Editorial

Teacher education consists of different types of knowledge that must be integrated, namely:

- conceptual knowledge (foundations / theories/disciplinary knowledge) with the aim of acquiring knowledge specialised proficiency; and
- contextual knowledge (aspects that endeavours to contextualise knowledge for occupational purposes, such as subject didactics and practical teaching) with the aim of acquiring task-specific proficiency.

The focus of this special issue is on research associated with the acquisition of contextual knowledge. Schools and schooling are continually changing. Therefore research is needed to assist teacher education providers in developing programmes suited to changing curricula and the contextual requirements of schools.

Thirty one research papers were received and after the peer review process twelve were selected to be included in this special issue. These cover a range of topics from preparation for practice to reflection on practice. In the preparation for practice paper it was found that much still needs to be done to ensure that practicing teachers model effective teaching to students. In the reflection on practice paper three stages were identified regarding the process of self-reflection.

Four research papers touch on aspects of assessment associated with practical teaching. In two critical questions are asked regarding the reliability of assessments and in both it was found that some mentor assessments are not always very accurate and may need improvement. In one paper there is a report on assessment and feedback practices regarding lesson plan presentations and it was found that feedback needs attention if it is to provide rich opportunities for reflection and improvement. The fourth paper also deals with feedback on lesson presentations and the researcher similarly found that this could be improved substantially.

Another four paper report on research regarding teaching methodologies. In one components of effective mathematics teaching were identified. The one on life-sciences teaching found that effective mentoring is as important as the methodology teaching and that these two must be integrated to enhance preparation of teachers. In the paper on physical science teaching it was found that using a DVD to illustrate science experiments done by a teacher has huge benefits for students studying at a distance. In the fourth paper the researcher found that students prefer the inclusion of environmental education in all subjects so that it can be taught in an interdisciplinary way.

Furthermore there is an paper on the functionality of schools which is of utmost importance when placing students for practical teaching and an paper on the importance of the language of instruction to support successful teaching.

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