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Pre-service teachers' professional learning experiences during rural teaching practice in Acornhoek, Mpumalanga Province

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The concept of student teaching practice is globally rooted in training pre-service teachers to work within diverse schools and learner populations, in dissimilar contexts. It is also a drive towards the development of knowledge, professionalism, sense of efficacy, and flexibility in their performance and interactions. There is seemingly little research that has been done in South Africa to gain insight into the pre-service teachers' development of knowledge and professionalism during rural teaching practice. In developing countries like South Africa, teaching practice challenges are usually severe, particularly in rural schools, where there is generally a paucity of information on the nature of school-based support pre-service teachers receive. In the article we explore pre-service teachers' professional learning experiences during teaching practice in Acornhoek, rural Bushbuckridge. The project used qualitative semi-structured reflective discussions and students' reflective journals to collect data. The findings show that pre-service teachers experienced a shift of mind as they engaged in professional thinking, learning and meaning making.

Keywords: complexity; leadership; Mpumalanga province; pre-service teachers; professional learning; rural school, situative theory; teaching experience

Introduction

Internationally, there is general consensus that teaching practice (TP) is fundamental to the preparation of teachers, as "a good teacher education programme must seek to assist individual teachers to grow and develop as people, provide them with the necessary skills and professional abilities to help them become effective teachers" (Fafunwa, 2001:81). Thus, the concept of student TP is deeply rooted in a drive towards the development of competent and professional teachers. Notwithstanding that, the teacher preparation component is a valued educational tradition essential to pre-service teacher professional development, and initiation into teaching, the process of which is often highly complex. Such complexities often shape the students' ability to derive maximum benefits therefrom and indeed, from the pre-service training (Bloomfield, 2010; Johnston, 2010).

In developing countries like South Africa, teaching practice challenges are usually more severe, particularly in rural schools, due to limited research to understand the school-based support and its effectiveness. Heeralal and Bayaga (2011) discovered that student TP efficacy in rural South Africa was minimised by isolation, low and uneven levels of school-based teacher expertise, and support. Similarly, Prince, Snowden and Matthews (2010) posit that student teachers find the TP period in rural contexts stressful, lonely and demanding because of inadequate support from the schools and mentors. Current debates foreground the quality of TP as a universal concern within teacher education (Heeralal & Bayaga, 2011). Grisham, Laguardia and Brink (2000) lament the distressing and intimidating situations that arise when pre-service teachers are placed in classrooms without support. This article illustrates that the current South African teacher education culture still has a long way to go before achieving effective student teacher TP support in rural schools, due to the focus on urban settings.

The Wits Student Rural Teaching Experience Project (WSRTEP) adopted a cohort model, where a group of students are placed in rural schools for residential practicum as cohorts. This approach provides a layer of support to counter some of the challenges and enhance achievement of the desired outcomes from practicum. The aim of this paper is to explore pre-service teachers' professional learning during TP in Acornhoek, a rural area in Bushbuckridge, Mpumalanga Province, as a new context for the students. The paper addresses two questions:

- a. How do pre-service teachers experience professional learning during teaching practice in Acornhoek schools?
- b. What meanings do they make of their experiences in the schools as they become teaching professionals?

Rurality and Rural Education in SA

Providing a clear and objective definition of 'rurality' or 'rural school' continues to present a conceptual problem. Some scholars have advised that 'rural' remains a transient concept, dependent on either place-based conceptions (Chikoko, 2008), or methodological considerations (Arnold, Newman, Gaddy & Dean, 2005) that drive knowledge generation in this respect. Internationally and also in South Africa, rural schools experience similar obstacles to better-quality student learning: meagre funding and resources that require schools to do more with less; issues of hard to staff, harder to stay; remotely located schools serving high poverty

communities; limited economic opportunities; and community remoteness (Kline, White & Lock, 2013; Mukeredzi, 2013). Rurality, in the context of this paper, constitutes communally owned portions and commercial farms located in the former white areas of South Africa and former 'homeland' areas (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005).

These former homelands are characterised by poor infrastructure, insufficient services and facilities, and either significantly dense homesteads or village-style sparse settlements. While it is acknowledged that not all rural areas are characterised by such challenges, due to different development in some of these communities, the shortcomings permeate into schools, and as a result, most South African rural and farm schools lack material and infrastructural resources and basic services and facilities, and they are associated with deficiencies, disadvantage and needs (Balfour, Mitchell & Moletsane, 2011; Moletsane, 2012). Student teachers in this study undertook TP in schools located in rural settings, with different developments within the same area. It is therefore important to understand that their professional learning experiences differ in various rural schools as they learn to become teachers.

