter being taught, and what representations of that content best enable learner understanding. This realisation led Shulman (1986) to formulate his highly influential categories of the knowledge bases needed for teaching. His original model contains seven categories, which include teachers' knowledge of the subject matter knowledge they teach, general pedagogical knowledge (which refers to those aspects of teaching that transcend subject or age of learners), pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), knowledge of learners, and knowledge of educational context and of educational ends, purposes and values. Shulman understood PCK as the unique knowledge that is the providence of teachers – knowing how to transform complex concepts into appropriate representations that will be understandable to diverse groups of learners.

Since Shulman's seminal work, research in the field of the knowledge bases that inform teaching has developed steadily (Ball, Thames, & Phelps, 2008; Banks, Leach, & Moon, 2005; Ben Peretz, 2009; Shulman, 1986; Verloop, Van Driel, & Meijer, 2001). Many researchers have developed the various domains of knowledge that he described, in particular, that of pedagogical content knowledge. There have been many authors who have put forward models of teacher knowledge that build on Shulman's work. One of these models was developed by Pam Grossman (1990) who streamlined Shulman's domains down to four, namely, content knowledge, pedagogic content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, and knowledge of context.

In Grossman's (1990) model, content knowledge comprises both the propositional knowledge and the procedural knowledge that the teacher has of the subject she is teaching. General pedagogic knowledge refers to a teacher's understandings of a range of teaching, assessment, classroom organisation, and lesson planning strategies, as well the ability to use these strategies appropriately. PCK is defined in a range of different ways, but at its simplest, is understood as the teacher's knowledge of how to teach specific content (for example, adding fractions, or the concept of millennia) by using particular explanations, analogies, models or activities. PCK moves the general pedagogic knowledge into the realm of how to teach a specific concept in a way that addresses learners' common errors and misconceptions about the topic. Knowledge of context refers to the teacher's knowledge of the specific context in which she teaches, which includes the curriculum that needs to be covered, the school policies, the school environment, and the learners' contexts.

There have been a range of teacher education policy documents in South Africa since 1994 aimed at regulating teacher education. The most recent is the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ) which was published in 2011 (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011). In contrast to the Norms and Standards (Department of Education, 2000), which focused on competences, MRTEQ also describes the knowledge base needed by teachers. The MRTEQ does not advocate a "purely skills-based approach", which relies almost exclusively on "evidence of demonstrable outcomes as measures of success, without paying attention as to how

knowledge must underpin these skills for them to impact effectively on learning" (DHET, 2011, p. 7). Rather, the MRTEQ policy foregrounds the importance of knowledge bases underpinning the development of effective teaching practice. Most of the competences expected of a beginner teacher are expressed in terms of an adequate grasp of the knowledge bases on which effective practice rests. For example, beginner teachers must have "sound subject *knowledge*" and "*know* how to teach their subject(s) and how to select, determine the sequence and pace of content in accordance with both subject and learner needs"; they must "*know* who their learners are and how they learn" (DHET, 2011, p. 53). However, the minimum specified competences expected of beginner teachers cannot (and in our opinion, should not) be translated directly into criteria for assessing students' developing teaching practice during the practicum sessions. Higher education institutions offering initial teacher education programmes are required to align their curricula to the requirements of MRTEQ by 2015.

The teaching practice assessment instruments analysed in this report are not necessarily aligned to MRTEQ, (since the documents were collected in 2012), and thus we did not use the knowledge domains described in the policy to analyse the instruments. We used Grossman's four domains of teacher knowledge as a starting point to analyse the teaching assessment rubrics, and describe the analysis in more detail in a later section.

Becoming a qualified teacher in South Africa

An initial teacher qualification (such as a 3 year-Bachelor's degree with a PGCE or 4 year B Ed) enables newly qualified teachers to register with the South African Council of Educators (SACE) and obtain a license to teach. Higher education institutions thus assume responsibility for ensuring that newly-qualified teachers are ready to assume responsibility for classroom teaching at the start of their careers. A credit or 'pass' mark in a teaching practice course is thus a convenient way for institutions to verify that each student teacher's competence in the classroom has been ascertained. Direct observations of student teaching, together with other sources of supporting evidence (such as students' lesson planning, reflections, devised learning and assessment tasks, and their insights during post-observation discussions) have the potential to form a holistic profile of students' teaching on which an assessment of their professional development can be based (Fraser, Killen & Nieman, 2005; Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000).

The practicum (or work-integrated learning) as envisaged by the MRTEQ has both a developmental and evaluative purpose, and should thus be both supervised and assessed (DHET, 2011). In order to support their professional development, the practicum provides students with opportunities to develop their tacit practical knowledge as they *learn from practice* (e.g. observing and reflecting on lessons taught by others), as well as *learn in practice* (e.g. preparing, teaching and reflecting on lessons presented by oneself) (DHET, 2011, p. 8). In addition, the practicum is envisaged to "provide an authentic context within which student teachers can experience and demonstrate the integration of the competences they had developed during the learning programme as a whole" (DHET, 2011, p. 15).

The purpose of teaching practicum assessment instruments

A practice is understood to be a complex form of socially established human activity, in which participation and striving for excellence leads to a deepened understanding of the nature of the

