

## Views of a Cohort of South African Student Teachers on Feedback of Their Lesson Presentations during Teaching Practice

B.J.J. (Kobus) Lombard

*School of Educational Sciences, North-West University, Vaal Triangle Campus,  
PO Box 1174, Vanderbijlpark 1911, South Africa  
E-mail: Kobus.Lombard@nwu.ac.za*

**KEYWORDS** Assessment. Formative Assessment. Teacher Education

**ABSTRACT** Based on theoretical overviews covering feedback and partners in teaching practice, this paper reports on a cohort of South African third year B.Ed. student teachers' impressions of feedback during a specific period of teaching practice by means of a quantitative study. By focusing on feedback on lesson presentations, 82 randomly sampled student teachers shared their impressions of feedback provided by supervisor teachers and university lecturers. Although the findings suggest that student teachers experience feedback of university lecturers as of higher quality than feedback provided by supervisor teachers, much must still be done to improve feedback practices during teaching practice periods.

### INTRODUCTION

Teaching practice is one of the most prominent and internationally recognised pedagogies in teacher education (*cf.* Marais and Meier 2004; Myles et al. 2006; White 2009; Copland 2010; Hennissen et al. 2011). Exemplifying professional learning, which “cannot be learned out of context and later applied in classrooms” (Eick et al. 2003: 75), teaching practice allows student teachers “to develop their self-confidence in a safe environment and build up their skills and their understanding of the complexities of teaching and learning” (Moody 2009: 169). Caires and Almeida (2005: 111) contend that teaching practice exposes students to “pedagogical experiences such as planning, teaching and assessment, the manipulation of a large amount of teaching tools, the resolution of real problems, and the reflection on the political, social and ethical aspects of teaching”. Williams et al. (2008: 309) conclude that teaching practice affords student teachers the opportunity to “move from the theories learned in their education courses to obtaining the many skills necessary in the actual teaching environment”. Teaching practice is thus established to assist prospective teachers in making the transition from student to teacher.

A variety of synonymous terms are used in the literature to describe the phenomenon of teaching practice. Among others, these include *teaching practicum* (Myles et al. 2006; Copland

2010), *supervised field experience* (Goodnough et al. 2009), *practicum* (White 2007; Moody 2009) and *teacher education practicum* (Brown and Danaher 2008). Within the South African context the preferred terms appear to be *teaching practice* (Department of Education 2000), or more recently, *supervised and assessed teaching practice* or *school-based work integrated learning* (Department of Higher Education and Training 2011). Despite the variations in terminology, teaching practice, as it is referred to in this paper, provides for experience-based learning (Dewey 1938), social cognitive learning (Vygotsky 1978) and situated learning (Lave and Wenger 1991). Put differently, teaching practice facilitates the development of professional knowledge and practice of prospective teachers within an authentic school environment.

Since learning to teach is a complex, interactive and dynamic process which is determined by the interplay of personal and situational factors (Borko and Mayfield 1995: 501; Caires and Almeida 2005: 112), prospective teachers in South Africa, as probably elsewhere, have to successfully complete a prescribed teaching practice period in order to become qualified teachers. This suggests that prospective teachers need to be assessed during teaching practice periods to determine their levels of success in teaching. Lee (2007) maintains that assessment of student performance during teaching practice can be both summative and formative. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that whether

assessment is done to report on the results of a student's performance (summative purpose) or to enhance a student's performance (formative purpose), both assessment purposes are intended to inform students about the level of success of their performance. This line of reasoning is underscored by Maclellan (2004: 312) who argues that since the learner is the principal beneficiary of assessment, assessment primarily has a formative function. In addition, Clark and Rust (2006: 74) state that all assessments should provide potential learning opportunities. Yet, assessment (Fairbanks et al. 2000; Beck and Kosnik 2002; Moody 2009) and feedback as its concomitant feature (Higgins et al. 2001; Hounsell et al. 2008), remain contentious components of teaching practice.

Considering feedback in particular, evidence from the literature discloses its paramount importance in prospective teachers' performance and development (*cf.* Shantz and Ward 2000; Tang and Chow 2007; Brandt 2008). However, the literature also reveals some deficiencies regarding feedback. These include that students rarely find feedback to be routinely helpful (Maclellan 2001); that feedback often lacks clarity (Va'squez 2004) and that it does not allow for sufficient interaction (Hyland and Lo 2006). The list of limitations continues when it is indicated that feedback is experienced by many students as too impersonal (Higgins et al. 2002) and that it is sometimes difficult to make connections between feedback, performance, the expected performance and how to monitor and improve future performances (Weaver 2006). Wilson and Scalise (2006: 636) endorse the aforementioned by stating that detailed feedback is not often provided. Adding to the list of shortcomings, Carless et al. (2011: 395) conclude that a great number of feedback practices are not fit for purpose. On the other side of the spectrum Orsmond et al. (2005) report that the quantity of feedback is sometimes considered as overwhelming by students, while Pellegrino et al. (2001) state that feedback is often not provided timely.

In addition to the aforementioned feedback challenges, Ganser (1996) and McIntyre et al. (1996) claim that a lack of clearly defining roles and responsibilities together with different definitions and philosophical perspectives of supervising teachers and university lecturers also

impact on the provision of feedback to student teachers during teaching practice.

### **Aim of the Study**

Implied in the concluding remarks mentioned above, differing perspectives of supervising teachers and university lecturers, may shape the inspiration student teachers get from feedback, how they perceive feedback processes and procedures as well as their reflexive awareness in terms of their own teaching. The central aim of this paper is to report on a cohort of third year South African B.Ed. students' views on the aforesaid aspects with specific reference to feedback received from supervising teachers and university lecturers respectively, on their lesson presentations during a particular teaching practice period. Secondary to this aim, is to provide a condensed theoretical account of feedback and to highlight some insights from the literature about partners in teaching practice.

