

The organisation of pedagogy in a learnership model of teacher education

Monica Mawoyo* and Maureen Robinson

Faculty of Education, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Private Bag 652, Cape Town, 8000 South Africa
monicam1@mweb.co.za; RobinsonM@cput.ac.za

* To whom correspondence should be addressed

The different ways in which student teacher learning was organised and managed as part of the Level 6 Learnership for Educators in Schooling are described. Three primary schools working in 2003 with the Cape Technikon were chosen for the study. Lave and Wenger's notion of situated learning is used as the conceptual framework for describing the purpose of a learnership. The article focuses on the spatial and temporal organisation of this learnership, the knowledge and practices that are privileged in each school, how these repertoires are made available to student teachers and how the student teachers are assessed. Some points for further exploration are raised, in particular around the selection of schools, the roles and responsibilities of mentors, and models of partnership.

Aim of the study

In this study the implementation of the Level 6 Learnership for Educators in Schooling was explored. In particular the study looked at the way in which the process of learning to teach was organised and managed between the mentors and the student teacher. Interviews were conducted in 2003 with mentors and student teachers at three primary schools in the Western Cape. All three schools were participating in a learnership programme with the Faculty of Education at the Cape Technikon (prior to its merging with Peninsula Technikon to become the Cape Peninsula University of Technology). The aim of the study was to compare the experiences of a number of mentors and student teachers participating in the learnership programme, with a view to establishing how the learnerships were organised in the different schools in terms of structure, mode of delivery, and assessment. These comparative experiences are described and discussed in terms of the notion of situated learning, where novices learn through observing a more experienced person as well as through participation in the practice that they want to master.

The learnership model

The learnership model of education and training was introduced in South Africa in 2001, as a route to obtain a qualification that integrates structured theoretical learning at a Higher or Further Education and Training institution, with workplace experience. The duration of the course being studied and the number of credits that the course carries determine the time spent in the workplace, but this is generally a minimum of 30% of the full study period.

Learnerships are driven by Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs). The SETAs are charged with the responsibility of improving the skills of the South African people in line with the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS). The SETA responsible for teacher education is the Education, Training and Development Practitioners (ETDP) SETA. A Level 6 learnership refers specifically to a pre-service professional teaching qualification, pegged at Level 6 on the National Qualifications Framework. In 2001 the following teacher education qualifications were registered with the Department of Labour: the Bachelor of Primary Education, the Bachelor of Secondary Education and the Post-graduate Certificate in Education. These learnerships were implemented in schools in the same year.

The ETDP SETAs provide students involved in learnerships with grants towards fees and living expenses. In 2003, this was an amount of R11 000–R13 000 per annum, depending on the student teacher's year of study. Students in their first year received R11 000, those in their second year R12 000, and those in their third and fourth years of study received R13 000 (ETDP SETA:2002). At the time of writing, it was envisaged that these amounts might increase to R20 040 for first year students and R27 200 for second to fourth year students (Project Co-ordinator of Level 6 Learnership in Kwazulu Natal, pers. comm.).

A learnership differs from conventional models of teacher education in South Africa in its structure and mode of delivery. Con-

tionally, student teachers go to a school for teaching practice over a blocked period ranging from four to ten weeks per year. The ideal-typical model of a learnership is that student teachers spend between one- and two-thirds of their weekly programme time in a school, getting practical guidance on how to become the best teacher possible (ETDP SETA, 2002). This guidance is obtained from a teacher at the school, called a mentor. The mentor is appointed by the school on the basis of experience and expertise in the phase or learning area in which he or she will be mentoring the student teacher (ETDP SETA, 2002). In this model, the student teacher is employed by the school and registered to study with an accredited education provider.