practice (MacIntyre, 1981). One of the characteristics of a practice is that those within a practice should be able to recognise excellence based on common language and conceptions of the practice, and their shared understanding of the criteria on which excellence is recognised and measured. To some extent, then, the consistent and reliable mentoring and assessment of student teachers during their practicum rests on this condition of a shared sense of "what counts" in recognising competence within students' developing teaching practice. As large numbers of university tutors and supervising teachers are involved in the observation and mentoring of student teachers during any practicum period, a teaching practice assessment instrument provides a standardised and convenient way for university staff and/or supervising teachers to profile how each student has progressed professionally during a practicum session within each institution. The design of TP assessment instruments is thus an important (and highly visible) way in which an institution can make explicit the grounds upon which student teaching is assessed to various stakeholders: university tutors (who need to be accountable for the judgments they make); student teachers (who need to understand the extent to which their teaching is approaching competence); the wider teaching profession (who participate in mentoring and assessment of student teachers); and the State (as accreditors, policy-makers and future employers of graduates) (Rusznyak, 2012). However, the CHE review of South African initial teacher education programmes identified a pervasive "lack of a sectoral consensus regarding quality issues in work-based learning" as well as a "lack of common understanding of mentoring and assessment rubrics" (Council on Higher Education, 2010, p.94). These concerns "pose a significant challenge to achieving quality" within the teacher education sector. This would suggest that at present, teacher education in the South African context still falls short of establishing itself as a coherent, shared practice. In this study, we seek to investigate the way in which assessment instruments across various institutions offering teacher education are used to recognise and measure competence in student teaching. The similarities will provide some sense of the commonalities that exist within the teacher education sector. The differences between teaching assessment instruments that emerge from this study have the potential to stimulate those in the teacher educator sector to relook at the possibilities and constraints in the design, criteria, and rating scales of the teaching practice assessment instruments used. MacIntyre argues that practices extend their horizons when new possibilities and ways of engaging with a practice are found and shared.

In order to strengthen initial teacher education within the South African context, teacher educators have been urged to undertake research that "provide insights into the effectiveness and impact of specific teacher education programmes" (Green, 2012, p. v) and in particular, to engage in "extensive discussion" around the organisation and assessment of work-placed learning (Council on Higher Education, 2010 p. 94). There are a few studies of this sort where the institutional practices for observing and assessing student teaching are analysed and critiqued (e.g. Rusznyak 2011, 2012), but there are too few of these to draw cross-institutional comparisons. Two South African multi-institutional surveys (Reddy et al., 2008, DHET, 2010) have investigated the nature of practice teaching across institutions, but tended to focus more on the logistical structure of the practicum than the actual assessment practices. In reporting results of one of these surveys into the arrangements and practices of work placed learning, the summative assessment of student teaching is described as "contentious and complex" (Reddy et al., 2008, p.155) and "one of the major challenges facing practicum supervisors and teacher educators in general" (Reddy et al., 2008, p.146). While the Department of Higher Education and Training undertook a cross-institutional survey of the logistical arrangements of teaching practice, the survey did not include a detailed analysis of the teaching practice instruments and criteria. The criteria, design, and levels

of competence of student teaching assessment instruments present particular concepts of what is considered essential in student teachers' professional development within each institution. The report suggests that "further research into and especially comparisons between these varied submissions [of Teaching practice instruments] is likely to be fruitful" (DHET, 2010). The analysis of teaching practice assessment instruments in this report intends making a further contribution to our existing knowledge in this area.

4 Conceptual framework for this study

In this analysis, we have adopted Grossman's four knowledge domains as a heuristic to describe what knowledge domains are emphasised by the various institutions' assessment forms. The most recent teacher education policy (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011) describes the knowledge base for student teachers in a way that is similar to Grossman's, in that it includes categories of disciplinary (propositional) knowledge, but differs in that this category includes both the disciplines informing educational theory as well as the subject matter knowledge of the subject to be taught. Both Grossman's and MRTEQ's categories include contextual or situational knowledge. Whereas Grossman separates general pedagogic knowledge and PCK into two separate knowledge types, MRTEQ includes both under a broader category of Pedagogical Knowledge. The MRTEQ policy also includes "fundamental" knowledge which is knowledge of languages of learning and teaching, knowledge of information technologies, and academic literacies. However, since most universities have not yet implemented the curricula that are based on this policy, we did not use the MRTEQ knowledge domains in this analysis.

A key critique of the knowledge domains is that they can be understood as simply propositional knowledge that does not consider professional practical knowledge. Morrow (2007, p. 78) suggests that "professional knowledge is a qualitatively distinct kind of knowledge, different from academic and technical knowledge, although it draws on both". In a similar way, we understand teacher professional practice to be informed by propositional knowledge, practical knowledge, and personal knowledge (Bertram & Christiansen, 2012). When engaging in the professional practice of teaching, the student teacher draws on all these knowledge domains. This means that a propositional understanding of the knowledge domains is never sufficient for practice, but the student teacher needs to recontextualise this knowledge for her particular learners, in her particular classroom and school, and for her particular subject content. Thus the concepts of professional judgement (Shalem, 2014) and reflective practice were also used to analyse the assessment rubrics.

5 Data collection and analysis

This is a qualitative study based on the documentary analysis of the teaching practice assessment instruments from five universities offering initial teacher education programmes. Our data is limited to what is directly visible in the structure, criteria, and rating scales of the teaching practicum assessment instruments used to assess and evaluate the teaching practice of Bachelor of Education (B Ed) degree student teachers. The teaching practice assessment instruments were collected in 2012 from the five participating universities in the first phase of the Initial Teacher Education Research Project. It should be noted that this is a retrospective study, based on the teaching practice instrumentation used with B Ed student teachers over the previous four years. Because of the recurricularisation of the B Ed degree to comply with requirements of the MRTEQ

policy, we recognise that some institutions in this study were in the process of redesigning their teaching practice instrumentation.

A set of 23 questions were designed to guide the analysis of these assessment forms. Questions 1- 6 focused on the different kinds of assessment instruments used by each institution, their purpose/s, and structures. Questions 7 – 9 engaged with the ways in which the assessment instruments promote an assessment of content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, general pedagogic knowledge, and curricular knowledge. Questions 10 – 16 addressed the ways in which the assessment instruments privilege professional judgement and reflection on practice, as well as the underpinning assumptions about what constitutes teacher professionalism. Questions 17 – 23 focused on the formative and summative assessment of student teaching, including how marks are awarded and the grounds for recognising distinctive/inadequate levels of teaching competence.

The first level of data analysis was to engage with the set of forms from each university. Each institution's teaching practice assessment instrument/s was analysed by answering the 23 questions using data directly obtainable from the instrument/s. Inter-researcher reliability checks were conducted to ensure validity. The second level was to consider the responses to each of the 23 questions across institutions, and draw out similarities and differences in how the institutions assess student teaching competence. A final level of analysis was to establish a set of analytic continua that can be used to analyse any teaching assessment forms.

