

# STUDENT TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF PRACTICE TEACHING

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in partial fulfillment for the Degree of  
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by

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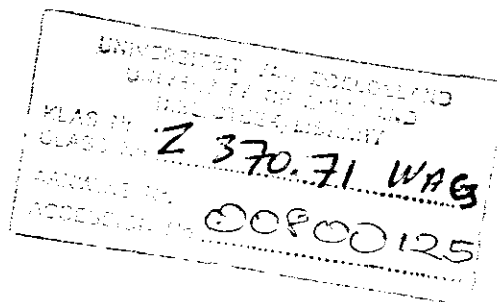
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## ABSTRACT

Practice teaching is of paramount importance in the vocational training of student teachers. It is this immersion into the real world of school that prepares the student in making the transition from trainee to professional.

The motivation for this study arose from the researcher's own experience of practice teaching as well as protracted contact with student teachers in a professional capacity. This research project attempted to explore and articulate an understanding of some of the experiences of student teachers following their final practice teaching session at a school before graduating.

In order to garner a rich and nuanced perspective of these experiences, a phenomenological research methodology was utilized. Pertinent literature was reviewed in order to provide a content basis for further analysis and discussion. Five student teachers from the University of Fort Hare were interviewed. Their transcripts were individually analysed in order to extract themes.

The following themes were identified:

- A sense of it being mainly a positive experience
- An awareness of the importance of relationships
- An awareness of the cultural and contextual make-up of learners
- A sense of ambivalence around sources of anxiety
- A sense of ambivalence around the value of the journal
- A learning experience

The findings of the study revealed that all of the student teachers experienced practice teaching as being mainly a positive experience, although all the participants had experienced anxiety in some form around maintaining discipline. Practice teaching played an important part in their development as teachers by providing a context wherein they could merge theory and practice, find their own teaching and management styles as well as cope with the demands of multi-tasking that being in a

classroom demands. The paramount role of the host teacher and the importance of positive relationships with all stakeholders was foregrounded – as was the importance of an awareness of the cultural and contextual make-up of learners.

This study hopes to make a contribution towards the understanding of student teachers' experiences of practice teaching in South Africa. It is also hoped that through this study, further research in this field will be encouraged.

We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time

T.S. ELIOT  
*Four Quartets*

Often a succinct literary reference can give voice to a feeling or viewpoint that is difficult to put into actual words. Eliot sums up my personal “journey” with practice teaching from my time as a student teacher at the Port Elizabeth College of Education, to being a teacher in East London. My experiential travels continued with my having regular contact with student teachers from the University of Fort Hare until my “arrival” as an Educational Psychology Masters student at the University of Zululand and the decision to complete my dissertation around the topic of practice teaching.

My professional journey led me to believe that I knew a lot about practice teaching. Like Eliot, however, I have found that even now, at the end of the “exploring”, I find that I “know the place for the first time”.

## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that the work on “Student teachers’ experiences of practice teaching” is my own work, both in conception and execution and that the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete reference.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Motivation for the study

*A student teacher reflected that the practical component of teacher training - practice teaching - was a part of the course fraught with difficulty and thus exceedingly stressful. She did not appear to enjoy the experience.*

This student teacher's experience identifies her own feelings around practice teaching. This anecdotal reference serves to position the research question as both relevant and constructive in terms of the ongoing research around teacher training in South Africa.

Many problems confront teachers who enter the workplace for the first time after completing their studies. Student teachers who qualify from our current teacher training programmes are not always ready to enter the classroom. These problems are related to their practice teaching experiences, a conclusion that may be deduced from the researcher's own professional dealings with student teachers. One gets the impression that some student teachers are inadequately prepared for the real situation during their practice teaching.

Research conducted by Tang (2003) found the quality of student teachers' learning experiences in the field to be a major concern. Converting theoretical knowledge into practice will always remain a challenge – learning to teach is a complex process (Solomon, Worthy & Carter as cited in Farrell, 2002).

In support of these views, many researchers have written about the 'shock of reality', a phrase referring to the difficulty of shifting from theoretical training and academic knowledge to the actual work of teaching (Johnston, Rastoy, Holdaway & Friesen as cited in Bertone, Meard, Euzet, Ria & Durand, 2003).

Research undertaken in 1999 by the United States Department of Education's National Centre for Education Statistics shows that only one in five teachers feels

well prepared to work in a modern classroom (Thomas & Loadman, 2001:195). Supporting this finding, French researchers also focused on the limitations of practical experience (Charlie & Durand as cited in Bertone et al., 2003).

On the other hand, Borlo and Mayfield (as cited in Bertone et al., 2003) found that practical experience can also be of great value in learning how to teach. An appropriate mix of challenge and support contributes to students' positive experiences of practicals (Tang, 2003).

Practicals are a rite of passage all teaching students have to undergo before entering the classroom to begin their teaching careers. The question that arises is how do final year students currently experience teaching practice in the prevailing South African educational climate?

## **1.2. Statement of the problem**

This research intends to explore the experiences of a sample of student teachers in order to gain a richer understanding of practice teaching experiences in the intermediate phase.

The research questions are:

- 1.2.1. How do students feel about practice teaching?
- 1.2.2 What do students experience as positive aspects of practice teaching?
- 1.2.3 What are some of the negative aspects of practice teaching?
- 1.2.4 Which aspects of practice teaching have been the most challenging?

## **1.3. Aims of the study**

The aims of the study are:

- 1.3.1. To investigate the phenomenon of practice teaching as experienced by a sample of student teachers.
- 1.3.2. To determine the positive aspects of practice teaching with respect to the respondents.
- 1.3.3. To establish the negative aspects of practice teaching with respect to the

respondents.

1.3.4. To identify the most challenging aspects of practice teaching with respect to the respondents.

#### **1.4. Definition of terms**

1.4.1. The term “student teachers” refers to final year Bachelor of Education students who have not yet entered formal teaching.

1.4.2. The term “practice teaching” refers to the practical component required by the curriculum for final year Bachelor of Education students at University of Fort Hare.

1.4.3. The term “intermediate phase” in South Africa refers to Grade 4, 5 and 6 learners (*Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9, 2002:17*).

#### **1.5. Value of study**

By examining some of the dynamics of student teachers’ experiences in the classroom, this research will be contributing to the ongoing discussion regarding productive student teacher experiences. The information gleaned from the study will then be shared with the relevant education faculty. It is the contention of the investigator that institutions presently training teachers in South Africa would benefit from the knowledge generated as a result of this study.

#### **1.6. Methodology**

##### **1.6.1 Research design**

This research will adhere to a case study format whereby an in-depth study of a few cases will be conducted. This investigation will follow an interpretive, phenomenological approach in order to enable the researcher to explore and describe as accurately as possible the personal experiences of each participant. Jianping (2002) in a study of student teaching in the context of a school-university partnership used a similar research design. The kind of information the researcher hopes to extract will

include details regarding student teachers' lived world experiences of practice teaching.

### **1.6.2 Sampling design**

#### **1.6.2.1 Target population**

The sample to be studied will comprise five final-year Bachelor of Education students from Fort Hare University in East London.

#### **1.6.2.2 Selection procedures**

Students from the target population will be approached as to their willingness to participate in the research. The sampling procedure will thus be extreme sampling, where respondents and situations that are rich in sampling will be selected. The researcher herself possesses a BA HDE in teaching and has contact with the proposed target population on a professional basis.

### **1.6.3 Research Instrument**

#### **1.6.3.1 Questionnaire**

Well-constructed questionnaires allow researchers to gather reasonably valid quantitative data in a simple, cost efficient and timely manner (Anderson, 1998:182). The questionnaire will comprise biographical and demographical questions posed in order to obtain a sample description. Questions that will elucidate the research topic will also be included.

#### **1.6.3.2 Interviews**

As this study is mainly qualitative and descriptive, the research will include an interview with participants. The interviews will be conducted after the researcher has had a chance to examine the responses to the questionnaire. The semi-structured interview will allow the researcher to be flexible enough to respond to cues from the

participants in order to access their experiences regarding teaching practice. This type of interview is referred to by Kvale (1996:6) as a semi-structured life world interview... whose purpose is to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena”.

These face-to-face interviews will be conducted by the researcher herself and will be recorded onto audiocassette for purpose of analysis.

#### **1.6.4 Data Analysis Techniques**

Data analysis will follow a qualitative approach. The questionnaires and transcripts of the interviews will be analysed individually in order to develop a picture of final year student teachers’ experiences of practice teaching. The researcher will adapt the methods used by Smith (1995) and Stones (1988): reading an entire script to achieve a holistic sense thereof, searching for emerging themes, noting the connections between themes, producing a master list of themes and then adding an identifier of instances.

#### **1.6.5 Reliability and Validity**

Although careful validation procedures will be employed during the collection and processing of data, it is acknowledged that the outcomes will only apply to a small number of individuals. Borrowing a phrase from Koetsier and Wubbels (1995:344) the conclusions derived from this study must thus be seen as “well-grounded hypotheses rather than firm assertions”. However, this should not compromise the argumentative reliability and communicative validity of the study.

Qualitative research requires alternative models appropriate to qualitative designs that ensure rigour. In order to ensure the reliability and validity of the study, Guba’s model of trustworthiness of qualitative research will be used (Poggenpoel, 1998:348). This model has been used with success in South Africa and makes use of four strategies: truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality.

## **1.7 Summary**

Although practice teaching is an integral, essential requirement of teacher training, it remains to be seen whether student teachers view this period in a positive or negative light.

Student teachers are not always ready to enter the classroom. There is difficulty in shifting from theoretical training and academic knowledge to the actual work of teaching - converting theoretical knowledge into practice is tricky. Some student teachers are inadequately prepared for this leap. Institutions presently training teachers in South Africa would benefit from the knowledge generated as a result of this study.

This introduction is a first step in the journey of exploring the research questions:

How do students feel about practice teaching?

What do students experience as positive aspects of practice teaching?

What are some of the negative aspects of practice teaching?

Which aspects of practice teaching have been the most challenging?

At this point, it would thus be appropriate to take a closer review of some of the related literature around the topic of student teachers and practice teaching.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Most research appears to agree that student teachers world-wide are concerned about practice teaching (Ngidi & Sibaya, 2003). Regardless of this, there exists a dearth of relevant literature explicating personalized experiences of practice teaching in general in South Africa although studies have been done in the United States, Great Britain and elsewhere.

Furthermore, studies about practice teaching often focus on the perspectives of lecturers and co-operating teachers and exclude the perspectives of student teachers (MacDonald, 1992). As a consequence, a shortage of findings exist that relate specifically to the lived-world experiences of practice teaching by student teachers.

While several studies have documented the development of student teachers under certain circumstances, much of the research has ignored “the complex, dynamic, and multidimensional nature of settings and people, individually and in interaction” (MacDonald, 1992:21). This research hopes to rectify this deficit by viewing the experience of practice teaching period in its totality.

In South Africa every student in a teacher education programme is expected to do practice teaching. This refers to the opportunity given to student teachers in South African schools to conduct teaching trials in the context of a school situation in order to fine tune the skills required of a teacher. Practice teaching is thus different to micro-teaching which involves teaching mock lessons to fellow students in a simulated setting.

Many researchers consider practice teaching to be the most significant section of undergraduate teacher preparation programmes (Chepyator-Thomson & Liu, 2003). Practical experience at school is regarded by the University of Fort Hare’s Education Department to be “crucial to the successful completion of... studies” as well as “the



focal point of (the) teacher education degree” (Irvine, Westaway & Schaefer, 2004). This period is likened to an internship – the time to work as a professional in training when the student teacher’s knowledge, skills, insights and personality are brought to bear on the task of practical teaching.

By allowing students to practice the skills of teaching, designing and implementing curricular activities as well as learning to get along with different types of learners, practice teaching can be deemed one of the most important areas of undergraduate teacher preparation. It also affords student teachers the opportunity to evaluate the extent to which they either possess or lack teaching-related abilities and skills.

At the same time, practice teaching can indicate the extent to which undergraduate preparation programmes meet student needs. The needs of students are often overlooked. This research will attempt to redress this imbalance by focusing on the experiences of the student teachers; experiences which will include, among other things, whether they perceived themselves as being adequately prepared.

The training institutions responsible for teacher training have the onus on them to produce teachers of a sufficient calibre for that society’s needs. Dovey (1984) refers to a “reality gap” between the experiences of high school teachers at school and what he terms the “educational rhetoric of education departments” in his South African study. Course requirements and curricula need constant monitoring and reviewing. These are deemed successful if the graduates of such programmes are proficient. Chepyator-Thomson & Liu (2003:1) asserts that an ongoing concern of student teacher educators is *how to improve the effectiveness of student teaching*.

The researcher’s interest around the topic of practice teaching originated in her having experienced it herself at undergraduate level. This interest grew over the years by the researcher having regular contact with student teachers on a professional basis at schools throughout her own teaching career. The results of this research will therefore have both personal and professional relevance.

This study thus views reflections on student teacher experiences by student teachers themselves as a very important aspect to consider when trying to understand and

improve student teaching. Are student teachers' needs being met within the South African context?

## **2.2 Theme Review**

### ***Theme 1: Reality shock***

It has been found that the actual practice teaching period is akin to jumping into a deep pool of icy cold water – a shock to the system! Some researchers have even written about this phenomena of suddenly being exposed to adverse elements and have described it as “reality shock”, a term used to describe inadequacy in transition from the possession of declarative knowledge by student teachers to the application thereof in the actual field (Chepyator-Thomson & Liu, 2003:1). Reality shock occurs when teaching experiences are either lacking or not enough at undergraduate level.

South African studies bear this out. A case study of teacher education at the University of Durban-Westville (UDW) in which graduating students were interviewed found that fifty-eight percent of the students indicated a preference for more time to be spent on teaching practice (Samuel & Pillay as cited in Lewin, Samuel & Sayed, 2003:143).

The need for a longer practice teaching period was confirmed by additional data in the form of a questionnaire which indicated that seventy-nine percent of the student teacher sample at UDW indicated a preference for more/far more time to be spent on the practical components of the course. There was a definite poor rating of the quality of teaching/supervision in preparing students for the teaching practice component of the curriculum. A case study of teacher education at the University of Durban-Westville (UDW) in which graduating students were interviewed also found that fifty-eight percent of the students indicated a preference for more time to be spent on teaching practice (Samuel & Pillay as cited in Lewin et al., 2003:143-146). Further research around this topic would thus be valuable.

## *Theme 2: Scope of experience*

Whereas some researchers refer to practice teaching as a “rite of passage”, others describe it as an “initiation into the real-life world of the school” (Ngidi & Sibaya, 2003:18). This so-called ‘real-life world of the school’ makes many demands on the student teacher which is why exposure to as much as possible during practice teaching is so important.

University of Fort Hare (UFH) states that it makes every effort to ensure that student teachers experience a variety of schools in a range of settings which include rural, urban, high density and suburban schools as well as a wide range of grade levels during the four year Bachelor of Education degree (Irvine et al., 2004). It will be interesting to examine this from the students’ perspective. Do final year students completing their degree necessarily agree?

The preparation for teaching in white, state, high schools as provided by English-medium university education departments was described in a study by Dovey (1984) as “inappropriate and inadequate”. A staff member interviewed in another South African study commented: “There needs to be more time spent in teaching practice. It puts the university students on the other side of the fence for the first time. They see the real world of teaching” (Quick and Sieborger, 2005:3).

Samuel and Pillay (as cited in Lewin et al., 2003) found that only three percent of the primary school student teachers surveyed in a study at UDW were assigned the full range of school subjects to teach during practice teaching. UFH requests host schools to allow final year student teachers to take full responsibility for their assigned class as well as teach all lessons for the final two weeks of practice teaching in order to ensure that students are exposed to handling classroom dynamics on their own (Irvine et al., 2004). It will be interesting to see how this was experienced by Fort Hare students.

In another South African study, fourth-year students wanted preparation on classroom administration and to be taught skills such as marking a register, keeping a journal, dealing with parents, planning the term’s work and keeping records (Reddy as cited in

Lewin et al., 2003:188). Administrative issues cannot be ignored; preparation and record-keeping need to be kept up to date and student teachers must pay attention to factors such as the resources and materials in the classroom and whether these are these adequate for planned lessons. If textbooks and other materials are shared by other classes in the same grade the logistics thereof have to be taken into consideration and planned for. Factors such as learner behaviour, dealing with colleagues and time constraints are part and parcel of teaching. Some host teachers expect student teachers to initiate and change displays in the classroom particularly when they have sole control of the class. "Sole control" only occurs in the student's final year during the last teaching practice. How is all this experienced by student teachers?

### ***Theme 3: Reflective practice***

As Hadley and Wood (1992:8) point out, a teacher training course is neither simply 'professional' nor 'technical' – the experiences which students go through affect their whole personality, not just some compartmentalized 'teacherly' part of them and it is thus logical to encourage students to think about themselves in relation to the experiences they are going through. The keeping of journals can thus be an important element of the student teacher's first attempt at planning.

Fort Hare University describe the journal as a document that reflects a private and personal response to teaching practice. It is viewed as a useful tool for self-evaluation in that, if approached correctly, will be an excellent future resource by providing both feedback and reflection on growth as a teacher (Irvine et al., 2004).

The proliferation of reflective practice by teaching students in a South African study led Samuel and Pillay (as cited in Lewin et al., 2003:147) to conclude that if it is part of the requirements of the teaching practice stint for students to keep a journal, it leads to students reflecting as to how their lessons could have been improved upon. Although seen as a 'burdensome responsibility' in the beginning, the students in the study soon came to see the journal as a useful tool suggesting that student teachers emerge out of the aforementioned programme believing that teaching is an ongoing developmental process (Samuel & Pillay as cited in Lewin et al., 2003). It is believed

that student teachers do not enjoy engaging in reflective practice and the keeping of a journal is seen as another 'assignment' to be handed in. However student teachers, when allowed to choose the subject matter of the journal, value the journal as a helping aid. It will thus be very interesting to hear what actual students have to say in this regard.

Allowing student teachers to reflect critically on their teaching practice as a whole could be viewed as a useful tool to aid both their professional and personal development. This is exactly what this research aims to achieve by going further than merely reflecting on certain lessons or on certain specific issues. This study allows for students' reflections on teaching practice as a whole. If critical reflection occurs after the whole school experience, student teachers will emerge as first year teachers with a valuable resource at their disposal.

#### ***Theme 4: Stress and the student teacher***

It is believed that practice teaching is the most stressful component of the undergraduate teacher curriculum. A South African study bears this out: student teachers find practice teaching to be a valuable experience but it is also viewed as the most stressful part of undergraduate training (MacDonald, 1992). Students have to struggle with the emotional stress generated by the realities of classroom teaching such as learner behaviour, teaching colleagues and time constraints as well as the demands of academic life. Research indicates that student teachers show high levels of anxiety before practice teaching but that little is done to alleviate this anxiety or lessen its effects on performance (MacDonald, 1992: 21).

Ngidi and Sibaya (2003:18) cite a number of studies that highlight the fact that student teacher anxiety factors related to practice teaching are common in many countries. They also make the assertion that "very few, if any studies have addressed student teacher anxieties related to practice teaching in the Republic of South Africa, particularly among student teachers at historically black universities" (Ngidi & Sibaya, 2003:18). Although student teacher anxiety per se is not the focus of this particular study, it is hoped that by dint of the experiential nature of the study, the theme of anxiety and thus stress, will surface naturally.

The emotional stress of teaching can lead to the adoption of what Ballantyne (1992:359) terms “conservative attitudes and teaching practice as a survival strategy”. Is this what is happening in some of South Africa’s classrooms when student teachers are given free reign and responsibility for a class for an extended period during the practice teaching period?

Student teachers find practice teaching disheartening because they are placed in a difficult position. MacDonald (1992) wrote about some of the concerns of student teachers during practice teaching: “They worry about being liked by the students, about being able to handle the ‘kids’, about how they would do”. In the researcher’s experience, practice teaching is stressful because the student teacher’s role is often not clearly defined and not all teachers are thrilled to “host” a student for a protracted amount of time.