The responsibility of the higher education provider in this arrangement is to adapt its curriculum so that it is flexible enough to accommodate the student teacher's school experience. Some providers have restructured their programmes by moving their lectures to Saturdays so that student teachers can have an uninterrupted week in the school (interview with Rhodes University lecturer, 2003). The provider has to monitor the tasks that the student teacher is given to perform in the school. These tasks usually form part of an assignment. In addition, the provider needs to make available mentoring courses or offer support to mentors by giving them guidance on how to work with their student in the school. Finally, the provider has to make sure that the student teacher's work-based component is assessed (ETDP-SETA, 2002:3-4).

In 2003, 384 student teachers were participating in the learnership across the country, an increase of about a third from the previous year. Twelve HEIs had expressed interest in the learnership or were already participating, an increase from five in 2001 and nine in 2002. At the time of writing, sixteen HEIs had expressed interest in participating in the learnership in 2004 (internal communication with ETDP SETA Level 6 Learnership Project Manager, 2003).

A theoretical framework for the learnership model of teacher education

The learnership approach fits into a model of teacher education which is predominantly school-based. School-based teacher education itself rests on the notion of experiential learning or situated learning, which is viewed as a powerful learning tool for several reasons, the main one being that student teachers get hands-on experience and make sense of what they are learning in the school where they see it happening. Hagger, Burn & McIntyre (1993), responding to the move in England towards a more school-based model of teacher education, emphasise that experience in a school context provides opportunities for "Learning what ideas are worth putting into practice, what ideas it is possible to put into practice, and under what circumstances any particular ideas are useful" (1993:7).

This position is different from the one that sees learning theory at the educational institution as a precedent to later application in a classroom situation. Lasley and Watras (1991) call this a linear approach, where teacher development is seen as something that moves

through discrete steps.¹

A further influence on the traditional model of teacher education has been particular discourses in cognitive psychology, which have tended to dichotomise learning and doing as distinct processes. These processes are supposed to be sequential, with the mind acquiring knowledge first and then the knowledge being transferred in later situations where its application is required. This view divorces cognition from its social and cultural context, and has come under attack from theorists of situated cognition (Brown & Duguid, 1989; Lave, 1993).

Lave and Wenger (1991) suggest a more holistic framework in which the learner acquires the knowledge and skills to perform by learning *in situ*. They critique the process of dichotomising learning and doing and divorcing it from socio-cultural contexts. They argue that situated learning places thought and action in a specific place, a place that involves other learners, the environment and activities to create meaning.

Learning from experience provides opportunities for a community that facilitates sharing of ideas, testing of one's theories and providing feedback, support and opportunity for growth and formation of a knowledge identity. This community is called a community of practice. In teacher development, when the student is learning from the mentor, he or she will be accessing professional knowledge and skills from an expert. This can be defined as some form of apprenticeship, not in the anachronistic sense of an apprentice being contracted to a master for a long period of time, but in the sense of:

imparting specialised knowledge to a new generation of practitioners. It is the rite of passage that transforms novices into experts. It is a means of communicating things that cannot be easily communicated by conventional means (Coy, 1989:xi-xii)

Learning in the context of practice, for teacher development especially, is significant because in teacher development the way teachers exhibit 'best practice' can be both tacit and explicit. There are some aspects of their practice that teachers cannot transmit linguistically but tacitly through demonstration (Ensor, 2000). Student teachers can only acquire these aspects through observing the mentor and through themselves possessing the ability to be able to distinguish between best and poor practice based on the foundational knowledge that they learn from the academic institution (Hirst, 1990).

Participants in the study

In the Western Cape in 2003, a total of 43 schools participated in the Level 6 learnership for educators in schooling. This study has focused on three independent schools which hosted students studying for the BEd degree with the Cape Technikon and receiving ETDP-SETA Level 6 learnership funding. Only independent schools were selected as these were the particular schools that had made arrangements at that time to participate in the learnership with the Cape Technikon.

In total, five student teachers and six mentors from the three schools were interviewed for the study. Of the five student teachers, three were doing their fourth and final year of the BEd degree, specialising in intermediate and senior phase (Grades 4–9). The other two students were doing the Higher Diploma in Education (HDE), also for the intermediate and senior phase of schooling, and were also in their fourth and final year. All student teachers were female and coloured. This is significant because the National Skills Development Strategy has set targets for employers in terms of equity. Employers have to achieve an equity target by employing people of colour, women and people with disability in their workplace. SETAs also have to meet these equity targets in the candidates that they fund for learnership grants (Budlender, 2001).