In correspondence with the stated aims, this paper will unfold into a literature and an empirical section.

### **Feedback: A Clarifying Synopsis from the Literature**

#### ***Defining Feedback***

The literature is replete with attempts to define feedback. Some of these include the view of Wiggins (1998: 182) who states that feedback is "information that provides the performer with direct, useable insights into current performance, based on tangible differences between current performance and hoped for performance". Taras (2005: 470) quotes Ramaprasad (1983) who contends that feedback is "information about the gap between the actual level and the reference level of a system parameter which is used to alter the gap in some way". In turn, Hattie and Timperley (2007: 102) suggest that feedback is "information ... that seeks to provide knowledge and skills or to develop particular attitudes". Higgins et al. (2001: 221) call specific attention to the fact that feedback is a social process "in which elements, such as discourse, power and emotion, impact on how messages can be interpreted". Also highlighting its discursive element, Askew and Lodge (2000: 1) argue that "all dialogue to support learning in

both formal and informal situations” can be considered as feedback.

Congruent with the aforementioned, Clynes and Raftery (2008: 405/406) believe that many definitions of feedback share the following common characteristics:

- ♦ it is an interactive process,
- ♦ it aims at providing learners with some understanding and insight into their performance,
- ♦ depending on its purpose, feedback could be provided in formal and informal ways,
- ♦ feedback should be timely,
- ♦ feedback includes opinion and judgement,
- ♦ feedback is analytical and interpretative in nature,
- ♦ it explores options for improvement,
- ♦ feedback allows for reflection by both the provider and receiver, and
- ♦ it is often broadly categorized as positive or negative.

Inferred from the above, feedback aims to facilitate improvement by assisting learners towards a pre-determined goal. Viewed in this way, the correspondence between feedback and Vygotsky's (1978) belief that social experiences and interaction promote cognitive development is evident. Moreover, Vygotsky's notion of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is perceptible when engaging with feedback, given that the ZPD is described as “closing the distance between the actual developmental level ... and the level of potential development ... under guidance or in collaboration with [someone]” (Vygotsky 1978: 86).

### ***The Value of Feedback***

Deduced from the aforementioned explanations of feedback, Gallavan and Kottler (2009: 157) declare that feedback is essential for growth and change. Corroborating this viewpoint, Kilbourn et al. (2005) state that substantiated feedback could assist students to grow the ability to monitor their own pedagogical practice. According to White (2007: 300), constructive feedback is one of the most powerful influences on student achievement because it celebrates students' successes, helps keep them motivated and increases their confidence. Moreover, it highlights for students the aspects that are important to focus on and directs their learning towards the next steps. Quinton and Smallbone (2010: 125)

remark that feedback offers students an experiential base for reflection. This perspective is encouraged by Sadler (1989) who portrays the prime purpose of feedback as enabling students to become proficient self-assessors. In addition, Higgins et al. (2002) believe that feedback also provokes deeper learning. Quoting Hounsell (2003), Carless (2006: 219) maintains that feedback “plays a decisive role in learning and development, within and beyond formal educational settings. We learn faster, and much more effectively, when we have a clear sense of how well we are doing and what we might need to do in order to improve”. Taras (2003: 550) affirms the usefulness of feedback as an educational device when stating that “there is a plethora of literature on feedback which emphasizes its centrality in student learning”.

Based on a comprehensive synthesis of feedback literature, Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006: 205) propose the following seven principles of good quality feedback that articulates and summarises the value of feedback:

- ♦ it clarifies what good performance is,
- ♦ it facilitates the development of self-assessment (reflection),
- ♦ it delivers high quality information to students about their learning,
- ♦ it encourages dialogue around learning,
- ♦ it encourages positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem,
- ♦ it provides opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance, and
- ♦ it provides information to shape teaching.

Derived from the discussion thus far, the potential of feedback to stimulate learning during assessment is undoubtedly demonstrated and affirmed.

### ***Remarks from the Literature about Teaching Practice Partners***

In addition to structural partnerships in teaching practice, which is composed of structures such as the school, the university and even the department of education, personal partnerships in teaching practice is mainly characterised by a triad which consists of a student teacher, a supervisor teacher and a university lecturer (Slick 1997). This prompts Brown and Danaher (2008: 147) to assert that teaching practice “depends for its efficacy and utility on close and

authentic collaboration among multiple stakeholders". Although this statement is underscored by Borthwick et al. (2003) and Vickers et al. (2004), Zeichner (2010) draws attention to the fact that challenges of bridging the boundaries between different stakeholders to support beginner teachers' development remains problematic. Relationships among stakeholders, whether structural or personal in nature, are therefore complex and contested. Among others, Brookhart and Loadman (1992) identified three potential problem spheres eliciting tensions between university-school partnerships: the theoretical focus of universities versus the practical concerns of schools, issues of time and power, and differences in the ways in which school-based educators and university-based educators are rewarded for their work. Tillema (2009: 155) explains the sophisticated personal relations when indicating that student performance during teaching practice is perceived differently by supervisor teachers, university lecturers and students. Supervisor teachers, it is said, are more concerned with how students' classroom performance will benefit the learners, while university lecturers usually view student performance during teaching practice in relation to expected programme standards. Student teachers on the other hand, are just concerned with coping with the direct demands of teaching a class. Cardini (2006: 398) furthermore observes that personal partnerships are often "asymmetrical and unbalanced" relationships. To illuminate this in terms of teaching practice, McIntyre et al. (1996) together with John (2001) and Haigh and Ward (2004) suggest that since teaching practice is school based, supervisor teachers have a greater influence on the behaviour and attitudes of student teachers than university lecturers. Slick (1998) even refers to university lecturers as "disenfranchised outsiders" in the triadic partnership. In terms of assessment during teaching practice, Stones (1984), McIntyre et al. (1996) and Moody (2009) reveal inconsistencies between the assessment of supervisor teachers and university lecturers due to different meanings and viewpoints of what constitutes "good teaching". Viewed from another angle, Holland (2005) and Copland (2010) attribute conflicting assessment practices during teaching practice to the fact that the role of supervisory teachers is often associated with development while the role of university lecturers is frequently cou-

pled with assessment. Understood in this way, *development* implies a higher incidence of support, guidance and "scaffolding", signifying that assessment is formatively inclined, while *assessment* projects a more summative purpose. The dilemma of assessment of student teachers by university lecturers during teaching practice gets another slant when Yusko and Feiman-Nemser (2008) accentuate the inherent conflict between evaluative and educative aspects of supervision.