MacDonald (1992:21) identified the following factors as the main reasons that student teachers felt under constant pressure: lack of role clarification, not knowing the expectations of the host teacher, feeling the need to fit into existing practices and teaching styles, the lack of time to talk to the host teacher as well as the actual evaluation procedure. Anxiety appears to be a relevant characteristic of student teachers, particularly related to evaluation. Homing in on the experiences of student teachers during practice teaching may shed some light on this.

### ***Theme 5: Evaluation***

A number of studies revealed that student teachers world-wide are anxious about evaluation (Ngidi & Sibaya, 2003). Findings from a South African study suggested that younger male student teachers placed at primary schools are overly anxious about evaluation lessons and although the reason for this is unclear, one possible explanation may be that there are few young male teachers at primary schools to offer support to them (Ngidi & Sibaya, 2003:21).

A student in a British study made the comment that “telling me that everything is going all right doesn’t help in the slightest. I want to know how I can improve my

practice” (Hadley, 1992: 83). This would suggest that student teachers value feedback received from assessment and would prefer this to be honest and thus, helpful, to improving classroom practice. Feedback needs to be perceived as valuable and of course authentic. Every student worth his or her salt knows that they have copious amounts to still learn and cannot and more importantly, should not expect to be given positive feedback on every aspect of their teaching practice after evaluation.

Positive feedback from the learners being taught as well as the host teacher and faculty members evaluating the student teacher can also serve to confirm teaching as a career choice for the student teacher. Conversely, other factors and negative feedback may have the opposite effect. Feedback needs to be sensitively conveyed. The supervising university must ensure that the correct structures are in place to facilitate fair feedback. This is another issue for researching with South African students - how do student teachers experience evaluation and assessment during practice teaching?

#### ***Theme 6: The host teacher’s role***

The host teacher plays a crucial role regarding the student’s personal perception of the practice teaching period. One study reported that a good relationship with the host teacher is essential during practice teaching although there was some disagreement among the student teachers in the study as to exactly what constituted a “good” relationship; there was, however, some consensus that a good relationship with a host teacher would be one that was not threatening (MacDonald, 1992).

There is also considerable debate in the literature about the multi-faceted role of the host teacher. There is no doubt that the role of host teacher is a complex one as the host teacher has to be mentor, model and coach among other things. Ngidi and Sibaya (2003:21) are unequivocal that there appears to be a need for tertiary institutions to inform student teachers about what is expected of them during practice teaching and that “effective supervision and guidance from subject teachers at their schools of placement can also play an important role in reducing anxiety among student teachers”.

In the words of a host teacher interviewed in a South African study focusing on PGCE (Post Graduate Certificate in Education) students: "We had to give lots of suggestions to the students. We had to help them prepare many lessons. They did not have much initiative and were scared" (Quick & Sieborger, 2005).

MacDonald (1992:23) points out that much of the debate around the host teacher's role centers around the issue of modeling versus experimentation; the host teacher who allows the student teacher to experiment regarding classroom practice is ideal: "...if helping preservice teachers become more reflective and active is a worthwhile goal, then it is more important to find co-operating teachers who support an experimental approach to student teaching who can facilitate an open exchange of ideas".

Fourth year students at a South African college saw help from the host teacher and the school as more valuable for teaching practice than visits by lecturers, yet interestingly enough the training institution seemed to be unaware of the impact of the schoolteachers in shaping the practices of the trainees (Lewin et al., 2003). It was also interesting to discover that eighty-eight percent of student teachers in another South African study ranked watching other teachers working as valuable (Samuel & Pillay as cited in Lewin et al., 2003).

It is believed that conforming to the teaching style of the host teacher is usually because the student teacher wishes to be assessed or evaluated highly by the host teacher. It is the researcher's experience that student teachers believe that favourable assessment by a host teacher may lead to the student teacher eventually getting a job on that staff should one become available. In another study, respondents said that one of the reasons they conformed to the teaching style of the host teacher was not only because the learners in that class were used to that style, but assessment was actually the prime motivator: "... your career is on the line with these stupid evaluation forms" (MacDonald, 1992).

Student teachers identify "little extras" done by the host teacher as going a long way towards making them feel comfortable and welcome and even affecting their perception of the entire practice teaching experience: organizing a desk for the



student, showing them around the school and introducing them to colleagues, inviting the student to staff lunches, putting the student's name on the door, arranging a pigeon hole, including them in the class photograph as well as inviting them to professional development days and parent interviews (MacDonald, 1992: 23).

Results of studies also suggest that the model of collaborative partnership between the class teacher, the method lecturers supervising and student peers are perceived as useful to student teachers (Samuel & Pillay as cited in Lewin et al., 2003).

### ***Theme 7: Multicultural Education***

In the words of Dovey (1984):

“It is thus imperative that teacher education faculties concede, in practice as well as in rhetoric, the political nature of schooling and assist teachers-in-training in becoming ‘culturally literate’ and thereby empower them to negotiate the values, assumptions, and myths that underlie the “official” definitions of education within their specific school contexts” (Dovey, 1984:26).

South Africa, like its counterpart America, works on a multi-cultural educational system. Modern classrooms generally represent a cross-section of the cultural diversity of a nation. However, American studies report that only one in five teachers feels well prepared to work in a modern classroom (Thomas & Loadman, 2001:195). It goes without saying that good teachers need to be well prepared. The task of helping student teachers become culturally sensitive is one that teacher preparation programmes must continually address (Milner, Lamont, Moore, Moore & Flowers, 2003).

Mwamwenda (1996) phrases the need for sensitivity succinctly:

“Knowledge of African childrearing practices makes teachers of African children sensitive to and aware of some of the values that have shaped them. These can be drawn on in interactions with pupils. While teachers may not agree with all the practices, they should nevertheless treat them with respect

and understanding so that they do not make their students feel that they are inferior simply because they are different” (Mwamwenda, 1996:412-413).

It is common talk among some of the older generation of teachers in South African schools that like should be taught by like, and perhaps this outlook was acceptable in a climate of apartheid. However, the student teacher of today needs as much exposure to multicultural classroom teaching as possible in order to learn to cope with the challenges of learners with varied racial, ethnic, socio-economic, cultural and linguistic orientations. This is the reality of a South African classroom, although some pockets of sameness do exist where pupils are culturally homogenous and are taught by teachers from that selfsame culture. Some black township schools are an example of this phenomenon.

Student teachers often enter classrooms culturally, racially and ethnically incompetent, having had little exposure to diverse populations and relying on stereotypical conceptions of diverse students to inform their future work as teachers. The need for praxis (the merging of theory and practice) is even more important when thinking about preparing teachers to teach in culturally diverse contexts. (Milner et al., 2003:15). Do South African student teachers get enough exposure to pupils from the gamut of South African culture during teaching practice?

Although research sources differ as to what it is exactly that teacher candidates need to become effective teachers, one thing is certain in South Africa's schools – the importance of training in multicultural education can never be overstressed. As one American researcher so succinctly phrased it and which is just as applicable to our country: “Our nation is not a melting pot wherein human diversity fuses into a uniform America. On the contrary, ours is a mosaic of vibrant, diverse colours in which a cultural medley forms a variegated whole called the American culture” (Chisholm, 1994:1).

Training programmes for student teachers persist which are based on models developed by former colonial powers and the majority of published studies have been carried out in industrialized countries like UK, USA, Canada and Australia (Lewin et al., 2003). Although there is a plethora of discourse around practice teaching in

general, there exists a dearth when trying to pinpoint what would be of interest and relevance in the South African educational climate.

Interesting comments were received from one of the interviewees in a study conducted at University of Western Cape (UWC) regarding teaching “different kinds of people”. The interviewee responded that the course had given her “insight into other people and how to treat other people... (as she had) learnt to deal with different kinds of people; the course is concerned with the present situation in SA” (Lewin et al., 2002:168). This insight then begs the question: Do any Fort Hare students share this viewpoint?

### ***Theme 8: Discipline and classroom management***

It has been found that student teachers are not adequately prepared during coursework with regard to discipline in the classroom. This advanced management skill which is essential for effective learning to occur, is generally learned through trial and error in the climate of a real classroom. Although an overseas study found that far more student teachers (60%) learned class management and discipline techniques than developed teaching related skills (17%) during teaching practice, it remains to be seen whether South African studies will bear this out (Chepyator-Thomson & Liu, 2003).

Ngidi and Sibaya (2003:18) assert that empirical findings support the view that a high level of anxiety among student teachers may be tied to a variety of negative consequences such as class control problems and classroom disruptions. It is believed that problems with regard to controlling a class can be a huge source of anxiety for both student teachers and teachers alike.

### ***Theme 9: Praxis - linking theory and practice***

Quick and Sieborger (2005) state that the act of teaching involves many experiences that simply can not be replicated in a non-school environment and quote Dreyer in this regard:

“When initial teacher training students spend more of their training time in

schools they get the opportunity to integrate theory of Education with that which they are experiencing at first hand” (Dreyer as cited in Quick & Sieborger, 2005).

Students appear to be keenly aware of the disparity between the possibilities which teaching offers as presented by their lecturers and the reality of the conditions they find in schools (Hadley, 1992:87). Overseas research documents many studies which attest to the problem of getting student teachers to mesh theory taught in professional education courses with practice during their field experiences; many students make decisions contrary to what they are taught and what is known about effective teaching research (Boger & Boger, 2000). Yet other research espouses the view of the high impact of formal teacher education training (Boger & Boger, 2000). This serves as a challenge to researchers to examine what happens during practice teaching within the South African context. A teacher at a host school in a South African study commented that teaching practice puts students into the ‘real world’ and allows them to put theory and philosophy into practice (Quick & Sieborger, 2005).

It is also interesting to note that although coursework may hold the promise of imparting knowledge about teaching, teachers traditionally and consistently deny the influence of formal coursework stating that what they learned about teaching during professional preparation, they learned through field experiences (Boger & Boger, 2000).

### **2.3 Summary**

There appears to be a dearth of research around the topic of student teachers’ experiences of practice teaching in South Africa. Although the Multi-Site Teacher Education Research (MUSTER) project aimed to fill the gap in the research, the researchers themselves are unequivocal that more research around the topic is essential: “although some of the essays are awe-inspiring in the depth of research and the quality of analysis... others provide a basis for further research, analysis and debate” (Lewin et al., 2003). All the studies were conducted at UDW, and the Universities of Witwatersrand, Cape Town, Western Cape and Pretoria. None of the studies were conducted at institutions in the Eastern Cape and none focused

specifically on this research study's focus – the lived-world experiences of student teachers regarding their final practice teaching before graduating from the course.

This review of the studies that have been conducted on the experiences of student teachers regarding their practice teaching, shows that there is both agreement and dissent on results pertinent to related issues. This study hopes to contribute to the growing body of research in South Africa and in the following chapter, the research design and methodology used for this research project will be discussed.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter will examine the design and methodology used to illuminate the experience of practice teaching within the framework provided by literature on the topic and explicate how the research was conducted in order to obtain data.

Data was collected by means of conducting semi-structured open-ended interviews after a brief, mainly biographical questionnaire had been completed. The interviews were both tape recorded and transcribed by the interviewer/researcher in order to maintain confidentiality. Prior to conducting the interviews, as thorough a literature study as possible was conducted. The broad parameters of the topics the researcher wished the interviewee to cover are included as Appendix 4. The biographical questionnaire is included as Appendix 3.

A pilot interview was conducted with one participant in order to evaluate whether questions would be understood by the participants and whether the interviewing techniques needed to be refined before continuing the study. As stated by Yin (1994), the pilot case can assist the researcher in developing relevant lines of questions as well as helping to refine data collection plans with respect to both the content of the data and the procedures to be followed. The researcher was satisfied with the outcome of the pilot case and for this reason, it was included in the research study.

Initially it was planned that six participants would be interviewed. Time constraints and a busy schedule for students returning to university after their practice teaching period precluded this from happening. Five participants were interviewed.

### 3.2 Qualitative versus quantitative research methods

Researching experiences, in this case the experience of practice teaching, negates the necessity to take a positivist approach requiring quantification. It was assumed that qualitative research would allow a better understanding of student teachers' experience of practice teaching than quantitative approaches. According to Kruger (1979) it is the subjective nature of the feelings of the interviewee that makes the data relevant. This research uses qualitative methods in order to focus on the experiential worlds of student teachers. When choosing an appropriate research methodology, one of the considerations that Smith (1995) suggests be borne in mind is that there should be a concern for persons rather than statistics or variables. This study was then approached from a phenomenological point of view in which rich descriptions of different individuals' immediate experiences of practice teaching were sought.

Quantitative studies emphasize the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, not processes (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). These studies also require objectivity and detachment; the participants are viewed as 'subjects' or 'objects under study' who are usually excluded from any participation in the research process. Conversely, qualitative researchers seek answers to questions that stress how experience is created and given meaning. This study is concerned with subjective meanings that are beyond the scope of quantitative studies. In order to explore and describe as accurately as possible the experience of practice teaching, a phenomenological approach was adopted. Phenomenology falls within the scope of qualitative research and in this research project the 'phenomenon' of practice teaching will be explored.

According to Stones (1988) the operative word in phenomenological research is "describe". Therefore the research focuses on an accurate description of the experience rather than providing explanations for the experience. Stones (1988) does issue a caveat in this regard in that a researcher employing this method needs to be aware that a phenomenon can never be completely described, because research can never be "complete". In any event, this study did not aim for a definitive description of practice teaching. The aims for this study as set out in chapter one are to investigate the phenomenon of practice teaching as experienced by a sample of student teachers,

to determine the positive aspects thereof, to ascertain the negative aspects and to identify the most challenging aspects of practice teaching.

This does not mean that this study will not be systematic. In the words of van der Mescht (2001): “Qualitative researchers too easily fall into the trap of believing that the need to be systematic is a criterion for positivistic research only”. Regarding scientific rigour, he goes on to quote Kvale who defines “science” as the “methodical production of new, systematic knowledge” (Kvale as cited in van der Mescht, 2001). All research, both qualitative and quantitative needs to be methodical (organized and careful) as well as systematic (consistently operating within well defined and transparent guidelines) (van der Mescht, 2001: 7-8). This study attempts to adhere to these strictures.

Stones (1988:155) asserts that any form of phenomenologically-inspired research requires the fulfillment of the following criteria:

- the research interview situation should entail a description of experience or meaning-structure: that is, it should focus on the phenomenon in its lived world context;
- explication of the protocols should be concerned with the meaning of the data from the participant perspective;
- essential themes should be extracted in their varying manifestations;
- the dialectic between approach, method and content should be maintained.

### **3.3 Research design**

#### **3.3.1 Case study**

As the overall aim of this research is to explore the experience of practice teaching for a small group of students at Fort Hare University, an appropriate research design needed to be carefully selected. The complexity and richness of practice teaching demanded it!

This research will thus adhere to a case study format whereby an in-depth study of a limited number of cases will be conducted. Bassey (1999:58) describes an educational



case study as an “empirical enquiry” which is conducted into interesting aspects of an educational activity - in this instance, practice teaching. Its purpose is usually to inform the judgements and decisions of practitioners or policy makers. An educational case study attempts to explore significant features of the case, to create plausible explanations of what is found, to test for the trustworthiness of these interpretations, to construct a worthwhile argument or story that can be related to any relevant research in the literature and to convey convincingly to an audience this argument or story (Bassey, 1999:58).

The advantages of a case study are that

- it is an easy means of gathering information in a short time,
- whatever aspect of behaviour of a person or persons being studied can be examined in detail,
- it allows for the study of human behaviour in a relatively naturalistic setting and
- the case study approach can be a valuable means of contributing to our understanding of human behaviour (Mwamwenda, 1996:10).

In this study, the experiences of just 5 student teachers during practice teaching will be examined. Information derived by means of the case study design can be said to be in keeping with a scientific approach and therefore reliable to an extent. However, it needs to be remembered that as scientific as the information may be, it applies primarily to the behaviour of those who have been included in the case study and thus cannot be generalized. Despite this limiting factor, the information gleaned is valuable in facilitating understanding of why the student teacher behaved the way they did and may provide one with a sense or idea of what might hold true with others under similar conditions (Mwamwenda, 1996:9).

### **3.4 Sampling procedure**

Decisions regarding sources of data need to be described as well as justified.

### 3.4.1 Participants

Participants for this study were drawn from University of Fort Hare students who were registered for the Bachelor of Education degree and in their final year of study. The sampling procedure was thus extreme, as respondents and situations that were rich in sampling were selected. Permission was requested from the faculty to undertake the research and they then furnished the researcher with a comprehensive list of students and their contact details. The researcher informed potential participants of the study via a letter (Appendix 1). Students were then approached individually as to their willingness to partake in a study of this nature.

When selecting participants for a phenomenological study it is always hoped that what they are going to say in the interview does have some significance and “reality” for them beyond the bounds of the interview situation and that “it is part of their ongoing self-story and represents a manifestation of their psychological world” (Smith, 1995: 8).

The intrepid and novice researcher is cautioned by Stones (1988: 152) that it is an inevitability that “many, if not all of the descriptions by the subjects will be incomplete or imperfect...”. However he does proffer that “this problem can be overcome largely by the use of more than one subject”. Hence the researcher’s decision to choose five participants as it was thought that five interviews would yield sufficient data, while still adhering to the requirements for sound qualitative research.

The five students were then chosen on the basis of their willingness to participate in the study and availability to be interviewed at times convenient to both themselves and the researcher.

Stones (1988:50) mentions four criteria for selecting participants who are “pre-eminently” suitable for participating in phenomenologically-based research:

- i) experience of the phenomena to be researched;
- ii) verbal fluency together with an ability to communicate feelings, thoughts and perceptions regarding the phenomena;
- iii) the same home language as the researcher;

- iv) a willingness to be open to the researcher.

The researcher decided on a fifth criterion pertinent to this particular study which was that interviews had to be conducted within one week of participants completing their final practice teaching period. This was to ensure that the experience would still be fresh in their minds.

All the participants for this particular study were white, middle-class, English-speaking students who had gone straight from high school to university and comprised two males and three females. They had each had the same amount of exposure to the classroom as they had followed the same course and were now in their fourth and final year as student teachers. Practice teaching periods at University of Fort Hare run for seven consecutive weeks in the third term of each study year, beginning in the second year. In the first year of study, student teachers are expected to merely observe in the classroom. These extended practice teaching periods are supplemented by spending one day or two days a week in the classroom at designated schools in the greater East London area from the first year to the fourth and final year.

### **3.5 Research instruments**

#### **3.5.1 Questionnaire**

The use of a questionnaire for data gathering may even overlap or be integrated with other approaches (Irwin, 2003:7). For this research, a questionnaire was used as an 'ice breaker', to build up rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee, to gather biographical data, to seek answers to specific personal questions, as well as to inform the construction of questions for the interview.

Information regarding each participant's name, school, grade taught, duration of teaching practice and previous school experience comprised the first half of the questionnaire which was completed prior to the interview. This was merely used to "locate" and relax the participants. The second half of the questionnaire comprised more personal details pertinent to practice teaching namely, professional strengths and

shortcomings, what was enjoyed, what was not enjoyed, what they would change and their wishes/hopes/dreams for the following year. See Appendix 3.

### **3.5.2 Semi-structured life world interview**

Although in this type of unstructured interview the research purposes govern the questions asked, their content, sequence and wording are entirely in the hands of the interviewer (Euvrard, 2003:2). Thus the semi-structured life world interview offers opportunities for asking, probing and response-keying (or personalization) which allows the researcher/interviewer to clear up misunderstandings.

The interview situation is not a neutral tool and qualitative methods recognize this. It is the interviewer-as-researcher who creates the reality of the interview which itself produces "situated understandings grounded in specific interactional episodes" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994:353). To this end, the semi-structured life world interview was chosen as being best suited to the purpose of extracting what Kvale (1996:53) describes as being "the experienced meanings of the subject's life world".

The purpose of this type of interview is to obtain descriptions of a certain event or phenomenon in the life of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of their meaning:

"I want to understand the world from your point of view. I want to know what you know in the way you know it. I want to understand the meaning of your experience, walk in your shoes, to feel things as you feel them, to explain things as you explain them" (Spradley as cited in Kvale, 1996:25).

This quote goes a long way to explaining what the interviewer hopes to achieve from the interviewee and the interview situation.