6 Findings

In reporting our findings, we do not move systematically through answering each of the 23 questions that guided our analysis. We have structured this report around three major areas, namely, how the teaching practicum assessment is structured, the aspects of teaching practice that institutions use as criteria for assessment, and how students' teaching competence is determined.

6.1 The structure of teaching practicum assessment

Variation of TP assessment instruments within an institution

The TP documentation from several institutions differentiates between what is visible during a particular lesson observation and what is observable over extended periods of time (e.g. professionalism and extra mural activity involvement; working within school environment).The five universities each have at least two different forms – one for individual lesson observation, and one for the assessment of an overall teaching practice session. In Institution B, a different form is used for first year B Ed students who are expected to undertake classroom observations but not expected to teach lessons, while a common form is used for students in their 2nd – 4th years of study. At Institution A, there is differentiation between an assessment instrument intended to give student teachers in all years of study formative feedback on their teaching (Rusznyak, 2011) and a summative assessment instrument used to allocate a mark to students in their final year of study (Rusznyak, 2012).

In all cases, the same TP assessment instrument is used for Sen/FET students teaching across different subjects. Some institutions have different forms for particular school phases. Three institutions (Institution A, B, and E) have adapted the forms to consider phase difference -

especially the criteria for Early Childhood Development /Foundation phase compared to other phases. In most cases, the same TP documents are used to assess PGCE and B.Ed student teachers.

The continuity of the TP assessment instruments over phases/years suggests that there are common criteria by which students across certain phases/teaching subjects can be assessed. This does not necessarily imply that teaching is presented as a generic practice, but that the criteria can be phrased to indicate subject specific considerations and contextual responsiveness.

Involvement of mentor teaching and/or university staff in completing TP assessments

In cases where the student teacher is placed in schools that are not easily accessible by university staff, the supervising teachers and/or principals are required to submit an assessment of the student's teaching. Where logistically feasible, most of the forms require input from both a university staff member and a school-based teacher who mentors the student teacher; however, where different assessment instruments contain different criteria for mentor teachers and for university tutors, the implication is that different aspects of a student's teaching may be visible to the assessors in their different roles.

In some cases (e.g. Institution A and Institution E), the form requires that the TP assessment is completed jointly, and separate assessments are submitted only in cases where a consensus between the teacher and lecturer cannot be reached. This structural arrangement requires that university staff members and school based teachers are in contact with one another, and suggests that they both bring particular perspectives that together enhance the overall assessment: the extended time that the school based teacher spends with the student and the more global view of student teachers that the university tutor brings to bear on the assessment. As a result some criteria tend to be more about appropriateness/responsiveness to the given subject/context, than about the application of particular (preferred) methodologies.

In contrast, other institutions (e.g. Institutions B and C) provide different forms for the school-based teachers and university staff members to complete. In such instances, the forms emphasise different aspects of the student's teaching, revealing an assumption that the school based teachers are better able to comment on the student's extra mural involvement, inter-personal relationships, and general professionalism over an extended period of time, while the university tutors are more able to assess the extent to which a student teacher is meeting the requirements of the university, and the way s/he is drawing on her/his university coursework to inform her/his pedagogical decision making. As a result, some criteria tend to emphasise the application of course methodologies/university requirements. In this way, a more normative approach to TP assessment is supported by the structural arrangement of who assesses what.

6.2 Criteria for assessing student teaching competence

Clearly defined criteria by which qualifying students can be assessed are assumed to ensure greater transparency and public confidence in the delivery of teacher education (Schulze, 2003; Lewin, 2003; Robinson, 2003; Fraser *et al.*, 2005). All TP assessment instruments across the different institutions have criteria clustered into broader categories. In the lesson observation forms which teacher mentors/lecturers complete during the lesson observation, the criteria tend to follow the

chronological sequence of what a teacher mentor/lecturer would see during a lesson observation, starting from the student's planning and moving through the execution stages of a lesson. The student's understanding of the content knowledge, for example, would most likely be revealed to an observer during an explanation phase of the lesson, and would therefore be located midway through a list of criteria. In the case of Institution A documentation for overall assessment, the criteria are not sequenced according to the chronology of a lesson observation, but rather follow the sequence of a teaching process (starting with a student's understanding of content knowledge, the lesson conceptualisation and delivery, the assessment of learning, and then the professional relationships with learners and staff). In Institution B, the student's professionalism is assessed upfront, proceeding to the student's skills and knowledge. The Institution D documentation clusters criteria following the Roles of the Educator described in the Norms and Standards (Department of Education, 2000) policy. There are other forms that assess the overall TP period (not just an isolated lesson).

As mentioned previously, Grossman's (1990) domains of knowledge were used as a starting point for the analysis of these criteria.

Content knowledge

Content knowledge is a criterion across all the instruments, except in the Early Childhood Development (ECD) forms, where they exist (Institutions A and C). The different instruments each convey a message about the importance of content knowledge to student's teaching practice. The Institution C assessment instrument allocates 5 % of the total mark for 'expertise knowledge of subject'. Institution B mentions content knowledge using the following descriptors: 'thorough knowledge - listed as a teaching skill; sufficient knowledge'. Institution E's instrument states the student teacher's knowledge should be 'adequate for the current section; accurate facts; correctly interprets knowledge and skills; sound content knowledge'. The Institution A assessment instrument sets up a range of criteria relating to 'Knowledge and understanding of content'. On the weakest end of a continuum of the student's understanding of content knowledge, the indicators are 'inaccurate content, misunderstands frequently', and on the strongest end of the range are 'Comprehensive, well organised; foregrounds main ideas; networked examples'. Institution D allocates 8% of the total mark for 'knowledge of the subject' using the following criteria 'working knowledge of the subject - using in the real world; research evident in lessons'.

Both Institutions B and C note that students must have "sufficient knowledge" in order to teach effectively, but give no further indication of what they should be able to do with that knowledge. Institution E mostly emphasises the accuracy and soundness of the knowledge, and does add that it should be correctly interpreted. Institution A's assessment instrument provides the following description of what student teachers should be doing with their knowledge – that it should be well organised by foregrounding the main ideas, and that the knowledge should show connections and networked examples. In the Institution A rubric, a student with 'Inaccurate content' could be in danger of failing, whereas at Institution C and D where content knowledge is a small proportion of an overall mark, a student may still pass the teaching practice session, even if s/he achieves 0% or 'Not acceptable' on a rating scale for the knowledge criterion.