Based on the above remarks, disparities and tensions between teaching practice partners are self-evident. Be that as it may, support and advice offered to student teachers in terms of learning to teach remains imperative for their personal development and for improving practice in general. This set of realities necessitates a deeper look into the views of student teachers concerning the feedback they receive from supervisor teachers and university lecturers during teaching practice.

## Empirical Study

### Context

The main aim of this paper centres on a cohort of third year South African B.Ed. students' views on feedback on their lesson presentations during a particular teaching practice period. Hence, the researcher embarked on an empirical study to gather first-hand opinions from students to reveal their views. Keeping in mind that the research was not essentially intended to sanction the generalizability of the research results, third year students enrolled for the four year B.Ed. degree at one South African residential university participated in the research. The third year group was purposively selected based on the assumption that since this was the first time these students presented lessons to be formally assessed during a teaching practice session, their views regarding feedback will be free from any preconceived ideas that could affect the reliability of their responses. To further strengthen the rationale behind the method of selection, was the fact that the assessed lessons were supposed to be commented on by supervisor teachers as well as by university lecturers. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 320), the purposive sampling strategy in this research can be identified as typical case sampling since it was argued that these students'

teaching practice experiences are representative of the mainstream South African third year student teacher. Eighty-two (or 62%) of a cohort of 132 third year students were randomly selected to complete the questionnaire. Of the 82 participating students, 21 chose to do their teaching practice at Township schools which are public schools situated in townships or urban areas, mainly occupied by Black South African residents. The remaining 61 students opted for ex-Model C schools, which are public schools situated in urban areas where the majority of residents are White. Consequently, the sample allowed for diverse South African school types, each representing a unique entity because of its particular milieu and ethos.

## METHODS

Grounded in the quantitative approach, a survey research design (Leedy and Ormrod 2005: 183; McMillan and Schumacher 2006: 233) was adopted to address the primary aim of the study. To gather survey data a close-ended questionnaire was developed which was administered by the researcher after the students' return from a teaching practice period of three consecutive weeks. Other than a section on students' biographic information, the questionnaire consisted of 30 statements that centred on three themes: the inspiration students get from feedback, how students perceive feedback processes and procedures, and students' reflexive awareness in terms of feedback received on their teaching. The three themes consisted of six, nineteen and five statements respectively. Students were required to respond to each statement, which related to supervisor teachers and university lecturers, on a four-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". Informed by the literature study, discussions with and verifications from one knowledgeable colleague on the topics of assessment, feedback and teaching practice; as well as by the researcher's own knowledge and experiences in the same fields, content and face validity of the questionnaire items were ascertained. In terms of content validity (Leedy and Ormrod 2005: 92; Delport and Roestenburg 2012: 173/174), the questionnaire included adequate and representative items related to feedback during teaching practice. The questionnaire also conformed to face validity (Leedy and Ormrod 2005: 92; Delport

and Roestenburg 2012: 173), since all the items were carefully structured to focus on feedback during teaching practice. To further strengthen the validity of the questionnaire, three students of the cohort who were not included in the sample, were asked to complete the questionnaire. This pilot group of students was also required to indicate as to whether the respective items were easily comprehensible. As no apparent problems were experienced or reported, the questionnaire was used as intended.

## OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

### Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data obtained from the questionnaires were analysed by applying inferential statistics in the form of a t-test and the Pearson correlation coefficient ( $p < .005$ ) to report significant differences between two means. As was mentioned earlier, the research was not essentially intended to generalize the findings. However, the researcher was mindful that although the sample was confined to a cohort of third year students from one university, the obtained results could possibly be inferred to a larger population by applying inferential statistics (Leedy and Ormrod 2005: 267; Plano Clark and Creswell 2010: 217).

In terms of analysing the data to attain the aim of the study, the researcher was particularly interested to illuminate the following questions:

- Which themes and statements project significant differences when comparing teacher and lecturer feedback for the entire sampled group?
- Which themes and statements project significant differences when comparing teacher and lecturer feedback in Township schools?
- Which themes and statements project significant differences when comparing teacher and lecturer feedback in ex-Model C schools?
- Which themes and statements project significant differences when comparing teacher feedback in Township schools to teacher feedback in ex-Model C schools?
- Which themes and statements project significant differences when comparing lecturer feedback in Township schools to lecturer feedback in ex-Model C schools?



In attempting to resolve the above questions, the data revealed the ensuing findings. On the question: *Which themes and statements project significant differences when comparing teacher and lecturer feedback for the whole sampled group?* nine statements within two of the three particular themes appeared to be noteworthy. These are reflected in Table 1.

When considering teacher feedback in comparison with lecturer feedback in terms of the nine statements shown in Table 1, data obtained from the total group of 82 respondents (irrespective of whether teaching practice was done at a Township or ex-Model C school), reflect the significant differences as indicated in Table 2.