At each of the schools, each student teacher had two mentors. One was a general mentor who would oversee the administrative side of the learnership, like completing SETA forms and attending SETA meetings. This mentor also had a pastoral role and would see to it that the student teacher was settled in the school. The other mentor was responsible for the student teacher's development as a classroom teacher, and was a learning area mentor, if the school organized its tea-

ching according to learning areas, or a phase mentor, if the school organized its teaching according to phases. The learning area or phase mentor would work in her classroom with the student teacher. Both mentors participated, in different ways, in:

a nurturing process in which a more skilled person, serving as a role model, teaches, sponsors, encourages, counsels, and befriends a less skilled or less experienced person for the purpose of promoting the latter's professional and/or personal development (Anderson & Shannon, 1988:40).

All three of the schools in the study shared similar characteristics. All were independent schools in an urban area, serving a predominantly upper-middle class constituency and charging high fees. The majority of learners came from wealthy homes, with some learners being supported financially by scholarships. One of the schools was co-educational, whilst two were for girls only. The learner body was racially mixed, but the teachers at all three schools were mainly white and female. Teachers were professionally qualified.

For reasons of confidentiality, the names of the schools have been changed to Balboa, Quince and Fallal Primary Schools. The names of the student teachers have also been changed, as have those of the mentors. The student teachers are here called Susie, Sam, Gail, Tania and Sonia and the mentors Dawn, Jill, Shaun, Ruth, Jan and Tessa.

Methodology

A number of categories of analysis informed the questions that were asked of the teachers and the student teachers. In seeking to understand how mentors were giving student teachers access to opportunities to learn to become a teacher, evidence of the following was gathered:

- Spatial and temporal organization of the learnership
 - The pedagogic relationship between the mentors and the student teachers
 - Privileged repertoires of knowledge and practice
 - How best practice was made available to student teachers
 - How student teacher performance was evaluated by the mentors.
- To explore these issues, a structured interview was designed and administered. The questions sought answers to the following questions:
- What the mentor and the student teachers did in the school and classrooms when they were together;
 - If the school and the mentor had structured learning programmes for the student teacher's learning;
 - What the most important aspects of teaching were that were taught and learnt in the school; why these aspects were considered important, and how these important aspects were taught and learnt;
 - If and how the student teachers were assessed;
 - If the student teachers and mentors could recommend changes to improve the way the Cape Technikon learnership model was being implemented.

A structured interview was appropriate for two reasons. Firstly, it enabled us to collect the data in a relatively short space of time, thereby ensuring that the data could contribute to course planning for the following year. Secondly, mentors and student teachers could be asked the same questions. This meant that it was possible to find out the degree of convergence and divergence in the student teachers' and mentors' perceptions of the work that they were doing together in the schools. It served as a way to triangulate the data in the absence of systematic classroom observation to confirm the validity of the data. Whilst it is acknowledged that the sample was small, it represented the full picture of the learnership at one higher education institution, and was therefore considered worth exploring in detail.

The study formed part of a larger study to find out what models of the Level 6 learnership existed in South Africa and how these models related to the Cape Technikon model (Mawoyo, 2003).

The above discussion provides a backdrop for the analysis of ways in which student teacher learning was organized in three schools that were implementing the Level 6 learnership with Cape Technikon

students in 2003. The following section reports on the central issues that emerged from the interviews and raises some matters for further investigation.

Spatial and temporal organization

The student teachers at the three schools spent different amounts of time in their schools working with their mentors. Table 1 indicates the amount of time each student spent each week at their school.