Smith (1995) stresses that semi-structured interviews are used in order to gain a detailed picture of a participant's beliefs about, or perceptions or accounts of, a particular topic; this method thus affords both interviewer and interviewee much more flexibility than the conventional structured interview, questionnaire or survey:

- the participant is able to give a fuller picture
- the researcher-as-interviewer is able to follow up particularly interesting avenues that emerge
- the richness of emergent themes can be captured instead of being reduced to quantitative categories.

Like Denzin and Lincoln (1994), the researcher too views the interview as a “conversation” – the art of asking questions and listening. It must be borne in mind that the conversation in a research interview is not the reciprocal interaction of two equal partners: it is the interviewer who defines the situation, introduces the topics of conversation, and through further questions steers the course of the interview (Kvale, 1996).

The researcher thus has to be aware of and acknowledge any preconceptions she may be harbouring as well as the influence these may have on the interpretative process. Kvale (1996:38) refers to this as “attempts to bracket foreknowledge”. This issue is particularly pertinent for this particular topic as the researcher herself has a subjective understanding of practice teaching. Whereas a quantitative study would see this as contributing to researcher bias and thus negatively affecting the validity of the study, qualitative research allows for subjectivity (as long as it is acknowledged by the researcher) and views the interviewer as gendered as well as culturally and socially situated. One of the main reasons for doing any kind of research and certainly this applies to the case study design which requires a huge investment of time, is that one has personal interests and concerns about the subject of the research (Bassey, 1999). Denzin and Lincoln (1994:11) view the researcher as one who “approaches the world with a set of ideas, a framework (theory, ontology) that specifies a set of questions (epistemology) that are then examined (methodology, analysis) in specific ways”.

What also needs to be borne in mind is that the close personal interactions required by the interview situation may produce special and often sticky problems of confidentiality and anonymity as well as other interpersonal difficulties (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). For this reason interviews were sensitively conducted because the students were still part of the university and did not wish their personal and/or critical feelings regarding practice teaching to jeopardize their futures at the university! As it

was important to guard against the interview turning into an attack session on university practices, should such a situation have arisen, the researcher would have proffered the suggestion that approaching the faculty with criticisms of that nature would have been the more appropriate route to follow.

The audio-taped interviews were held at the University of Fort Hare at a time convenient to the student teachers. One student chose to be interviewed at home. Each interview lasted as long as necessary in order to allow sufficient time and opportunity for the participants to explore their feelings around practice teaching. As they had just finished a seven week session, the final and longest (in terms of actual time spent teaching) practice teaching period of the course, it was hoped that data gleaned would be rich in experiential detail.

Rapport should exist between the researcher and participants and it is thus important that the researcher creates a situation in which the participant can feel relaxed. As the interview style followed a phenomenological approach in order to ascertain personal experience, the participants were required to respond to the following:

Tell me about your school experience.

A schedule of further questions was drawn up and used as a rough guide to steer the interview process. See Appendix 4.

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

Since qualitative data analysis is both an intuitive and inductive process, most qualitative researchers analyze and code their own data. As it is also a dynamic and creative process, through analysis, researchers attempt to gain a deeper understanding of what they have studied as well as to continually refine their interpretations (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998:141).

It was found that the use of a tape-recorder allowed a more reflective response to what was under discussion in the interview and that the transcription of the tapes became the first step in the analysis of data. Not only did transcription yield a rich source of

information, it allowed the researcher to “re-visit” the scene as many times as was necessary. Subtle intonations, pauses and hesitations on the part of the participant which may not have been apparent in the interview situation, can be ‘discovered’ when listening to tapes over and over whilst transcribing them. This may even shed light on the interviewee’s verbal intent and thus actual meaning.

The analysis of data is thus a continuous process in which the collection of data and the analysis thereof are interlinked (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Kvale (1996:205) continues this thought by stating that “a recognition of the pervasiveness of interpretation throughout an entire interview inquiry may counteract a common overemphasis on methods of analysis as one way to find the meaning of interviews”.

The method outlined by Smith (1995) was adapted in order to analyse the protocols; the process described by Stones (1988) and dubbed by him as the “Scientific Phase of Explication” was also referred to. An outline of the eventual method used is as follows:

- i. Reading a single transcript in detail in order to achieve a holistic sense thereof. In doing so, the researcher tried to bracket personal preconceptions and judgements.
- ii. Each line of text was then numbered and the protocol was read and re-read with a more reflective attitude.
- iii. Anything thought to be of significance or of interest was noted in the right hand margin. Some of these comments were attempts at summarizing, some were associations and connotations that sprang to mind and others were even preliminary interpretations.
- iv. The left hand margin was kept to document emerging theme titles or key words that captured the essence of the text. Kvale (1996) asserts in this regard that in the investigation of essences, the researcher needs to shift from describing separate phenomena to search for their common essence.
- v. The themes that had emerged were then listed on a separate sheet of paper. Connections were then sought between them. This form of analysis involved a close interaction between the researcher and the text because

the researcher had to try and understand what the person was saying while drawing on her own interpretive skills.

- vi. A master list of themes was produced from the listed themes. Some of these themes were governed by some of the questions posited by the researcher, others were completely new because often the participant would address the subject differently to what was anticipated. These 'new' themes were then added to the list.
- vii. An identifier of instances was added. Below each master theme, it was indicated where in the transcript instances thereof could be found. This was achieved by supplying the line number of the transcript.

This process was then repeated for each individual transcript, thus generating a set of five master lists which were then read together in order to produce a consolidated list of themes for the group. Analysis is a cyclical process and one must be prepared to go through the stages a number of times, dropping a master theme if a more useful one appears (Smith, 1995).

This process of analysis is not without tension as the more one organizes the material into themes, the further one is moving from the original transcripts which generated the themes, and several theoretically interesting statements were very difficult to categorize unequivocally with respect to their meaning. Kvale (1996) notes that different interpretations of the same interview passage are possible and this need not mean biased subjectivity, but may merely be the result of different research questions. What then becomes important is to formulate explicitly the questions put to the text. Thus questions posited to the participants' statements did not belong to some fixed interpretational scheme, but were developed during the analysis of the interviews (Kvale, 1996). They were thus content and context specific – the experience of practice teaching – as well as from the specific theoretical perspectives adopted (Kvale, 1996).



### 3.7 Relation of items to aims

#### 3.7.1 Validity and Reliability

Janse van Rensburg (2001) explores how we make meaning of ‘validity’ through an interpretivist lens, citing researchers who reject the notion of ‘validity’ as inappropriate for constructivist and interpretivist methodologies given its origins in a test-based research context. She uses the example of an author like O’Dea, who has even tried to avoid the pitfall of using the term ‘validity’ by replacing it with the notion of ‘trustworthiness’ and ‘authenticity’ (Janse van Rensburg, 2001). She continues that far from being a ‘soft’ approach, criteria for validity as well as reliability within this research paradigm, become more, rather than less rigorous or cumbersome (See Table 1).

**Table 1: Comparing Criteria by Research Tradition** (from Krefting, in Janse van Rensburg, 2001).

<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Interpretivist</b>	<b>Positivist</b>
Truth value	Credibility	Internal Validity
Applicability	Transferability	External validity (generalisability)
Consistency	Dependability	Reliability
Neutrality	Confirmability	Objectivity

This research study fulfills the criteria for validity and reliability in that it is credible, transferable as well as dependable. The list of strategies for establishing validity (or trustworthiness, credibility, transferability and reliability) in the interpretivist and constructivist traditions, highlights that far from being ‘soft’, these strategies can be as taxing as empiricist efforts to take objective measurements as well as being impractical (Janse van Rensburg, 2001). Some strategies were indeed impractical for the purpose of this study, such as prolonged and varied field experience and time sampling. However, those strategies which could be employed and indeed were adopted are tabulated in bold in Table 2:

**Table 2: Strategies for establishing Validity** (Adapted from Janse van Rensburg, 2001):

<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Strategies employed in this study</b>
<b>Credibility</b>	<p>Prolonged &amp; varied field experience</p> <p>Time sampling</p> <p>Triangulation</p> <p>Reflexivity</p> <p>Member checking</p> <p>Peer examination (colleagues examine our procedures)</p> <p>Interview technique (to minimize influence)</p> <p>Establishing authority of researcher</p> <p>Structural coherence (to the study as a whole)</p> <p>Referential adequacy (our sources of data, ideas)</p>	<p>Use of questionnaire, interview and observation during interview.</p> <p>Continuous discussions with supervisor.</p> <p>Refined technique. Pilot interview.</p> <p>Methodical adherence; attempt to explain inconsistencies between data and its interpretation.</p> <p>Thorough literature review.</p>
<b>Transferability</b>	<p>Nominated sample (looking for specific characteristics)</p> <p>Comparison of sample to demographic data</p> <p>Time sample</p> <p>Dense description (providing much detail)</p>	<p>The degree to which these findings or results can be applied to other contexts, settings or groups and generalized is of less relevance in this study; the purpose of this study was to describe a particular phenomena or experience and not to necessarily generalize it to other contexts.</p>
<b>Dependability</b>	<p>Audit (of the research process)</p> <p>Dense description of methods</p>	<p>The exact methods of data gathering and analysis are comprehensively</p>

	<p>Stepwise replication</p> <p>Triangulation</p> <p>Peer examination</p> <p>Code-recode procedure</p>	<p>described in order to highlight the uniqueness of this study as well as provide information should the study need to be repeated.</p> <p>The researcher's supervisor examined the research plan as well as the implementation thereof.</p>
Confirmability	<p>Audit</p> <p>Triangulation</p> <p>Reflexivity (researcher reflecting on own subjectivity)</p>	<p>The supervisor of this study will review this research in its entirety.</p> <p>Researcher acknowledges own part and influence on the research process. Van der Mescht (2001:5) sees the "subjective engagement of the researcher" as "one of the greatest strengths of qualitative research".</p>

It is clear however, that whatever the terminology, the question of legitimation is problematic in qualitative research and this limitation must just be accepted as one of the quirks of qualitative research.

### 3.8 Ethical Considerations

Lewis (2003) is of the opinion that ethical considerations have a particular resonance in qualitative research studies owing to its in-depth, unstructured nature and the fact that qualitative research often raises issues that are not always anticipated.

### **3.8.1 Informed consent**

Participants were fully informed of the nature of the study and its aims and assured of their right to terminate at any stage. Before each interview, participants completed a consent form (Appendix 2) as well as a questionnaire (Appendix 3). Prior to starting each interview, the phase referred to as “briefing” by Kvale (1996) was completed in that participants were once again reminded of the purpose of the interview and asked if they had any questions for the interviewer. They were assured of their right to terminate the interview or their participation in the study at any stage of the process.

The ethical issues involved in the research process are thus indicated as critical. Each participant consented to a tape recording of the interview which was then transcribed.

### **3.8.2 Anonymity and confidentiality**

Anonymity means the identity of those taking part not being known outside the research team which may be compromised in case studies where there is structural linkage between samples (Lewis, 2003:67). For this reason then, absolute guarantees of anonymity with respect to this study, could not be given. However, each participant was assured that his/ her identity would be concealed as far as possible.

Participants were also given the assurance that confidentiality would be maintained and that they would have access to the resultant project upon its completion. Confidentiality means avoiding the attribution of comments to identified participants (Lewis, 2003:67). Only one of the students requested that the study should not be made available to the faculty until she had graduated, a request that has been honoured. In this study, issues of confidentiality may have compromised the extent to which contextual detail was given in reporting specific comments. However, it is also the researcher’s duty to protect participants from harm.

### **3.8.3 Protecting participants from harm**

Lewis (2003:68) cautions that “interviews can have a certain seductive quality: participants may appear comfortable and may disclose information apparently

willingly during an interview, but may later regret having been so open". In this study, the researcher needed to stay after two of the interviews were concluded to respond to some anxiety that two of the participants had regarding confidentiality and when the results of the study would be made available to the faculty concerned. The judgement of risk or harm is likely to involve subjectivity on the researcher's part (Lewis, 2003).

#### **3.8.4 Researcher Integrity**

As Fontana and Frey (1994:373) suggest, field workers or researchers need to exercise common sense and moral responsibility to their subjects first, their study next and to themselves, last; to learn about people we must remember to treat them as people, and they will uncover their lives to us. An ethical obligation thus rests on the researcher to ensure at all times that the investigation proceeds correctly and that no one is deceived by the findings (Strydom, 1998:30).

#### **3.9 Summary**

In this chapter, a discussion of qualitative versus quantitative methods was provided. Thereafter, an explication of the research design chosen, which was the case study, was presented. The sampling procedure, research instruments and methods of data analysis were also discussed. This was followed by a relation of items to aims which described aspects relating to the validity of the research. Finally, ethical considerations were listed.

In the following chapter, the themes extracted from the transcribed and analysed data will be put forward. A discussion of the findings in relation to existing literature around the topic will conclude the chapter.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This research endeavoured to describe and understand the meanings of central themes in the life worlds of the participants. The central themes focused on the experience of practice teaching and the participants were a group of final year student teachers from the University of Fort Hare in East London.

This chapter provides descriptions of the participants' experience as well as a qualitative analysis of the descriptions of their experience. The participants' identifying details have been omitted as far as possible in order to protect their confidentiality. The participants are respectively referred to as A, B, C, D and E.

The themes that emerge from their accounts are reflected here.

#### **4.2 Results**

##### **4.2.1 Analysis of interview transcripts:**

#### **PARTICIPANT A**

A is a single, white female. The following themes were extracted upon analysis of A's protocol:

##### **A sense of it being mainly a positive experience**

A's first reaction to the interviewer's opening directive to speak about her recent school experience or practice teaching was that it was an enjoyable experience. "I thoroughly enjoyed it." Remarks peppered throughout the interview substantiate this: "I've just had a really good one this year." "I think it was nice that they gave us time to grow." "It was nice just to be back in the classroom."

## **An awareness of the importance of relationships:**

### **\* Relationship with host teacher**

According to A, the host teacher is pivotal regarding whether the practice teaching is experienced as positive or negative. She describes her host teacher as “very accommodating”, letting her have “freedom” and allowing her to get on with the work. Guidance as to what needed to be covered in a week was given in a matter of fact way which A describes as “really nice”: “Okay this is what we have to cover this week but do it totally how you want to so I didn’t have to sift through the textbook. She just let me get on with it which was really nice.”

A good relationship with her host teacher played an enormous role in A experiencing the practice teaching session as positive. “I think I had a really good relationship with my host teacher which helped a lot,” she expounded.

### **\* Relationship with colleagues**

A described her dealings with other staff members as positive. She had been with her class to a camp and had interacted with other teachers besides her host teacher. The experience of seeing them “out of the classroom” and school context, she describes as “quite fun”. Remarks such as “They didn’t treat you like you really had to know your place”, “They weren’t derogatory or whatever,” and “They were decent” illustrate this.

### **\* Relationship with learners**

A good relationship with learners goes a long way to translating into a positive practice teaching experience. Learners who are “catty” or “that pre-Grade 7 stage where they get a bit macho” can be daunting and A emphasizes that “it made it easier not having those sort of things to deal with as well as the teaching”.

## **An awareness of the cultural and contextual make-up of learners**

Participant A viewed cultural issues more in terms of the “different type of child” she had encountered during different practice teaching periods. She compared a school servicing a predominantly farming community where she had previously practice taught to the recent teaching practice where the school was a middle class urban one. Her perception was that “the white children there (the previous school where she had practice taught) were from a farming community” and therefore “have more independence so maybe they deal with more at home.” She viewed the farm school learners as being more worldly-wise and the urban ones as appearing more innocent: “... they were a lot younger I found them.”

Cultural factors, although not necessarily seen as an issue by A, impacted on her practice. She illustrated this by saying that cultural diversity “wasn’t like an issue, it wasn’t something you had to go there and try...” However, this sense was contradicted when she later referred to an incident regarding “a little girl who was Moslem”. A had based a lesson on Noah’s Ark, which she rationalized by stating that it was merely an exercise to garner “a character profile of the different people that were involved” and she hadn’t taken it “from a Christian point of view”. She had apologized to the learner concerned who had approached her “in the middle of the thing after she read what we were doing”. It appears that the incident had then led to A becoming culturally sensitive and aware: “...after that had happened I changed everything around.”

## **A sense of ambivalence around sources of anxiety:**

### **\* Anxiety around evaluation**

On analysis of the protocols, participant A’s experience also appeared to include the experience of dealing with evaluation. However, the experience did not seem to be perceived as stressful. She describes herself as “very open-minded and broad shouldered” and is clear that in her opinion the lecturers who evaluate the student teachers and award marks do it for the right reasons. She opined that the purpose of



assessment was to develop the students and she viewed assessment as the lecturers wanting the students to “improve” although she pointed out that “some people take it too personally.”

A also saw being evaluated by her host teacher as helpful and beneficial. She described being “critted” (the colloquial term for formal evaluation) by her host teacher in positive terms: “She was, you know, encouraging and she also critted some of my lessons, gave me feedback and encouraged me with the parts that I could’ve improved on, and just kind of showed me where I was going wrong.” The response, “I got quite a lot of feedback from her before the lecturers came... which was very nice,” further illustrates this.

#### **\* Anxiety around maintaining discipline**

Another experience self-evident within this respondent was her sense of disquiet rooted in trying to find a method of classroom management that would work. She had been with her class for two days a week, only teaching the odd lesson, prior to the unbroken seven week teaching practice period. She elaborated: “I found when I was actually teaching and they were doing something I had the discipline, but like if my host teacher wasn’t there and we were maybe waiting for another teacher then it was like they wouldn’t notice me in the classroom...” When she taught the class and thus was the one in control, she found that classroom management “got easier as (she) spent more time with them.”

She did differ with her host teacher regarding what she terms “discipline strategies” in that she felt that the positive reinforcement used by her host teacher “doesn’t work all the time” and that it is necessary to find what works for you and ultimately “refine your own discipline strategies into the person you are”.

#### **A sense of ambivalence around the value of the journal**

Participant A’s experience was that the journal was “a bit of a pain”. Her assumptions regarding the amount of written interaction required from the faculty were that expecting seven weeks worth of self-reflection was exorbitant: “... for every lesson

you give you have to evaluate how you taught and then the assessment of the learners, you had to comment on that and try say how you would improve your lesson, say how you would incorporate your children and then after three of those a day what else do you have to say?" A did not appear to be totally convinced that the journal, in the way that the faculty require its use in fourth year is a useful tool and that it would have been more beneficial for her to "only write *maybe once or twice a week if I really saw something I was struck by, you know, otherwise you find you are just filling it up with nonsense you know.*"

A's protocol however also reflects the usefulness of the journal. Comments that reflect the importance of self-reflection are as follows: "when we've done it in the past it's quite nice" and "we have to do some self-evaluation and you like to look up in the journal for that and give you some ideas" and "see how you've done".

#### **A learning experience:**

##### **\* A sense of needing to find one's own teaching style**

Regarding experimentation with new theory and trying out new ideas in the classroom, A was of the opinion that because she and her host teacher "think very much along the same lines" this had not been necessary.

##### **\* The experience of merging theory and practice**

Another experience that emerged was the benefit of merging theory and practice. A illustrates the usefulness of theory by saying that "it was nice during my school experience – you are able to put some of that theory into practice.... You think: why do I have to learn about the development of a child and its different stages and sometimes when you like... when you actually there and you think ' I wonder why the child isn't doing too good in that' and you go to your notes and you realize wow that's why – maybe they haven't developed they are maybe still at that stage..."

A is emphatic that converting theory to practice is "not as easy as it sounds" and "takes a bit of time getting used to." Being afforded the opportunity to put theory into

practice through the medium of practice teaching was a positive for her although she admits that it does not always run smoothly and poses ongoing challenges. Learning in teaching is an ongoing process which she admits: "... maybe I got this right but maybe tomorrow it might not work..."

However, the merging of theory and practice can be hindered by what is already happening in a class. Using group work as an example, this is an area covered theoretically at the university. However, this appears not to be put into practice in the classroom. Comments by A such as "I don't think they'd done much of it" and "I find people are working independently although they are in a group" illustrate that the learners were not used to working collectively in groups.

## **PARTICIPANT B**

B is a single, white male. The following themes were extracted upon analysis of B's protocol.