Concerning *feedback processes and procedures*, the sampled students were of the opinion that teachers, by and large, do not provide feed-

back immediately after their lesson presentations (S10) while lecturers are more inclined to provide feedback in written as well as verbal format (S14). The data revealed that lecturers have the tendency to compare individual student's lesson presentations with those of their peers (S15). The students also experienced lecturers' feedback as more specific in comparison with the feedback provided by teachers (S16). In addition, the students observed that teachers are less concerned than lecturers to point out how their lesson presentations impact on learners' learning (S25).

With regard to *feedback that stimulated reflection*, the students' responses revealed that teachers' feedback did not increase their awareness of the information as indicated on the lesson plan, whereas feedback received from lec-

**Table 1: Statements within themes projecting significant differences when comparing teacher and lecturer feedback for the whole group**

| Theme                                    | Statement                                                                                                                                      |
|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Feedback Processes and Procedures</i> | 10. The feedback on my lessons followed immediately after they were presented                                                                  |
|                                          | 14. The feedback on my lesson presentations was presented in both written and verbal formats                                                   |
|                                          | 15. The feedback on my lessons compared my presentations with those of other students                                                          |
|                                          | 16. The feedback on my lesson presentations lacked specificity                                                                                 |
|                                          | 25. The feedback on my lesson presentations provided causal explanations of how my teaching impacts on learners' learning                      |
| <i>Reflection on Feedback</i>            | 27. The feedback on my lesson presentations increased my awareness of the information spelled out on the lesson plan                           |
|                                          | 28. The feedback on my lesson presentations created opportunities for personal reflection to inform and improve my future lesson presentations |
|                                          | 29. The feedback on my lesson presentations improved my understanding of the importance of self-assessment                                     |
|                                          | 30. The feedback on my lesson presentations was related to the assessment criteria as specified on the assessment form                         |

**Table 2: Significant differences when comparing teacher feedback with lecturer feedback for the whole group**

| Theme                                                         | Statement                                                                                                              |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Feedback Inspiration Feedback Processes and Procedures</i> | 6. The feedback on my lesson presentations motivated me to become a model teacher                                      |
|                                                               | 7. The feedback on my lesson presentations was done in a hurried and unconsidered manner                               |
|                                                               | 16. The feedback on my lesson presentations lacked specificity                                                         |
|                                                               | 18. The feedback on my lesson presentations was difficult to process and interpret for future presentations            |
| <i>Reflection on Feedback</i>                                 | 27. The feedback on my lesson presentations increased my awareness of the information spelled out on the lesson plan   |
|                                                               | 29. The feedback on my lesson presentations improved my understanding of the importance of self-assessment             |
|                                                               | 30. The feedback on my lesson presentations was related to the assessment criteria as specified on the assessment form |

turers contributed positively in creating such awareness (S27). Compared with teachers' feedback, the students generally perceived feedback from lecturers as consequential for their personal reflection to inform and improve on their future lesson presentations (S28) as well as contributory towards their understanding of the importance of self-assessment (S29). Furthermore, in contrast with teachers' feedback, the sampled students alleged that lecturers' feedback was related to the assessment criteria as specified on the assessment form (S30).

It can therefore be inferred that the cohort of students experienced lecturers' feedback, in comparison with feedback received from teachers, as being presented in multiple forms, immediate, specific in nature, conceivably oriented towards norm-referenced evaluation, and creating awareness for reflection. This confirms lecturers' concern with students' performance in relation to programme standards (*cf.* Tillema 2009). However, in contrast with findings cited from the literature (*cf.* Tillema 2009), the students also held the opinion that lecturers care about the impact of their (students') teaching on learners. Emerging from the aforementioned, it can be assumed that in general, the sampled student teachers

were more satisfied with the feedback provided by lecturers than the feedback provided by teachers.

Since the sampled students completed their teaching practice in two different contexts, (for example, Township schools and ex-Model C schools, the researcher was also interested to know how the students perceived feedback from supervising teachers and university lecturers in these distinctive school environments. Hence, the second question was concerned with: *Which themes and statements project significant differences when comparing teacher and lecturer feedback in Township schools?* In this regard, seven statements covering all three themes were noted (See Table 3).

From the responses of the 21 students who were doing their teaching practice at Township schools, significant differences between teacher feedback and lecturer feedback were calculated as reflected in Table 4.

In terms of the theme: *inspiration that resulted from feedback*, the respondents deemed Township teachers' feedback as less motivating than that of their lecturers to become model teachers (S6). Responses covering the theme *feedback processes and procedures* revealed

**Table 3: Statements within themes projecting significant differences when comparing teacher and lecturer feedback in Township schools**

| Statement | Mean teachers | Mean lecturers | SD teachers | SD lecturers | T-value | P-value<br>P < .005 |
|-----------|---------------|----------------|-------------|--------------|---------|---------------------|
| S6        | 1.84          | 1.32           | 1.015       | .478         | 2.379   | .029                |
| S7        | 2.85          | 3.45           | .988        | .826         | -2.349  | .030                |
| S16       | 2.90          | 3.50           | .968        | .607         | -2.854  | .010                |
| S18       | 3.20          | 3.75           | .894        | .444         | -2.773  | .012                |
| S27       | 2.10          | 1.60           | .788        | .754         | 2.127   | .047                |
| S29       | 1.95          | 1.60           | .826        | .598         | 2.666   | .015                |
| S30       | 2.10          | 1.55           | 1.021       | .759         | 2.773   | .012                |