Pedagogical Content Knowledge

None of the assessment forms explicitly use the term pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), but two institutions do allude to it in the criteria for teaching strategies. Both Institutions A and E make specific mention that the strategies and questions used should be applicable to the content knowledge that is taught, which is close to Shulman's description of PCK as the 'amalgam of pedagogical knowledge and a specific content area, that is particularly appropriate to enhance learning that content' (1986). In all institutions, the criteria are about students being able to select appropriate strategies, and not about enacting a list of preferred strategies. The importance of the student teacher making links with learners' prior knowledge was mentioned by all the higher education institutions, so this is clearly an important criterion. Three institutions (Institutions B, C and E) note that student teachers need to use relevant and authentic examples when teaching.

Institution C's form notes that teachers should be able to select appropriate teaching and learning activities and include effectiveness of revealing new content, use of authentic examples, and linking with prior knowledge. Institution B's form also points to the choice of relevant activities, as well as the introduction linked with prior knowledge, appropriate contextualisation, relevant activities and scaffolding of learners. Institution D allocates 15% of the total mark to 'effective teaching', which means the use of appropriate teaching strategies, methods and techniques, and efficient use of learners' previous knowledge. Institution E also notes that teachers need to make links to learners' existing knowledge in the introduction and constantly link to real life examples/scenarios. The Foundation Phase student teachers from Institution E need to show conceptually cohesive and comprehensive lessons with appropriate teaching methods, be able to develop content logically and systematically, and questions must be clear, brief, and applicable to the content. At Institution A the criterion is 'Thoughtfully selects and effectively uses a variety of teaching and learning strategies appropriate to content and learners'.

Knowledge of curriculum

In terms of the student teacher's curricular knowledge, both Institutions B and E expect the student to work closely with national curriculum documents, particularly in the planning of lesson outcomes. The other three institutions do not mention engagement with national curriculum policy documentation, presumably assuming that the lesson topics are provided to the student by the supervising/mentor teacher/s.

General Pedagogic Knowledge

There are a range of aspects of general pedagogic knowledge that are assessed in these rubrics. In this sub-section, we will consider the following aspects of general pedagogic knowledge:

- Classroom management

- Lesson Planning

- Teaching and learning resource materials

- Monitoring and assessment of learning

- Language and communication

- Inclusion and responsiveness to diverse learner needs

- Relationship with learners

Classroom Management

Regarding classroom management or organisation, the institutions seem to be placed on a continuum with a more autocratic understanding of classroom management (words like 'control/handling/deals with learners/offenders' are used) at one end, and a more democratic approach which focuses on 'creating a positive environment for learning' on the other end. In the latter, it seems to be assumed that a positive environment removes any need for explicit action for discipline. Institution C requires that the student teacher shows 'control of class (rapport), enthusiasm and class climate', while the Institution B assessment instrument requires that students are assessed on their 'learner handling'. Institution D understands this domain as absolutely vital and allocates 25% to the student's ability to facilitate group and pair work, create a positive learning environment and be open to learners' challenging the teacher's ideas. Institutions A, D and E include the issue of pacing and effective use of time as an important component of discipline. At Institution A, the emphasis is on 'creating a disciplined safe learning environment' with the assumption that this can be done by responding to the pace of learners and using teaching time effectively and productively. Classroom management is presented as a means to achieving learning, and not as an end in itself.

Lesson Planning

Lesson planning is generally understood as a vital part of pedagogic knowledge, and this is a key component in all assessment forms. In all the cases in this study, the documentation relating to the TP session is assessed as an integral part of the lesson observation by the person undertaking the observation. All instruments required attention to the purpose (aim/objective/outcome or purpose) of a lesson and the intended lesson steps/learning activities to achieve the stipulated purpose. This suggests that a commonality exists in the conception of teaching reflected in the assessment instruments as an intentional activity through which a teacher designs and organizes a process to enable a group of learners to learn something that is specified beforehand.

For Institution C, it is also important that the lesson comprises particular phases which are listed as the 'beginning, middle phase, exercise'. Thus the form of the lesson is emphasised rather than the conceptual coherence between the parts. Institution B emphasises that the lesson should be thoroughly planned using 'SMART' outcomes: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Traceable. Lesson planning is not stated as an explicit criterion at Institution D, but students must create and maintain a productive learning environment, design learning activities and show the ability to introduce the topic, and to show learning outcomes and lesson outcomes. Institution E places a strong emphasis on lesson planning, and the student teacher needs to be able to clearly formulate outcomes, clear teaching methods, include an introduction, development and conclusion, and show actions of educator and learner clearly defined. This is the only institution where the assessment form requires record keeping, as the student teacher's file must be organised, up to date, and accessible. The Institution A documentation requires that student teachers must show insight and thoughtful conceptualisation of the lesson steps. They are also expected to do advance planning of coherent units of the lesson, and observers are expected to look at the coherence both

within a lesson and between subsequent lessons. In the other institutions, the expectation was to consider only one lesson at a time.

Teaching and learning resource materials

All the assessment documents note that learning resources in the classroom should be used effectively, and that student teachers need to use their professional judgement to select appropriate and relevant resources. There are differences in the expectations of whether students should be able to design their own resources. Institutions A and E expect student teachers to be able to design their own resources, or to modify those they have found, while Institution B, C, and D state that students need only to be able to use the resources appropriately. At Institution A, the lowest category describes a student teacher who does not use resource materials, while the highest category would be to develop/modify/select resources that are appropriate to the level of learners, and to use these effectively and innovatively. At Institution E, the student teacher is also required to make use of 'some form of media' which must be correctly used and must enhance lesson presentation and learning. At Institution B, the criterion is whether resources are used effectively, and at Institution C the criteria are the use of learning and teaching support materials (LTSM), the quality of the hand-outs/LTSM and the integration of LTSM. These are weighted at 10% of the overall lesson. At Institution D, the student teacher must use LTSM to facilitate learner progress and the development resources should be relevant.