### **A sense of it being mainly a positive experience**

Participant B experienced the seven week practice teaching period as "having two sides to it". His experience had been mostly positive with some negative aspects. He attributes his finding the positive in situations to his personal style: "I'm the type of person I like to grow and challenge myself..." In his words, "it's good, I'm excited so now I've grown but I won't say now crits are always fun." B's experience was that there are factors during practice teaching that tilt the experience towards the negative, such as the fact that students have to "take on a lot of responsibility during that time". However his obvious sense that this had been a positive experience overall comes through in phrases like, "definitely positive" and "it was good" and "fourth time going into school, I can really relax, I can control the kids".

### **An awareness of the importance of relationships:**

#### **\* Relationship with host teacher**

An aspect that became self-evident within Participant B's experience was the relaxed relationship he had enjoyed with his host teacher. He illustrated this with comments like, "It was exciting to just be relaxed and to be able to be myself", "It's good to have an experience where people are pretty free and easy". His positive experience was reflected in that he was able to laugh about his relationship with his host teacher: "We actually got speaking sometimes on quite personal issues and I think in a lot of ways, because of the openness, we had a lot of times where we could just bond and hang out. It was good."

#### **\* Relationship with learners**

An aspect that became self-evident within B's experience was the love he developed for his learners. "I just – I loved them." He was able to take his deep feelings for his learners and extend this into other aspects of his practice: "In fact a few times I just said to the (learners): 'Guys – I'm doing this now' (when I was disciplining... whatever). Do this because I love you. I want to see you grow and hopefully this will teach you a lesson.' Just being honest with them."

B is clear that the university encourages the students to keep a distance from the children and not to get "too friendly" with them, a policy he endorses, although he "pushes" himself to "be real with them". He tried to "get a vibe going in the class" and noticed that they responded really well to him: "I could be like almost friends with them but then still just know that I have the responsibility and the authority in class".

#### **A sense of ambivalence around sources of anxiety:**

##### **\* Anxiety around evaluation**

Participant B welcomed evaluation and constructive criticism from his host teacher: "What I really liked about this experience was my host teacher was willing to give me criticism, she didn't feel like she needed to hold back because of our relationship - in fact she also asked me to crit her on a few things, just say and be honest, this could... I feel maybe in this area you're holding back a bit or whatever the case may have

been.” B relayed that although other students “get quite intimidated having somebody there”, he has had to “push” himself not to care, a fact he attributes to his having a “stronger character”.

B admitted to enjoying his experience of evaluation, because he “really wanted to improve”. “I always am excited to hear the lecturers after a crit lesson or whatever and what they are saying. I am being honest as well.” These comments illustrate that B experienced evaluation as helpful and enjoyed the feedback from his lecturers, whom he describes as “always so interested” with their evaluatory comments such as, “your introduction was lovely or you held the children you know for the whole lesson”.

Constructive criticism was also experienced in a positive way by Participant B: “But I’m excited for them to say to me ‘you know, you really need to be more organised’ so I can really pick up on those issues and develop them. I think it’s important whether it’s with a file, the crit lesson or whatever, it is just so that I can know how I’m going.”

#### **\* Anxiety around maintaining discipline**

The sense that classroom management or maintaining discipline was an important issue for Participant B came through in that one of the first things that Participant B had said in his interview had related to it: “I can really relax, I can control the kids. I know I have good rapport with the children”. Although he felt more equipped in this regard because it was his “fourth time going into the school”, he did however point out that “school experience is always a challenging time”.

B’s protocols indicate that his experience was that “general class discipline wasn’t a problem”. One of the discipline strategies that appeared to work for him was that he would “smack (his) hands together” or he would say, “all right that’s enough”. He explains himself further: “They’d be writing a test or something and I’d start kind of fooling around, making them laugh whatever.”

His experience was that he “never really had a problem” and for some learners, misbehaviour was perhaps an attention seeking mechanism. “Some guys I don’t think they were discipline problems as such but more like pastoral cases in a way. Like they needed someone to talk to. They needed a few moments outside the class whatever.”

#### **\* A heightened sense of responsibility**

It emerged from analysis of B’s protocol that a sense of now being one of what he terms “these teacher people” and thus responsible for the welfare of one’s learners, was both a new realization and an added stress for him. This ultimately placed “a lot of stuff on (his) shoulders”. He viewed this as a valuable learning experience: “We are put through a lot of stuff and it does grow us and it’s not just for university – like children I am responsible for.”

#### **A sense of ambivalence around the value of the journal**

“I loved the journal.” So began Participant B’s enthusiastic diatribe about the journal. He found the journal to be “a release”, although he had a sense that “the university wanted (them) to reflect on things that (they had) seen in the school and maybe relate it to theory or practice.” He admits that he “really used it as an emotional release” and wrote personal things that he was going through in the journal so that the lecturers could “assess and see” what he was going through and the fact that he still had to “cope with the school”. His experience of the journal as a tool for self-reflection was that it was “awesome”.

#### **A learning experience:**

##### **\* A sense of juggling multiple roles and tasks**

B describes getting home “drained” after a day of “all the teacher stuff” and then still having to set out lesson plans for the next day, assessing learners’ work for the teacher’s marks as well as having to cope with the university’s demands in terms of deadlines for various tasks. B expressed a sense of frustration with the assignments set for the fourth year students, which he experienced as “very loaded”. The planning file

expected by the university, wherein “every single lesson has to have a plan...” added to the pressure he experienced. On top of that were assignments needing completion: “... and above that we have a special study or mini-thesis”. Participant B dealt with having to complete numerous tasks by ignoring them as he perceives himself as only being able to do “one or two things properly”.

On further analysis of the protocols, it became evident that B had learned the skill of prioritizing and making decisions regarding his practice that would make it tenable for him. “So there’s a certain aspect of the file taking up too much of my time. I don’t mind neglecting that a little bit just to make sure that I’m there for the children and getting through stuff.”

Another learning experience for Participant B resulted from his having personal issues outside the class to deal with as well as having to face the demands of being a teacher: “I had a lot of personal issues that I needed to deal with and things that happened to me outside of school and for me a big learning thing was to really learn to cope with still being a teacher.”

#### **\* A sense of needing to find one’s own teaching style**

Participant B used this experience of practice teaching to find his own personal style. Practice teaching afforded him the space in which to grow and develop in the direction most needed by him. “I kind of didn’t know which parts of the school experience to focus on and what I mean by that is in terms of do I want to focus on my lesson preps, do I want to focus on assessment, do I want to focus on really getting to know the children, on how to develop my own personal style?” He admits that he personally tried to make practice teaching “as real world as (he) can”.

B expressed a wish that the faculty would give free reign to final year students in terms of the areas they personally wished to develop and explore instead of being prescriptive. He would have appreciated a directive along the lines of: “Do it, create your own file and your own reflection of what you’ve learned now. Take this opportunity. You’ve paid all this amount of money to come and study, use this opportunity to develop those areas which you want to develop.” His personal

preference would have been in the area of assessment although this is something he says that they as student teachers “have been encouraged” not to do: “I know for myself I really wanted to get stuck into assessment or really just help with the marking or whatever.”

B felt he was able to experiment with his own ideas and was clear that it had been his experience that he had always seemed to visit classrooms wherein the teachers had “always been open and interested” in how the students did things.

### **\* The experience of merging theory and practice**

“I’ve been feeling that this school experience is really good at giving you a real-world experience.” B expressed that this experience had been very “real” for him, although the faculty did stipulate certain requirements: “... it has a particular set of tasks and things they want us to go through and get done which kind of shapes the way that we do experience school life but as far as possible I try and make it as real world as I can.”

Participant B was very ambivalent as to whether student teachers were adequately prepared by their coursework for the practical side of things. His measured response was that they follow five or six different courses, prepared and presented by different lecturers and “obviously some courses weren’t as applicable as others”. Debriefing with his classmates following this last practice teaching period, the general feeling was that they “really appreciate the more practical side of the courses. Like how to put together a social science module.” He had actually done that for his class which he had experienced as far more valuable “than reams and reams of theory”. He expounded: “Those workshopping sorts of sessions where we’ve got to get stuck in and involved, but I definitely do feel that over all in general as a whole we were prepared, I felt well prepared. I was confident in areas of assessment. Our lesson preparation over the last couple of years has been good. Definitely been good.”



## **PARTICIPANT C**

C is a single, white female. The following themes were extracted upon analysis of C's protocol:

### **A sense of it being mainly a positive experience**

Participant C's enthusiastic response that "this school experience was the best one (she) ever had" conveyed how positive the experience had been for her. She was not unrealistic about the practicalities and hard work surrounding this experience of practice teaching and she described teaching her learners as "much more difficult" than she "ever, ever imagined". However, her positive reaction was due to the fact that in this final practice teaching session, she had been given "the most freedom to teach" which she ascribed to the fact that her host teacher had thought that she "was of the calibre to be able to teach".

Freedom made this experience one of learning and enjoyment for C, illustrated by comments such as "I could get on with it", "...she just let me get on with it and ... I developed most as a teacher and this actual experience more than any other".

### **An awareness of the importance of relationships:**

#### **\* Relationship with host teacher**

C described her host teacher as "Brilliant! Brilliant, brilliant", "absolutely fantastic", "a fantastic woman", "a fantastic teacher" as well as "open-minded and a fantastic person to be with" which leaves one in no doubt as to the strength and orientation of her feelings in this regard.

Participant C's perception of her host teacher's role in her development as a student teacher had been instrumental in leading to C's comment, "I developed most as a teacher and this actual experience more than any other". Her host teacher "didn't interrupt so much" and let her "get on with it" and she didn't "actually care what I taught as long as... the syllabus was followed".

### **\* Relationship with colleagues**

An aspect that became apparent within Participant C's protocol was a sense of exclusion within the grade by the other teachers of that grade. It appeared to be a carryover of how her host teacher was treated. Due to the fact that her host teacher was the newest member of staff, C's experience was a sense of being excluded from what was happening in the rest of the grade. "... she's been there the shortest time so she's not in the loop kind of thing and I found because I was with her, I was also left out of the loop..."

### **\* Relationship with learners**

Another experience self-evident within this participant was frustration that the focus was always on the student teacher and how he or she was teaching, when what it really boiled down to, was how the learners responded. This, in Participant C's experience, was the measure of an effective teacher. "The kids have always been most important... and that's the main thing, that they're actually learning. It's not about what you're teaching, it's about what they're learning."

### **An awareness of the cultural and contextual make-up of learners**

The only evidence of a sense of awareness of contextual issues were evidenced in Participant C's words that "teaching the boys was much more difficult than I ever, ever imagined".

### **A sense of ambivalence around sources of anxiety:**

#### **\* Anxiety around evaluation**

On analysis of the protocol, it was apparent that participant C was dismissive of evaluation as a source of anxiety. "Oh, I don't mind crits. Crits are, I forget they are even there."

### **\* Anxiety around maintaining discipline**

Another aspect that became apparent within Participant C's experience was the experience of stress when she failed to keep the learners interest when teaching, resulting in their ignoring her. She refers to "days when they were excited" and constant disruptions and interruptions. Her frustration with not being able to teach uninterrupted is illustrated in the following comments: "...this school I was at was the most ridiculous at that" (referring to children leaving the classroom to partake in various activities), "I've never had so many interruptions" and "just didn't have continuous time... It's ridiculous. Absolutely ridiculous".

### **A sense of ambivalence around the value of the journal**

Participant C could see the value of the journal. "You can see your development and things like that... and going back and reading it the beginning of term I found it very interesting to read..." However C felt that if the journal had been purely for private consumption it would have been fine to "write these really in-depth, thoughtful things". "If it's just for you I can understand." C did not why she should write things that might have negatively affected an evaluation or "crit" by a lecturer. Writing about "very bad days" might have reflected badly on her marks. "If I had to write that I had a really terrible day and the kids were not listening to me then in my crit the next day she (the lecturer concerned) would read back the day before and think, she would not give me a distinction because I hadn't had good discipline the whole way through so I'm reluctant to write what I really feel because they're just going to pull you down for it."

For Participant C her reluctance around journal writing resulted in her being less than honest whenever it became a requirement. "... I just never, ever wrote the truth." She is candid that her classmates who had been honest in their journals had found that it had negatively impacted on their marks so she had decided not to do that to herself, for as she succinctly phrases it, "No reason for it. Why should I do that to myself - I'd just be shooting myself in the foot?"

## **A learning experience:**

### **\* A sense of juggling multiple roles and tasks**

The requirement that detailed lesson plans had to be kept for each and every lesson taught was an aspect of “admin” deplored by C. She could see the value of “doing that” at second year level in order to “understand the whole concept of how you work through things”. However she did not see the necessity for writing detailed lesson plans because in her opinion it was a time wasting exercise. C admits that she was less than honest to the faculty about the number of lessons she had to teach, because, had she been honest, during one of her practice teaching stints at third year level, it would have resulted in “three pages of lesson plans for every single lesson”. Participant C describes this as “just ridiculous”: “... I never told them so I wouldn’t have to do those kinds of things...” Her experience of administration at fourth year level was that it was more to the point: “right – what you going to do, what worksheet you gonna do, what are you going to introduce ... so you can actually visualize what you are going to do. Cos that’s what I’m going to do when I teach one day”.

C was also of the view that being up to date with “admin” had led to her having experienced that practice teaching period as a positive one. She expounded: “...that improved my whole outlook on the whole experience because I was up to date with everything so nothing, nothing was a problem, nothing was a big deal to do because when I got to the day and we had to hand it in I was done with everything”. In contrast her classmates were “all stressed about that which I’ve been every other year but not this year... I had made it my way of planning things.”

What had helped Participant C in this regard was an extra two week stint of teaching when she had acted as a replacement for a teacher who was away. She puts her better planning down to this fact. “I just wrote down what I was going to do... keeping a record of everything I had done for the kids those two weeks... and that helped ‘cos I had to keep records of what I had done before and what I couldn’t do again. If I missed the next lesson then I had to move it forward.” Having to keep up to date with administration is emphasized by C as having “really helped” – “that all helped to be able to pull everything together.”

C is unequivocal when she states that she “never knew how much admin actually went into being a teacher”. Here she was explaining how this final practice teaching stint had differed from those in the past because she was now solely responsible for the smooth running of the class over a protracted period of time. “As you know before you always had to teach in your classroom and she (the host teacher) always had to do all that and you got on with your teaching whereas now your teacher, she came in she did a few things but you ultimately told all the kids when they had anything on, when they had to go to Remedial, when they had to go to – anything”.

### **\* The experience of merging theory and practice**

On analysis of the protocols, participant C’s experience also reflected the issue of merging theory and practice. She referred to the theory taught as “the things that we’ve done (that) have helped” but likened it to “treading water” as she is of the opinion that you have to “find your own way”. C substantiates this by using the example of Subject X which she describes as “so airy-fairy that you didn’t actually know what was going on or even what Subject X was. What is Subject X? What is – what is Subject X? They asked this whole big thing and by the end of the course I didn’t know still what Subject X was”. These sentences attest to the frustration experienced by C.

Subject Y was also experienced as frustrating by Participant C. “Subject Y, ja – we’ve learnt nothing at all, but by teaching I’ve learned lots of things so the experience, the experiences of teaching have helped us”. Although C experienced parts of her coursework as failing to provide her with the skills she wanted, being placed in the field and having to teach even these subjects, had led to her development and ultimately her enrichment as a student teacher.

Although somewhat critical of how certain subjects are presented by certain lecturers at the university, A describes how individual lecturers who teach the methodology (as opposed to the content) of a subject as the focus have been helpful to her: “... when one particular lecturer was with us... we did a course in Z and that’s why I think I’m confident in teaching Z because he was so OBE based which is what we’re supposed to be doing and like he gave us lessons and said okay this is when you do that and we

discussed it”. This particular lecturer had taught an approach to teaching a particular concept which C had found helpful and relevant. Comments in her protocols illustrate this: “Showed how you start, when you move on to the next concept”; “what you supposed to do”; “continuity”.

Participant C recounts in her protocols that during one lecture when she had questioned how the subject matter of the particular lecture was going to help them as student teachers, it had been explained to them that this was for their development in that subject and she had responded by leaving. “I got up and left.” Her rationalization of her departure was the following: “I don’t need to do something that is not going to help me teach actual kids to be able to learn better...”.

Some courses were described by C as “fantastic”, “very interesting” and “lovely”. She described the course in Law that had just been completed as “probably the most beneficial” of the whole course because the student teachers had learnt how they fitted into the legal system as teachers, what they were and were not allowed to do, as well as how important both teachers and learners are respectively. She added that other students on the course had not necessarily shared her viewpoint and laughed when she recounted that they “found it extremely boring and they never want to do it again”.

## **PARTICIPANT D**

D is a single, white male. The following themes were extracted upon analysis of D’s protocols.

### **A sense of it being mainly a positive experience**

Participant D had experienced practice teaching as something “nice” and had realized that he had enjoyed the experience of practice teaching in his final year as a result of his learners who had not needed continuous discipline, resulting in his being able to build a relationship with them.

## **An awareness of the importance of relationships:**

### **\* Relationship with host teacher**

“I think this year was probably the best relationship I have had with my host teacher to be quite honest, but I actually knew him before so it wasn’t build-a-relationship-in-one-day.” D described how he experienced his relationship with his host teacher and how knowing him his whole life had impacted positively on the experience.

## **An awareness of the cultural and contextual make-up of learners**

Participant D experienced an incident wherein a black learner had accused him of being a racist: “I had to substitute for an absent teacher and one of the kids, it was a black boy... he kept on disturbing me so I told him to keep quiet so he said that I’m racist or something to that effect so I leant forward and said: ‘Were you speaking?’ and he said ‘Yes’, or ‘No’ – I can’t remember what he said, so I said, ‘So you’re actually inferring that I’m a liar?’ and then I told him to keep quiet. So I turned it around on him and instead of him calling me a racist, I inferred that he was calling me a blatant liar. That sort of worked.”

It came out in an aside that learners from what participant D labelled a “difficult school” (that D had taught during his third year) were more difficult to teach than the learners from the school where D had just completed the practice teaching block. His experience was that “it was nice just to teach without having to continuously discipline the kids or try to get them to understand...” As a result, he could “actually build a relationship with the kids while teaching”, something he describes as “nice”.

## **Ambivalence around sources of anxiety:**

### **\* Anxiety around classroom evaluation**

“I find crits a bit stressful.” Thus the experience of evaluation did lead to D’s experiencing some anxiety, but only when a lecturer, rather than the host teacher, was

the one doing the evaluation. “I think you are a bit nervous but by fourth year you’re... not used to it, but you’re not as stressed. A little bit stressed, that would be the crit lecture. The host teacher, actually I didn’t notice him. You so used to teaching in front of someone else all the time that you ignore them.”

#### **\* Anxiety around maintaining discipline**

D did not experience discipline as an issue, but interestingly for whatever reason, when this topic arose during the interview, D switched the audio-recorder off for a brief while and thereafter was happy to resume the interview. Previously he had spoken about having to “contain” the learners during an evaluation lesson, something he admits to having found “the only stressful thing”.

#### **A sense of ambivalence around the value of the journal**

The only comment initially extracted from D regarding the journal was a somewhat sarcastic, “the lovely reflective journal”, which the researcher at first interpreted to mean a rejection thereof on the part of Participant D. However, he went on to add the following: “I think what we’ve written so often that you just write what goes on in your head. I’ve always been very open and I’ve written what I think and a lot of times people probably don’t like it, but that’s their problem.” D had experienced the concept of the journal with respect to teaching practice as one which had been done to death, yet he had managed to be “very open” when he had used it, suggesting a benefit.

#### **A learning experience:**

##### **\* A sense of needing to find one’s own teaching style**

Regarding trying out new practices, D suggests that student teachers are essentially job hunters or apprentices, who want to be hired the following year and thus “subconsciously” try not to be “too much of a radical”. He did however try it with some of what he terms the “lesser important subjects”. Participant D experienced the adoption of conservative practices. It was his perception that “by fourth year”



students want to “appear traditional” or “conventional... because you probably need to remember that next year those schools might want to hire you”.