**Table 4: Significant differences when comparing teacher feedback to lecturer feedback in Township schools**

| Theme                             | Statement                                                                                                                                      |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Feedback Processes and Procedures | 14. The feedback on my lesson presentations was presented in both written and verbal formats                                                   |
|                                   | 15. The feedback on my lessons compared my presentations with those of other students                                                          |
|                                   | 25. The feedback on my lesson presentations provided causal explanations of how my teaching impacts on learners' learning                      |
| Reflection on Feedback            | 27. The feedback on my lesson presentations increased my awareness of the information spelled out on the lesson plan                           |
|                                   | 28. The feedback on my lesson presentations created opportunities for personal reflection to inform and improve my future lesson presentations |

that students concluded that Township teachers, as opposed to lecturers, provided feedback on their lesson presentations in a hurried and unconsidered manner (S7) and, furthermore, that the teachers' feedback lacked specificity (S16). Moreover, students who did their teaching practice at Township schools regarded teachers' feedback on their lesson presentations as more difficult to process and interpret than that of lecturers (S18). Addressing the theme of *reflection on feedback*, students were of the opinion that the feedback they received from Township teachers did not increase their awareness of the information spelled out on the lesson plan as much as lecturers' feedback (S27). The students were also of the opinion that Township teachers' feedback was not very helpful towards their understanding of the importance of self-assessment (S29). Finally, it is realized from the responses of students who were based at Township schools for their teaching practice that teachers' feedback was less related than the lecturers' to the assessment criteria specified on the assessment form (S30).

It can thus be concluded that, with the exception of the statement related to the theme of inspiration, the views of students who did their teaching practice in Township schools show congruence with the views of the whole sample. In terms of the seven principles of good quality feedback (cf. Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick 2006) and the role of motivation in increasing students' confidence (cf. White 2007), this group of

students' responses also highlighted the importance of feedback on their motivation and self-esteem.

Based on the same rationale as the previous question, Table 5 discloses five statements within two particular themes to shed some light on the question: *Which themes and statements project significant differences when comparing teacher and lecturer feedback in ex-Model C schools?*

Table 6 reflects the significant differences between teacher feedback and lecturer feedback concerning the identified five statements as perceived by the 61 students who attended an ex-Model C school for their teaching practice.

With regard to *feedback processes and procedures* students who did their teaching practice at ex-Model C schools reported that lecturers' feedback, in comparison with that of teachers, were done in both written and verbal formats (S14). Students doing their teaching practice at these schools also believed that lecturers are more inclined than teachers to mention comparisons between students' lesson presentations in their feedback (S15). From the responses it is furthermore clear that ex-Model C teachers are less likely than lecturers to indicate the impact of students' lesson presentations on learners' learning (S25). On the theme of *reflection on feedback* the respondents give the impression that the feedback of teachers at ex-Model C schools did not increase their awareness of the information stipulated on the lesson

**Table 5: Themes and statements projecting significant differences when comparing teacher and lecturer feedback in ex-Model C schools**

| Statement | Mean teachers | Mean lecturers | SD teachers | SD lecturers | t-value | P-value<br>P < .005 |
|-----------|---------------|----------------|-------------|--------------|---------|---------------------|
| 14        | 1.86          | 1.55           | .980        | .807         | 2.178   | .034                |
| 15        | 3.34          | 3.04           | .900        | 1.111        | 2.814   | .007                |
| 25        | 2.15          | 1.93           | .848        | .716         | 2.459   | .017                |
| 27        | 2.09          | 1.82           | .752        | .669         | 2.269   | .027                |
| 28        | 1.75          | 1.53           | .726        | .716         | 2.058   | .044                |

**Table 6: Significant differences when comparing teacher feedback to lecturer feedback in ex-Model C schools**

| Theme                                    | Statement                                                                                                                                                   |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Feedback Processes and Procedures</i> | 7. The feedback on my lesson presentations was done in a hurried and unconsidered manner                                                                    |
|                                          | 9. The feedback on my lesson presentations was provided in a group situation where my own and other students' lessons were discussed in a collective manner |



plan as much as lecturers' feedback (S27), nor did it create opportunities for personal reflection to inform and improve future lessons (S28).

The findings to this question show similarities to the preceding two questions and based on the information on feedback cited earlier in this article, signals higher quality feedback of university lecturers as compared with the feedback of supervisor teachers. However, the inclination of lecturers to compare students' performances is noteworthy. Despite the promotion of concepts such as criterion-referencing (McMillan 2007: 360) and growth-referencing (Oosterh of 2009: 16) in the literature, the tendency displayed by lecturers in this study reveals that norm-referencing is still deeply rooted and well and active in assessment practices. In terms of viewing student performance in relation with expected programme standards (*cf.* Tillema 2009), which suggests criterion-referencing, this group of the sampled students experienced the opposite from their university lecturers. It can also be deduced that summative assessment is inherent in the behaviour demonstrated by the lecturers (*cf.* Holland 2005; Yusko and Feiman-Nemser 2008; Copland 2010).

The inclusion of questions four and five warrants some explanation. Since the researcher also wanted to approach the aim of the study by using a different lens, a comparison was drawn between the feedback of supervisor teachers in Township schools and their counterparts

in ex-Model C schools. Subsequently, the same was done with university lecturers' feedback in the respective school environments. To justify this approach in the context of the study, it was argued that school context can be regarded as a possible factor when considering the quality of the teaching practice triadic partnership and consequently, the quality of feedback student teachers receive during teaching practice.

Stated as the fourth question of interest was: *Which themes and statements project significant differences when comparing teacher feedback in Township schools to teacher feedback in ex-Model C schools?* By considering the views of all sampled students who completed their teaching practice in the different school settings, the information shown in Table 7 attracted attention. The calculations of significant differences for the two relevant statements within the theme *feedback processes and procedures* which are applicable to this question are highlighted in Table 8.

