

A quest for professionalism amongst teacher educators in the NUL

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Outline

- Introduction;
- Research Problem;
- Methodology;
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Introduction

- The professional preparation of teacher educators provided through formal training gives them an opportunity to acquire professional knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes that are unlikely to be acquired through experiential learning alone Interest to undertake research
- **HOWEVER**

Introduction

- Teacher educators in Lesotho enter the field of teacher education without any training in this field;
- The reviewed literature revealed that the experiences and pathways to becoming teacher educators did not differ much;
- Context may vary, however, there are similarities shared by teacher education institutions.

Research Problem

- formal training would equip teacher educators with a professional knowledge base that is foundational for their task of training prospective teachers.
- Critical analyses of being in a career as teacher educator by Alexander (2004), revealed that there was need for a structured career path for teacher educators.

Research Problem

- little empirical evidence of what the sources of professional knowledge for teacher educators who practice without any form of training are or should be.
- How is professional knowledge enacted in teacher educators' practices?

Methodology

- The study was set to answer a question: what are the sources and application of professional knowledge amongst teacher educators
- The study employed an interpretivist research paradigm within a qualitative research methodology (Creswell, 2007). We explored the world of teacher educators.
- A case study of teacher educators at NUL

Methodology

- Data collection was carried out in three departments of the NUL.
- Purposive sampling was chosen and the lecturers had to be from different disciplines and specialization.
- The criteria included teaching experience and gender.
- A total of eight teacher educators participated. The criteria for the selection
 - observed the individuals' actions in practice,
 - asked them to narrate their life stories on becoming and as teacher educators.

Data Collection and analysis

- The data collected through narratives was transcribed and together with the observation data captured using the Atlas ti. computer programme;
- Followed Michel Eraut's analytical framework to guide the data analysis process;
- Eraut maps professional knowledge into knowing "that" equated to propositional or received knowledge, and
- knowing "how" (Eraut, 1994), which he equates to practical or experience-based knowledge.

Literature Review

- Appointment of teacher educators.
 - teaching experience within the school system
 - academic subjects or disciplines
 - However
 - These are not necessarily tailor-made for qualifying teacher educators to assume this new role.
- There are essential aspects of professional knowledge they need

Literature Review

- Other aspects of knowledge include *episteme* and *phronesis*;
- This is “knowledge possessed by professionals which enables them to perform professional tasks, roles and duties with quality” (Eraut (1994, p.1).
- A profession, has a systematic knowledge base, which means that it is specialised, firmly bound, scientific and standardised (Schon, 1983);

Literature review

- knowledge as epistemic, teacher educators have knowledge at their disposal and therefore should be in a position to use such knowledge in a manner that students will be helped by it;
- Phronesis - is not concerned with existing or concrete scientific theories which teacher educators tend to present to student teachers as conceptual.

Korthgen, Kessels and Koster (2001),

Literature Review

- According to Korthagen et. al (2001), in contemporary teacher education, transmission of knowledge is discouraged; exploration is, instead advocated.
- In this regard, Korthagen et al. (2001), argue that the task of teacher educators is to assist prospective teachers to explore, refine their perceptions and have opportunities to reflect on their practical experiences under the guidance of their teacher educators.

Literature Review

- It would therefore be inappropriate to think of the theoretical dimensions of professional knowledge as theory (*episteme*) to be applied to practice (*phronesis*). In essence the construction of the professional praxis knowledge is accomplished through concrete experiences of that practice itself.

Literature Review

- In practice, immersion in concrete practical experience translates into learning. Therefore there are reasons for discussing learning and its various aspects in the context of this paper. The implication is that the process of learning is not only targeting student teachers and their future students but also has to begin with teacher educators themselves.

Literature Review

- A number of issues were revealed in reviewing the literature
- First, the sources and application of teacher educator professional knowledge is inextricably linked with the education practice portrayed in classrooms;
- The sources and application of teacher educator professional knowledge can therefore not be considered without practice in classrooms contexts and the required teacher professional knowledge;

Literature review

- Secondly, teacher educators' professional knowledge should have practice as its primary concern because it is education in practice that eventually counts;
- The challenge for teacher educators is that they have to construct their own professional knowledge through enquiry-based authentic experiences.

Findings

- Two categories of sources of professional knowledge:
 - propositional and
 - practical knowledge.
- Primary sources of professional knowledge
 - Academic programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate levels serve as sources of a propositional type of professional knowledge.
 - This is ascribed to the fact that at undergraduate level six took courses in educational foundations

Findings

- Secondary sources of professional knowledge
- The major source of professional knowledge is practice
- ***Teaching practice***
- The most valued teaching practice is teaching at a teacher education institution. It is in the context of teaching from which they learned the most.