Regarding conforming to his host teacher’s style of teaching, D experienced their teaching styles as being “very similar”. However, when it came down to methods of maintaining classroom management, D followed his own instincts: “His disciplining I didn’t want to conform cos he was, he was very strange... he used to shrug off the kids like in a sort of humorous way as like, ‘You’re naughty, don’t do that’, whereas I was more sort of ‘Why are you doing this?’. See the reactions. Not jumping over the kids but be more firm.”

### **\* The experience of merging theory and practice**

Regarding trying out new practices, D suggests that student teachers are essentially job hunters or apprentices, who want to be hired the following year and thus “subconsciously” try not to be “too much of a radical”. He did however try it with some of what he terms the “lesser important subjects”.

Participant D’s experience is that schools are conservative regarding the true implementation of group work. He describes schools as not being “fully liberal”. Continuing in this vein, he describes how he perceives most teaching that occurs: “I think they like the kids still in neat little desks, quiet, doing their work so you would tend to do most of your teaching as ‘un’ group work.”

D experienced the converting of theory to practice, or “praxis” as something that the students had to go out and work out or do on their own. “It depends really on which theory because you get some lecturers who can assist you and then some who look daunted and say: ‘Here’s Freud’s theory’ or whatever, ‘Do your own thing.’ But it’s practical. You can do it. It’s possible.”

## **PARTICIPANT E**

E is a single, white female. The following themes were extracted upon analysis of E’s protocols.

### **A sense of it being mainly a positive experience**

Participant E's first reaction to the interviewer's opening directive to speak about her recent school experience or practice teaching was that it was an enjoyable experience. "I had a wonderful time." Remarks peppered throughout the interview substantiate this: "I really had a nice time", "... I think this school experience just gave me wings to fly," and "I feel like now I've got my wings to go into next year...".

### **An awareness of the importance of relationships:**

#### **\* Relationship with host teacher**

E's experience was that her host teacher was "brilliant – I think she really made it for", expressing a sense of the host teacher being pivotal with regard to whether the practice teaching is experienced as positive or negative. This is further illustrated in comments such as "she's exactly the kind of teacher I'd like to be in the classroom one day so it was so nice to be her shadow".

Being treated as a colleague rather than as a mere student was extremely empowering for Participant E. "I think the thing I loved the most about her was that she... she used to make out that we were a team so she'd even tell the class, Ms. E and I are a team, we discuss everything together, there's nothing she doesn't know, there's nothing I don't know and we're both teachers in the classroom, so she's not a student teacher, she's a teacher with me."

The host teacher was not just paying lip service to a concept, but practiced what she preached regarding her student being her colleague: "And she said it, but she also lived it like it felt like that all the time. Whenever a parent wrote a note she'd call me over and she'd ask me what I think she should say in the letter back or she would ask me what to do. Not that she, I don't think she didn't know what to do, I think she was getting my input, so I felt like valued from the beginning..." .

E's experienced her host teacher as a motivator and a positive uplifting force. "My

teacher was so good in that she kept just saying, pushing me to just go with it and just run with it and she put so much confidence into me.” This sentiment was echoed in other statements made by E: “I was so blessed because she really encouraged me all the time” or “You can do it! That was an excellent lesson!” or “You’re a good teacher!”. Although Participant E expressed that she was sure that some of her lessons “were flops”, her host teacher “just kept encouraging” her anyway.

### **\* Relationship with colleagues**

E experienced a sense of exclusion from some of the authority figures in the school in that they, as students, had not been formally welcomed or introduced to fellow staff members. She describes her experience in the following manner:

“Perhaps there just wasn’t that much support from the head of the school. There wasn’t much... ja, like we weren’t really welcomed into the school, because I think it’s a huge staff and because it was never announced in the staffroom – not that we wanted a big thing, but it was never announced: ‘These are the students from Rhodes’, or anything. We sometimes felt like teachers were wondering: ‘Who are you? What are you doing here?’ and then... maybe that was a negative experience”.

### **\* Relationship with learners**

On analysis of the protocols, participant E’s experience also appeared to include the experience of enjoying her learners, illustrated in comments like, “I really enjoyed the class”, and “I just enjoyed the learners”. She describes the class as having “lots of livewires, boys with issues”. What had turned into an enriching experience for her was dealing with a learner who had manifested bullying behaviour. There had been endless incidents of this. During the practice teaching period his desk had been placed in such a way in his group that “his desk... was sitting just in front of (her) desk”. “I just really gelled with him and I didn’t... he just totally changed. I mean I couldn’t believe the change. The last day he even brought me a little present. He never would have done that in the beginning of the year so, ja he was a challenge in the beginning, but I just found I clicked with him towards the end and his whole attitude changed. The class hated him and then they grew to really like him towards the end.”

### **\* Relationship with parents**

Participant E had to deal with a negative reaction from a parent as a result of a decision she had made concerning a learner. This highlighted the fact that many relationships are involved during practice teaching. She describes the incident: “ I had one negative experience with a parent once. It was during the two weeks when we had to completely take over in the classroom. I made a decision with a child: he wanted to organise a surprise for the teacher, the host teacher and he was sort of going on his own mission, but he wanted the whole class to chip in money towards the thing, but he wasn’t prepared to do what the class wanted to do. He wanted to do his own thing with the money. So I made a decision with the class to rather do what the whole class wanted to do with the money and the next day his mom came roaring in to school saying that I’d been unfair on him and I had gone right over his feelings and everything and that was just one... and that was on the last day as well so it was kind of... but I sorted it out with him so it was fine.”

### **An awareness of the cultural and contextual make-up of learners**

Participant E had experienced quite a shock to be faced with what she terms as “something... they always talk about” at university: “Well the biggest thing when I arrived was that, what I wasn’t expecting, was an autistic child in the class. The experience of dealing with inclusionary practices in the classroom had been an enlightening and challenging experience and she describes the learner concerned as “an absolute blessing” who “melted my heart till the very last day”.

Regarding having experienced cultural issues in her practice teaching block, Participant E expressed a sense of frustration around homework practices: “... often in the black culture, the children are not living with their parents at home and so often, you know, homework wasn’t done because it wasn’t supervised or they would come with excuses and you would never know – are they telling the truth are they lying – you can’t keep a tab on things as easily as you can with children who see their parents every day so if a test is not signed you know - why must you wait a whole week for the test to be signed or you don’t know if they’re telling the truth or not.”

## **Ambivalence around sources of anxiety:**

### **\* Anxiety around evaluation**

Evaluation, per se, had not been experienced as an anxiety-provoking issue by E. This was illustrated through statements like, “I don’t mind” and “... it doesn’t bother me really”. What had been experienced as an issue was a lack of consistency between evaluating lecturers: “It’s just that different lecturers look for different things as well so there’s not always a consistency so you can never meet... you can never please them all.” Although resigned to the fact that all lecturers are different, or as she phrases it, “you can’t make them all have the same personalities”, her experience included an element of frustration: “You can do an amazing lesson and another lecturer will think it’s like a distinction thing and another lecturer will think: ‘she didn’t use her resources so it wasn’t that good’.”

E describes crit lessons as “a little bit fake in that like it’s this big show and it’s not really what’s going on and you get so nervous that everything must be perfect so that if the intercom comes on during a lesson, it’s like ‘Oh!’ you know ‘my plan is going’ or if someone walks in for the rugby team...”.

### **\* Anxiety around maintaining discipline**

“... there were days when I sort of lost it with the class and felt like things were not going well and they had behaved badly and I came out to the staffroom and I was just upset and ‘Oh, I’ve lost it and I’m not a good teacher and...’.” An honestly recounted experience by Participant E. Incidents like this had forced her to deal with what can sometimes be one of the hardest parts of practice teaching. Although she admits that she “would have liked her (host teacher) to walk in and just give them the run down and tell them that they must listen”, what had actually worked and given her confidence was having to go right back in to the classroom and deal with the learners herself.

The fact that E's host teacher had treated her like a colleague and had been clear to the learners about this, made it easier for Participant E to maintain discipline: "... the children could pick up on that we were a team, so it wasn't like that when she left the classroom everything went riot...".

### **A sense of ambivalence around the value of the journal**

"I enjoyed my journal." So began Participant E's enthusiastic diatribe about the journal, "I enjoy journal writing so I think I'm at an advantage compared to other students. I didn't write in it every day but whenever something came up, I jotted it down. But I'm a very feelings sort of person so I don't find it difficult to say how I'm feeling." As someone able to share her emotions, she found the journal to be a valuable tool for reflection.

Her experience was that the faculty required the journal "so they can see a window into your life, inside of you" and to gain a sense of how different subjects and lessons had been experienced. "How did the day go, not what did you do. I did Maths and Afrikaans and I did Geography. Well, how did Geography go? And what was your feeling after the lesson? What comments did children make that made you feel good? What things went bad today?" She had enjoyed it, although there were times when she "didn't always put down (her) comments about things in the school that (she) didn't enjoy". Her experience was that she was aware of "cases... where teachers have picked up journals and read them and they, the students have got into big trouble."

### **A learning experience:**

#### **\* A sense of needing to find one's own teaching style**

A very good relationship with her host teacher, allowed E to implement "a lot" of her own ideas and bring her own style into the classroom. She admits that it had been an effortless experience for her because she and her host teacher had liked the same kind of thing and shared similar ideas: "I think that was quite easy for me because they were exactly what I'd like to do so it wasn't like... but she was very open to own my

ideas as well. I implemented a lot – a new discipline thing in the classroom and she loved that and now she’s still using it even though I’m now left...”.

### **\* The experience of merging theory and practice**

Participant E’s protocols indicate that she experienced a sense of having been well prepared by the coursework at the university. However, her experience had been that a lot of subjects get repeated because of a lack of communication between different years. “But on the whole the subjects have been very good, very thorough.” E describes the practical component of making teacher aids for classroom usage as “useful”.

E was clear that merging theory and practice was not a simple process: “I don’t think it’s always that easy. I think often in the real world it’s not exactly as it’s going on in the textbook, but I think the theory can really help you in the real world...”. Her experience was that it was not a straightforward issue, but that theory is a useful starting point for the novice. Her final words on that particular issue were: “I think sometimes it’s unrealistic... but generally things match up I think.”

## **4.3 Common themes**

The following section highlights the common themes that emerged from qualitative analysis of the data. Each participant did not necessarily experience each of the following themes. The six major themes that were extracted are as follows:

- A sense of it being mainly a positive experience
- An awareness of the importance of relationships
  - Relationship with host teacher
  - Relationship with colleagues
  - Relationship with learners
  - Relationship with parents
- An awareness of the cultural and contextual make-up of learners
- A sense of ambivalence around sources of anxiety

- Anxiety around evaluation
  - Anxiety around maintaining discipline
  - A heightened sense of responsibility
- A sense of ambivalence around the value of the journal
  - A learning experience
    - A sense of juggling multiple roles and tasks
    - A sense of needing to find one's own teaching style
    - The experience of merging theory and practice

The following table gives an overview of themes and whether they were experienced:

Theme	A	B	C	D	E
A sense of it being mainly a positive experience	*	*	*	*	*
An awareness of the importance of relationships:					
* relationship with host teacher	*	*	*	*	*
* relationship with colleagues	*		*		*
* relationship with learners	*	*	*		*
* relationship with parents					*
An awareness of the cultural and contextual make-up of learners	*		*	*	*
Ambivalence around sources of anxiety:					
* anxiety around evaluation				*	
* anxiety around maintaining discipline	*	*	*	*	*
* a heightened sense of responsibility		*			
A sense of ambivalence around the value of the journal	*	*	*	*	*
A learning experience:					
* a sense of juggling multiple roles and tasks		*	*		
* a sense of needing to find one's own teaching style	*	*		*	*
* the experience of merging theory and practice	*	*	*	*	*



## **4.4 Discussion of findings**

In this section, the researcher presents the common themes that have emerged from the qualitative analysis of the data, together with research findings that either support or oppose the proposed themes.

### **4.4.1 A sense of it being mainly a positive experience**

It is important to note that all the participants experienced practice teaching as being mainly a positive experience. Practice teaching played an important role in their development as teachers by providing a context wherein they could undergo a learning experience merging theory and practice. The experience also afforded the student teachers the opportunity to find their own teaching and management styles as well as learn to cope with multi-tasking. The responses, “I think it was nice that they gave us time to grow” and “I think this school experience just gave me wings to fly”, reflect this sense. From the analysis it appears that both male and female participants shared sentiments extolling the positive value of practice teaching, equally.

Findings of this study are in accordance with Tang (2003:483) who reported that experience in the field has been regarded as the most favourably viewed component of student teacher education in contributing to student teachers’ professional learning.

These findings however, do not support Bertone et al.’s (2003) account that although certain authors have found that practical experience is of great value in learning to teach, others have focused on the limits of practical experience. Certain authors have even questioned the usefulness of practice teaching (Bertone et al., 2003).

Participant B related that he had grown through the experience, but practice teaching had also had its difficult or painful side: “it’s good, I’m excited so now I’ve grown but I won’t say now crits are always fun”. Practice teaching, which he had experienced as challenging, had resulted in his professional growth. These findings echo Tang (2003:483) who suggests that “productive student teaching experiences take place in a student teaching context with an appropriate mix of challenge and support which drives student teachers’ ongoing construction and reconstruction of teaching self”.

#### **4.4.2 An awareness of the importance of relationships**

##### **Relationship with host teacher**

A significant aspect that came to the fore on analysis of the data was the importance of relationships when teaching, particularly the student teacher's relationship with the host teacher. All five of the participants in this study expressed a sense of the paramount importance of the relationship with the host teacher, and that this had impacted positively on their experience.

These findings correspond with a report by Knowles and Cole (1996:659) who espouse that the relationships that student teachers develop, particularly with "the experienced teachers with whom they spend most of their time... are of primary significance".

Participant A attributed her experiencing the practice teaching session as positive to her having had a good relationship with her host teacher: "I think I had a really good relationship with my host teacher which helped a lot."

The fact that Participant B had enjoyed a more personal relationship with his host teacher contributed to his positive overall experience. When recounting his experiences, he was able to laugh happily about the relaxed relationship he had enjoyed with his host teacher: "We actually got speaking sometimes on quite personal issues and I think in a lot of ways, because of the openness, we had a lot of times where we could just bond and hang out. It was good."

Participant C described her host teacher as "open-minded and a fantastic person to be with", highlighting both their positive relationship as well as the fact that her host teacher was open to new ideas and their implementation, rather than jealously guarding her territory. She added, "I developed most as a teacher in this actual experience, more than any other."

These findings are in accordance with Knowles and Cole (1996: 659) who report that “the development of a positive and productive working relationship between cooperating and preservice teachers is the most significant factor in determining successful field experiences”.

All the participants in this study had experienced their relationship with their host teacher as being positive and did not allude to any aspect of their relationships (including the supervisory role of the host teacher) as being a source of anxiety. These findings however, do not support the report by Knowles and Cole (1996), which found that the supervisory aspect of relationships with cooperating teachers is one of the major sources of stress for student teachers.

### **Relationship with colleagues**

Regarding relationships with other teachers in the host school during practice teaching, Participants A, C and E had all experienced these differently. Participant C had felt excluded by the other teachers in the grade whereas E had experienced a sense of exclusion from some of the authority figures in the school due to the fact that the student teachers had not been formally welcomed into the school or introduced to staff members.

A had been on a camp which had led to interaction with other teaching colleagues in her assigned grade. This had been a positive experience for her, seeing them “out of the classroom”, a phenomenon she described as “quite fun”. These findings are in accordance with Knowles and Cole (1996:659) who report that “opportunities to develop working relationships with members of the learning community are an important part of facilitating pre-service teacher development”.

### **Relationship with learners**

Regarding relationships with learners, four of the five participants had experienced a sense of the importance of fostering relationships with learners as an important contributory factor to a good practice teaching experience. The responses, “just be honest with them”, “be real with them” and ‘the kids have always been most

important”, reflect this sense. From the analysis it thus appears that student teachers realize the importance and value of forging relationships with their learners. The results of this study thus correlate with Knowles and Cole (1996: 660) who postulate that “understanding who students are and developing relationships with them are essential for successful field experiences”.

### **Relationships with parents**

Only Participant E had mentioned parents as a factor when discussing the importance of relationships within the practice teaching context. Participant E experienced a negative reaction from a parent regarding a decision she had made, but had sorted the matter out.

#### **4.4.3 An awareness of the cultural and contextual make-up of learners**

Four of the participants had indicated a sense of the cultural and/or contextual make-up of learners impacting on their practice. Participant C’s words that “teaching the (sex deleted for purposes of confidentiality) was much more difficult than I ever, ever imagined”, highlight the fact that student teachers are often not sufficiently prepared for certain classroom contexts or their diversity. Participants A and D had alluded to both the cultural and contextual make-up of learners having impacted on their experience and Participant D had been accused by a learner of being a “racist” after telling the learner to keep quiet.

Inadvertent cultural insensitivity had impacted on the practice of Participant A who had experienced an incident that had led to her apologizing to a Moslem student. She had based part of a lesson on a Biblical character. This type of incident may have been prevented had the student in question been exposed to a course in multicultural educational practices. This echoes Woodbridge (1994:67) who proposed a teacher-training model for multicultural education whereby student teachers learn how cultural influences might affect the educational experiences of students.

Findings of this study are also in accordance with Knowles and Cole (1996), who highlight the fact that few student teachers “understand or are prepared for the diversity that awaits them in many classrooms”. The existing literature points to the importance of student teachers being adequately trained in this regard and suggest that the time is indeed “ripe for the introduction of a compulsory course on multicultural education for all student teachers in South Africa, in order to prepare them adequately for a diverse pupil population in South Africa” (Woodbridge, 1994:68).

Participant E’s experience had been somewhat different and she had questioned the broader social structure impacting on certain aspects of the educational arena. E had pondered upon the issue of homework and wondered whether the fact that “often in the black culture, the children are not living with their parents at home and so often, you know, homework wasn’t done because it wasn’t supervised or they would come with excuses and you would never know – are they telling the truth are they lying?” This finding corresponds with the views of Knowles and Cole (1996) who found that “preservice and beginning teachers regularly talk of the importance of being able to respond to the diverse backgrounds, experiences, abilities, and interests of their soon-to-be students”.

Participant A had made reference to the “different type of child” she had encountered in a previous practice teaching session, who had appeared more worldly-wise than her present learners, whom she appeared to view in a more positive light. The fact that she had not enjoyed the previous learners as much as her present ones with whom she had identified more, can perhaps be attributed to the fact that she was more in tune with what she terms, their being “a lot younger...”.

These findings correlate with Knowles and Cole (1996:657) who postulate that “lack of attention to the community within which the school is situated and the role of the school within the community does little to help student teachers understand and appreciate the contextual and cultural make-up of students”.

#### **4.4.4 Sources of anxiety**

##### **Anxiety around evaluation**

Only Participant D made specific reference to finding evaluation somewhat anxiety-inducing. The results of this study concur with Ngidi and Sibaya's (2003) report of a British study wherein it was shown that student teachers experience anxiety from factors such as evaluation, pupil and professional concerns, class control and teaching practice requirements.

### **Anxiety around maintaining discipline**

What seems of central importance here is that all the student teachers in this study alluded to or referred to the maintaining of discipline as a source of anxiety. This echoes Tulley and Chiu (1995) who put forward that student teachers have consistently ranked discipline as one of their greatest sources of anxiety and uncertainty.

Participant E referred to an incident when her learners had got out of hand. She describes being "upset" and her thoughts were, "Oh, I've lost it and I'm not a good teacher...". Participant D referred to having his learners "not under control" and spoke about having to "contain" his learners for an evaluation lesson, a factor he admitted to having experienced as "the only stressful thing".

### **A heightened sense of responsibility**

Only Participant B alluded to a sense of now being someone with increased responsibility and what he succinctly terms, one of those "teacher people" and thus responsible for the welfare of learners. This was both a new realization and an added stress for him which ultimately placed "a lot of stuff on (his) shoulders". He viewed this as a valuable learning experience: "We are put through a lot of stuff and it does grow us and it's not just for university – like children I am responsible for."