Monitoring and assessment of learning

The ability to assess learners is a key competence for teachers and is often placed within the domain of general pedagogic knowledge. Most of the institutions mention the use of both formative and summative assessment, and the use of appropriate assessment tasks and feedback to learners. The quality and purpose of this 'continuous feedback' is not assessed. Institution A mentions probing learner understanding, and acting on the assessment to remediate misconceptions as a key part of assessment; which points to linking assessment more specifically to learners' understanding of particular content knowledge. This criterion speaks to the purpose of assessment for learning. Institution C states that there must be both formative and summative assessment, and Institution B focuses on the formative monitoring and continuous feedback during the lesson. The Institution D form allocates a weighting of 10% to assessment, and notes that the student teacher must be able to integrate assessment and learning, assess the achievement of outcomes, and select, devise, administer, and interpret appropriate tasks. Institution E requires the student teacher to correctly apply assessment to determine whether learning has taken place, to indicate how feedback will be given, and to use effective assessment techniques.

Language and Communication

All the assessment forms have a criterion of language use and communication. Some of the institutions focus on the 'technical' aspects of communication, such as the clear use of voice, voice control, and audibility, while others link the criterion to enabling learning. All institutions acknowledge clarity and audibility as basic competences for student teachers.

Institution C lists the criteria as speaking clarity, eye contact and nonverbal behaviour, voice control, and clear instructions, which are very similar to Institution E's criteria of 'quality of verbal, written and nonverbal communication is considered; listening skills, speaking skills and writing

skills; body language'. The Institution D criteria link the issue of communication more clearly to the teaching process, as the focus is on the 'ability to use the main language of instruction to explain, describe and discuss key concepts'. This criterion is weighted at 4% of the overall mark. Institution E combines both the 'technical' issues of 'voice projection audible; uses language, voice, body language and gestures to good use; correct grammar and pronunciation' with the importance of using language to enhance the learning process by articulating meaning and instructions clearly, using appropriate language to clearly explain, instruct, and question, and pitching the level of language at a level that is appropriate for learners. The Institution A criteria express similar requirements, but also expect a student teacher to not only use language effectively herself, but to also actively develop learners' subject specific vocabulary and literacy.

Inclusion and responsiveness to diverse learner needs

In terms of the issue of diversity or the inclusion of diverse learners' needs, universities understand the term 'diversity' differently. Only Institution D names issues of ethnicity and gender, while the assessment rubrics from Institutions A and E portray diversity as cognitive differentiation within a class. Institution C makes no mention of inclusivity, and Institution B simply requires that students demonstrate an 'accommodating attitude to learners'.

Relationship with learners

Regarding the regulative discourse in the classroom, student teachers in all five institutions are expected to engage positively with learners, which sometimes is at odds with discipline control criteria. Some institutions list particular dispositions that the student teacher should have, while others focus more on the type of behaviour which students should practice. For example, the student teachers at Institution B need to be 'positive, accommodating, open, inviting, supportive' and Institution C lists the dispositions of 'empathy, friendliness, humorous' along with the action of responding and listening to children.   At Institution E, the focus is on the practice of the student teacher and less on his/her own personal disposition. Student teachers need to lead the learners with dignity and respect, encourage them to participate and feel comfortable, make good contact with the learners, and engage them in interaction. At Institution D, the requirements are that the student teacher be motivating, be able to arouse learners' interest, and show the ability to relate to learners as individuals and in a group context. While the other institutions tend to a normative approach regarding the teacher-learner relationship, Institution A requires students to show an understanding of learners' strengths and weaknesses, and an appropriate balance between friendliness and firmness, which seems to point more to the professional judgement of the student teacher.

Knowledge of Context

Considering the importance of the knowledge of context in Grossman's categories, the five institutions' TP assessment documentation made very little reference to the way in which student teachers responded to the limitations, challenges, and opportunities within the school context. In all cases, reference to context was more related to diversity of learners and learner needs. While all TP rubrics provided space in which mentor teachers/university staff could write open-ended comments about how a particular student had responded to the opportunities and challenges within a particular context, this would be ad-hoc, given that none of the documents analysed listed

this as a criterion. The analysis shows this as a gap, especially for students who undertake their practicum sessions in particularly challenging contexts.

6.3   Other criteria that were privileged in the documentation

Reflection on teaching practice

While reflection on the lesson is noted as a criterion in most of the rubrics (except Institution B), this is usually in a post-lesson reflection-on-action. The post-lesson questions for Institutions D and C rubrics are generic: "what did you feel about the lesson?" This question seems to suggest that it is acceptable for the student teachers to draw on their emotional experiences of teaching the lesson rather than give a response which draws in relevant propositional knowledge to critique the teaching and learning. In the most competent category of Institution A's rubric, students are required to show the ability to reflect in action, and to change tack during the lesson if necessary. Similarly, in an Institution E criterion, students' ability to reflection-action and the flexibility to "adapt if necessary" is valued. This is appropriate for novice teachers, who will continue to develop this ability to reflect in action as they become more experienced.

Professionalism

Teaching practice rubrics also provide a picture of the 'ideal professional teacher'. Professionalism is not mentioned as a criterion in the Institution C assessment instrument at all. Institution B notes that professionalism is about having particular dispositions, which are listed as courteousness, thoroughness/effectiveness, and acceptance of authority, ethics, and loyalty. The student teachers' personal appearance and neatness is important and they should be properly attired. The only skill listed under professionalism is communication skills. Institution D also requires a professional image and attitude, and also includes involvement in extra mural activities and integration into school life. Institution E has similar requirements, together with the characteristic of being both respectful and commanding respect. A professional teacher is also willing to learn, takes initiative and is involved in school life. The Institution A form has similar expectations of the student teacher, but does not include the criterion relating to students' appearance, and includes the ability to understand learners' strengths and weaknesses.

6.4   Measuring student teaching competence

Rating scale or level descriptors

In all the TP assessment instruments, a range of level descriptors form a continuum from what is regarded as excellent to unacceptable levels of teaching competence. In four cases (Institution B, C, D and E), supervising teachers and or university tutors are assumed to be able to draw on their internalised criteria to distinguish one level of competence from the next (for example, an "excellent" performance from a "very good" one), as these distinctions are not explicitly stated. In contrast, the Institution A form explicitly specifies what is expected from students at each level of competence against each criterion. It relies less on an intuitive sense of what constitutes competence for student teachers by offering evaluators an explicit description of four levels of competence against each specified criterion.