When comparing the feedback processes and procedures of respectively Township and ex-Model C teachers, the sampled students who did their teaching practice in Township schools expressed a stronger opinion than their counterparts at ex-Model C schools that supervisory teachers' feedback on their lesson presentations were done in hurried and unconsidered manners (S7). The same group of students also indicated that teachers at Township schools have

**Table 7: Themes and statements projecting significant differences when comparing teacher feedback in Township schools to teacher feedback in ex-Model C schools**

| Statement | Mean T/S teachers | Mean Ex-C teachers | SD T/S teachers | SD Ex-C teachers | T-value | P-value<br>$p < .005$ |
|-----------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------|------------------|---------|-----------------------|
| 7         | 2.76              | 3.39               | 1.044           | .846             | -2.730  | .008                  |
| 9         | 2.76              | 3.58               | 1.179           | .658             | -3.012  | .006                  |

**Table 8: Comparing teacher feedback in Township schools (T/S) to teacher feedback in ex-Model C schools (Ex-C)**

| Theme                             | Statement                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Feedback Inspiration              | 2. The feedback on my lesson presentation reflected sensitivity and compassion towards my personal well-being                       |
| Feedback Processes and Procedures | 12. The feedback on my lesson presentations was mainly presented in written format                                                  |
|                                   | 13. The feedback on my lesson presentations was mainly presented in verbal format                                                   |
|                                   | 15. The feedback on my lessons compared my presentations with those of other students                                               |
|                                   | 20. The feedback on my lesson presentations was isolated from my other presentations and uniquely aimed at one specific lesson only |

the propensity to provide feedback in a group situation where lessons of peers were discussed collectively (S9).

The apparently rushed and impulsive manner in which supervisor teachers at Township schools provide feedback, confirms that students may not find the feedback very helpful (*cf.* Maclellan 2001), that feedback lacks clarity (*cf.* Va'sques 2004) and that feedback is vague (*cf.* Wilson and Scalise 2006). These teachers' behaviour also disregards the developmental nature of their involvement in prospective teachers' teaching practice (*cf.* Holland 2005; Copland 2010). The fact that feedback is provided in groups rather than to individuals, endorses what Higgins et al. (2002) say about the impersonal manner in which feedback is sometimes provided.

The final question: *Which themes and statements project significant differences when comparing lecturer feedback in Township schools to lecturer feedback in ex-Model C schools?* is clarified in Tables 9 and 10.

With reference to *feedback inspiration*, students at ex-Model C schools were more strongly of the opinion that university lecturers' feedback was sensitive and compassionate towards their personal well-being than their peers at Township schools (S2).

Responses to the four statements within the theme: *processes and procedures of feedback* reveal that a significant number of students at Township schools believe that lecturers' feedback is mainly presented in written format (S12) and not in verbal format (S13), while the students at ex-Model C schools apparently experienced the opposite. Students at ex-Model C schools felt more strongly that lecturers' feedback drew comparisons between their lesson presentations and those of their peers (S15) than students at Township schools. However, students at ex-Model C schools were more convinced than their peers at Township schools that lecturers' feedback was focused on a specific lesson (S20).

It therefore appears as if the views of students who completed their teaching practice in ex-Model C schools differ from some of the views originating from the literature and which were mentioned earlier in this paper. Since their experiences of lecturers' feedback point to sensitivity and compassion, it rejects the fact that feedback is sometimes experienced as impersonal (*cf.* Higgins et al. 2002). In contrast to what is mentioned in the literature, it also appears as if the same students experienced feedback which makes provision for sufficient interaction (*cf.* Hyland and Lo 2006) as more verbal feedback

**Table 9: Themes and statements projecting significant differences when comparing lecturer feedback in Township schools to lecturer feedback in ex-Model C schools**

| Statement | Mean T/S teachers | Mean Ex-C teachers | SD T/S teachers | SD Ex-C teachers | t-value | P-value<br><i>p</i> < .005 |
|-----------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------|------------------|---------|----------------------------|
| 2         | 2.16              | 1.66               | .958            | .815             | 2.196   | .031                       |
| 12        | 2.00              | 2.57               | 1.076           | 1.059            | -2.062  | .043                       |
| 13        | 3.05              | 2.47               | .911            | .920             | 2.374   | .020                       |
| 15        | 3.70              | 3.04               | .657            | 1.111            | 3.180   | .002                       |
| 20        | 2.60              | 2.00               | 1.046           | .874             | 2.500   | .015                       |

**Table 10: Comparing lecturer feedback in Township schools (Lect. T/S) to lecturer feedback in ex-Model C schools (Lect. Ex-C)**

| Theme                                                                   | Statement                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Feedback Inspiration</i><br><i>Feedback Processes and Procedures</i> | 2. The feedback on my lesson presentation reflected sensitivity and compassion towards my personal well-being.                       |
|                                                                         | 12. The feedback on my lesson presentations was mainly presented in written format                                                   |
|                                                                         | 13. The feedback on my lesson presentations was mainly presented in verbal format.                                                   |
|                                                                         | 15. The feedback on my lessons compared my presentations with those of other students                                                |
|                                                                         | 20. The feedback on my lesson presentations was isolated from my other presentations and uniquely aimed at one specific lesson only. |

was provided. Although lecturers' use of norm-referencing is confirmed, the students who visited ex-Model C schools felt that the lecturers' feedback focused on a specific lesson. This experience suggests a connection between feedback, performance and expected performance and feedback which is fit for purpose. The students' experiences are therefore in contrast with the views expressed earlier by Weaver (2006) and Carless et al. (2010). However, in most cases the experiences of students who did their teaching practice in Township schools, ratify the literature findings regarding feedback deficiencies in terms of the feedback received from university lecturers.

### CONCLUSION

In the final analysis, the generated data illuminated the following:

- ♦ The majority of the sampled students' opinions regarding feedback received from their university lecturers on their lesson presentations during a particular teaching period, revealed better quality feedback as compared to feedback received from supervisor teachers. This is irrespective of the school settings in which teaching practice was done.
- ♦ Students who did their teaching practice in ex-Model C schools reflected more positive views on university lecturers' feedback as opposed to the views of their peers who did their practical teaching in Township schools.
- ♦ Views of students who attended Township schools for their teaching practice, disclosed that the quality of feedback provided by supervisor teachers is lower compared to the views expressed by their counterparts who did teaching practice at ex-Model C schools.