This finding correlates with other researchers who have noted that student teachers' perceptions of possible sources of anxiety related to practice teaching can vary greatly

from individual to individual (Ngidi & Sibaya, 2003). The findings of this study are also in accordance with Knowles and Cole's (1996:656) assertion that "few student teachers enter formal preparation programmes with either comprehensive or realistic understandings about teaching and the roles of teachers".

#### **4.4.5 A sense of ambivalence around the value of the journal**

Participant A's experience was that the journal was "a bit of a pain". She had however recognized its usefulness in earlier years but repetition over four years of study had led to her comment that you end up filling the journal "with nonsense...". The findings of this study are not in accordance with a report by McGlinn (2003) that all student teachers were positive about the reflection cycle and its influence on their development as teachers.

Experiences and opinions differed with regard to the journal's usefulness and its role as a tool for self-reflection. As someone able to share her emotions, Participant E found the journal to be a valuable tool for reflection. The results of this study are also similar to those obtained by McGlinn (2003) who found that the usefulness surrounding reflection is an essential element in learning, as an experience in itself does not lead to the formation of new ideas.

Participant B had also "loved" the journal and had used it as an "emotional release". The findings of this study with regard to these respondents are in accordance with Johnson (2001) who reports how journals have encouraged the use of the personal voice and sought to use the telling of the narrative to gain a fuller understanding of feelings, actions and intentions.

#### **4.4.6 A learning experience**

##### **A sense of juggling multiple roles and tasks**

Two of the respondents, B and C had verbalized a sense of difficulty around having to multi-task. Participant B described getting home after "drained" after a day of "all the teacher stuff" and then still having to set out lesson plans for the next day, assessing

learners' work for the teacher's marks as well as having to cope with the university's demands in terms of deadlines for various tasks.

It is important to recognize that the results of this study correspond with the views of Knowles and Cole (1996:657), who claim that most preservice teacher education programmes place relatively little emphasis on the contextual realities of schools or on the complexity of teaching, focusing instead on what takes place between students and teachers within the confines of classrooms.

Another learning experience for Participant B resulted from his having personal issues outside the class to deal with as well as having to face the demands of being a teacher. Participant B had learned the skill of prioritizing and made decisions regarding his practice that would ensure his survival: "So there's a certain aspect of the file taking up too much of my time. I don't mind neglecting that a little bit just to make sure that I'm there for the children and getting through stuff."

Thus, in order to survive the teaching practice, some of the students had devised strategies for dealing with the multitudinous demands placed on them. Some of these strategies had been less than honest. Participant C had pretended to teach far fewer lessons than she actually had during a practice teaching session in order not to have to write copious and detailed lesson plans, a practice she referred to as "just ridiculous". She hinted to the researcher that this had not been the only occasion when duplicity had been a necessary survival tactic: "... I never told them so I wouldn't have to do those kinds of things...".

The existing literature on neophyte teachers correlate with the results of this study and many teachers devise, through trial and error, "strategies enabling them to survive in the school system", a process that "inevitably led them to compromise their ideals..." (Ballantyne, 1992:360). This is borne out by other research that suggests that teachers' work is a complex set of interdependent concepts rather than a discrete classroom-based enterprise (Knowles & Cole, 1996:656).



## **A sense of needing to find one's own teaching style**

Four of the participants had experienced a sense of needing to find their own teaching style. However, the experiences and the specifics had differed, with only one participant using the field experience to really try to find a personal teaching style:

Although aware of the necessity of finding a personal teaching style, Participant A had opined that this had not been an issue for her by dint of the fact that she and her host teacher “think very much along the same lines”, thus negating the need for experimentation with new theory and trying out new ideas. D also experienced his host teacher’s style of teaching as being “very similar” to his own. Participant E experienced being allowed to implement “a lot” of her own ideas and bring her own style into the classroom. She admits that it had been an effortless experience for her because she and her host teacher had liked the same kind of thing and shared similar ideas. The above results suggest that some students are not willing to try to find their own styles and lack understanding regarding their individual styles and roles.

Regarding trying out new practices, D suggests that student teachers are essentially job hunters or apprentices, who want to be hired the following year and thus “subconsciously” try not to be “too much of a radical”. He did however try it with some of what he terms the “lesser important subjects”. Participant D experienced the adoption of conservative practices. It was his perception that “by fourth year” students want to “appear traditional” or “conventional... because you probably need to remember that next year those schools might want to hire you”.

Participant B on the other hand had used this experience of practice teaching to find his own personal style and postulated that practice teaching had afforded him the space in which to grow and develop in the direction most needed by him.

These findings are in accordance with the existing literature which reveals that different student teaching contexts offer varied opportunities of growth for student teachers (Tang, 2003:495).

## **The experience of merging theory and practice**

All of the participants in this study referred to the experience of merging theory and practice. It had been Participant A's experience that certain approaches, promoted by the university, were not being practised in the classroom and she cited group work as an example. Participant D's experience confirmed this view and he declared that schools are conservative regarding the true implementation of group work: "I think they like the kids still in neat little desks, quiet, doing their work so you would tend to do most of your teaching as 'un' group work."

The merging of theory and practice can thus be hindered by what is already happening in the field. The findings of this study confirm studies that have characterized the difficulty of shifting from academic knowledge and theory to the actual work of teaching (Bertone et al., 2003).

Participant C referred to the theory taught as "the things that we've done (that) have helped", and B's cautious response was that "some courses weren't as applicable as others". Participant E was emphatic that merging theory and practice was not a simple process: "I don't think it's always that easy. I think often in the real world it's not exactly as it's going on in the textbook, but I think the theory can really help you in the real world...".

This study's findings - that students experienced the merging of theory and practice as challenging - correlates with a study conducted by Tang (2003:492), who referred to "attempts to bridge campus-based and school-based learning" as one of the factors that render an appropriate mix of challenge and support which engenders productive learning experiences for student teachers.

## **4.5 Summary**

In analyzing the protocols, several themes were identified. Some of these themes had sub-themes. All of the participants did not necessarily experience each theme.

Considering the multi-faceted demands placed on student teachers in their final practice teaching period, two of the participants highlighted their experience of feeling overwhelmed with various deadlines that had to be met, as well as the demands of teaching and being solely responsible for a class. The importance of administration, organization and keeping up to date became apparent as did having to set aside personal issues in the context of the classroom with its already multitudinous demands. The sense of needing to find an individual teaching style was experienced by eighty percent of the respondents.

However, the teaching practice period had been experienced as a positive learning experience by all the participants, who had all grappled with the issues of evaluation and the disciplining of learners, to differing degrees. An awareness of the cultural and/or contextual make-up of learners and its impact on practice teaching, was experienced by four-fifths of the participants in this study.

All of the respondents found having to merge theory and practice in the classroom a learning experience with both challenges and benefits. The importance of practical experience can never be underestimated and neither can the role of theory when training teachers. It is the balance and merging and re-merging of these two processes that ensure the “successful” teacher at the end of the day. Much as there appears to be a linear progression from theory to practice, and from student teacher to teacher, this is not a one-way street. The ongoing professional development of teachers and their practice, make this more of a circular than linear progression.

The value of the journal as a tool for self-reflection was a controversial issue with the respondents in this study. Its usefulness was either strongly promoted or rejected.

There appeared to be a sense of ambivalence around sources of anxiety with only one respondent making reference to anxiety around evaluation. All of the participants experienced a sense of anxiety around the disciplining of learners. The importance of the student teacher’s relationship with learners was alluded to by eighty percent of the sample, whereas only sixty percent mentioned their other teaching colleagues.

A central phenomenon that became apparent from the analysis is the importance of the host teacher. All of the participants made reference of this. The host teacher appeared to have served a triple function. On the one hand the host teacher served a didactic role, teaching the student how to cope in the classroom and on the other hand, a mentoring role offering support to the student teacher. Linked to both of these, the host teacher had a supervisory role, keeping an eye on proceedings as well as evaluating the student teacher in certain learning areas. The host teacher thus plays a vital role in how the student teacher experiences practice teaching.

The next chapter addresses the limitations of the study and concluding remarks and recommendations are put forward.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

Chapter five presents the main findings of this study and recommendations. The purpose of this study was to investigate student teachers' experiences of practice teaching.

*Specifically, the study attempted to answer these questions:*

- 1.2.1. How do students feel about practice teaching?
- 1.2.2 What do students experience as positive aspects of practice teaching?
- 1.2.3 What are some of the negative aspects of practice teaching?
- 1.2.4 Which aspects of practice teaching have been the most challenging?

#### **5.2 Summary of main findings**

The participants in this particular study were a select group, asked to provide selected information about their individual experiences. Therefore any generalizations derived from the findings of this research should be approached with caution. However, the anecdotal information provided describes incidents that can and do occur in many South African classrooms. One could then assume that these student teachers and the classrooms in which they undertook their practice teaching has some degree of comparability with other South African classrooms. The findings of this research will therefore have relevance to other teacher education programmes in South Africa.

With regard to aim one, to investigate the phenomenon of practice teaching as experienced by a sample of student teachers, the finding was that the participants in this study experienced practice teaching as mainly a positive learning experience that played an enormous role in their development as teachers by providing a context wherein they could merge theory and practice, find their own teaching and management styles as well as adapt to the demands of multi-tasking.

With regard to aim two, to determine the positive aspects of practice teaching with respect to the respondents, the finding was that all of them had experienced the benefits of a positive relationship with their host teacher. This solid base had then impacted positively on the whole experience.

With regard to aim three, to ascertain the negative aspects of practice teaching with respect to the respondents, the finding was that maintaining discipline was an ongoing concern and for some individuals, evaluation and the keeping of a journal as well as relationships with other teaching colleagues besides the host teacher, had been experienced negatively.

With regard to aim four, to identify the most challenging aspects of practice teaching with respect to the respondents, one of the findings was that the cultural and contextual make-up of learners add a dimension to class teaching that needs to be addressed. Another finding was that the juggling of multiple roles and tasks in the classroom as well as dealing with personal issues outside of the classroom can be a challenge. The converting of theory learnt at university to practice in the classroom was yet another challenge.

### **5.3 Limitations of the study**

According to phenomenological theory, the interviews should have proceeded with as little prompting as possible. As can be seen from the transcriptions, this did not transpire.

Another limitation of the study was that only one interview per participant was held. On reflection, this was insufficient for in-depth exploration and a follow-up interview would have shed more light on intended meanings, thus adding to the study's internal validity through member checking which involves taking interpretations back to respondents to check. However, time constraints did not allow for this.

A further limitation was that the process of audio-taping excludes non-verbal behaviour which can be a further rich source of data. This study's interpretive value

would have been enriched had a more detailed observational account been adhered to during the interview process as these were rather scanty.

Yet another limitation was that only white students were interviewed. Considering the theme of multicultural education, a black perspective may have yielded different results. Thus a more heterogeneous sample of student teachers which includes respondents from various cultural groups is recommended for further research.

An additional limitation was that the findings of this study are trans-situational to a degree, but cannot be generalized to broader populations and settings because the sample group was not a random one, but a purposive sample. Kvale (1996:102) adds that a common critique of interview studies is that the findings are not generalizable because there are too few subjects – however, a paradoxical answer from the history of psychology is that if the aim of a study is to obtain general knowledge, then focus on a few intensive case studies. The institution was chosen for practical reasons as well as for the fact that no other study of this nature had, to the researcher's knowledge, been conducted there.

Although the interviews resulted in rich narratives regarding the experience of practice teaching, more specific questions may have narrowed the focus down onto only those areas of particular interest to the researcher. This, however, would not have been true to the methodology employed in this study.

Triangulation of methods could have been used to strengthen the external validity of the project. If time had allowed, it would have been interesting to perform a questionnaire study with a large sample of student teachers asking questions based on the information gleaned from the results of this research. Results obtained from this questionnaire could be used to strengthen the external validity of the study as well as to inform universities.

This study has implications for future student teachers and for universities and training institutions that train prospective teachers. To enhance the practice teaching experience, student teachers should prepare themselves for its challenges and

demands. Staff members involved in the training of student teachers may also learn from this research as can schools where student teachers are posted.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

Student teachers need to be sensitively and adequately trained to deal with their colleagues, learners and the wider community, particularly the parents of learners.

Teacher education courses should be realistic in training teachers to expect and feel confident to deal with a range of learner responses and behaviours.

Student teachers should be allowed time during their practice teaching period to concentrate their efforts on developing classroom teaching strategies and dealing with class related administrative tasks without the added burden of assignments set by the university.

The journal would be a more effective tool for reflection if the principles laid down by McGlinn (2003) were adopted:

1. Student teachers should use what they have learned in their reflections to plan future lessons.
2. Co-operating teachers can support the reflection cycle by providing time for reflection.
3. Students need to feel secure, to have a safe place to reflect.

#### **5.5 Future research options**

Little research has been done on the phenomenon of student teachers' experience of teaching practice within the South African context. It is hoped that this study will serve as a pilot study for further research around the topic.

In view of the above limitations and recommendations, the following issues are possible future research options:



1. To explore the experience of practice teaching of a multi-cultural sample of student teachers.
2. To investigate how literature on practice teaching assigns the student teacher an untenable position between novice and professional.
3. To further explore a subsidiary goal of this research project, namely the negative aspects of practice teaching.
4. To examine the effect of the host teacher role, specifically, on the experience of practice teaching.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

This research project provides insight into the experiences of student teachers following their final extended practice teaching period at a school.

A phenomenological methodology was employed in order to garner pithy material from the five interviewees and the data was analysed by extracting themes from their narratives.

## **5.7 A final word**

I learned a lot from this undertaking. Even when we think we know our subject matter very well, there will always be surprises and new knowledge that emerges.

I also learned that interviewing people is a difficult business. As Oakley (cited in Fontana & Frey, 1994:374) so succinctly says:

“Interviewing is rather like a marriage: everybody knows what it is, an awful lot of people do it, and yet behind each closed front door there is a world of secrets”. I am grateful to those students who were willing to share their “secrets” with me.

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## **APPENDIX 1**

### **APPROACH FOR VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH PROJECT**

Dear Sir/Madam

#### Participation in Research

As a Masters student at the University of Zululand, I am conducting research to explore student teachers' experience of Practice Teaching.

Final year Bachelor of Education intermediate phase students from the University of Fort Hare will participate in the research project. Information will be gained through conducting interviews in a strictly confidential setting. Excerpts of the interview may be used as part of the final report, but identifying details will under no circumstances be disclosed.

I am approaching you for your voluntary participation in this research project. Your participation is valuable and will be most appreciated.

Participants may request a copy of the research report.

Yours sincerely

Melanie Wagenaar (Mrs)

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH STUDY**

I,

---

hereby consent to participate in this research project about my experiences of Practice Teaching, the purpose and goals of which have been explained to me by Melanie Wagenaar. I further agree that the data obtained may be used for research and possible publication, on condition that confidentiality of my identity is maintained.

SIGNATURE

---

DATE

---

**APPENDIX 3**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE**

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SCHOOL:** \_\_\_\_\_

**GRADE TAUGHT:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DURATION OF SCHOOL EXPERIENCE IN WEEKS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PREVIOUS SCHOOL EXPERIENCE:**

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**MY PROFESSIONAL STRENGTHS:**

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**MY PROFESSIONAL SHORTCOMINGS:**

---

**WHAT I ENJOYED THE MOST:**

---

**WHAT I DID NOT ENJOY:**

---

**WHAT I WOULD CHANGE ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE IF I COULD:**

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**MY WISH FOR NEXT YEAR:**

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## APPENDIX 4

### Interview Guidelines

The research question:

**What are student teachers' feelings around practice teaching, particularly with regard to the positive and negative aspects and the challenges that face them?**

- What is your experience of practice teaching?
- Were you prepared by your course work?
- What were some of the positive aspects?
- What were some of the negative aspects?
- How did you feel about evaluation?
- Can you tell me about your learners?
- What did you find stressful?
- What were some of the challenging aspects?
- What would you have improved upon?
- What was your relationship with your host teacher like?
- Was disciplining easy?
- Did you enjoy the journal?

## APPENDIX 5

### TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH MS. A

- I. Tell me about your school experience.
- A. Okay. Well I was at School X for the whole of this term, 7 weeks of it and I thoroughly enjoyed it. I think I had a really good relationship with my host teacher which helped a lot. She was, you know, encouraging and she also critted some of my lessons, gave me feedback and encouraged me with the parts that I could've improved on, and just kind of showed me where I was going wrong. I got quite a lot of feedback from her before the lecturers came... which was very nice.
- I. Tell me about your learners.
- A. (pause) How I found them? (interviewer nods encouragement) I think - compared to - cos I was in a Grade 6 class at School L (a rural school comprising many farm children from neighbouring areas) and I found this class a little bit younger which was quite nice because they weren't that sort of pre-Grade 7 stage where they get a bit macho. There wasn't that much of it this year that I found. Like one or two of the girls were a little bit catty, but other than that, they were a lot younger I found them. So it made it easier not having those sort of things to deal with as well as the teaching.
- I. What type of school is L? If you are comparing the learners, you say that X's learners are younger...
- A. I suppose there they have to...
- I. Is it a different type of school?
- A. Ag the atmosphere is different there. Maybe a different type of child as well to the child that's... I just think they have more independence so maybe they deal with more at home, where they come from, the farming community, maybe I just think.
- I. So there weren't cultural issues that came into play?
- A. At School L? (interviewer nods assent) (pause) Just a difference in the child.
- I. How did you cope with the cultural diversity at School X?
- A. (pause) Sorry... it wasn't really an issue. Ag, maybe at School L it was. The white children there were from a farming community but they still (pause) I don't know... Ja, I didn't really see - it wasn't like an issue, it wasn't something you had to go there and try you didn't have to go and try. No.
- I. So you didn't have to accommodate different learners' needs?
- A. No. Just the one little girl was a Moslem so I had to be careful like not to... Like the one lesson I didn't know, right at the beginning. I was doing my special sub and I based the RSV thing on Noah's Ark and we did a character profile of the different people that were involved and she like said to me in the middle of the thing after she had read what we were doing and she said: "Ms A, I can't do this, I'm a Moslem.
- I. So how did you handle it?
- A. I just like apologised and said okay well, I let her get on with something else. I didn't quite know what to do but then after that had happened I changed everything around. Even though I didn't take it from a Christian point of view - we were just talking about everyone involved, but it was still like there...
- I. She couldn't base it on her own experience?
- A. Ja. Ja.

- I. And do you think you were prepared by your course work at Fort Hare for this school experience?
- A. Ja. It was nice cos during my school experience you are able to put some of that theory into practice You don't... you think: why do I have to learn about the development of a child and its different stages and sometimes when you like... when you actually there and you think 'I wonder why that child isn't doing too good in that and you go to your notes and you realise wow that's why - maybe they haven't developed they are maybe still at that stage and you know who to maybe they need a bit more it's quite nice
- I. You spoke about converting theory to practice. Is it easy?
- A. Not as easy as it sounds cos everyone's like ooh ja we need to put our theory into practice and, ja it takes a bit of time getting used to. But the nice thing is we learn about constructivism and group work and you finally get to see, well okay it worked today - maybe I got this right but maybe tomorrow it might not work because the kids might not be feeling like it...
- I. And how did you feel about being evaluated?
- A. (pause) I just... some... I know some people take it too personally and they don't like what the lecturers say - they don't agree with them, what they say, but I'm very open-minded and broad shouldered so I take it, they want us to learn that's why, they want us to improve, that's why we get evaluated.
- I. Do you find it a stressful process?
- A. I haven't this year. Like I'm used to it now. This year I've grown with confidence. I didn't even notice that my lecturer was sitting there watching me. I think it's just...
- I. Tell me, any relationships develop with other teachers? How did this happen in the school you were at?
- A. I only really got to know my grade teachers. The camp as well that was nice. You get to see them out of the classroom. Ja, it was quite fun (laughs).
- I. So do you feel as if you were treated as one of the staff or did you always feel as if you were a student and you had to know your place?
- A. They didn't treat you like you really had to know your place. They weren't derogatory or whatever. They were decent. Friendly, that type of thing.
- I. Tell me what would you improve upon regarding this experience for future students.
- A. (pause) Ummm....
- I. Would you like me to come back to that?
- A. Yes.
- I. Disciplining the children?
- A. I found it harder disciplining them during the ELP stage because I was only there two days a week and I only really taught like one or two lessons and that was mainly my special study, so like I found when I was actually teaching and they were doing something I had the discipline, but like if my host teacher wasn't there and we were maybe waiting for another teacher then it was like they wouldn't notice me in the classroom and that was a bit... but I found that when I arrived for the second term I had thought about it like how am I going to keep them settled so once I was part of the furniture teaching them more regularly then obviously then they realised I wasn't just there to play I was there to discipline them. It got easier as I spent more time with them.

