

An Exploration of the Assessment and Feedback Practices in a Practical Teaching Intervention for In-service Teachers

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ABSTRACT There is much concern in South Africa about the quality of teaching in our schools, and many teacher development programmes have introduced a classroom support component where in-service teachers are assessed on their teaching practice skills. However, limited research related to the support and assessment functions of such interventions has been published. The qualitative study reported in this paper focused on the feedback reports given to 249 rural mathematics and science teachers as part of the assessment of their teaching practices. The teachers from the South African province of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) were enrolled on a teacher development programme. The purpose of the study was to explore the nature of the feedback reports that were provided and to assess the value of allocating assessment scores to the teachers. The data were broken down into 1 028 feedback units that were used to generate open codes. These codes were refined into six main categories. The findings reveal that the written comments covered a range of issues related to teacher professional development. However, the majority of the comments did not provide rich opportunities for reflection. It was also found that the scores lay within a narrow range and did not work well in differentiating between a range of competencies. It is recommended that the feedback role of the university tutor should receive more attention than that of the evaluative function of the classroom support visits.