The following ensuing elements emerging from the above findings are also worth mentioning.

- ♦ Although university lecturers provided ostensibly better quality feedback, it does not mean that their feedback is flawless. The fact that students who did their teaching practice in Township schools experienced lecturers' feedback less positive than their fellow students who did their teaching practice in ex-Model C schools is unsettling. This could possibly suggest lecturer prejudice against certain groups of students or the schools in which they chose to do their

teaching practice. This finding thus suggests that school context is a contributory factor towards the quality of the teaching practice triadic partnership.

- ♦ Though feedback of university lecturers can still be improved, the feedback provided by supervisor teachers demonstrates much more weaknesses. These weaknesses could impact negatively on students' development of their self-confidence, their exposure to and understanding of pedagogical experiences and their attainment of the necessary skills to persevere in the actual teaching environment. The fact that the feedback of supervisor teachers is experienced as less favourable, could suggest that they are not exceptionally willing or sufficiently skilled to act as supervisor teachers for student teachers during teaching practice.

Based on the preceding information, it can be concluded that the feedback skills of university lecturers and supervisor teachers should be improved. Given the fact that teaching practice as inseparable component of teacher education is universally valued, assessment of student teachers' teaching practice to stimulate growth and development require much more attention. Implied in such a statement, the significance and covert consequences of feedback should not be underestimated.

### REFERENCES

- Askew S, Lodge C 2000. Gifts, ping-pong and loops. In: S Askew (Ed.): *Feedback for Learning*. London: Routledge, pp. 1-17.
- Beck C, Kosnik C 2002. Components of a good practicum placement: Student teacher perceptions. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 29(2): 81-98.
- Borko H, Mayfield V 1995. The roles of the cooperating teacher and university supervisor in learning to teach. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 11(5): 501-518.
- Borthwick AC, Stirling T, Mauman AD, Cook DL 2003. Achieving successful school-university collaboration. *Urban Education*, 38(3): 330-371.
- Brandt C 2008. Integrating feedback and reflection in teacher preparation. *ELT Journal*, 62(1): 37-46.
- Brookhart S, Loadman W 1992. School-university collaboration and perceived professional rewards. *Journal of Research in Education*, 2(1): 68-76.
- Brown A, Danaher P 2008. Towards collaborative professional learning in the first year early childhood teacher education practicum: Issues in negotiating the multiple interests of stakeholder feedback. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 36(2): 147-161.

- Caires S, Almeida LS 2005. Teaching practice in initial teacher education: Its impact on student teachers' professional skills and development. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 31(2): 111-120.
- Cardini A 2006. An analysis of the rhetoric and practice of educational partnerships in the UK: An arena of complexities, tensions and power. *Journal of Education Policy*, 21(4): 393-415.
- Carless D 2006. Differing perceptions in the feedback process. *Studies in Higher Education*, 31: 219-233.
- Carless D, Salter D, Yang M, Lam J 2011. Developing sustainable feedback practices. *Studies in Higher Education*, 36(4): 395-407.
- Clark CM, Rust FO'C 2006. Learning-centered assessment in teacher education. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 32: 73-82.
- Clynes MP, Raftery SEC 2008. Feedback: An essential element of student learning in clinical practice. *Nurse Education in Practice*, 8: 405-411.
- Copland F 2010. Causes of tension in post-observation feedback in pre-service teacher training: an alternative view. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26: 466-472.
- Delpont CSL, Roestenburg WJH 2012. Quantitative data-collection methods: Questionnaires, checklists, structured observation and structured interview schedules. In: AS De Vos, H Strydom, CB Fouché, CSL Delpont (Eds.): *Research at Grass Roots for the Social Sciences and Human Service Professions*. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. Pretoria: Van Schaik, pp.171-205.
- Dewey J 1938. *Experience and Education*. New York: Collier.
- Eick CJ, Ware FN, Williams PG 2003. Co-teaching in a science methods course: A situated learning model of becoming a teacher. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 54(1): 74-85.
- Fairbanks C, Freedman D, Kahn C 2000. The role of effective mentors in learning to teach. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 51(2): 102-112.
- Gallavan NP, Kottler E 2009. Constructing rubrics and assessing progress collaboratively with Social studies students. *Social Studies*, 100(4): 154-158.
- Ganser T 1996. The cooperating teacher role. *The Teacher Educator*, 31: 283-291.
- Goodnough K, Osmond P, Dibbon D, Glassman M, Stevens K 2009. Exploring a triad model of student teaching: Pre-service teacher and cooperating teacher perceptions. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 25: 285-296.
- Haigh M, Ward G 2004. Problematising practicum relationships: Questioning the 'taken for granted'. *Australian Journal of Education*, 48(2): 134-148.
- Hattie J, Timperley H 2007. The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, 77(1): 81-112.
- Hennissen P, Crasborn F, Brouwer N, Korthagen F, Bergen T 2011. Clarifying pre-service teacher perceptions of mentor teachers' developing use of mentoring skills. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27: 1049-1058.
- Higgins R, Hartley P, Skelton A 2001. Getting the message across: The problem of communicating assessment feedback. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 6(2): 269-274.
- Higgins R, Hartley P, Skelton A 2002. The conscientious consumer: Reconsidering the role of assessment feedback in student learning. *Studies in Higher Education*, 27(1): 53-64.
- Holland P 2005. The case for expanding standards for teacher evaluation to include an instructional supervision perspective. *Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education*, 18(1): 67-77.
- Hounsell D, McCure V, Hounsell J, Litjens J 2008. The quality of guidance and feedback to students. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 27(1): 55-67.
- Hyland F, Lo M 2006. Examining interaction in the teaching practicum: Issues of language, power and control. *Mentoring and Tutoring*, 14(2): 163-186.
- John P 2001. Winning and losing: A case study of university tutor - student teacher interaction during a school-based practicum. *Mentoring and Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 9(2): 153-168.
- Kilbourn B, Keating C, Murray K, Ross I 2005. Balancing feedback and inquiry: How novice observers (supervisors) learn from inquiry into their own practice. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, 20(4): 298-318.
- Lave J, Wenger E 1991. *Situated Learning*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Lee I 2007. Feedback in Hong Kong secondary writing classrooms: Assessment for learning or assessment of learning? *Assessing Writing*, 12: 180-198.
- Leedy PD, Ormrod JE 2005. *Practical Research: Planning and Design*. 8<sup>th</sup> Edition. New Jersey: Pearson.
- Maclellan E 2001. Assessment for learning: Differing perceptions of tutors and students. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 26(4): 307-318.
- Maclellan E 2004. How convincing is alternative assessment for use in higher education. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 29(3): 311-321.
- Marais P, Meier C 2004. Hear our voices: Student teachers' experiences during practical teaching. *Africa Education Review*, 1(2): 220-233.
- McIntyre D, Byrd D, Fox S 1996. Field and laboratory experiences. In: J Sikula (Ed.): *Handbook of Research on Education*. New York: Macmillan, pp. 171-193.
- McMillan JH 2007. *Classroom Assessment: Principles and Practice for Effective Standards-based Instruction*. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- McMillan JH, Schumacher S 2006. *Research in Education: Evidence-based Inquiry*. 6<sup>th</sup> Edition. Boston: Pearson Education Inc.
- Moody J 2009. Key elements in a positive practicum: Insights from Australian post-primary pre-service teachers. *Irish Educational Studies*, 28(2): 155-175.
- Myles J, Cheng L, Wang H 2006. Teaching in elementary school: Perceptions of foreign-trained teacher candidates on their teaching practicum. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 22: 233-245.
- Nicol D, Macfarlane-Dick D 2006. Formative assessment and self-regulated learning: A model and seven principles of good feedback practice. *Studies in Higher Education*, 31(2): 199-218.
- Oosterhof A 2009. *Developing and Using Classroom Assessment*. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. New Jersey: Pearson.
- Orsmond P, Merry S, Reiling K 2005. Biology students' utilization of tutors' formative feedback: A qualitative interview study. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 30(4): 369-386.