While teacher education is central to transforming the South African education system, Buthelezi (2004) indicates that gaps in teacher education in part contributes to rural school shortcomings. This is because some teacher education courses partially address diverse school contextual issues to expose student teachers to various teaching and learning practices.

Internationally, it is acknowledged that teacher education institutions and schools should foster strong partnerships, for more effective pre-service teacher preparation and support (Adie & Barton, 2012; Haugaløkken & Ramberg, 2007). Similarly, in South Africa, Islam, Mitchell, De Lange, Balfour and Combrinck (2011) advocate for strong partnerships with collaboration in critical reflective practices, and ongoing examination and interrogation of existing teaching cultures and philosophies. This is to generate new theories consistent with contemporary South Africa, as Balfour, Mitchell and Moletsane (2008:101) argue, for a "generative theory of rurality", in which the dynamic interaction between variables allow for both a descriptive and an analytical framework for data, emanating from, and located in, rural area research.

Without promoting the dynamic interaction between mentor teachers and student teachers and interrogating the nature of rural school-university partnerships, pre-service teachers might learn what they can on their own during practicum, and this may influence the quality of professional learning experiences. The Department of Education (DoE) (2006) also adds that the success of on-site initial

teacher education in South Africa is hampered by the absence or poor quality of school-university support, mentoring and supervision. This has implications for the significance of allocating experienced mentor teachers in schools, and the nature of school-university partnerships, and a clear understanding of the expected outcomes of TP. This article suggests that before any school-based pre-service teacher support can occur, rural school-university partnerships should be encouraged and developed. WSRTEP developed partnerships with some primary and secondary schools in Acornhoek to enhance teacher mentor support and student teachers' professional learning experiences, knowledge and practice.

The Wits Student Rural Teaching Experience Project (WSRTEP)

Although the Wits student rural teaching experience project (WSRTEP) took a mixture of students from rural and township/urban backgrounds, that rural areas are not the same and students would still be exposed to different school contexts, learners, community, and lifestyles is acknowledged. In conceptualising WSRTEP, the purpose was to provide opportunities that allowed student teachers to understand existing opportunities and challenges of working in rural schools (Maringe, Masinire & Nkambule, 2015). Further, taking student teachers to rural schools was intended to address some (mis)perceptions about rurality and rural schools amongst them, and expose them to inherent rural school opportunities through interaction with rural schoolteachers and learners (Masinire, Maringe & Nkambule, 2014). This exposure would probably encourage the pre-service teachers to consider taking up teaching positions in rural schools upon graduation, thereby positively contributing to challenges of hard to staff and harder to stay quality teachers in rural schools (Nkambule, 2017).

Situative Theory

This study is located within the broad field of teacher development and framed around concepts related to their situative orientations. Situative /situativity theory refers to perspectives which view knowledge and cognition (thinking and learning) as situated in experience, and characterised by three themes: learning and knowing as situated, social, and distributed (Durning & Artino, 2011; Putnam & Borko, 2000). The physical and social contexts in which activity occurs are integral to the activity itself, and the activity is an integral part of the learning that takes place within it (Putnam & Borko, 2000). Hence, the way in which a student teacher acquires particular teaching knowledge and skills, as well as the context in which they learn, are fundamental to what is learned.

Learning, thinking and meaning making are distributed across teachers, students and resources/

artefacts (e.g. reading materials, computers), and situated within a larger physical and social environment (Durning & Artino, 2011). Emphasis is placed on the social setting and how interactions lead to cognition. From this perspective, systems must promote interaction of individuals with each other, and with materials within those contexts. Furthermore, interaction with resources and other people is both the process and the product of learning, hence, learning can only be analysed inclusive of its interactional systems, because cognition is located in particular contexts of intentions, social partners, and tools/artefacts (Putnam & Borko, 2000). Thus, individuals undertaking thinking and learning activities, as well as their social and material contexts, constitute the unit of analysis (Durning & Artino, 2011). Consideration is made on a 'person-plus' unit of analysis, whereby artefacts intensify participants' cognitive capabilities. Such distribution of learning and thinking across individuals and resources enables teachers to collectively accomplish cognitive tasks beyond the individual capabilities of members (Putnam & Borko, 1997).