Table 1 Time that each student teacher spent at school per week

Student teacher	Hours
Susie	12
Sam	35–36
Gail	35–36
Tania	8–9
Sonia	10.5

It is evident that the student teachers spent varying times at school. This is because they all had different timetable commitments in relation to their academic studies. The schools that hosted the student teachers worked out the time by "working around" the student teacher's course timetable. Sam and Gail spent more hours at the school than the other three student teachers because they were enrolled on a part-time course and their lectures were in the late afternoons and on Saturdays. For the full-time students, the time they spent in the school was spread across a number of days, depending on when they were free from lectures. This made it quite difficult for the student teachers to manage time. As Dawn, Sonia's mentor commented "*Usually, poor thing, she has to be running back to lectures*".

In the schools, each student teacher worked with two mentors, a general mentor and a phase or learning area mentor. In addition to this, at Balboa, the student teacher also got an opportunity to work with teachers from the senior phase. While the boundaries within the school were quite fluid and student teachers could work with teachers other than their two mentors, the boundaries were quite impermeable when it came to students moving between schools. The student teachers spent their entire learnership at the same school. Dawn from Balboa even complained because her student teacher went to another school for the official four-week period of Teaching Practice, in the middle of the year. She would have preferred Sonia to do the Teaching Practice at Balboa, thereby ensuring Sonia's commitment to the one school.

Pedagogic relationship between mentor and student teachers

It was not surprising that the mentor had more control than the higher education institution over selection of what the student teacher would do in the school. The mentor herself was conforming to the school curriculum and so the student teachers' learning programme structure and content became predetermined by the needs and rhythm of the school. Shaun stated that the student teacher "*fits into our programme*" and Jill noted, "*I allowed her to come on board and become part of my programme. I did not have a [special] programme for her*".

Even though at the general level student teachers could not make their own decisions about what they were exposed to at the school, at micro-level, the relation with the mentor was quite collaborative. Three student teachers and three mentors indicated that they planned together and did a lot of collaborative teaching ("*we bounce off ideas with each other*"). When student teachers and mentors work closely together in collaboration the relationship can become mutually beneficial in terms of knowledge growth for the mentor. Cochran-Smith and Paris (1995) use Dewey's work to explain how mentor and student teacher roles can be interchangeable. Dewey argues that without knowing it, the teacher can be seen as a learner and the learner as a teacher. Shaun indicated that student teachers "*bring in new ideas which can be exchanged between them and the school. Teachers can learn a lot*

from students. This is an immense advantage for the teacher". Ruth, a mentor at a different school, Balboa, also pointed out that she learnt a lot from her student teacher.

Privileged repertoires of knowledge and practice

Ensor (2000) has proposed that any pre-service teacher development course elaborates a privileged repertoire that involves a selection and combination of content for the production of pedagogic tasks. Pedagogic resources to facilitate the tasks are also presented. The privileged repertoire includes aspects about teacher/learner communication, assessment and classroom management. Ensor's argument is useful in describing what student teachers learn in a school on a learnership. Each school has a privileged repertoire that it wants the student teacher to acquire and the way this privileged repertoire is made available differs from school to school, and from mentor to mentor.

Based on data from the interviews, we developed categories to classify what student teachers indicated were the most important things they were learning from their schools and what mentors thought they had taught the student teachers. We classified these forms of teaching and learning as follows:

- Instructional, pertaining to subject matter knowledge and teaching strategies;
- Regulative, pertaining to disciplining children as well as the student teacher's appropriate conduct in the school;
- Interpersonal, pertaining to social authority relations in the school between teachers and learners and between teachers;
- Administrative, pertaining to the daily routines of the school.

In Table 2 we use these categories to map out and compare the responses from both the mentors and the student teachers at the three schools.

When asked to indicate explicitly what the most important aspects learnt and taught at the school were, at all schools both student teachers and mentors foregrounded aspects of teaching related to the regulative, administrative and interpersonal. Interestingly, the emphasis on the regulative at Balboa and Quince, from the perspective of the mentors, was mainly directed at student teachers' conduct. However, in other responses student teachers indicated that they had benefited a lot from the input received from their mentors on aspects of the instructional, in particular in relation to lesson planning and lesson evaluation.