- I. Did you feel you were able to experiment with the new theory that you had been taught at university or did you find you were doing what your host teacher was doing?
- A. I think my host teacher and I think very much along the same lines which was quite nice. Lecturer Z had done quite a lot of work with us on discipline. You refine your own discipline strategies into the person you are so and I know my host teacher was very much positive reinforcement but at times you have to discipline down the line - positive reinforcement doesn't work all the time.
- I. What other things didn't work taking it into the classroom.
- A. I found it a little bit harder with the group work. I don't think they'd done much of it if I wanted to do group work I would take them outside cos its really hard to get them to keep their voices down because you're really close to those other classes on their camp we just managed to talk about it cos they just had to brainstorm and I find people are working independently although they are in a group and then they think they've completely
- I. Is group work stressed at Fort Hare?
- A. Ja
- I. And tell me what did you find helpful?
- A. I think it was nice that they gave us time to grow. It was nice just to be back in the classroom.
- I. And I know it's a strange word to use but do you think you've made the 'correct' career choice?
- A. Ja, second year I was a bit was I doing the right thing but after being in the schools three times.
- I. Any negative comments about this experience?
- A. (pause) Not really. I've just had a really good one this year.
- I. So do you think it depends on the school as well?
- A. Ja. And also maybe even your host teacher. Teacher X was just very accommodating. She just let me have freedom. Okay this is what we have to cover this week but do it totally how you want to so I didn't have to sift through the textbook. She just let me get on with it which was really nice.
- I. If you had to draw a picture of yourself that encapsulated your whole experience, what would you be doing in the picture?
- A. (laughs) That's a tough one. (pause)
- I. Tell me about your wish for next year.
- A. My wish for next year? I just want to get some independence. I stay at home with my parents - on home turf - you take a few things for granted. I just want to experience life a bit more before I settle down at one school...
- I. Thank you.
- I. Tell me about your journal.
- A. It was just like a bit of a pain - for every lesson you give you had to evaluate how you taught and then the assessment of the learners, you had to comment on that and try say how you would improve your lesson, say how you would incorporate your children and then after three of those a day what else do you have to say. They wanted us to reflect on what was happening at school or whether they were doing an assembly and how did you feel it was run and what you learned from other teachers, watching other teachers teaching. Which was fine, I mean you could comment on that - seven weeks...
- I. Do you think a journal is a useful tool?

- A. Ja-a because when we've done it in the past it's quite nice we have to do some self-evaluation and you like to look up in the journal for that and give you some ideas and see how you've done. I think by the time we get to fourth year you want to write almost the same thing four times.
- I. So do you think it should just be in fourth year or come from a different angle or focus on a different topic. If you were left the freedom to write in your journal as you wanted, would you prefer that?
- A. Ja, I'd probably only write maybe once or twice a week if I really saw something I was struck by, you know, otherwise you find you are just filling it up with nonsense you know.

## APPENDIX 6

### TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH MR. B

I: Tell me about your school experience.

B: I can tell you about it. This last term we did our third school experience over the course and it was – I felt in a lot of ways that I was confident – it was good cos I felt, oh my goodness straight away - fourth time going into the school; I can really relax; I can control the kids - I know I have good rapport with the children. In some ways I did feel like I've had a lot of experience already and I kind of didn't know which parts of the school experience I wanted to focus on and what I mean by that is in terms of do I want to focus on my lesson preps, do I want to focus on assessment, do I want to focus on really getting to know the children, on how to develop my own style? But every experience that I've been on there's a spontaneity that comes out where you just go with the flow like this school experience I had a lot of personal issues that I needed to deal with and things that happened to me outside of school and for me a big learning thing was to really learn to cope with still being a teacher... so, ja school experience is always a challenging time. I think it grows us as students and now today's my first day back at lectures and I'm feeling like it's almost a different person sitting there in lectures (laughs) a coming of age sort of experience.

I: So tell me did you find it a positive experience or a negative experience?

B: (pause) Well there's obviously two sides to it: (of) course positive cos I'm the type of person, I like to grow and challenge myself and I see challenging situations as when you come out the other... it's good, I'm excited, so now I've grown, but I won't say now crits are always fun. I won't tell my friends it's a fun experience - you obviously take on a lot of responsibility during that time. Definitely positive because growing us to be these teacher-people and so in that way I think we definitely put through... I don't know what the word is in English – we are put through a lot of stuff and it does grow us, because we definitely - there's a lot expected of us and it's not just for university. Like children I am responsible for and a lot of stuff on your shoulders

I: So this is the real thing?

B: Ja. Definitely. I've been feeling like this school experience is really good at giving you a real-world experience. There are one or two things in terms of the way that the university operates; obviously it has a particular set of tasks and things they want us to go through and get done which kind of shapes the way that we do experience school life but as far as possible I try and make it as real world as I can. So there's a certain aspect of the file taking up too much of my time. I don't mind neglecting that a little bit just to make sure that I'm there for the children and getting through stuff.

I: You mentioned the file. What would you change about the school experience?

B: I really found it this year to be very loaded in terms of... we have this file where every single lesson has to have a plan and obviously there's assessment of learners and as a teacher you know you get home like drained, like you know all the teacher stuff, you drained by the end of it and then you've got to set out a lesson plan or you still want to assess the learners for the teachers' marks and on top of that we had assignments which we had to think about and over and above that we have a special study or mini-thesis that we are working

on throughout the year - so some of those things, I mean the assignments and the thesis thing - I just completely ignored cos I can only do one or two things properly so now I'm under pressure now in the fourth term to really get those things going.

I. So how do you feel it could have been improved upon?

B. I think - I really do think in my heart by the time we get to fourth year I feel that when we have two or three schools we've been to already, you've obviously got a long way to the course - the fourth year school experience they should put us in the schools and say: 'Do it, create your own file and your own reflection of what you've learned now. Take this opportunity. You've paid all this amount of money to come and study, use this opportunity to develop those areas which you want to develop.' I know for myself I really wanted to get stuck into assessment or really just help with the marking or whatever - it's something we've been encouraged not to do, but I still want to develop that. I think that would be a good thing if they really just gave us more freedom to explore our own areas. Hopefully we've become critical thinkers after four years or so and wouldn't just be lazy or anything. We'd be able to put something together that's our own - what I'm interested in - what I've learned and it could be combined with our thesis as well.

I. Tell me about your journal.

B. I loved the journal. The journal was such a release for me. I think the university wanted us to reflect on things that we've seen in the school and maybe relate it to theory or practice. I really used it as an emotional release almost cos like I said I was going through a lot of personal things. I wrote those things. I wrote them in the journal so that the lecturers could and assess and see, 'this is what he's going through and he's still got to cope with the school', and so it was awesome for me to get it out there and on to paper. Get it down.

I. Tell me about your relationship with your learners.

B. (laughs) I had, I had this thing. I feel like the personal style I'm developing is quite relaxed. I don't subscribe to petty rules and things and I really, we've been encouraged to keep a distance from the children and not get too friendly with them which I agree with, but I really push myself to going there and be real with them, just be B, not so much Mister B. Really get down to them and speak to them about the surfing and stuff and Bob Squarepants on tv and really just hang with them and get a vibe going in the class. But I viewed it as a strength of mine during this school experience where I noticed that I could be like almost friends with them but then still just know that I have the responsibility and the authority in class. (laughs) They responded really well to it. I mean we had a good time. What was the question again?

I. That was the question - about your learners.

B. I just - I loved them. In fact a few times I just said to the: Guys - I'm doing this now when I was disciplining whatever. Do this because I love you. I want to see you grow and hopefully this will teach you a lesson. Just being honest with them. Those days when I had a rough day I'd start out by just saying... ja, just be honest about my life and sometimes coming to school on a skateboard or a bicycle, you don't look like this teacher person whatever, but I was pushing boundaries whatever to be as real with them as possible. Not to put on this mask. I'm the teacher but... I also had a hard time in kind of being more real.

- I. So how did you maintain discipline?
- B. In the class? Um (pause) I don't know. I found that if I was do fun things then smack my hands together and just be like all right that's enough. At times I needed to be disciplined maybe. They'd be writing a test or something and I'd start kind of fooling around, making them laugh whatever. Ja, I never really had a problem. Some guys I don't think they were discipline problems as such but more like pastoral cases in a way. Like they needed someone to talk to. They needed a few moments outside the class whatever. But general class discipline wasn't a problem. I mean I'd just say it's about time we need to get back into some work or do whatever it's fine.
- I. Do you think you were prepared adequately by your coursework at varsity?
- B. (pause) Well, it's a very yes and no situation. We obviously have about five or six different courses and lecturers and obviously some courses weren't as applicable as others. I found that speaking as a group of fourth years together coming back I just noticed that we really appreciate the more practical side of the courses. Like how to put together a social science module. I actually got to do that during this experience and things like that more than reams and reams of theory. Those workshopping sorts of sessions where we've got to get stuck in and involved but I definitely do feel that over all in general as a whole we were prepared, I felt well prepared. I was confident in areas of assessment. Our lesson preparation over the last couple of years has been good. Definitely been good.
- I. Tell me about your relationship with your host teacher.
- B. We had a really relaxed relationship. It's good to have an experience where people are pretty free and easy. We actually got speaking sometimes on quite personal issues and I think in a lot of ways because of the openness we had a lot of times where we could just bond and hang out (laughs). It was good. What I really liked about this experience was my host teacher was willing to give me criticism, she didn't feel like she needed to hold back because of our relationship - in fact she also asked me to crit her on a few things, just say and be honest, this could... I feel maybe in this area you're holding back a bit or whatever the case may have been. It was exciting to just be relaxed and be able to be myself and I'm sure that I don't feel that my host teachers were threatened either by having someone in the class although it did get them to think about things a bit I'm sure.
- I. Did you find you had to conform their teaching styles and discipline or were you able to experiment?
- B. Not at all this time around. Over the few years I don't think I ever had. I think it might just be the teachers who have always been open and interested in how we do things. I also know that I've had to push myself not to care what the host teacher really thinks maybe because I've got a stronger character or whatever, but I know other students may get quite intimidated having somebody there.
- I. And how do you feel about being evaluated?
- B. (pause) I enjoy it because I really want to improve and I always am excited to hear the lecturers after a crit lesson or whatever and what they are saying. I am being honest as well. They are always so interested "your introduction was lovely or you held the children you know for the whole lesson". But I'm excited for them to say to me "you know, you really need to be more organised" so I can really pick up on those issues and develop them. I think



it's important whether it's with a file the crit lesson or whatever it is just so that I can know how I'm going.

I. Do you find it anxiety-inducing?

B. Not really.

I. B, if you had to draw a picture for me encapsulating your whole experience, what would you be doing?

B. What would I be doing? I'd be – I don't know, as soon as you said that I saw myself in front of the board, kind of, bouncing off the walls sort of thing, just just having fun, making the most of it. It would be fun. Fun.

I. What was the most challenging that happened to you?

B. (pause) Well like I said in the beginning I think just having to cope with stuff that was going on outside of school and push ahead during school time. That this year was a big challenge. When I think back to past experiences, the challenges were in the beginning to keep discipline as we've had a couple of experiences it's been good to just grow into, just grow into it naturally. Otherwise I'm a bit on the spot now I can't think.

I. B, thank you.

## APPENDIX 7

### TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH MS. C

I. Tell me about your school experience.

C. What aspect?

I. You tell me.

C. Well... this school experience was the best one I ever had. In terms of teaching... teaching the (*sex deleted for purposes of confidentiality*) was much more difficult than I ever, ever imagined. But I was given the most freedom to teach. My teacher obviously thought I was of the calibre to be able to teach. She didn't interrupt so much, she just let me get on with it and didn't actually care what I taught as long as I was, the syllabus was followed and I could get on with it. My discipline was excellent. I enjoyed teaching, it was. I developed most as a teacher in this actual experience, more than any other.

I. Why do you think this was so?

C. Because you were just, you had to teach for two weeks. I never realised how much admin actually went into being a teacher. As you know, before you always had to teach in your classroom and she always had to do all that and you got on with your teaching whereas now your teacher, she came in she did a few things but you ultimately told all the kids when they had anything on, when they had to go to remedial, when they had to go to - anything. I they had to remember their (*specific type of gym equipment deleted for purposes of confidentiality*), you had to remember to do that and there is so much more to do than I, I ever thought that there was and you actually... And also the fact that my teacher is not a part of - there are three grade heads or grade teachers and my teacher she's been there the shortest time so she's not in the loop kind of thing and I found because I was with her I was also left out of the loop and the head teacher of grade Z, how do you say it - decides everything that she wants, how she wants it and what she wants and if she isn't doing it, you don't do it. It's very much - she might as well teach the whole grade; she doesn't actually need any other teachers, she can teach all of them on her own without the help of anyone else and I'd say she has a follower next door who follows everything she does and my teacher doesn't want, doesn't not necessarily want to, she just wants to do more, like get on with things and teach more and that's not allowed. You know, like say I'd planned all these lessons with my teacher, I'd planned 'a' and she'd come in and say, 'no, you can't teach that because I'm not teaching that so you can't get on with it. That was probably the only hindrance to my whole experience was this other foreign teacher coming in and saying, 'Listen, you're going too far, you're teaching them too much'. That sort of thing, that was the only thing. That was the only one time my teacher came into class and she was, she saw what I was teaching them a step and she wanted to get them going because she thought the other class was behind, they were moving ahead of us and so she thought she would get into trouble. So she came in and said "No, let's do this and this and this" and confused the hell out of all the kids 'cos they didn't have time to actually develop that concept before I went into it because that was how I was going to do my next lesson, go through it. It was the most amazing experience though because I actually taught them everything and they understood everything and they never like got confused even like the really slow ones, you know they'd

go “Oh, okay” and then they went through. Then I stopped and made sure the other ones had extra work who were really clever and needed extension and got them to a certain point and then we’d carry on and then, you know even the slow ones, I’d take them aside, we’d go on with something and then carry on and every single child understood what was happening all the time. It was the most amazing thing. I never ever never had that and maybe because I’d taught that section before at another school. It was easy to teach, I knew what to do that all helped to actually know what to teach and so my experience of teaching, how can I say a level was easier because I had that continuity from previous years, staying in the same grade so I could teach the same work so it was easier to make them understand and I think my teacher was worried they weren’t learning quick enough, because nobody, like you are teaching at a slower level maybe but you’re learning faster because you have to learn at your own pace kind of thing. Traditional teachers might not know that kind of thing, they’ve never been taught how to teach that way and so it was hard for her to grasp at the beginning. It was like the first couple of days I was teaching full on, she stayed in the class, she began to understand just to leave me alone because I was then - once I got to that stage I actually went much faster than any other teacher which I don’t think was really relevant whether you work faster or slower or whatever as long as you’re getting the work done and the kids understand. In the end the kids are the most important thing – it’s not actually anything else which I found difficult.

I. Tell me about your learners.

C. They were just. I don’t know why or what it is I just get on really, really well with the children. I’ve had that at every school experience. Like – I have discipline and respect at the same time but I can have a one-on-one conversation and they will tell me everything about their lives and what is truly important to them and I’ve only known them for a week. Ag, I just have that... where I can tell the same thing without being too much friendly, friendly but still being teacher-learner situation and they responded so well and they were, they were just fantastic. I loved every single one of them for different reasons, you know, obviously more difficult to teach those that were on a, with low IQ’s. I don’t even know their IQ’s, it was just some of them wouldn’t finish their work and they were slower at progressing so it was working with them on the mat and giving the others extension work.

I. You spoke about discipline, you don’t have a problem with that?

C. No, not really. I’ve seen like through the years different approaches being used so I’ve taken all those together sort of thing and used my own especially when my teacher wasn’t in the class because then the real thing comes out and also the fact that I found it’s difficult to use your own in someone else’s class. When you’re using your own discipline strategies then if you say something in class or do something that is different to them and then you’re almost infringing on their space cos their classroom is their space and if you come in there and start this whole new way of doing things, you’re almost putting them out of their little area and you know, like I don’t like to do that so I normally just stick to what they’re doing then use my own when they’re not there which works the best. No, I’ve never found discipline a problem because they respect me for how I am and I respect them for who I am, for who they are so - they’re fine.

I. Describe your relationship with your host teacher.

- C. Brilliant. Brilliant, brilliant. No, she's absolutely fantastic. A fantastic woman, a fantastic teacher, she's open-minded and a fantastic person to be with. I'm so glad I was with her. But every year I get given someone who's fantastic so I've been really, really blessed in that way that I can get on so... maybe I can get on better with older people and younger people. It takes a long time to get on with people my own age, a little bit longer, but people who are a little bit older than me I get on really, really well with and then little people as well. I don't know if that's why (laughs).
- I. Tell me were you prepared do you think adequately by your coursework at Fort Hare?
- C. (pause) Actually, yes. In many ways like the things that we've done have helped us, but in other ways we've just been treading water and you have to find your way because I found that *Subject X* was so airy-fairy that you didn't actually know what was going on or even what *Subject X* was... I remember our first course that we had said: 'What is *subject X*?' Which made me think I don't know what *subject X* is. What is *Subject X*? What is - what is *Subject x*? They asked this whole big thing and by the end of the course I didn't know still what *Subject X* was. They kept saying portfolio – just what language and how you... I had no idea – at all – and none of us did. I kept asking people It was very I was reading through my document that we were supposed to have made and I really want to know so much about *Subject X* and my reflections it said I still don't have any idea about *Subject X* but I've learnt this and this and this. And *Subject Z*, ja – we've learnt nothing at all, but by teaching I've learned lots of things so the experience, the experiences of teaching have helped us I don't think that the course that they've given in *Subject Z* is of any worth at all. We might as well have just gone home and looked through a textbook and made worksheets absolutely of no worth whatsoever except when one particular lecturer was with us – *Q* – he has left to go (*deleted*). We did a course in *concept Y* and I think that's why I'm confident in teaching *Y* because he was so OBE based which is what we're supposed to be doing and like he gave us lessons and said okay this is when you do that and then we discussed it and we said what we did like or didn't like and then we moved showed and showed how you start, when you move on to the next concept, what you supposed to do continuity and that was probably the only thing we did in *Z* that had continuity. The rest was all very boxed in and then you looked at something and then you tried to figure out – it wasn't any work you'd teach the learner and the stuff *P* gave us was really complicated thing which I'd never even done at school and he said: 'No, this is for your development of your *Z*' and we just said how are we supposed to learn it? How is this supposed to help us? And we, no no no and I said listen, I'm going home. I got up and left. I don't need to do something that is not going to help me to teach actual kids to be able to learn better, you know so ja in that way. So *Z* and *X* I felt was a bit of a waste, you know in that way otherwise... Art was fantastic – very interesting - a lovely course in Art. Law, we've just done one course in Law which I found probably the most beneficial of my whole course. We really learnt what you were as a teacher, like how you fit into the legal system, what you're allowed to do, what you're not allowed to do, how important you are, how important kids are and I found that the most important aspect of probably our whole course whereas other people found it extremely

boring and they never ever want to do it again (laughs). So I dunno maybe I just found it very interesting.

I. How would you improve upon your school experience or your coursework?

C. I found that this year I did all my admin so that, that improved my whole outlook on the whole experience because I was up to date with everything so nothing, nothing was a problem, nothing was a big deal to do because when I got to the day and we had to hand it in I was done with everything. Everyone else was all stressed about that which I've been every other year but not this year, but you know so I had made it my way of planning things - which was much more easier. I just wrote down what I was going to do and I think I was also helped by, what also helped was my Xhosa, being able to teach your things and you know keeping a record of everything that I had done for the kids those two weeks that I took for you and that helped cos I had to keep records of what I had done before and how I was working and everything and that helped me to be able to do this experience cos when I had to do that I had to think what I had done before and what I couldn't do again, if I missed the next lesson then I had to move it forward and all sorts of things. That all helped to be able to pull everything together. That really helped.