Research Methodology

The purpose of the study was to explore pre-service teachers' professional learning experiences and understandings during TP in Acornhoek schools, in rural Bushbuckridge, Mpumalanga Province. A qualitative approach within the interpretive paradigm was adopted for the study. Qualitative research views reality as constructed inter-subjectively through meanings and understandings developed socially and experientially by individuals (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Creswell, 2008). Given that the study sought to explore student teachers' professional learning experiences, which could only be understood through listening to their stories and looking into their eyes, a qualitative approach was found to be suitable.

Purposive sampling was employed for extracting 21 participants. Bhengu advises that "... the researcher must ensure that informants are information rich" (2005:58), and Denzin and Lincoln (2008) add that purposive sampling extracts groups, settings and individuals where the processes under exploration are likely to occur. The 21 participants fitted within the definitions as elucidated by Bhengu and Denzin and Lincoln, because students were expected to possess rich information about their professional learning experiences during TP in the rural context. The TP period was in two parts, three weeks each year, in 2014 and 2015, making a total of six weeks. Ten students carried out their three weeks practicum in May 2014, and eleven in May 2015. Of the 21 students, nine were in the second year, and twelve were in the third year of study. As this was a

purposive sample, there was neither randomisation nor matching to the demographics of the third and second year student population. Allocation of students to schools was determined by teaching phases.¹ In May 2014, each of the two secondary schools that we used received five students, each majoring in English, Social Science, and Life Sciences. Of the eleven students on practicum in May 2015, three student teachers in the Foundation Phase specialisation were deployed to one primary school and the remaining eight students were divided between two secondary schools.

Data Gathering

Reflective journals

The main data sources were individual reflective journals and group reflective sessions. Students recorded the daily teaching and learning classroom activities, contextual issues, any information about the school leadership, and collegial interactions in the school in their reflective journals on a daily basis. Their reflections were guided by a set of reflective questions, which had been discussed with and explained to the students, namely: what happened; what did you experience; why did things happen like that; what does this mean; what could you have done differently; According to Cohen-Sayag and Fischl (2012), reflection tasks in teacher education are seen as a tool that promotes professional learning, and are perceived as mediating between existing and new knowledge. It is also about "breaking habitual ways of thinking, enhancing the development of meta-cognition, increasing awareness of tacit knowledge, facilitating self-exploration, and working out solutions to problems" (Kerka, 2002:1).

For effective, on-site leadership, the first author of this paper, who acted as their resident mentor or advisor, stayed at the lodge with the student teachers offering them professional guidance and support. Every Friday between 16h00 and 19h00, students submitted their journals to her for close scrutiny and reflection before group reflective discussions on Saturday or Sunday afternoons. Observations were discussed during the group meetings and professional guidance offered. At the end of the TP, the reflections were copied and then transcribed. The second author acted as the external independent inter-rater, due to the fact that she had no prior connection with the study and analysis of data, thus providing substantiation of the instrument (Marques & McCall, 2005).

Group reflective discussions

Compulsory group reflection sessions lasted approximately two hours, and were carried out every Saturday or Sunday, facilitated by the student resident mentor/advisor. The group reflective discussions were guided by the same reflective questions that guided the daily individual

reflections. Jindal-Snape and Holmes (2009) identify conversation as a beneficial method of reflective practice, especially when reflective conversations occur with a mentor or reflective supervisor. For the project, conversations not only offered guidance, clarified issues, covered strategies, but also enabled knowledge exchanges and offered a supportive professional learning community. These reflective discussions were held during all the three weekends of the teaching practice, and all were audio-recorded and later transcribed. In applying inter-rater reliability, also called solidification strategy, the first and second author engaged in attentive reading of the findings to display a similar understanding of the emerging themes in relation to the topic (Marques & McCall, 2005).

Ethical Consideration

Ethical clearance for the project was granted by the University of the Witwatersrand and Mpumalanga Department of Education. With regard to the students, while still at Wits we explained our desire to use information in their journals for research, and requested their permission to analyse it. Before the data collection process commenced, all pre-service teachers were informed of the purpose, confidentiality, and voluntary nature of the study. They were requested to sign consent forms before their reflective journals were photocopied, and transcribed, along with audio-recorded reflection discussions.