Findings

- Teaching practice
- The teacher education context is valued as one in which teacher educators experiment with their professional knowledge continuously. It provides the best experience of testing new teaching ideas and addressing new teaching challenges.
- Supervision of instruction
- All but one participant indicated that they had received no formal training on supervision of instruction;

Findings

- ***Supervision of instruction***
 - For the majority, supervising students' teaching practice had been directly informed by involvement in the supervision activity itself;
 - Working with colleagues provides prospects of learning from those with extensive experience;
 - Supervising students' teaching practice is in itself an opportunity to learn from the students as they practise what they had learned.

Findings

- Research
- Supervision of research
 - limited opportunities to supervise research;
- Participation in research
 - Working at institutions that require one to undertake research, served as a learning experience.
 - undertaking research on their own teaching appeared to be a major gap among the research participants;

Findings

- ***Assessing student teachers***
 - They had exposure to assessing students in the programme of study or discipline in which they were studying. However,
 - to most teacher educators, assessment continued to present challenges throughout their teacher education career;
 - lack of knowledge in this area coupled with a lack of mentorship and participation in continuing professional development opportunities contributed to the problem.

Findings

- ***Induction***
- Experiences varied, with some research participants having been attached to a mentor while others were not;
- There were many benefits attached to a mentorship programme,
- some of the research participants were not so fortunate, even though they too had mentors;

Findings

- *Professional activities in other contexts*
- Teacher educators engage in professional activities in other contexts, including conferences and participation in continuing professional development (CPD) endeavours.
- ***Challenges***
- The context within which they worked posed a number of professional challenges.
- It required refining and revision of their professional knowledge.

Findings

- There other challenges
 - classroom contexts to teaching
 - learning materials and
 - assistance provided to student teachers
 - Teaching large classes
 - Investing time in research on own research

Findings

- **Application of professional knowledge**
- The data analysed is based on
 - classroom observations and
 - views on a number of issues.

Findings

- ***Methods of teaching used***
 - *Transmissive methods*: in practice, the predominantly used method of teaching was of a didactic nature: The practice it varied from giving a very short explanation to giving extensive lectures.
 - there were situations in which teacher educators took an entire hour of lecturing with very little or no contribution from the student teachers.

Findings

- **Teaching Methods of teaching used**
- ***Interactive teaching methods***
- interactive teaching methods also featured as the second most commonly used methods of teaching. Teacher educators posed verbal questions; some prefaced questions with statement, others used single or multiple expository questions. Some elicited students' opinion asking either lower order or thought provoking questions.
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Findings

- The interactive teaching methods included students working in large groups of up to ten students and paired groups of two students in a group.
- Both large and small groups were common in both small and large class sizes.

Discussion

- **Sources of professional knowledge**
- Formal education has contributed to their education.
- This fell into two distinct categories.
 - undergraduate teacher education programme, which focused on two areas,
 - postgraduate level, where individuals specialised in disciplines of their choice;

Discussion

- **Enacting professional knowledge**
 - In enacting professional knowledge, teacher educators relied heavily on transmissive methods of teaching.
- They failed to exhibit claims that they learned from current practices as purported;
- claims that lessons have been gained did not seem to be observable nor were they that obvious in practice.

Discussion

- **Enacting professional knowledge**
- Loughran (2007) has established that enactment of professional knowledge goes beyond teacher educators merely teaching prospective teachers using transmissive and interactive methods of teaching. Loughran (2007) argues that teacher educators have to develop the pedagogy of teacher education.

Discussion

- Therefore, referring to the practice of teaching as the best source of professional knowledge represents a perpetuation of current education practice;
- Perpetuating the current practice presents some challenges. Improving education with the intention of producing the highest possible quality of education to all learners will continue to experience problems in the context in which the current practice of educating prospective teachers continues;

Discussion

- Enactment of professional knowledge goes beyond teacher educators merely teaching prospective teachers using transmissive and interactive methods of teaching as argued by Loughran (2007).
- He further argues teacher educators have to develop the pedagogy of teacher education.

Discussion

- The intention would be to signify the relationship between teaching about teaching and learning about teaching.
- In such a context, teaching about teaching might be purposefully examined, described, articulated and portrayed in ways that enhance an understanding of this complex interplay.

Discussion

- Discussing the findings and grounding the arguments on research undertaken seem to indicate that enacting professional knowledge is an avenue for teacher educators to learn from their everyday teaching experience.
- Finally, teacher educators can learn from researching education practices and reforms as these relate to their work of producing new teachers.

Conclusion

- In practice, very few teacher educators challenge student teachers to the extent of providing them opportunities to learn using their own strategies;
- Changing the current practice requires teacher educators to be courageous. They should move prospective teachers from the tendency to rely heavily on teacher educators;
- The observed situation contradicts the fact that teacher educators themselves acquire their professional knowledge from being immersed in the actual teaching of student teachers.

Conclusion

- In rethinking their practice they could design operationally powerful learning environments to ensure the highest possible quality of learning;
- Adopting this frame of thinking would require them to shift from the paradigm that persuades them to use teaching methods that are transmissive to facilitating learning.

Conclusion

- Espousing the proposed model implies that they, and eventually their student teachers, will emulate strategies of teaching that recognise and encourage the potential in students to learn in ways that are meaningful to them.

Thank you