Summative assessment of student teaching

In four institutions (B, C, D and E), marks are awarded to students for their TP in each year that students undertake a practicum session. This raises a question as to whether students are assigned a mark in relation to what would be the "norm" for a student teacher in each year of study, or in relation to the "norm" expected of a qualifying student. All four forms are silent in that respect. In contrast, student teachers from Institution A are awarded a credit/no credit until their final year of study when they are awarded a mark for TP for the first time. In this way, learning to teach is presented as a developmental process, whereby junior students are not yet expected to display teaching competence in the early stages of their initial teacher education programme.

Four institutions assign marks for TP based on an arithmetic total of points awarded to each individual criterion. In the case of Institution E, assessors are given the option of giving an arithmetic mark or a global impression mark. Intentionally or unintentionally, this system portrays teaching as the sum of a collection of discrete skills/competencies. Some instruments privilege some criteria through higher weighting, but none of the four indicate that a fail in one criterion (such as professionalism or content knowledge) would result in an overall fail.

Unlike the others, the Institution A instrument for summative assessment of TP awards marks by presenting a two-dimensional rubric in which a student's ability to understand/think/reason (along the horizontal axis) as well as her ability to perform/respond/interact with learners in the classroom context (along the vertical axis) is assessed. The intersection of these two indictors suggests a global mark range that takes into consideration both a thinking and a performance dimension of effective teaching. The conception of teaching conveyed by this rubric is that teaching cannot be conceived as a collection of discrete competences, but is a practice that relies on the interplay between understanding, thinking, and performance.

Recognising distinctive student teaching

For four of the TP assessment instruments (Institutions B, C, D and E), the words 'Excellent'; 'Very satisfactory'; 'Highly developed' and 'Outstanding' are used to describe a distinctive teaching performance, which translates into a mark above 75% . In most cases, a distinctive performance is assumed to be readily recognisable by assessors. In the case of Institution B, C and D, a distinction is achieved by an accumulation of a distinctive mark or rating or score across many criteria; however, whether the criteria are prioritised or the number of criteria that should be at an "excellent" level of competence" is not clearly articulated.

At Institution A, what constitutes distinctive teaching is explicitly articulated in a way that does not require the arithmetic sum of discrete competences. The Institution A summative assessment form (used only with final year students) provides a description of what constitutes a distinctive performance, and requires high levels of competence in both teacher thinking and teacher performance, as follows:

Evidence of student teacher's thinking:

Deep insight into subject, own teaching practice and the needs of diverse learners; Probing reflection in discussion and journal; Advance planning of innovative, coherent and conceptually sound units of lessons with attention to formative/summative assessment; Preparation file up to date and well organised.

AND

Observation of student's teaching action:

Responds flexibly to classroom dynamics; exceptional responsiveness to diverse learning needs; creates safe productive learning environment; Probes learner understanding; Exemplary professionalism and commitment.

The grounds for a fail in teaching practice

In the Institution B, C, D and E TP assessment instruments, the words 'Not achieved'; 'unsatisfactory' and 'Experiencing difficulty' are associated with marks of below 50%. In these cases, the nature of the 'unsatisfactory' performance is assumed to be readily recognisable by assessors. In the case of Institution B, C and D, a fail is achieved by an accumulation of a failed mark or rating or score across many criteria - although easy to calculate, the fail does not consider the teaching as a whole. Nor does it privilege certain criteria as non-negotiable in order to pass. So, for example, a student's very weak understanding of content knowledge might very well not be a reason to fail if the student is properly attired and has a good relationship with learners.

At Institution A, what constitutes failing in teaching practice is explicitly articulated in the summative rubric. The grounds for failing have been stipulated as:

Evidence of student teacher's thinking:

Pervasive misunderstanding of content; Lessons are largely unplanned, demonstrate little (if any) formal thought to the construction of a learning process; Reflective journal/Preparation file is incomplete or unavailable

AND/OR

Observation of student's teaching action:

Lessons are often not executed effectively, so little meaningful learning happens and /or unprofessional conduct in the school.

7 Discussion

This study is based on a premise that teaching practice assessment instruments intentionally or unintentionally convey conceptions about teaching to student teachers, mentor teachers, and university staff assessing student teaching. These messages are embedded in the structure of the documentation, the criteria about what counts as effective practice, and the way in which a rating scale is used to determine the teaching competence of student teachers. In the discussion that follows, we pull out several of the key ways in which teaching practice assessment documentation transmits (explicitly or implicitly) to stakeholders' different notions about the essence of teaching as a practice. While we present these messages as binaries for ease of discussion, we intend that the distinctions we draw are better understood as two extremes on a continuum. Institutions can analyse their TP instrumentation and position aspects of their teaching practice assessment instruments along each continuum between the binary positions described. On the question as to whether these continua are descriptive or normative, we argue that there is a normative element,

which is generally based on research. After each description, we discuss why recent research would be more supportive of one end of the continuum, but also engage with issues of context which can render any 'ideal' impossible to implement.

7.1 The extent to which the teaching practice assessment instrument enables an atomistic or holistic assessment of student teaching

In our analysis, we noticed the occurrence of criteria in nearly all of the assessment instruments that contain references to its contribution towards enabling learning. For example, in the Institution E document, the "quality of learning" is measured in terms of "learner participation", "learner understanding of lesson's concepts", an "emphasis on content knowledge", and the "achievement of outcomes". In this way, the criteria suggest a network of relationships between different aspects of a lesson. Similarly, in other examples, teaching resources are not merely important to have in a lesson as a standard requirement, but must be thoughtfully chosen, modified (where necessary), and used to enhance learners' access to a concept; classroom management and discipline are presented as a condition in which productive learning takes place. In these cases, a criterion is expressed in terms of a relationship with others, so that the internal connections between criteria become more explicit to students. In this way, the criteria are often not presented as discrete, but exist to greater or lesser extent within a nest of relationships. However, the potential of these assessment rubrics to transmit a view of teaching as an integrated practice is often undermined by the structure of the rubric where a mark is awarded against each criterion. The student's mark is calculated by adding together the discrete marks awarded. Although easy to calculate, the arithmetic manner in which the mark is calculated does not reinforce a view of teaching as a coherent whole, but a collection of the mastery of various aspects of the practice-although in several cases, 'coherence of teaching' is listed as one out of many criteria. Assessments that are based on lists of competences may unintentionally transmit a notion to students that the practice of teaching is reducible to a list of discrete, observable, and habitual routines.