Data Analysis

The transcripts of individual reflective journal and audio recorded collaborative discussions were the main data sources informing the analysis. Creswell (2009:183) indicates that the process of data analysis involves making sense out of text data, preparing the data for analysis, conducting different analyses, moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data, representing the data, and arriving at an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data. The analysis involved reading the transcriptions over and over, as well as listening many times to the audiotapes to make sense of the entire data, and developing some context for the themes to surface. This was followed by delimiting the categories of meaning, using open coding, by segmenting sentences into themes and labelling them *'in vivo'* (Creswell, 2008), namely that the themes that emerged from the codes are phrased verbatim. This was followed by a close examination of transcripts one by one, trying to answer the question "what is this about" so as to enable identification of fundamental meaning, which was then recorded in the margin. After going through all transcripts, all ideas (fundamental meanings) were listed and then the related topics clustered together, reducing them to

themes/categories of relevant meaning (relevant to the research questions). Three themes emerged: "it's difficult to observe teachers [...] they don't want to be observed"; "... there's a sense of mind shifting and understanding that teaching is complex"; "it's tough, professionalism is missing [...] leadership seems to be in ICU." After critically analysing the themes against the data, links enabled researchers build a story from their analysis. The story is connected to research questions, and captures the substance of pre-service teachers' professional learning experiences during TP.

Results and Discussion

"It's Difficult to Observe Teachers [...] They don't Want to be Observed"

While students were excited about the opportunity to conduct teaching experience in rural schools, it was also challenging to work with some mentor teachers, because they appeared uninterested in assisting students. The following responses are illustrative:

The first two days in the schools we supposed to observe teachers teaching. I didn't experience that in my school with my supervising teacher, instead she seemed uninterested to attend her classes. In the second day I asked to go to class with her, she said "if you want to go to class you can go and teach, I am not feeling well" [Student reflective journal, May, 2015].

When I saw time moving and no indication of going to class, I asked a teacher that was assigned to me for the Geography time-table [...] the teacher told me to wait and I waited for almost a whole day until a grade 8 teacher asked if I can teach natural science. I went to class to observe him. Later my supervising teacher told me we will go to class the following day, and I should prepare a lesson without observing her [Student group discussion session, May, 2014].

Some pre-service teachers experienced supervising teachers that were reluctant to work with them, even when they used their agency to initiate the interaction and process. Mentoring teachers' unwillingness to be observed by the student teachers is concerning, particularly when situated theory promotes interaction of individuals with each other for the purpose of learning (Durning & Artino, 2011). The nature of interaction and activities are significant in the development of student teachers' professional knowledge and cognition (thinking and learning), as they are situated in the experiences with mentoring teachers. The student experiences highlighted different mentors in schools, where some were willing to share their professional experiences, whilst others held the view that the exercise was to observing students teaching, without being firstly observed teaching by the students. There was lack of interaction between a mentor and a student to plan and discuss a lesson before teaching, as well as to guide and practice professional learning.

On the other hand, when the process of interaction and mentoring are supportive, this promotes positive professional development, resulting in accomplished knowledge and cognitive tasks (Putnam & Borko, 1997). For example, as the responses demonstrate:

I had a great supervising teacher for English, he was always there when I needed assistance. We planned lessons together and he was always there when I teach, I also observed all his lessons. I had a great teaching experience in my school and I really want to come back and work there [Student group discussion session, May 2015].

I met my supervising teacher first day and we went to class [...] he recapped on a previous lesson and linked with a new lesson, it was great to watch. Learners were participating actively [...] the importance of good relationship. We planned my lessons and he observed my teaching and advised constructively, it is actually a good school [Student reflective journal, May 2014].

These experiences reiterate the important role that supervising teachers play in supporting pre-service teachers through a period that is frequently stressful, both emotionally and physically (Maphalala, 2013), particularly in a social and material context unfamiliar. Some students observed well-structured lessons and different pedagogical practices in the classrooms, and mentors were supportive of student's professional development, which resulted in positive teaching practicum. Globally, mentors are expected to support students through lesson modelling and supervision, and provide criticism and feedback to nurture them into competent practitioners (E Silva & Herdeiro, 2014).

"... There's a Sense of Mind Shift and Understanding that Teaching is Complex"

The opportunity to undertake teaching practicum in rural schools introduced pre-service teachers to different communities and practices in schools, and the exposure enhanced their contextual experiences and knowledge about the teaching profession. Various experiences were mentioned and described during group discussions and in reflective journals as amazing, mind changing, and interesting.