- Pellegrino J, Chudowsky N, Glaser R 2001. *Knowing What Students Know: The Science and Design of Educational Assessment*. NCR Centre for Education. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- Plano Clark VC, Creswell JW 2010. *Understanding Research: A Consumer's Guide*. New Jersey: Merrill (Pearson).
- Quinton S, Smallbone T 2010. Feeding forward: Using feedback to promote student reflection and learning – a teaching model. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 47(1): 125–135.
- Sadler D 1989. Formative assessment and the design of instructional systems. *Instructional Science*, 18(2): 119–144.
- Shantz D, Ward T 2000. Feedback, conversation and power in the field experience of preservice teachers. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 27(4): 288–294.
- Slick S 1997. Assessing versus assisting: The supervisor's roles in the complex dynamics of the student teaching triad. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 13(7): 713–726.
- Slick S 1998. The university supervisor: A disenfranchised outsider. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 14(8): 821–834.
- Stones E 1984. *Supervision in Teacher Education: A Counseling and Pedagogical Approach*. London: Methuen.
- South Africa Department of Education 2000. *Norms and Standards for Educators*. Pretoria: Department of Education.
- South Africa Department of Higher Education and Training 2011. *Policy on the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications*. Pretoria: Department of Higher Education and Training.
- Tang SYF, Chow AWK 2007. Communicating feedback in teaching practice supervision in a learning-orientated field experience assessment framework. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23: 1066–1085.
- Taras M 2003. To feedback or not to feedback in student self-assessment. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 28(5): 549–565.
- Taras M 2005. Assessment – summative and formative – some theoretical reflections. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 53(4): 466–478.
- Tillema HH 2009. Assessment for learning to teach: Appraisal of practice teaching lessons by mentors, supervisors, and student teachers. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 60(2): 155–167.
- Va'squez C 2004. "Very carefully managed": Advice and suggestions in post observation meetings. *Linguistics and Education*, 15: 33–58.
- Vickers M, Harris C, McCarthy F 2004. University–community engagement: Exploring service-learning options within the practicum. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 32(2): 129–141.
- Vygotsky S 1978. *Mind in Society*. London: Harvard University Press.
- Weaver M 2006. Do students value feedback? Student perceptions of tutors' written responses. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 31: 379–394.
- White S 2007. Investigating effective feedback practices for pre-service teacher education students on practicum. *Teaching Education*, 18(4): 299–311.
- White S 2009. Articulation and re-articulation: Development of a model for providing quality feedback to pre-service teachers on practicum. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 35(2): 123–132.
- Wiggins G 1998. *Assessing Student Performance*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Williams J, Shibamura A, Matsuzaki Y, Kanayama A, Ito A 2008. Developing a 'feedback cycle' in teacher training: Local networking in English education at Keiwa College. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 34(4): 307–318.
- Wilson M, Scalise K 2006. Assessment to improve learning in higher education: The BEAR assessment system. *Higher Education*, 52: 635–663.
- Yusko B, Feiman-Nemser S 2008. Embracing contraries: Combining assistance and assessment in new teacher induction. *Teachers' College Record*, 110(5): 923–953.
- Zeichner K 2010. Rethinking the connections between campus courses and field experiences in college- and university-based teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 61(1-2): 89–99.