Unlike the others, the Institution A TP summative assessment rubric enables a more holistic assessment of teaching practice by weighing up the depth of a student teacher's thinking against her classroom performance. This structure conveys to students that teaching involves both a cognitive and performance dimension, and that if one component is weak, the effectiveness of teaching as a whole is compromised.

Recent research in the field of teacher education supports a more holistic understanding of the practice of teaching as an integrated and complex practice (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2007; Hoban, 2002). Thus it would be more ideal for teaching practice instruments to present teaching in this way, which describes not only the observable behaviour, but also the underpinning knowledge and integration of competences. However, we recognise that to do this requires all teacher educators and teacher mentors to share this common understanding of teaching as a holistic practice. The Norms and Standards (Department of Education, 2000) were premised on this holistic understanding of competences, but the implementation of this policy was generally atomistic, which is why the new MRTEQ policy foregrounds knowledge rather than competence (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011). So there is still a need to develop this more holistic understanding in South Africa, and to engage with how this could work on a large scale in teacher education programmes that have large student numbers. For example, Institution D enrolled 1200 first year B.Ed students in 2012, and has 420 partner schools to which it sends

student teachers for teaching practice. This scale means that there are huge challenges for university lecturers to get to schools to observe students, as well as challenges of developing a shared understanding of holistic teaching practice with hundreds of mentor teachers.

7.2 The extent to which the teaching practice assessment instrument privileges the professional knower or professional knowledge

In our analysis of the assessment instruments, we find included some criteria that refer to the disposition, attitudes, and personalities of student teachers. The references to students' dispositions were often located within sections assessing students on their 'professionalism', or on their presentation style. In these cases (Institutions B, C and E), the notion that teaching requires a particular personality type is conveyed to student teachers. For example, in criteria relating to students' attitudes in class, they should be "confident and enthusiastic; respectful and commands respect" (Institution E); "self-confident, enthusiastic, empathetic, friendly and humorous" (Institution C); "positive, accommodating, open, inviting, supportive" (Institution B) towards learners. In terms of criteria for professionalism, at Institution B, students are also expected to be "courteous" and "accepting of authority, ethics and loyalty" within the school environment. The 'developing' Institution A students should be co-operative members of the school community, and comply with the school's code of conduct. Institution D requires that students are integrated into the life of the school, and that they relate to other staff members and work co-operatively. Unsurprisingly, the expectation is that student teachers will accept the ethos and rules of the school, and co-operate within these parameters.

These kinds of criteria convey a notion to student teachers that their 'professionalism' is about *who they are*, not necessarily about *what they* know/*do or don't know/do*. This is interesting considering that a professional practice is one that is recognised by a common endeavour, with a unique specialised knowledge base, skills, and ways of thinking that can be taught and learned (Elmore, 2008). In most instances, then, it seems that professionalism for student teachers is depicted as being more about who they are, than about the particular professional knowledge and competence that they are expected to acquire through their formal studies. Generally, the assessment rubrics analysed here present an understanding of professionalism that foregrounds the 'knower' over the 'knowledge', to draw on Maton's (2007) concepts. However, none of the assessment instruments analysed in this study focused entirely on students' personality, attitudes or disposition, and all did include ample reference to the knowledge and skills students are expected to demonstrate as they teach.

We would argue that the concept of 'being a professional' does require more engagement within South African teacher education, so that we convey that it requires both professional knowledge and professional behaviour.

7.3 The extent to which the teaching practice assessment instrument presents teaching as the application of technical skills or as a knowledge-based practice

It has been shown that all the teaching practice assessment instruments in this study include reference to several of the knowledge bases for teaching. The students' understanding of the content knowledge they teach is a common criteria across the instruments. It is also the one kind of

teacher knowledge that is explicitly mentioned, and as such, is portrayed as an observable aspect of teaching that can be monitored and assessed through lesson observations and/or an examination of students' lesson planning. For four of the institutions, (Institutions B, C, D and E), content knowledge is one of many criteria that contribute a portion to an overall credit, whereas at Institution A content knowledge is a non-negotiable criterion upon which a credit/pass in teaching practice depends.

There exists broad consensus between the teaching practice assessment instruments about the criteria relating to general pedagogical knowledge. While none of the assessment instruments refer directly to a generic knowledge base, all include criteria such as the students' use of teaching and learning resource materials, teaching strategies, and their ability to manage a classroom. However, there are differences between the expectations that the teaching practice assessment instruments associate with each of these criteria. In this way, we notice that certain categories have different levels of skills embedded within the criteria. It was shown, for example, that all instruments require the presence of teaching resources, but some (Institutions A and E) further require that they are "effectively used" or "adapted to the needs of learners", and so on.

Furthermore, some of these aspects of general classroom practice are presented as generic skills for classroom practice (such as the variety of teaching strategies used). By presenting teaching as a set of generic criteria (especially when in the form of a checklist of atomistic criteria), a conception of teaching as the application of a collection of generic skills is intentionally or unintentionally conveyed by the instrument/s. In other cases (Institutions A and E), however, there is reference to the students' PCK when relation is made between the pedagogical choices made and the demands of the content knowledge of the lesson (for example, teaching strategies are appropriate to the concept/s being taught). When there is a clear indication that conceptual and reasoned thinking must underpin the choice of teaching and assessment strategies, then the practice of teaching is presented as a knowledge-based practice. We would argue that it is important that teaching practice instruments do present this conception of teaching.