One of the amazing lessons I learnt in Acornhoek is never assume, I noticed that a Grade Eight learner did not always have a pen. Unexpected heart breaking story of sharing two pens at home with four older siblings [sic] [...] she always has to borrow or wait for friends to finish writing and then use theirs. My mind shifted [...] it became clear that being a teacher is complex, because you always have to be observant of your learners [Student group discussion session, September, 2014].

Coming to Acornhoek was mind changing [sic], because growing up in township and stay in city can make you complacent. Learners have to travel long distances to attend school [...] they arrive to school tired and sleep most of the period; as a teacher you have to make sure they stay awake.

How do you know they listen and understand what you teach? Is very difficult here as compared to my teaching experience in Johannesburg [...] [Student reflective journal, May, 2014].

This has been an interesting experience, although there are some similarities with township schools in terms of learners' ill-discipline, but here [Acornhoek] it's worse. The classrooms and desks are falling apart, you [are] not sure when will the ceiling fall, making it difficult to focus on teaching [...] a place of knowledge is not supposed to be like this. Learners' attitude towards teaching and learning is disappointing, maybe because of the dilapidated classrooms and furniture [...] no one is interested. This is a challenging profession, because teaching and learning has to go on [...] it is sad [Student group discussion session, September, 2014].

The interactions and experiences of working with learners made student teachers aware of the significance of always being conscious of the various socio-economic factors that influence teaching and learning in the classroom. Some incidences are described as 'amazing' and 'mind changing' because they challenged students' norms, in particular unexpected family situations and practices. Lave (1991:34) states that when something is situated it implies that "a given social practice, such as teaching or learning, is intricately interconnected with other aspects of ongoing social processes, and that the teacher needs to be attentive to these processes to maximise effectiveness." It was a situated learning experience for student teachers, because they were introduced into a situation that challenged their perceptions about learners and learning in rural classrooms. Greeno, Collins and Resnick (1996) state that learning is situated, due to how a person learns a particular set of knowledge and skills, and the situation in which a person learns, are a fundamental part of what is learned. Thus for situated theory in teaching and learning situations, the purpose of the engagement was not only about content, but it was also important that student teachers pay attention to demonstrating when and how the learnt and experienced information could and should be used within and beyond the current situation. The interaction with learners exposed student teachers to different professional learning experiences, as they understood that situations beyond school influence teaching.

"It's Tough, Professionalism is Missing ... Leadership Seems to be in ICU"ⁱⁱⁱ

In schools, student teachers continued to observe teachers' and learners' behaviours, as part of professional learning. Some student teachers observed a lack of urgency to discipline learners as "... teachers pass learners standing outside classrooms without asking for reasons, as if is a norm [...] learners get inside the class if they want and a teacher won't say anything, I was shocked"

[Student group discussion session, May, 2015]. While it is understandable, but not acceptable, that learners roam around the school, teachers' lack of discipline is questionable, because it is expected that they instill rules. In addition, and of some concern, is the lack of respect for teachers and learners in the classroom, as some learners come and go as they wish, and teachers' authority is challenged. Considering that student teachers are expected to think, learn and make meaning of various practices in the schools, such professional learning experiences, although 'real', can influence decisions about the choice of schools in which to work. The observed experiences furthermore made some student teachers question collegiality in the school because "... leadership seems to be in ICU in my school, everyone does what they want and the principal does not seem to reprimand teachers and learners [...] the principal and the deputy are always there and appears not to be bothered by this" [Student group discussion session, September 2014]. For the external observer, teachers' and learners' behaviours and actions are directed by the nature of leadership in the school. The effectiveness of the school management team (SMT) relies on the efficiency of the principal; and when a school is chaotic in the presence of a principal and SMT, the culture of teaching and learning can also be interrogated.

In this regard, the DoE (2006) laments that a lack of leadership, unprepared teachers and students has failed to adequately engage with rurality and rural schools as places that are unique. If this is the approach, it contradicts the general belief that South African schools can be improved by joint efforts of school leaders, educators, learners, and community members (DoE, 2006). For student teachers, these teaching experiences provide them with a different understanding of professional teaching, one that is extended from the urban and/or township schools and classrooms.