How best practice was made available to student teachers

Earlier, we mentioned that some aspects of teaching in a classroom are tacit and cannot easily be explained linguistically whilst others can be explicitly stated. Based on this proposition, the value of mentoring is that the student teacher can observe what the mentor is doing and they can also ask where they do not understand issues of classroom practice. The way in which the interviewed mentors and student teachers indicated how best practice was made available to student teachers can be classified using four categories. Each of these categories has been linked to the forms of teaching and learning identified earlier:

- Modelling — the student teachers would be able to observe how the mentors taught their learning area and how they interacted with the children. The use of modelling for student teacher learning is especially significant where the student teacher has access to different mentors. Sonia from Balboa stated, "*I am able to apply different methods of control because of seeing different methods from different teachers*". [Interpersonal, regulative, instructional]
- Role model — one of the mentors indicated that as a mentor, she had to be exemplary because she realized the student teacher was watching her. She felt she had to portray a professionalism that the student teacher would think worth emulating. [Regulative]
- Explicit articulation — mentors and student teachers indicated that they talked a lot and shared ideas, reflecting on what worked and what did not work so well. Some mentors indicated that they would discuss versatile ways of teaching different children with

Table 2 Mentors' and student teachers' perceptions of what has been learnt and taught at school

	Most important aspects of being a teacher that mentors thought they had taught the student teachers	Most important aspects of being a teacher that student teachers indicated they learnt from the mentor
Balboa Primary School		
Instructional	Teaching methods through co-teaching	Teaching methods through lesson evaluation
Regulative	Lesson planning Enthusiasm Professionalism Excellence Commitment	Lesson planning Classroom management
Interpersonal		Interpersonal relationships Team work
Administrative		Coping with pressure
Fallal Primary School		
Instructional	Every teacher has their own teaching style Lesson planning Teaching strategies	Different teaching strategies Being energetic Lesson planning
Regulative	Discipline Attitude Commitment	
Interpersonal	Love for children Relationship with children	Team work
Administrative		
Quince Primary School		
Instructional	Lesson preparation Confidence with subject matter Teaching skills	Lesson preparation
Regulative		
Interpersonal	Relationship with learners Social interaction with children and staff	Patience with children
Administrative	Organization	Organization School management

the student teacher, and they would also have discussions about particular children and how they could help those children understand better by teaching them in certain ways. [Instructional]

- Participation — when student teachers have observed the methods that their mentors used in the classroom, all of them indicated that they would then try to apply some of these methods in their own teaching. [Instructional]

Clearly, the methods through which student teachers learn to be teachers in a school-based context are quite varied and versatile. This finding gives impetus to the significance of the theoretical concepts of communities of practice and situated cognition, as articulated earlier in this article.

How student teacher performance was evaluated by the mentors

Morais and Miranda (1996) have suggested that the explicitness of evaluative criteria is related to students' understanding and achievement. If the evaluative criteria are made explicit to the student, then they are more able to know what is required of them and they will be able to produce the legitimate text. On the other hand, assessment can take place but the criteria for evaluation can be implicit. When such is the case, students will not know what text or performance they are required to produce. They will only have to guess and hope for the best from the teacher's assessment.

When asked if and how student teachers were assessed, mentors and student teachers at Balboa and Fallal stated that assessment took place. At Quince, Susie indicated that she was not assessed, but her mentor (Jill) indicated that assessment had taken place. This different interpretation could be because the evaluation was not always explicitly communicated. Although there was concurrence that assessment

took place at Fallal, the mentor stated her assessment was verbal while the student teacher thought the mentor completed forms. It appears that the procedure for evaluation was not commonly understood or explicitly stated by student teachers and mentors.