7.4 The extent to which the teaching practice assessment instrument conveys a normative set of expectations or privileges the development of students' professional judgement

In some of the teaching practice assessment instruments, we find a small number of instances that suggest students should employ a preferred approach, teaching strategy, or type of resource. In an example from Institution E, students are expected to use teaching strategies that "apply principles of cooperative learning", as well as to "use media correctly", and "assessment is correctly applied". In the other TP assessment instruments, there may be an implicit expectation that students apply the methodologies that they have learnt during their university coursework, but generally this does not manifest itself strongly in the way that criteria in the TP assessment instruments are phrased. The instruments do not convey a normative set of expectations that only particular teaching strategies must be used. All the institutions require that students choose *appropriate* teaching strategies, and *relevant* resource material. In this sense, all the assessment instruments analysed in this survey convey to students that teaching requires levels of professional judgement which make some pedagogical choices better than others.

There are few indications that students are required to justify the pedagogical choices they make, and account for why they consider particular choices to be appropriate. In most cases, the lesson planning criteria require an articulation of a purpose and a write up of intended lesson steps. Some rubrics do not make explicit what the criteria for an appropriate choice are. Others specify appropriateness in relation to another criterion (for example, Institution A states that the student "Thoughtfully selects and effectively uses a variety of teaching & learning strategies appropriate to content and learners" and "questioning must be applicable to the content"). In cases where the criteria for appropriateness is not specified, it remains unclear if the appropriateness of a decision or choice is judged in relation to a particular knowledge base, an explicitly articulated reason or a tacit sense of what 'feels right' to the student and the assessor. So, our finding is that while the TP assessment instruments convey the importance of professional judgement to student teachers, they do not always make clear the basis on which this professional judgement rests.

We would argue that it would be worthwhile to convey more precisely the basis on which the professional judgement rests, although this is not easy to do in the confined space of an assessment rubric. Ideally, student teachers should be able to justify their choice of particular teaching and assessment strategies and learning tasks in ways that show their deep conceptual understanding of the content they are teaching, as well as their understanding of the learners' levels of understanding and social contexts.

7.5   The extent to which the teaching practice assessment instrument relies on implicit or explicit indictors of competence

In nearly all the teaching practice assessment documentation (Institutions B, C, D and E,), the assessors of student teaching (either supervising teachers or university staff) were expected to have an internalised sense of what constitutes competence at various levels with single words such as 'excellent', 'competent', and 'unacceptable' to guide them. In the case of Institution A, the criteria for single lesson observations was implicit (requiring an open-ended narrative response to the lesson observed, using broad guidelines about what to respond to), whereas the assessment instrument used to evaluate students at the end of each practicum session uses highly explicit descriptors to define each level of competence against every criterion. This creates potential conditions for better standardisation of assessments across different assessors.

The use of implicit indicators of competence would probably be more reliable in a context where strong consensus existed between mentor teachers and university staff about what constitutes competence for student teaching. However, in the South African context, the reviewed literature suggests that this level of consensus does not exist. While the use of a checklist of criteria along with a simple rating scale may seem like a user-friendly way to structure the assessment of student teaching, it relies on a wide range of assessors (all supervising teachers and a large number of university tutors) being able to interpret each criterion at different levels of competence. This requires a sophisticated sense of what constitutes exemplary, satisfactory, and unacceptable levels of student teaching over all the specified criteria.

We argue that the teaching practice assessment instruments should make the indicators of competence more explicit. Student teaching assessment instruments have the potential to construct a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) for students' professional development (Vygotsky, 1962) by enabling assessment that shows student teachers what they are doing, what

they're not doing, and what they should be doing in order to teach more effectively (Rusznyak, 2011). Where student assessment is indicated on a scale without explicit descriptors of what is required at each level of competence, students may obtain very little formative feedback from the report about where and how to improve their developing practice. The quality of formative feedback would entirely depend on any open ended comments that the assessor writes over and above the rubric, or on the post-observation discussions that reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the lesson. Where a descriptor against each criterion is explicit, students have access to what they could do in order to strengthen their teaching. The student teachers have explicit access from the completed assessment instrument about what they are doing, what they are not doing, and what they could be doing to further develop their practice. More explicit evaluation of their teaching qualities has been found to enhance students' motivation for the teaching profession (Rots *et al.*, 2007).

8   Conclusion

In this study we have analysed the structure and criteria included in five teaching practice assessment instruments. While the use of TP assessment instruments is a small part of a much larger teacher education programme, it is nevertheless influential in drawing the attention of students, university staff and teachers to what the university considers most important in terms of developing effective teaching practice. Our analysis finds remarkable consistency in the criteria relating to the broad categories of content knowledge and general pedagogical knowledge. However, we notice significant differences in terms of the expectations of what is required from students against each of these criteria, the relative importance of particular criteria, and the way that criteria are positioned in relation to one another. Through structural differences and differences in the way criterion are networked, our analysis shows that different teaching practice assessment instruments present to students, staff, and teachers very different conceptions about teaching and what is involved in 'learning to teach'.

This finding raises questions about the extent to which the teaching practice assessment instrument reflects, detracts from or supports the conception/s of teaching that is/are promoted by the initial teacher programme as a whole. The conception of teaching that is transmitted by the teaching practice assessment instruments could be implicit or explicit, intentional or unintentional. Ideally, we would argue, the conception of teaching that is developed in university coursework should be both "strong and properly grounded", in the words of Morrow (2007, p. 84), in order to promote students' insight into their developing practice. Teaching practice assessment instruments should therefore not only align but actively support what students should come to understand about the nature of teaching during their initial teacher education. If introspective analysis shows a university that its teaching practice assessment instrument is misaligned with the ultimate goals of the teacher education programme, then the instrument could potentially undermine (to some extent) the very professional development it seeks to support. Within the South African context, where all teacher education institutions seek to produce highly competent newly qualified teachers, a critical analysis of teaching practice assessment documentation is a

small but powerful way of ensuring that the practicum is not merely used to assess the competence of graduating students, but also to reveal to them (and supervising teachers) more about what counts for effective teaching. It also points us to the need for South African teacher educators to engage in research-informed conversations about how we conceive of the practice of teaching, and how we translate these conceptions into programmes which induct student teachers into this practice.

Acknowledgement

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