Concluding Remarks and Implications

The findings suggest that during TP pre-service teachers, interacted and experienced different mentorship in rural schools. A number of issues may have been at play, in particular with mentor teachers who showed insufficient support for student teachers. They might not have received effective mentorship support themselves. Often, when a mentor did not experience effective mentoring, it is very unlikely that they will mentor effectively, given that much of what teachers do or do not do is a response to early learning influences (Allender & Allender, 2006; Mitchell & Weber, 1998). Mentors have potentially significant influence over pre-service teacher orientations, dispositions, conceptions and classroom practice as they professionally guide and interact with them during teaching practicum period. Ideally, they are

expected to model commitment, efficiency, responsibility and enthusiasm (Bloomfield, 2010), where in this case, they ought to have been guiding and directing students towards the specificities of the classroom and school context. Johnson (2010) points out that in the absence of classroom initiation by mentor teachers, trainees may struggle to cope in the classroom. Thus, lack of mentor support reflected in the comments tends to undermine trainees' critical role, and professionalism as school-based teacher educators.

On the contrary, other students experienced beneficial mentoring through effective mentor modeling lessons, and offering constructive criticism and feedback that nurtures students into competent practitioners (Florian, 2013). It is often through guidance, support and rigorous practices, that student teachers can plan, teach and evaluate work in an honest and professional manner. In addition, the amazement, mind shift, and interesting experiences that were reported appear to have been a result of exposure to a different WSRTPEP teaching practicum model, which probably challenged student teachers' taken-for-granted assumptions about rural schools, teaching and learning. The normative TP in urban/township schools was challenged in the rural area, as student teachers were obliged to adapt their way of teaching to suit the context. It is also important that a professional relationship between pre-service teachers, mentor teachers, and the SMT is developed and maintained, while students are on TP in rural schools, so as to ensure that they learn about the profession and the school-wide context. The mentor teachers know the context better than the students, and are expected to guide them appropriately.

Student teachers also reported on the value of a well-run school and collegiality, so as to ensure a good culture of teaching and learning. In the schools visited, leadership was perceived to be in "ICU", implying that it was ineffective because schools were 'chaotic', due to the lack of or little visible leadership necessary to make sure that teaching and learning took place. Professional learning experience is not only about the teaching and learning in the classroom, but student teachers learn everything about the schools, making it important for school leadership to ensure that schools are run professionally. Thus, if pre-service teachers experience a lack of professionalism and poor culture of teaching and learning in rural schools, they might not be encouraged to go and teach in such contexts. It is particularly important in rural schools to have effective school leadership, because these schools struggle to attract experienced and new teachers, as compared to township schools that continue to have quality teachers, irrespective of challenging professional conduct. Supportive professional learning for student teachers is of interest, as some students have

indicated in the findings, due to positive relationships that are able to be built with some mentor teachers in schools.

This research suggests that the achievement of effective mentoring in rural schools may be enhanced by continuing and strengthened partnership between teacher training institutions and rural schools, considering the unpopularity of rural teaching practicum in South Africa. The relationship will address, for instance, issues around specific roles of the mentor teachers, guidelines and expectations regarding mentoring time, and how the university, school and DoE can collaboratively address these. There is need for this tripartite group to engage in serious and committed discussions around school-based support for student teacher TP, otherwise significant change in this regard may not be possible, as mentors may continue to pay lip-service to the mentoring of pre-service teachers. It is also important that a forum to discuss concerns about the nature and processes of TP is set during TP, to strengthen the partnership between teacher training institutions, schools, mentor teachers and student teachers. It is important not only to give student teachers the opportunity to conduct teaching practica in rural schools, it is likewise crucial that teacher training institutions introduce courses and/or literature that address issues of rural education and the dynamics of the context. This could expose student teachers to different educational knowledge base; and at the same time, encourage curiosity to teach in contexts to which they might not have been exposed.

Notes

- i. In South African school system, there are four phases: Foundation phase which starts in Grade R (reception year, or Grade Nought) and lasts four years (up to and including Grade Three); Intermediate phase starts in Grade Four and lasts three years (up to and including Grade Six); Senior phase starts in Grades Seven up to Grade Nine and concludes the so-called General Education and Training Phase, that comprises the foundation, intermediate; Further education and training (FET) phase starts in Grades 10 up to Grade 12 and complete the schooling education (Department of Basic Education (DBE)), www.education.gov.za
- ii. The student used ICU to explain that leadership was not effective in a school, where, due to lack of observed organisation, the majority of learners were always roaming around the school unobserved during learning time. Leadership was seemingly so ineffective as a result that it resembled a helpless patient in the ICU unit.
- iii. Published under a Creative Commons Attribution Licence.

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