At Balboa, where the student teachers were in the school on a full-time basis, the evaluative criteria were very clear. Mentors provided examples of their assessment instruments. Ruth assessed Sam using specific criteria. The form that she presented was for the morning ring where she would assess Sam on her planning, educational content, language and use of voice, group management, interaction with children and meeting of special needs. Sam was assessed on a 4-point scale, as Outstanding, Achieved, Partially Achieved or Not Achieved. The other mentor at Balboa, Dawn, would send e-mail comments to Sonia after Sonia had presented a lesson in her class. Interestingly, these comments seemed to stress the positive aspects of Sonia's teaching and to gloss over any weaknesses observed.

It is clear from the above description that there were both differences and similarities in the implementation of the learnership at Balboa, Quince and Fallal. Whilst all of the schools were working with the same higher education institution and within the same learnership, the actual way in which the learnership took shape differed. Variations in practice occurred in the internal organization of the learnership as well as in the pedagogical relationship between mentor and student teacher.

Further issues arising from the research

The interviews highlighted a number of other significant issues besides those pertaining to the organization of the learnership. These are not explored in detail here, but are highlighted as pointers for further exploration. These issues include:

- student teachers' choice of schools
- roles and responsibilities of mentors
- models of partnership between the higher education institution and the school.

Student teachers' choice of schools

It was noteworthy that for four of the five student teachers, the selection of a learnership school was defined by the geographical proximity to the Cape Technikon. Students indicated that they found it convenient to be able to walk to the school and back and not be late for lectures. Given that a strong argument for school-based learning is the quality of experience that is available in the school, it does not appear that a concern with quality was a major priority for the students.

At the time of the research, the ETDP-SETA did not have any criteria for involvement of schools. In the broader study on which this article is based, co-ordinators of Teaching Practice in the BED degree at the institution under discussion here, all identified the functionality of the school as a prime criterion on which a school was selected for Teaching Practice. Some concern could be expressed, therefore, that the selection of learnership schools is not following this criterion, thereby undermining the philosophy of the institution and the likely benefits of the experience for student teachers.

A further matter of potential concern from the point of view of the higher education institution is the fact that the student teachers spent the whole learnership year at one school. If a student teacher is placed in a school with poor teaching and learning practices, this may discourage the student teacher before she even begins to teach. On the other hand, getting school experience only in a very well-functioning school with a healthy teaching and learning ethos may delude the student teacher into forming unrealistic expectations of the profession. It would be ideal for a student teacher to get more than one learnership experience, but this does not form part of the terms of reference of the learnership. This is an area where academic institutions may feel that they need to intervene, in order to change these terms of reference.

Roles and responsibilities of mentors in the schools

Five of the six mentors participating in this learnership had not received any formal mentor training. Mentor training focuses on learning to nurture a student teacher, to develop and use clear criteria of assessment, and to understand the student teachers' own background. These teachers, however, were relying solely on their own teaching experience to mentor the student teacher. They were not sure what they were supposed to do with the student teachers as there had been no clear guidelines from any of the other parties involved. Jill captured the mentors' frustration when she indicated:

I did feel that when the student came in I did not know what my role was. So I just took her on board and just exposed her to the way I do things. But I must admit I don't know what my role is. I was never told what my role is ... I do not know what I am expected as a mentor and so I just do what I think is right.

In a situation where the mentor does not know what her roles are but has experience with student teachers in a conventional Teaching Practice system, the mentor might focus primarily on the judgement of student teachers' performance rather than demonstrating the formative, developmental characteristics expected from the mentor in a learnership.

The issue of role confusion was compounded by what mentors perceived as a lack of communication from the higher education institution. Ruth, one of the mentors, described the disadvantage of the learnership as being: "*The time it takes ... and the effort of mentoring. It becomes easier if you know what is expected of you.*". Jill was more forceful when she said:

At the moment I don't know whether I am meant to be helping the teacher develop a certain methodology or ... develop their teaching style or ... help them with their assignments ... I have just been muddling along..