I. What about admin – tell me about your journal.

C. My journal? They always want us to write these really in-depth, thoughtful things that um, sure fine to write something like that, but then someone else is going to read it. If it's just for you I can understand. You can see your development and things like that and I reading it and going back and reading it the beginning of the term I found it very interesting to read. What I wrote on very bad days and things, but I don't see why I should write that... how I really to someone that doesn't know me and is going to just... especially okay for Z - if I am had to write that I had a really terrible day and the kids were not listening to me then in my crit the next day she would read back the day before and think, she would not give me a distinction because I hadn't had good discipline the whole way through so I'm reluctant to write what I really feel because they're just going to pull you down for it. That's really the thing. I don't know – you know, so many people found that so I just never, ever wrote the truth. You never ever were really truthful you always just surfaced and Lecturer W always says to me, 'C, I know you are deeper than that'. I am, but I'm not going to write it because I'm going to be pulled down for it and there's no reason for it. No reason for it. Why should I do that to myself – I'd just be shooting myself in the foot?

I. So the evaluation is an issue?

C. Ja, ja.

I. Tell me how you feel about being evaluated.

C. Oh, I don't mind crits. Crits are, I forget that they are even there. This last one –oh – for this last one I had... I think people were... cos I've never been good at admin, you know and people always say, 'Oh, C and admin - I'm sure they have meetings about me and say, like C is terrible about admin or something

I. When you say 'admin' explain what admin is.

C. Like keeping up to date with everything like lesson plans, like. Because in second year you had to write these detailed lesson plans and I'm sorry I don't have time for that, you know. I'll write down what I'm gonna do, like how I'm going to introduce it, what I'm gonna do and that's fine sort of thing because

that's all you really need to do as a teacher. As a teacher when you start teaching. I understand that you need to do that at second year to understand the whole concept of how you work through things, but like... I did it, but I probably didn't do all of them. I probably lied that I didn't have to do all of them - I taught a lot more than I actually ever said I did. When we got to third year and also we also had to do those and so I for my third year school experience my teacher went to hospital so the last two weeks I had to teach solidly for two weeks without anyone without any help, without anything and so I just didn't tell anyone that because otherwise I would have had to do two weeks, well actually it was three weeks of full on like for every lesson and that's a lot of lessons with like three pages of lesson plans for every single lesson. It's just ridiculous so I just never told them so I wouldn't have to do those kind of things and that's my admin problem. Everything else is fine.

I. Do they require detailed lesson plans now?

C. No. That's why I think cos I just have my every day as if I were a normal Teacher. I have my Maths, English, what I was going to do for every single day. Then I just have my evaluations on a new page. For every lesson I just never... made it much easier. I think that's why I could keep up to date cos I had to keep my lesson plans of what I had to do cos I can't just go to school and not know what I'm going to teach. That would be just pathetic. I wouldn't really be a teacher then, but I mean it's just to the point: right - what you going to do, what worksheet you gonna do, what are you going to introduce if you're going to re-introduce something, you know, if you're going to play, write letters, you going to play so your whole... right then so you can actually visualise what you are going to do. Cos that's what I'm going to do when I teach one day. That's all we have to do. That's probably why I could keep up to date because we didn't have to keep all this other rubbish: that, how, what questions I'm going to ask and you know you can't really do that because you know, kids ask completely different questions to what you could... and sometimes they go on a different track, and you know it's not even about what you're doing any more and you know that's the most important thing to actually gain knowledge about something else. Are they learning History. Are they learning Maths? Are they learning English? And that's the main thing, that they're actually learning. It's not about what you're doing teaching, it's about what they're learning. And so that always makes me really angry because they're always saying what are you teaching and how you know like they always make a focus on what you're teaching and all this stuff and it's not actually about what you're teaching, it's about how the learners respond and to me the kids have always been most important so if I found that they really interested in this, other kind of things then I'll change my lesson completely and make sure it was all about them so that they're interested in what they were doing, that they could develop more. Rather than finding a theme on... fantastic worksheets, I'd rather just change all that so they were interested in what they were doing.

I. What did you find stressful?

C. Stressful?... When they were just... not interested in what I was talking about. That was very stressful, you stress because they... when they... ja... when they just ignore you kind of thing. One of those days when they were excited about something else or that they just had... There are so many interruptions. I found that there was a six hour marathon or a this or that - that there were just

so many interruptions that you couldn't teach the whole class at one time – like this one's going out for music, this one going out for Seek and this one's going out for this and so there never was a full class. There was always one child coming to me and saying: 'Ms.C, what are we doing this lesson so I can catch up?' and you just want to go, you know you're just trying to do this fantastic lesson and you've got to go back (laughs) and I understand that's the way of teaching that this school that I was at was the most ridiculous at that. I've never had so many interruptions. I can understand one piano lesson a week kind of thing or twice a week but not every day, you know and then ja, no it's just ridiculous how many interruptions there were that kids just didn't have continuous time. For them it must be so stressful for them because then they catch up all this work and it's not just once a day, it's two or three times a day and this one's got Remedial and then it's got choir and then it's got steel drums and then it's got something else. It's ridiculous, absolutely ridiculous.

- I. C, if you had to draw a picture encapsulating your experience of this last school experience, what would you be doing in the picture?
- C. I don't understand what you're trying to say.
- I. Something... that typifies how you experienced this school experience.
- C. Just being... nothing really comes to mind. Just being with the *deleted* and I think just asking them questions. Being with them. Nothing really else. Ja. Just being with them.
- I. C, thank you.

**APPENDIX 8**  
**TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH MR D**

- I. Tell me about your experience at school.
- D. Fourth year? This last year? I think fourth year was much easier than third year due to the fact that I said the whole difficult school in inverted commas. It was nice just to teach without having to continuously discipline the kids or try to get them to understand so you could actually build a relationship with the kids while teaching. It's nice.
- I. Do you think you were adequately prepared by your coursework at Fort Hare?
- D. I think so. (pause) The only problem I think in first year when they put you in Nursery Schools or Grade R, is that you don't actually start teaching until the second year, but I think ja, we were well prepared.
- I. Converting theory to practice...
- D. Praxis!
- I. Well... How easy is that?
- D. It depends really on which theory because you get some lecturers who can assist you and then some who look daunted and say: 'Here's Freud's theory' or whatever, 'Do your own thing'. But it's practical, you can do it, it is possible.
- I. Did you feel during this experience you had room to experiment? Did you find E the teacher within or did you have to...
- D. I think by fourth year you want to appear to be traditional... not traditional but you want to be conventional for the schools because you probably need to remember that next year those schools might want to hire you, and you, subconsciously you try to be not too much of a radical. But you can still try it. I'd say I did it with some of your least or lesser important subjects, not labelling subjects as important or less important. Ja.
- I. What do you see as a conservative practice?
- D. What do I see as conservative? (pause) I would say at the moment in schools, I think schools aren't fully liberal. I think they like the kids still in little neat desks, quiet, doing their work so you would tend to do most of your teaching as 'un' group work. But I would say you do most of your teaching as listen to me. The next activity do quietly or whatever, don't make too much noise because it's not break. Whatever.
- I. Tell me about your relationship with your host teacher during this experience.
- D. I think this year was probably the best relationship I have had with my host teacher to be quite honest, but I actually knew him before so it wasn't build-a-relationship-in-one-day. I've known him oh about ten years, sixteen years, twenty, twenty-three years, sorry. Twenty-three years. Ja.
- I. And did you find you had to conform to his teaching style, his way of disciplining?
- D. His teaching style was very similar to mine. His disciplining I didn't want to conform cos he was, he was very strange... he used to shrug off the kids like in a sort of humorous way as like, 'You're naughty, don't do that', whereas I was more sort of 'Why are you doing this?'. See the reactions. Not jumping over the kids but be more firm.
- I. And how did you feel about being evaluated?
- D. By?
- I. By your lecturers, by your class teacher?



- D. Ummmm, by the lecturers... I think you are a bit nervous but by fourth year you're... not used to it, but you're not as stressed. A little bit stressed, that would be the crit lecture. The host teacher, actually I didn't notice him. You so used to teaching in front of someone else all the time that you ignore them.
- I. You spoke about stress. What else did you find stressful?
- D. Stressful? Ummm... (pause) When did I mention stress – sorry?
- I. Earlier in the evaluation – you say you still get stressed...
- D. Oh! Okay with crits. I find crits a bit stressful. Nothing else really. I think I have the kids not under control, but I managed to contain them so that really was the only stressful thing.
- I. So discipline isn't an issue for you?
- D. No. (laughs) No. (switches tape off)
- I. Tell me about your relationship with your learners.
- D. With my learners? Umm – I think it was quite an honest relationship. We negotiated what needed to be done and (laughs) they knew what I expected of them and it was honest they could ask me questions because I was open, most of the time.
- I. Did any cultural issues come into play?
- D. No, I don't think so. There was one incident but that didn't happen in my host class. I had to substitute for an absent teacher and one of the kids, it was a black boy... he kept on disturbing me so I told him to keep quiet so he said that I'm racist or something to that effect so I leant forward and said: 'Were you speaking?' and he said 'Yes', or 'No' – I can't remember what he said, so I said, 'So you're actually inferring that I'm a liar?' and then I told him to keep quiet. So I turned it around on him and instead of him calling me a racist, I inferred that he was calling me a blatant liar. That sort of worked.
- I. Tell me about your journal.
- D. My journal – the lovely reflective journal! (pause) What about it?
- I. Did you enjoy writing it?
- D. I think what we've written so often that you just write what goes on in your head. I've always been very open and I've written what I think and a lot of times people probably don't like it, but that's their problem.
- I. How would you improve upon this teaching experience?
- D. How would I improve upon it? Umm... goodness... umm. I wouldn't really improve discipline because that was fine. Perhaps if I had more time, you could actually work out your lessons better but when you actually teaching, you don't have four hours in the afternoon to sit and.... so ja, more time, but that's, that wasn't my fault.
- I. Tell me, if you had to draw a picture encapsulating your whole experience, what would you be doing in the picture?
- D. What would I be doing in the picture? I would (pause) What specific role I would take in the picture? What would I be doing? I would be... I dunno, if it was a big square I would be somewhere near the bottom right. I dunno why the bottom right, but anyway. Probably controlling the kids a bit like a puppeteer behind the scenes. I don't know.
- I. Anything more you want to add? Any positive or negative experience you want to speak about?
- D. About the school experience? No, nothing in particular.
- I. Thank you.

## APPENDIX 9

### TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH MS. E

I. Tell me about your school experience.

E. We were quite lucky because we did an ELP programme – I think it's called an Experiential Learning Programme in the first two terms where we went into schools for two days a week just as like a teacher aide and I was with a brilliant teacher at School M and then for school experience we got to choose if we wanted to stay at the same school or not so I chose to say and I think just by the time this ... by the time I got to school experience I knew the class so well and the teacher and I were friends outside of the classroom as well, which was really nice because she was brilliant – I think she really made it for me because I think she, all the years I've always had a different host teacher every year and every year they've been kind of right for the kind of need, like suited to the kind of need I had that year. Like I said my teacher's quite mothering which is quite nice because we all a bit nervous in the second year and then my third year the teacher was more, you know, you get on with it what you need to do kind of thing and so that was also what I needed then and then fourth year she was just, she's exactly the kind of teacher I'd like to be in the classroom one day so it was so nice to be her shadow and I think the thing I loved the most about her was that she... she used to make out that we were a team so she'd even tell the class, Ms. D and I are a team, we discuss everything together, there's nothing she doesn't know, there's nothing I don't know and we're both teachers in the classroom so she's not a student teacher, she's a teacher with me. And she said it but she also lived it like it felt like that all the time. Whenever a parent wrote a note she'd call me over and she'd ask me what I think she should say in the letter back or she would ask me what to do. Not that she, I don't think she didn't know what to do, I think she was getting my input so I felt like valued from the beginning and the children could pick up on that we were a team so it wasn't like that when she left the classroom everything went riot - they knew I would just tell her at breaktime so it was quite nice, ja.

I. Did you find you had to conform to her teaching styles and discipline styles?

E. I think that was quite easy for me because they were exactly what I'd like to do so it wasn't like... but she was very open to own my ideas as well. I implemented a lot – a new discipline thing in the classroom and she loved that and now she's still using it even though I'm now left so I mean I think we shared ideas but we more or less liked the same kind of thing which made it easy to do.

I. Tell me about some negative experiences.

E. (pause) I can't really think of any but I really had a nice time. Perhaps just there wasn't that much support from the head of the school. There wasn't much... ja, like we weren't really welcomed into the school because I think it's a huge staff and because it was never announced in the staffroom – not that we wanted a big thing, but it was never announced: 'These are the students from Rhodes' or anything. We sometimes felt like teachers were wondering: 'Who are you? What are you doing here?' and then... maybe that was a negative experience, but otherwise no, in the classroom it was great. I had one negative experience with a parent once. It was during the two weeks when we had to completely take over in the classroom. I made a decision with

- a child: he wanted to organise a surprise for the teacher, the host teacher and he was sort of going on his own mission but he wanted the whole class to chip in money towards the thing, but he wasn't prepared to do what the class wanted to do. He wanted to do his own thing with the money. So I made a decision with the class to rather do what the whole class wanted to do with the money and the next day his mom came roaring in to school saying that I'd been unfair on him and I had gone right over his feelings and everything and that was just one... and that was on the last day as well so it was kind of... but I sorted it out with him so it was fine. Ja.
- I. And tell me, E – how did you feel about being evaluated?
- E. With the crit lessons? Ummm, I think it was fine. I don't, I don't feel, get all hyped up about crit lessons because you just get nervous then and you don't do... you're not yourself, but I think that with a crit lesson it's a little bit fake in that like it's this big show and it's not really what's going on and you get so nervous that everything must be perfect so that if the intercom comes on during a lesson, it's like 'Oh!', you know 'my plan is going' or if someone walks in for the rugby team... but that's the real world so, ja, so I think, I don't mind, it doesn't bother me really. It's just that different lecturers look for different things as well so there's not always a consistency so you can never meet... you can never please them all. But, ja it didn't bother me.
- I. You spoke about the real world. How easy is it to convert theory to practice?
- E. (pause) I don't think it's always that easy. I think often in the real world it's not exactly as it's going on in the textbook, but I think the theory can really help you in the real world, but I think for example my special study, my love languages topic – the theory is, the theory uses five love languages; how to communicate love to children in different ways. But when you get into the classroom, there's limited time available to show different children love so I think sometimes it's unrealistic, the things that are unrealistic. But generally things match up I think. Ja.
- I. And do you think you are adequately prepared by your coursework at Fort Hare?
- E. (pause) In most things, I think. We weren't that prepared for subjects like Afrikaans. I taught that cos I thought I must teach what I don't actually enjoy now and I... you just don't know what you're doing. It's very boring, very... Whereas with Maths we've been taught how to make it exciting, but for second languages we just haven't been taught that much and but definitely Lecturer H has done a brilliant job at just preparing us for classroom management, classroom control and discipline. Definitely adequately prepared for that. So. Ja.
- I. What did you find helpful during this school experience?
- E. I think what I found helpful, there were days when, especially when I was teaching completely and my teacher was in the staffroom cos you had to do teaching completely for two weeks. What I found helpful was there were days when I sort of lost it with the class and felt like things were not going well and they had behaved badly and I came out to the staffroom and I was just upset and 'Oh, I've lost it and I'm not a good teacher and...' I found it helped would have liked her to walk in and just give them the run down and tell them that they must listen to me and everything but she didn't do that. She said: 'I want you to go back into the classroom, sit them down, have a peptalk and then carry on', and that really worked and it kind of got me to have a bit more

confidence so it was a bit like me a bit like what the real world's going to be like. You can't run to your host teacher and get her to click her fingers and it's all fine again. I found that helpful.

I. So what did you find stressful?

E. Stressful... I think stressful... the pressure on to finish work, cos you like... there just seem to be so many tests towards the end of term and marks and, you can't just... there's just a lot of pressure and all the teachers are feeling pressurised. Have you done this Maths? Have you got to here yet? No I haven't. oh well you are behind. And with that kind of stress, pressure, something like that, I think there's a lot of worrying about nothing. I mean you fit it all in at the end of the day, but there's always a teacher who's saying, mentioning how far he or she is. You know, just to stress everyone else out so... (laughs) That's what I found stressful.

I. What advice would you give if you wanted to improve on this course?

E. On the B.Ed course? (pause) Sho, that's a difficult question because we've been prepared so well. I think, I think there's general improvements like there's a lot of subjects that get repeated. Just because I think there's not communication sometimes between different years. But on the whole the subjects have been very good, very thorough. Primprac, the prac we do, we make posters and books and games that sort of thing has been useful as well. I've used a lot of that in the classroom so I wouldn't change any of that.

I. But improving on the school experience?

E. The school experience (pause) – just maybe a little more consistency between lecturers in terms of what they are looking for in a crit lesson. I know you can't make them all have the same personalities but maybe just to... ja, different lecturers are looking for different things... so you can do an amazing lesson and another lecturer will think it's like a distinction thing and another lecturer will think: 'she didn't use her resources so it wasn't that good'.

I. Tell me about your learners. Any issues that came up that you weren't expecting?

E. Well the biggest thing when I arrived was that what I wasn't expecting was an autistic child in the class. That was quite a shock. You know they always talk about inclusion at varsity, you realise what it's really going to be like when you get there. So that was quite interesting and quite challenging as well. I mean he was an absolute blessing and he melted my heart till the very last day so that was quite surprising and generally, no I really enjoyed the class. I just enjoyed the learners – there were lots of livewires, boys with issues but for me the greatest thing was there was a boy. The first two terms I went there for two days a week and every time I went there there were always some reports of bullying and it went as far to calling his parents in to the headmaster and him getting told it was his last chance and this term we put his desk so that in a group he was sitting just in front of my desk and I just really gelled with him and I didn't... he just totally changed. I mean I couldn't believe the change. The last day he even brought me a little present. He never would have done that in the beginning of the year so, ja he was a challenge in the beginning, but I just found I clicked with him towards the end and his whole attitude changed. The class hated him and then they grew to really like him towards the end.

I. Any cultural issues?

- E. Perhaps just the issue of... I think just often in the black culture, the children are not living with their parents at home and so often, you know, homework wasn't done because it wasn't supervised or they would come with excuses and you would never know – are they telling the truth are they lying – you can't keep a tab on things as easily as you can with children who see their parents every day so if a test is not signed you know - why must you wait a whole week for the test to be signed or you don't know if they're telling the truth or not. But language barriers, not really anything... no, they could all speak good English so... ja.
- I. Tell me about your journal.
- E. I enjoyed my journal, I enjoy journal writing so I think I'm at an advantage compared to other students. I didn't write in it every day but whenever something came up, I jotted it down. But I'm a very feelings sort of person so I don't find it difficult to say how I'm feeling.
- I. What was the requirement for the journal?
- E. It's basically just so they can see a window into your life, inside of you. How did the day go, not what did you do? I did Maths and Afrikaans and I did Geography. Well, how did Geography go? And what was your feeling after the lesson? What comments did children make that made you feel good? What things went bad today? I enjoyed it.
- I. Did you feel you could be honest?
- E. Yes, ja I was honest. I... I, there were times when I didn't always put down my comments about things in the school that I didn't enjoy because I know that there've been cases before where teachers have picked up journals and read them and they, the students have got into big trouble. Although I know my host teacher wouldn't have done that. I never had anything negative to say about her, but perhaps you know, other things at the school I didn't enjoy that much. I didn't put them in my journal because I wouldn't want that to get back to them.
- I. If you had to draw a picture for me encapsulating your whole experience, what would you be doing in the picture?
- E. Flying! (laughs) I think I would be flying because I think this school experience just gave me wings to fly. My teacher was so good in that she kept just saying, pushing me to just go with it and just run with it and she put so much confidence into me. I mean I really, I was so blessed because she really encouraged me all the time: 'You can do it! That was an excellent lesson!' or 'You're a good teacher!' I'm sure there were flops but she just kept encouraging me anyway, so if I was in the picture I'd probably be flying. I feel like now I've got my wings to go into next year so...
- I. E, thank you.