Models of partnership

Learnerships can be considered to be a form of partnership between schools and higher education institutions. One could argue, however, that the nature of the partnership described here was mainly a separatist one, where the school and the HEI are seen to have separate and complementary responsibilities, where there is no systematic attempt to bring the two parties into dialogue, and where there is little integration of learning activities. In this model, students have to achieve integration themselves, as the school and the higher education institution invariably offer separate knowledge domains, with the mentoring coming from the knowledge base of the school (Furlong, Whitty, Whiting, Miles, Barton & Barrett, 1996). Whilst all are ideal-typical models, the separatist model is in contrast to two other models identified by Furlong *et al.*, namely:

- A collaborative partnership — where teachers in a school are seen to have an equally important but different body of knowledge that they can give to student teachers. In this model, lecturers and teachers in school collaborate very closely in planning of the programme.
- An HEI led partnership — where the partnership is led by the HEI. The HEI defines what students should learn in the school and how they should be assessed.

The data gathered in this study indicated a central tension with the separatist model, namely, that of the assessment and evaluation of the students. It was clear from the interviews that the mentors in the schools were not clear on the criteria to be used to assess student teachers. Mentors also put different emphasis on different aspects of classroom teaching. Whilst this could be an indicator of professional independence, which mentors may value, there is also the danger that students will find themselves being assessed with different sets of criteria from the school and the higher education institution, or that teachers will not know what the institution would like them to emphasise in their student teachers' learning. Close collaboration with an HEI would also enable better monitoring of the quality of mentoring that the student teacher is getting.

A second area of tension in the separatist model is that different repertoires of knowledge and practice may be privileged by the school and the higher education institution. It has long been recognised that conceptions of knowledge in schools and universities or colleges are different. Schools and academic institutions also have different working cultures and varying expectations of each other (Hagger, Burn & McIntyre, 1993). Whilst the expertise of teachers is mostly implicit and context-dependent, as exemplified in the three schools' varying emphasis of aspects of classroom teaching, academic knowledge is usually explicit and can be generalised across contexts (Hagger *et al.*, 1993). To avoid a situation where student teachers are not taught very specific context-dependent aspects, there needs to be some constant reminder that what they are learning from the school relates to what they are learning at their academic institution. If there is no reminder, the student teachers may dismiss their academic knowledge as less important than the practical knowledge, and move to a repertoire of practice based more on routine than on conceptual understanding.

Conclusion

Drawing from interviews that were conducted with mentors and student teachers, this article has described the way in which the Level 6 learnership was being implemented in three junior schools in the Western Cape. It has focused on the spatial and temporal organisation of the learnership in the schools and the knowledge and practices that were privileged in each school. It has also looked at how these repertoires were made available to student teachers and how the student teachers were assessed. It has raised some points for further exploration, in particular around the selection of schools, the roles and responsibilities of mentors, and models of partnership.

The general argument that learnerships add value to student teacher learning has been shown to be more complex in practice than

might have been envisaged. Learnerships are not generic in their implementation. Whilst at policy level there are certain expectations imposed on the mentor and the student teacher, in practice what happens can be very context-dependent and can actually constrain the student teacher's learning.

As a final comment, we would argue that the effective implementation of a learnership in South Africa would benefit from a comparative investigation of models of partnership in teacher education. This study has shown that, whilst a separatist model of partnership may give independence to the mentors, it can also give too much uncontrolled variation to the practice and the degree of emphasis on learning aspects that are made available to student teachers. A collaborative partnership would appear to offer the most potential for a coordinated learning experience for student teachers. Studies in different parts of the world, however (Miller, 2002; Robinson, 1998; 2001; Villegas-Reimers, 2002), have shown that a collaborative partnership model depends on certain enhancing conditions at schools and teacher education institutions, many of which may not be present in every situation. The identification of such conditions in a South African context would, we believe, make an important contribution to understanding the potential for the learnership model to achieve the important goals it has set for itself.

Note

1. Sam, one of the interviewed student teachers, pointed out the contradiction between acquiring knowledge and applying it in practice later, in another context, when she stated that the major advantage for her of being in a learnership was that she was "... not just learning information and then applying it later when you qualify. You can actually relate to what the lecturer is talking about and you can apply the things. I prefer doing it this way than if I were studying and applying it later".

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